Explanation of the Reports Concerning the Virtues of the Pure Imams

By Judge Abū Ḥanīfa al-Nuʿmān ibn Muḥammad al-Tamīmī al-Maghribī, who died in 363 AH.

Part Fifteen

In the Name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

[1241]

From Abū Baṣīr, who said:

I heard Abū ʿAbd Allāh Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad, peace be upon them, say:

“Islam began as something strange, and it will return to being something strange just as it began. So blessed are the strangers.”

This is a well-known hadith transmitted from the Messenger of God, may God bless him and his family. Many people from both the particular [Shiʿa] and the general [Sunni] communities have transmitted it. Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq merely quoted it from him, peace be upon him, and I have omitted the chain of transmission back to him.

Abū Baṣīr said:

I said to him: “Explain this to me, may I be your ransom, O son of the Messenger of God.”

He, peace be upon him, said:

“The caller from among us will begin a new call, just as the Messenger of God began the call.”

Likewise, al-Mahdi began a new call to God when the established practices had been changed, innovations had multiplied, and the imams of misguidance had gained power. The remembrance of the imams of guidance—whose obedience God had made obligatory upon the servants and whom He appointed to call people to Him and to guide them to Him through His signs—had been erased, their mention forgotten, and news of them cut off because of the domination of the unjust imams over them.

When God fulfilled, through the call of the imams, what He had promised them concerning the appearance of their Mahdi, he needed to call them with a new call, just as the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, had initially begun calling them.

[The Sermon of the Commander of the Believers in Kūfa]

[1242]

From the Commander of the Believers, peace be upon him:

He addressed the people in Kūfa, urging them to fight and warning them against failure and against the evil consequences that were feared from it.

When he had finished his sermon, a man stood before him and said:

“O Commander of the Believers, who could possibly attack us while you are among us—the brother of the Messenger of God, his cousin, and his son-in-law—and we have with us the banner and standard of the Messenger of God? And we have with us the two sons of the Messenger of God, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, the leaders of the young men of Paradise. If jinn and humans were to gather against us, they would not be able to overcome us.”

ʿAlī, peace be upon him, said to him:

“And how could that be, when the tribulation has not yet become severe, zeal has not yet appeared, the offspring have not yet been taken captive, and you have not yet been ground like a millstone grinds with its lower covering, until none remains except one who is beneficial to them or harmful to them?

“When that happens, God will send forth the best of this community”—or he said, “of creation”—“and he will kill them in a slaughter, one after another, until God is pleased, and until Quraysh and the Arabs say: ‘By God, if this man were truly from the family of Muḥammad, he would have shown us mercy.’

“And they will wish that they had seen me for even an hour of the day, so that I might ask God to have mercy upon them.”

A man stood before him and said:

“O Commander of the Believers, when will God's pleasure be attained?”

He said:

“God will cast mercy into his heart, and he will lift the sword from them.”

The man asked:

“When will that be?”

He said:

“If God wills.”

Explanation of the Unusual Terms

His statement, **“you will be ground like a millstone grinds with its lower covering”**:

The *biqāl* is a piece of cloth or leather placed beneath the millstone when it is grinding.

His statement, **“slaughter, one after another”**:

This means fighting and the confusion that accompanies it.

Likewise, al-Mahdi did not arise until the tribulation had become severe, and the zeal of the Umayyads and Abbasids had appeared; until the offspring—the descendants of the

Messenger of God, peace be upon him—were taken captive at the killing of al-Ḥusayn, peace be upon him; and until the tribulation ground people as a millstone grinds with its lower covering.

It continued until there remained none of the believers except those who were beneficial to the enemies of God because of what they gained from them, or those harmful to them.

At that point, the son of the best of this community arose: al-Mahdi, son of ʿAlī the Trustee, and the son of the best of creation, because he was the son of the Messenger of God, peace be upon him.

During the days of his rule, he killed whoever among the enemies of God his hand reached.

Likewise, those among his descendants who remained would kill them until God placed mercy in his heart and he lifted the sword from them, as ʿAlī, peace be upon him, said.

ʿAlī did not say this from himself. Rather, the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, had informed him of it and shown him what would happen of this and other matters. This is among his proofs and evidences, peace be upon him.

The Conduct of al-Mahdi

[1243]

From Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad, peace be upon him, who said:

"If our Qaʾim were to rise, the people would not remain upon divorce except by the sword. And if that were to happen, it would only be according to the conduct of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, peace be upon him."

This was likewise the case when al-Mahdi arose. He imposed upon the people the divorce of the prescribed waiting period and the Sunnah, according to what God specified in His Book and the Sunnah of His Messenger, peace be upon him.

He abolished innovative forms of divorce and everything that the innovators had introduced into religion and its laws, and their opinions concerning what is lawful and unlawful.

He compelled the people by the sword to follow the conduct of ʿAlī, peace be upon him—the conduct by which he governed the community according to what the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, had entrusted to him, and according to what the imams among his descendants subsequently preserved.

They revived what the falsifiers had caused to die of the rulings of religion and abolished the innovations of the innovators.

This continued until religion became new and fresh again, just as it had begun in Islam, pure and unmixed as it had first emerged.

Religion would belong to God, as He promised in His Book, and He would make it prevail over every religion, as He established in His decree.

This would occur through the hands of the imams of His religion and His friends.

It is attributed to al-Mahdi, their first one, because he was the cause of its beginning, and from him everything that subsequently developed from it originated until its completion.

Likewise, this and what preceded it are attributed to Muḥammad the Prophet, peace be upon him, because it belongs to his law, his religious community, his call, and his people, and because it occurs through the hands of the imams from his descendants.

[1244]

Among the reports that confirm this, and that have the same meaning, is what was narrated from Salmān al-Fārisī, may God have mercy upon him, from what he transmitted from the Messenger of God, peace be upon him.

He mentioned al-Mahdi, peace be upon him, and said:

“He will indeed kill the oppressors. He will kill the heretics, and he will accept neither repentance from them nor jizya from them. He will leave no one on earth following the religion of Islam except that he will kill him. He will destroy the Turks, the Khazars, the Daylamites, and the Abyssinians. The kings of the Romans will be brought to him shackled in iron.

“He will leave neither Jew nor Christian, nor grant them protected status. He will return all people to the religion of Abraham and Muḥammad, peace be upon them.”

This is among what we have mentioned: that these things will occur one after another through the hands of al-Mahdi and the imams among his descendants.

It is attributed to him because he will be the first to open this matter and undertake it. And it is attributed to the Messenger of God because he is the possessor of the religious law and community, the patron of the imams and the Imamate, and the possessor of the message and the call.

It has been said that some of these matters will belong to certain imams. They did not occur during the lifetime of the one to whom they were attributed because he died, but they occur through his successor after him and are attributed to him.

[1245]

This also came from Abū ʿAbd Allāh Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad, peace be upon him, in what Ḥamza ibn Ḥumrān narrated from him.

He said:

I counted before him the imams after the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, one by one, until I reached him, and I testified that God Most High had made their obedience obligatory.

When I named him, he gestured with his hand to me to be silent, so I became silent.

He said:

“There was never a condition in which the imams were placed after God took His Prophet, except that the one whom I have named was the person most entitled to authority over the people.”

Then he said:

“When I tell you something about a man from among us—that something will occur in him—and it does not occur in him, then it will occur in his descendant after him.”

This explains what I have mentioned and confirms it.

It is supported and strengthened by the saying of God Most High concerning Muḥammad, peace be upon him:

“He it is Who sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth, so that He may make it prevail over every religion, even though the polytheists dislike it.” [Qur'an 9:33]

This was God's promise to His Messenger, peace be upon him. He fulfilled part of it during his lifetime, then caused it to prevail over other religions, and fulfilled—and will fulfill—the remainder through the hands of the imams among his descendants.

[1246]

Among similar reports is what al-Ḥasan ibn Maḥbūb narrated through his chain from Abū ʿAbd Allāh Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad, peace be upon him, who said:

“When the Qaʾim from among us rises, he will present faith to every hostile opponent. If he enters it with genuine conviction, then [he is accepted]; otherwise, his neck will be struck, or he will pay the jizya as the People of the Covenant pay it today. The belt of the *hymāyān* will be fastened around his waist, and they will be expelled from the territories toward al-Sawād.”

This had not yet occurred under any of the preceding imams. It will occur for the one among them when he rules the world, his authority becomes strong, and the religion becomes one, as God Most High promised.

[1247]

Among what Zādhān narrated from Salmān al-Fārisī, may God have mercy upon him, from what he transmitted from the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, is that he said:

“There must be a Qaʾim from the descendants of Fāṭima who will arise from the West. He will kill the heretics, rule over the Turks, Khazars, Daylamites, and Abyssinians, and the kings of the Romans will be brought to him shackled in iron. No banner will be raised except the banner of faith.”

This has the same meaning as what was mentioned and explained previously.

[1248]

From al-Shaʿbī, from Ḥudhayfa ibn al-Yamān, from what he transmitted from the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, who said:

“Neither Balanjar, nor the Daylam mountains, nor Constantinople will be conquered except by a man from Banū Hāshim.”

Meaning the imam of that time, from the descendants of al-Mahdi.

There has never been, nor will there be, an imam from Banū Hāshim except ʿAlī, peace be upon him, and the imams from his descendants—the descendants of the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, through Fāṭima al-Zahrāʾ, the leader of the women of the world.

As was mentioned earlier in this book, these places will only be conquered by them, peace be upon them.

[1249]

Also among this is what al-Shaʿbī narrated.

He said:

Mālik ibn Ṣaḥār al-Hamdānī told me:

“We invaded Balanjar during the caliphate of ʿUthmān. We engaged in battle, and my brother was wounded, so I carried him in front of me while he was wounded.

“After we had withdrawn, I was traveling for a day when a man caught up with me from behind and struck my back with a whip in his hand.

“I turned around and found that it was Ḥudhayfa ibn al-Yamān. I greeted him.

“He said:

‘Who is this in front of you?’

“I said:

‘My brother. He is wounded. You have seen what we encountered during our campaign, but we hope that we will conquer it next year, God willing.’

“Ḥudhayfa said:

‘The one who will conquer Daylam, Balanjar, and Constantinople is a man from Banū Hāshim. Through them God began the matter, and through them He will bring it to an end.’

“Whatever has been conquered—and whatever will be conquered—of these places and others: if the rule and authority of those who previously possessed them remain established, and they fight against those who conquered them, with one side overcoming the other at one time and the other side overcoming them at another, and each faction obtaining something from the other, then this is not the conquest intended.

“Rather, the conquest is that which occurs with the destruction of the enemy, victory over them, elimination of their influence, the ending of their rule and their historical presence.

“That is what will occur through the hands of God's friends, whom God promised in His Book would inherit the earth, and through whom He would make His religion prevail over every religion.

“God Most High will fulfill His promise to them and will not break His promise.

“Therefore, when it is reported that they will conquer these places, even though others conquered them before the appearance of their authority and the completion of God's promise to them, that earlier conquest is not considered the true conquest.

“The true conquest will be theirs, through the destruction of all the enemies of God at their hands and their inheritance of the whole earth.”

The manifestation of God's religion over every religion, as He promised in His Book; the destruction of His enemies; the ending of their authority; the disappearance of their memory; and the destruction of what they followed, their gods, and what they worshipped—that is the manifest conquest, as God Most High said to His Prophet Muḥammad, peace be upon him:

“Indeed, We have granted you a manifest victory.” [Qur'an 48:1]

This referred to the conquest of Mecca: his victory over its people and the ending of the religion they followed, their worship, and what they worshipped.

Likewise, God Most High promised His righteous servants—the friends of the pure imams—that He would make them inherit the earth and, through them, make His religion prevail:

“over every religion, even though the polytheists dislike it.” [Qur'an 9:33]

This is the manifest conquest. God fulfills His promise and does not break His promise.

[1250]

From the report of Wakīʿ ibn al-Jarrāḥ, which he traced back to the Prophet, peace be upon him:

“Constantinople will certainly be conquered. What an excellent commander their commander will be, and what an excellent army that army will be.”

Constantinople had not yet been conquered.

The one who will conquer it, as stated in the report before this, is a Qaʾim from the community, from the family of Muḥammad, peace be upon him.

Description of al-Mahdi

[1251]

From the report of Sufyān al-Thawrī, which he traced back to the Messenger of God, peace be upon him:

“Al-Mahdi is a man from my descendants. I see his face like the shining star. His complexion is the complexion of an Arab, and his body is the body of an Israelite.”

This was likewise the description of al-Mahdi, peace be upon him. He was among the most handsome of men in appearance, and his face was like a shining star, as the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, described him.

Explanation of the Unusual Terms

“The shining star” (*al-kawkab al-durrī*) means one of the luminous stars; its plural is *darārī*.

Likewise, al-Mahdi's face was radiant and luminous, as though light shone from it for whoever looked at him.

His statement:

“His complexion is the complexion of an Arab.”

Likewise, his complexion was like that of the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, the master of the Arabs: bright-faced, with a reddish tinge.

Those among the Arabs knowledgeable about complexions call this *al-rifq* and *al-sumra*; they do not call it “white” among the various human complexions.

This is considered among the finest complexions among people and is especially common among their nobles.

His statement:

“His body is the body of an Israelite.”

The bodies of the Israelites are large-bodied, and they are generally and predominantly larger in build than the Arabs.

Likewise, al-Mahdi was large and imposing in body, so that one of his walking companions would scarcely reach his height and would appear short and small beside him.

The same was true of those among his descendants who received the Imamate after him, up to the present day. God Most High granted them excellence, beauty, and perfection.

Al-Mahdi tried, while he was in concealment, to hide himself and make himself inconspicuous, but he was unable to do so.

Wherever he passed, those who recognized his status would say:

“By God, this is nothing other than a king among kings. This is not an ordinary commoner or a merchant.”

Likewise, al-Manṣūr repeatedly tried to conceal himself from some people from whom he wanted to hear their speech. He dressed differently from his usual clothing and entered among a group of people to whom he had presented himself, abandoning the reverence and exaltation normally accorded to him, and asking them to treat him as one of their equals.

They did so, but he was not concealed from anyone who saw him.

He did this during some of his journeys and entered one of the fortresses of the frontier. Some people there had never seen him before, yet he was not hidden from them.

He did something similar when he captured the accursed Mukhalid and he became a prisoner.

Likewise with Muʿtad ibn Muḥammad ibn Jazar when he also became his prisoner: he was not hidden from either of them. They recognized him even though neither of them had previously seen him.

The Arabs say in such circumstances, in one of their proverbs:

“How could the moon remain hidden?”

[1252]

ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar narrated—and this was among what he transmitted or related from the Messenger of God, peace be upon him—that he said:

“Al-Mahdi will be given the strength of ten men.”

Likewise, al-Mahdi was strong and was known for this from a young age.

[1253]

From the report of Qatāda, which he traced back to the Prophet, peace be upon him:

“Al-Mahdi has a broad forehead and a prominent, curved nose. He will fill the earth with equity and justice just as it was filled with injustice and oppression.”

Such was the description of al-Mahdi: he had a broad forehead and a prominent nose. These two features are among the finest characteristics of foreheads and noses.

His justice filled whatever portion of the earth his authority reached, and he would fill the remainder through those who came after him.

One of the earlier imams was asked:

“Are you al-Mahdi?”

He said:

“How could I be al-Mahdi when I have reached the age you see?”

He took hold of his forearm, stretched the skin, and said:

“Al-Mahdi does not need to be helped onto a riding saddle.”

[1254]

From Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī, peace be upon him, who said:

“Al-Mahdi will arise with not a single white hair in his head or beard.”

Likewise, al-Mahdi was when he assumed the Imamate. The Imam of the age who was alive in his time handed it over to him and explicitly designated him as the Mahdi of the imams, and his missionaries called people to him by that title.

At that time, he was young, at the beginning of his youth, a young man in the prime of his youth and among the finest of young men.

[1255]

It was narrated from ʿAbd Allāh ibn Masʿūd, from what he transmitted from the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, who said:

“You, members of this community, will become four communities.”

One community will stand upon the truth, and falsehood will not diminish them in anything.

He was asked:

“Will they not fight?”

He said:

“Yes. They will be shaken with a tremendous shaking.”

Another community will be upon falsehood, having nothing of the truth.

He was asked:

“Do they pray?”

He said:

“Yes, and their prayer will bear witness against them.”

Another community will seek the truth but miss it.

They will leave the religion as an arrow passes through its target, and they will not return to it until the arrow returns to its nock.

Another community will say according to their own opinions: “These are more rightly guided,” and “Rather, these are more rightly guided.”

They will remain in this condition for as long as God wills.

Then Islam will soon return to the gate from which it came.

It was asked:

“To where, O ʿAbd al-Raḥmān?”

He said:

“To Banū ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib.”

Explanation of the Unusual Terms

His statement:

“They will pass out.”

Murūq means to exit through the opening from which something entered.

Murūq from religion means leaving it through hypocrisy, and it is the opposite of entering it through faith.

The passing through of an arrow means that it exits through the place where it entered. When a hunter shoots an animal—or anything at which he shoots an arrow—the arrow

penetrates it and exits completely from the place where it entered because of the force of the blow. Nothing of the blood adheres to the arrow because of the speed and force with which it exits.

The Messenger of God, peace be upon him, described the Khārijites with this characteristic, saying:

“They will pass out of religion as an arrow passes through its target.”

The *ramiyya* is the thing that has been shot at; it follows the grammatical pattern of *faʿīla* with the meaning of *mafʿūla*.

His statement:

“Then they will not return until the arrow returns to its nock.”

The *fawq* of an arrow is the split or notch at its end that is placed against the bowstring when it is shot.

When an arrow is shot, it falls upon its arrowhead; it does not return to its nock.

He therefore meant that they would not return to Islam after leaving it.

His statement:

“You will become four communities.”

The community that stands upon the truth and fights and is violently shaken refers to ʿAlī, peace be upon him, his companions, and those who supported them.

They were likewise fought alongside him, peace be upon him, and after him, and they were violently shaken.

The community described as being upon falsehood, having nothing of the truth, while still praying—and whose prayer would bear witness against them—refers to the rulers who seized power and rose against others: the imams of misguidance from the Umayyads and Abbasids, and those who supported and followed them.

The community described as seeking the truth but missing it, and passing out of religion as an arrow passes through its target, refers to the Khārijites. The Messenger of God, peace be upon him, described them in this way.

The community that says, “These are more rightly guided; rather, these are more rightly guided,” refers to the common people who are associated with knowledge and who assumed leadership over the community based on the knowledge they claimed according to their own opinions and desires.

They differed concerning the superiority of their leaders and followers in matters of what is lawful and unlawful, judgments, and legal rulings. Some said, “These are more rightly guided.”

They remained in this condition for as long as God willed, until the Mahdi of the community arose.

Then Islam returned to the gate from which it had emerged, as he said, because of what he established during his days, and according to the extent to which his obedience was established.

The imams among his descendants likewise established and continue to establish it, according to what we have previously mentioned concerning their call and conduct, until God unites people upon obedience to them and grants them inheritance of the earth, as He promised them.

Religion will then be, as God Most High said, entirely for God, and He will make it prevail:

“over every religion, even though the polytheists dislike it.” [Qur'an 9:33]

[1256]

Abū Ṣādiq reported that he heard a man say:

“Al-Muhallab conquered Ṭabaristān.”

Abū Ṣādiq said:

“He related it from Ḥudhayfa, from what he transmitted from the Messenger of God, peace be upon him: that the one who will conquer Ṭabaristān, Daylam, the city of Balanjar, and Constantinople is a man from Banū Hāshim.”

Whatever Muslims have conquered of these lands and others, while the authority of the polytheists and others who previously possessed them remains and their affairs remain established—so that they fight those who conquered them, with one side prevailing at one time and the other side at another, and each faction taking something from the other—this is not the conquest that is intended.

Rather, conquest means what occurs with the destruction of the enemy, victory over them, the complete elimination of their influence, the ending of their period of rule and their historical presence, and the removal of their authority.

That is what will occur through the hands of God's friends, whom God promised in His Book would inherit the earth, and through whom He would make His religion prevail over every religion.

God Most High will fulfill His promise to them and will not break His promise.

Therefore, when it is reported that they will conquer these places, even though others conquered them before their authority appeared and before God's promise to them was completed, that earlier conquest is not considered the conquest intended.

Rather, the true conquest will be theirs, through the destruction of all the enemies of God at their hands and their inheritance of the entire earth.

The manifestation of God's religion over every religion, as He promised in His Book; the destruction of His enemies; the ending of their authority; the elimination of their remembrance; and the disappearance of what they followed, their gods, and what they worshipped—that is the manifest conquest.

As God Most High said to His Prophet Muḥammad, peace be upon him:

“Indeed, We have granted you a manifest victory.” [Qur'an 48:1]

This was the conquest of Mecca, his victory over its people, and the ending of the religion they followed, their worship, and what they worshipped.

Likewise, God Most High promised His righteous servants—the friends of the pure imams—that He would make them inherit the earth and make His religion prevail through them:

“over every religion, even though the polytheists dislike it.” [Qur'an 9:33]

This is the manifest conquest. God fulfills His promise and does not break His promise.

[1257]

Among what ʿInān ibn Ibrāhīm narrated from Abū ʿAbd Allāh Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad, peace be upon him, is that he said:

“If I had any authority in the matter, I would demolish every structure that obstructs the space between al-Ṣafā and al-Marwa. This will only occur at the hands of a man from Banū Hāshim.”

What is meant by the space between al-Ṣafā and al-Marwa is the *saʿy* of the pilgrims.

The first to perform *saʿy* there was Adam, peace be upon him.

When he reached the bottom of the valley, the accursed Iblīs, who had caused him to be expelled from Paradise, appeared to him. Adam had descended from al-Ṣafā intending to go toward al-Marwa.

When he saw him, Adam ran, and running there became a Sunnah.

After the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, people constructed buildings there that obstructed the space between al-Ṣafā and al-Marwa.

Al-Ṣādiq, peace be upon him, reported what they had introduced and innovated, and that demolishing these structures is obligatory.

He also reported that this would only occur at the hands of a man from Banū Hāshim.

This had not happened up to the present day, but it will happen soon through the one whom God causes to manifest among the imams of truth, God willing.

[1258]

From ʿAlī, peace be upon him, who said to the Messenger of God, peace be upon him:

“Is the Mahdi from us, or from others?”

He said:

“Rather, he is from us. Through us the religion will be sealed just as it was opened through us, and through us God will unite their hearts after the hostility of the tribulation, just as He united our hearts after the hostility of polytheism.”

This is among what we have previously mentioned: reports have reached such a degree of widespread transmission that al-Mahdi is from the descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad, peace be upon him, and from the descendants of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, peace be upon him.

The statement of the Messenger of God:

“Through us the religion will be sealed just as it was opened through us.”

The opening of the religion occurred through the Messenger of God and through what he established by appointing his successor, ʿAlī, to undertake what had been entrusted to him.

Likewise, it will be sealed through al-Mahdi and the imams among his descendants, until the end of the world and the establishment of the Resurrection occurs during the era of one of them.

God will unite all nations upon the religion of Muḥammad, peace be upon him, whom He sent, just as He stated in His Book that He would make it prevail over every religion.

Religion will belong entirely to God, and He will cause His righteous servants to inherit the earth.

They are His friends, the imams of His religion, from the descendants of Muḥammad, peace be upon him, and the descendants of ʿAlī.

And as the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, reported, God Most High will unite through them the hearts of His servants after the hostility of the tribulation, just as He united their hearts after the hostility of polytheism.

This is the saying of God Most High:

“O you who believe, remember God's favor upon you when you were enemies, and He united your hearts, so that by His favor you became brothers.” [Qur'an 3:103]

[1259]

From ʿAlī, peace be upon him, that the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, said:

“Al-Mahdi is from us, the People of the House. God will prepare him in a single night.”

His statement:

“God will prepare him in a single night”

does not mean that he was corrupt and God then corrected him.

Rather, it is like the expression:

“So-and-so is suitable for such-and-such an affair,”

meaning that he is qualified for that affair.

Likewise, God Most High saw him as qualified for what he would attain, and the one to whom the matter of the Imamate belonged at that time also recognized him as qualified through God's guidance.

He therefore handed the matter over to him in a single night, in which God showed him this.

Before that, others had been qualified for it. But no one who was qualified for it survived, because God Most High intended it to pass to the one entitled to it.

For this reason, it was said that the imam who handed it over to him appeared at the moment when he handed it over.

At that point he said:

“God has given you that above which there is nothing.”

And:

“How many times they tried to divert it from you and turn it away from you, but God refused except to drive it toward you, until they placed its collar around your neck.”

[1260]

From ʿAbd Allāh ibn Masʿūd, who said:

I heard the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, say:

“The world will not end until a man from my descendants rules over it and judges according to what God has revealed.”

[1261]

In the narration of ʿAbd al-Razzāq, which he traced back to Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī, he said:

The Messenger of God, peace be upon him, mentioned a tribulation that would afflict this community until a man would find no refuge to which he could flee from oppression.

Then he said:

“Then God will send a man from the People of my House, and he will fill the earth with equity and justice just as it was filled with injustice and oppression.

“The inhabitants of heaven and the inhabitants of earth will be pleased with him.

“The sky will leave none of its rain except that it will pour it down abundantly, and the earth will leave none of its vegetation except that it will bring it forth, until the living will wish for the dead.”

His statement:

“My descendants, the People of my House”

The word ʿ*itra* in the Arabic language refers to relatives descended from one's children and to one's paternal cousins.

Al-Mahdi and his descendants are relatives of the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, through Fāṭima, peace be upon her, and through ʿAlī, peace be upon him.

He is also his cousin through religion, his successor, and the one whose excellence and Imamate have been previously discussed, as well as the Imamate of the imams among his descendants.

As for what the Messenger of God mentioned in this report—that he will fill the earth with equity and justice just as it was filled with injustice and oppression—we have already mentioned what has occurred and what will occur concerning this and explained the manner in which it should be understood, making it unnecessary to repeat it here.

[1262]

Al-Shaʿbī narrated from Tamīm al-Dārī that he said:

“There is no city among the cities of Syria that I love more than the city of Antioch.”

The Messenger of God said:

“There are the broken tablets of Moses, and the table and pulpit of Solomon, and the staff of Moses in one of its caves.

“No eastern, western, southern, or northern cloud comes except that when it reaches that cave, it releases its blessings upon it because of what is contained therein.”

Indeed, the days and nights will not pass before a man from my descendants, from my ʿ*itra*, takes authority over it.

“His name will correspond to my name, and his father's name will correspond to my father's name. Among people, he will most closely resemble me in physical form and character.”

Footnotes

[1] Qur'an 9:33.

[2] Qur'an 9:33.

[3] Qur'an 48:1.

[4] Qur'an 9:33.

[5] Qur'an 3:103.

Explanatory Notes

[i] This is what is now known as Māzandarān in northern Iran.

[ii] Abū Ruqayya Tamīm ibn Aws ibn Khārija al-Dārī. He accepted Islam in 9 AH and died in Palestine in 40 AH.

[iii] Antioch (*Anṭākiya*): the principal settlement of al-ʿAwāṣim among the Syrian frontier territories. It was one day's journey from Aleppo. (See *Muʿjam al-Buldān*, vol. 1.)

[1263]

Muḥammad ibn Sallām narrated, through his chain of transmission, from Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī, peace be upon him, that he said:

“When the Qaʾim from among us rises, he will travel to Antioch and bring out from there the Torah from the cave in which it is located, together with the staff and the stone.”

As for the statement:

“His name corresponds to my name, and his father's name corresponds to my father's name,”

this likewise occurs in another passage concerning the one who will assume the Imamate from the family of Muḥammad, peace and blessings of God be upon him and his family, from the descendants of al-Mahdi—the one for whom God Most High will unite the nations, for whom the religion will become one, and through whom God Most High will make His religion prevail over every religion.

His name will likewise be Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh.

However, this will not happen all at once, as we have explained.

Rather, God Most High will bring His affair, His religion, faith, and the believers to completion through the imams from the descendants of al-Mahdi gradually, step by step.

Each one of them will open through his hands whatever God causes him to open, until the one to whom all the inhabitants of the earth submit comes.

He will open what remains of the earth, kill those of God's enemies who remain there, and the religion will belong entirely to God, as He has informed us of this in His Book and promised it to His righteous servants, the imams of His religion, on the Day of Resurrection.

This will be the transition from this world to the Hereafter.

[1264]

From the narration of Ibn Ghassān, through his chain of transmission, from ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās:

A man asked him about the sky—what is it made of? He asked about lightning—what is it? He asked about the first thing that sought refuge at the House [the Kaʿba]. And he asked about al-Mahdi—from whom is he?

Ibn ʿAbbās said to him:

“You have asked about something tremendous, yet it is easy in the knowledge of God.

“As for the sky, it is restrained water.

“As for lightning, it is from water.

“As for the first thing that sought refuge at the House: during the time of the Flood, the large fish used to eat the smaller ones among them. So they sought refuge at the House, and God granted them refuge.

“As for al-Mahdi, he is from the People of the House. May God honor you through their first one, and rescue you through their last one.”

His statement:

“May God honor you through their first one”

means Muḥammad, peace be upon him.

God honored the believers by making Paradise in the Hereafter obligatory for them through obedience to him. This is the greatest honor with which God honors those of His servants who obey Him.

His favor and generosity are greater than His servants can enumerate, as He Most High said:

“And if you were to count the blessings of God, you could not enumerate them.” [Qur'an 14:34]

And through the imams from his descendants, their last one will rescue them from the trial of the hypocrites and the misguided, and from the domination of the polytheists, until the religion belongs to Him, as He has stated in His clear Book.

Three Tribulations

[1265]

From the narration of Ibn Sallām, through his chain of transmission, from the Commander of the Believers, ʿAlī, peace be upon him, who said:

“There are three tribulations:

1. the tribulation of hardship,
2. the tribulation of prosperity,
3. and a tribulation in which people are purified as gold is purified in the furnace.

“They will continue in this state until a man from us, from the family of the Prophet, peace be upon him, emerges, and God sets their affairs right through him.”

His statement:

“The tribulation of prosperity”

means what afflicted those of this community who came before: they were tested by the worldly possessions given to them without lawful justification, and by the way the enemies of God who had seized authority over God's friends used those possessions to win their allegiance.

“The tribulation of hardship”

means what afflicted and tested the servants through the oppression of the oppressive imams, their domination over them, and their violation of their rights.

As for his statement:

“A tribulation in which people are purified as gold is purified in the furnace,”

maḥṣ in the Arabic language means the purification of something.

One says:

maḥaṣtuhu maḥṣan

meaning, “I purified it from every defect.”

God Most High said:

“And so that God may purify those who believe and obliterate the disbelievers.” [Qur'an 3:141]

This refers to what people were tested with through the affliction caused by the enemies of God—the imams of oppression—and their followers, who were induced through worldly rewards to support them.

Meanwhile, hardship continually befell those who held firmly to their religion and patiently endured what those oppressors inflicted upon them.

God Most High purified the believers and distinguished them from those who inclined toward His enemies out of desire or fear.

They remained in this condition until their Mahdi arose.

He rescued those among the believers whom his call, his period, and his days reached, and whom his hand reached.

After him, the imams among his descendants will likewise rescue those who remain, until God fulfills His promise to His friends and His believing servants and fulfills His threat against His disbelieving enemies.

Then the religion will be entirely as He said.

Therefore, truly successful is the one who is patient for that, remains sincere, and waits, as He—the most truthful of speakers—said:

“Then wait; indeed, I am with you among those who wait.” [Qur'an 7:71]

[1266]

Aḥmad ibn ʿUmar narrated, through his chain of transmission, from ʿAlī, peace be upon him.

He said to some of his Shiʿa, after mentioning the domination of the people of falsehood:

“O community of our Shiʿa, pray the Friday prayers with them and return their trusts to them.

“When the time of distinction comes, war will stand upon its legs.

“With us, the People of the House, there is a gate among the gates of Paradise. Whoever follows it is a doer of good; whoever stays behind from it is destroyed; and whoever joins it has joined the truth.

“Indeed, through us the religion was opened, and through us it will be sealed.

“Even if there remained only one day of this world, God Most High would prolong it until He sent a man from us who would fill it with justice just as it had been filled with oppression.”

His statement:

“With us, the People of the House, there is a gate among the gates of Paradise”

means the Imam of the Age in every era.

He is a gate of Paradise. Whoever approaches him, enters among his followers, and acts according to his command will reach Paradise; whoever remains behind from him is destroyed.

We have already explained the meaning of his statement:

“He will fill it with justice just as it had been filled with oppression.”

Its origin and first manifestation occurred through al-Mahdi, and God will complete it after him through the imams among his descendants.

It is attributed to al-Mahdi because he was its beginning, its key, its cause, and the first one to undertake it.

[1267]

ʿAbd Allāh ibn Ḥabala narrated through his chain from ʿAlī, peace be upon him, that he said:

“Islam will certainly flee from the hands of the people, like a stray camel from among camels, and God will not return it except through a man from us.”

Author's Commentary

I heard the Imam al-Muʿizz li-Dīn Allāh, may God exalt his name, speaking about what occurred with al-Mahdi.

One of the senior shaykhs of the *awliyāʾ* said:

“O our master, are you the awaited Mahdi for whom God will unite the servants, grant you possession of the earth, and make the religion one?”

Al-Mahdi replied:

“God's favor is abundant and vast. We have received a substantial share of it, and those who come after us will receive His favor as well. If the favor belonged to only one person, none of it would have reached us.”

Then al-Muʿizz said:

“Al-Mahdi was the key to the lock of God's favor, mercy, blessings, and grace. Through him God opened that to His servants.

“It will continue through his descendants until God's promise to them is completed, by His favor, strength, and power.”

As for the statement of ʿAlī, peace be upon him:

“Islam will certainly flee from the hands of the people.”

Al-nudūd means fleeing.

The verb is used in expressions such as:

nadā al-baʿīr

when a camel runs away and goes far off.

A camel that does this is called *nādd*.

From the narration of Ibn Ghassān, through his chain from ʿAlī, peace be upon him, who said:

“Beware concerning your religion of three types of men:

**“A man to whom God gave the Qur'an and who followed Islam and regarded that as belonging to God. Then he stripped it off, cast it behind his back, drew his sword against his neighbor, and accused him of polytheism.”

They asked:

“O Commander of the Believers, which of the two is more deserving of it?”

He said:

“The one who casts the accusation.”

**“And a man whom reports make light-minded: whenever someone puts forward a story, he lies, and its supporting links are cut off by an even longer story, so that a person can scarcely keep pace with its breadth.”

**“And a man who is like any one of you, to whom God gives authority, and he says: ‘Whoever obeys me has obeyed God, and whoever disobeys me has disobeyed God.’

“This is a lie. No created being is to be obeyed in disobedience to the Creator.

**“Know that there must be a millstone of authority established upon misguidance. When it is established, it will grind.

“Its grinding will be severe, but it will have a mercy within it, and its mercy will be its sharpness. And God will release it.

**“Know that the finest of my roots and the righteous of my descendants are the wisest of people when young and the most knowledgeable of people when old.

“Through us God cuts off the difficult age; through us falsehood is cut off.

“We are a People of the House whom God has judged: we judge accordingly. Whatever we hear as truth, we accept as truth.

“If you follow our traces, you will be guided by our insight. If you turn away from us, you will perish by our hands—or whatever God wills.

**“Woe to the young shoots—the descendants of Muḥammad—from a successor who succeeds [to power]. He will kill those who come after me and those who come after those who come after me.

“By God, even if there remained only one day of this world, God would prolong it until a man from us emerged, called al-Mahdi, who would fill it with equity and justice just as it had been filled with oppression and injustice.”**

His statement:

“Its supporting links are cut off” (*amṭuhā*)

means “I extend it”—that is, I follow one story with another.

One says:

takallama fa-maṭṭa ḥājatihi

meaning, “He spoke and extended his request.”

His statement:

“A man who is like any one of you, to whom God gave authority, and he says, ‘Whoever obeys me has obeyed God…’”

refers to those who claim worldly authority through domination.

The statement describes the behavior of such rulers.

“A man who is like any one of you”

means a person from among the ordinary people who claims that whoever obeys him has obeyed God and whoever disobeys him has disobeyed God—and this is false.

He did not say that the man was a prophet or an imam.

As for God's prophets and the imams of His religion, whoever obeys them has obeyed God, and whoever disobeys them has disobeyed God, because God Most High says:

"Whoever obeys the Messenger has obeyed God." [Qur'an 4:80]

And:

"Obey God, obey the Messenger, and those vested with authority among you." [Qur'an 4:59]

We have explained this so that someone who does not possess sufficient knowledge does not take the statement in its general sense when he hears it.

His statement:

"There must be a millstone of authority established..."

means the mechanism around which its affairs revolve.

The millstone is used as a metaphor for this and for war.

It is said of war:

"The millstone of war revolved around its battlefield,"

and:

"The millstone of death reached its appointed place."

The poet said:

"While the people are in their heedlessness,
the millstone of death grinds."

He said:

"Its grinding will have mercy."

Al-raʾf means the horn.

He compared its sharpness to the sharpness of a horn.

"And God will release it."

Meaning that God will remove that sharpness.

His statement:

"The finest of my roots..."

Al-arūma means the root of a tree.

The root of the wood is meant here by *arūma*, and by his descendants he means his children and grandchildren.

We have explained this previously.

By the successor whom the people installed, he meant the caliph whom the people appointed.

He established this practice for those who came after him.

They then killed the "young shoots" of the family of Muḥammad—that is, those descendants of his who were killed.

Al-khalf, with the **l** pronounced with fatḥa, means righteous descendants.

Al-khalf, with the **l** bearing sukūn, means wicked descendants.

God Most High said:

"Then there came after them successors who neglected prayer and followed desires." [Qur'an 19:59]

[1269]

From the narration of Ibn Ghassān, through his chain from ʿAlī, peace be upon him, who said:

"Two men will emerge from us, one from the other. One of them will be called al-Mahdi, and the other al-Marḍī [the Approved One]."

Al-Mahdi has already appeared.

Al-Marḍī will be from his descendants, as ʿAlī, peace be upon him, said:

"He is from him."

[1270]

In another narration from ʿAlī, peace be upon him, he said:

"It is as though I see your religion turning away, flicking its tail, with nothing of it remaining in your hands, until God returns it to you through a man from us."

His statement:

"Flicking its tail"

compares the religion, when it has departed from people's hands, to a camel that has broken loose, runs intensely, and moves its tail.

In the Arabic language, *ḥaṣḥaṣa* means movement within something until it becomes settled.

Al-ḥaṣaṣ—and *al-ḥaṣḥaṣa*—also means speed in running.

[1271]

From him, peace be upon him, who said:

“By Him who split the grain and created the living being, even if there remained only one day of this world, God would prolong that day until a man from me ruled during it.

“When you see that day, let no shooter fire an arrow or throw a stone, and let no one strike with a spear. Praise God.

“If you are tested, be patient, for the final outcome belongs to the God-conscious.”

This is among what has already been discussed: among the descendants of al-Mahdi there will be an imam through whom God will unite the servants upon his obedience, warfare will cease, and the religion will belong entirely to God, as He has stated.

He will make His religion prevail over every religion.

From the narration of Mukhnif ibn ʿAbd Allāh, through his chain from the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, who said:

“Al-Mahdi is from the descendants of Fāṭima, the leader of the women of the worlds.

“Whether the days are long or short, he will emerge and fill the earth with equity and justice just as it was filled with oppression and injustice.

“Life will become pleasant in his time.

“A caller will cry out, cursing the Umayyads and their followers, and invoking blessings upon Muḥammad and blessings upon ʿAlī and his followers.

“On that day, all people, without exception, will believe.”

This is among what we have mentioned: that some of the imams from the descendants of al-Mahdi will accomplish these things, and they are attributed to al-Mahdi because he is their cause and key.

The first one from the family of Muḥammad to undertake this is likewise attributed to the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, because he is the Prophet of the community and the possessor of the religious law and religious community.

God Most High said:

“He it is Who sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth so that He may make it prevail over every religion.” [Qur'an 48:28]

It is attributed to him because he was the first to undertake it, establish it as a practice, and lay its foundation.

[1273]

From the report of ʿAbd al-Razzāq, from Maʿmar ibn Saʿīd ibn Abī ʿArūfa, from Qatāda:

I said to Saʿīd:

“Is al-Mahdi real?”

He said:

“Yes, real.”

I said:

“From whom?”

He said:

“From Quraysh.”

I said:

“From which branch of Quraysh?”

He said:

“From Banū Hāshim.”

I said:

“From which branch of Banū Hāshim?”

He said:

“From Banū ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib.”

I said:

“From which branch of Banū ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib?”

He said:

“From the descendants of Fāṭima.”

Had he been asked which of Fāṭima's descendants, he would have told him: from the descendants of al-Ḥusayn, because he narrated that as well, and we shall mention it.

Saʿīd did not say this from his own opinion. Rather, he had heard it.

[1274]

Abū al-Malīḥ narrated from Ziyād ibn Bashshār, from Ibn Nufayl, from Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyib, from Umm Salama, who said:

I heard the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, say:

“Al-Mahdi is from my descendants, from the descendants of my daughter Fāṭima.”

Thus, what was mentioned earlier—that al-Mahdi is from Quraysh and from Banū Hāshim—was narrated in accordance with what came in the report from Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyib.

The questioner did not ask the person who transmitted this to him about what came after that.

Had he asked him, he would have been informed of it.

We will mention later those who establish the specific designation, God willing.

[1275]

Zādhān narrated from Salmān al-Fārisī that he said:

“There must be a Qaʾim from the descendants of Fāṭima who will arise from the West. He will break the strength of the innovators and kill the oppressors.”

Likewise, al-Mahdi arose from the West, and he is from Fāṭima.

When the reports concerning this reached them, the Abbasids feared Idrīs ibn al-Ḥusayn when he went to the West.

They plotted against him and poisoned him—and I have mentioned this previously.

In doing so, they were like the statement of God Most High:

“They wish to extinguish the light of God with their mouths, but God will complete His light, even though the disbelievers dislike it.” [Qur'an 9:32]

[1276]

Ḥabīb ibn Abī Thābit, from Ibn Idrīs, said:

I was sitting in a circle in the mosque in which al-Musayyab was present.

I heard him say:

I heard ʿAlī, peace be upon him, say:

“Shall I tell you about my family?

“As for ʿAbd Allāh ibn Jaʿfar, he is a man of food and hospitality.

“As for al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī, he is a man of the large bowl and dining table. If he were to turn toward the *ḥalf al-biṭān*, it would not benefit you in war any more than a bird's snare.

“As for Ibn ʿAbbās, he does not [something unclear in the transmitted text].

“As for me and al-Ḥusayn, we are from you and you are from us.

“These people will gain the upper hand over you because of your disobedience to your rightful imam, your obedience to their false imam, your corruption in your land, and their prosperity in their land.

“Their rule over you will become prolonged until none of you remain except one who benefits them or harms them.

“Your seeking their help will become like a slave seeking help from his master: when he sees him, he obeys him, and when he is absent from him, he curses him.

“People will become mourners: one mourner mourning for his religion, and another mourning for his worldly life.

“They will continue until there is no sacred thing that they do not consider lawful to violate, and until their oppression enters every house, whether made of hair or baked clay.

“If God grants you well-being through affliction, praise Him. If you are tested, be patient, for the final outcome belongs to the God-conscious.

“By Him who split the grain and created the living being, even if there remained only one day of this world, God would send them someone who would make them drink a bitter cup until they wished that I were among them so that I could intercede with Him for them.

“And until people from Quraysh say: ‘If this man were from Quraysh, he would have shown us mercy.’”

His statement:

“A bird's snare”

A *ḥibāla* is the snare with which birds and other game are caught.

His statement:

“These people will gain the upper hand over you”

means the Umayyads and Abbasids. They would alternate in gaining power so that the rule would belong to them.

The mourner for his religion is the one who sees his religion diminished under their rule.

The mourner for his worldly life is the one whose worldly possessions they oppress him in and take from his hands.

It was narrated from Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad, peace be upon him, from his grandfather ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn, peace be upon him, that he was asked about al-Mahdi.

He said:

“He is from my descendants.”

[1278]

Sharīk ibn ʿAbd Allāh narrated from Jābir al-Juʿfī, from Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn, peace be upon him, that he said:

“When our Qaʾim, the People of the House, rises, he will distribute equally and act justly among the creatures of the Merciful—among their righteous and their wicked.

“Whoever obeys him has obeyed God, and whoever disobeys him has disobeyed God.

“He will bring out the Torah, the Gospel, and the rest of God's Books from a cave in Antioch.

“He will judge the people of the Torah according to their Torah, the people of the Gospel according to their Gospel, the people of the Psalms according to their Psalms, and the people of the Qur'an according to their Qur'an.

“The earth will bring forth its treasures of gold and silver.

“He will say: ‘O people, come and take that over which you shed blood and severed family ties.’

“He will give what no one before him gave, and no one after him will give.

“His name will be the name of a prophet.

“He will fill the earth with equity and justice just as it was filled with oppression and injustice.”

This is among what we have mentioned will occur through some of the imams from the family of Muḥammad, peace be upon him, from the descendants of al-Mahdi.

It is attributed to al-Mahdi because he is the first of them to rise and the key to their affair.

[1279]

Among what was narrated and transmitted back to the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, is that he said:

“I saw the Umayyads upon the pulpits of the earth, and they will rule over you.

“You will find them to be evil masters.

“So wait, and wait for the disagreement of their fools.

“When their fools disagree, they will turn back upon their heels.

“They will not repair one breach except that God will open upon them one greater than it, until our Mahdi emerges.”

The Messenger of God was greatly concerned by the vision he had seen, and God revealed to him:

“And We did not make the vision We showed you except as a trial for the people, and the accursed tree in the Qur'an.” [Qur'an 17:60]

His statement:

“The Umayyads will continue to rule until their fools disagree, and when they disagree they will turn back upon their heels until the Mahdi emerges”

refers, as we have previously explained, to the emergence of the Mahdi as one who will rule the earth, from his descendants.

The Umayyad rule will come to an end in the East, while a remnant of them will remain in the West, in the Iberian Peninsula.

Their affair will unfold as the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, described it.

God will fulfill what He promised in His clear Book: to make His righteous servants inherit the earth.

His statement:

“They will not repair one breach except that God will open upon them one greater than it.”

Al-ratq means something closed or joined together.

Al-fatq is opening it and repairing it so that it returns to the state it was in before it was opened.

The commentators likewise explained God's statement:

“The heavens and the earth were joined together, then We split them apart.” [Qur'an 21:30]

They said:

The heaven did not rain and the earth did not produce vegetation.

God split open the heaven, so the heaven rained, and He split open the earth, so it produced vegetation.

[1280]

From the narration of Yaḥyā ibn Muḥammad ibn Sallām, traced back to ʿAbd Allāh ibn Masʿūd:

He said:

The Messenger of God, peace be upon him, said to me one day:

“Come with me, Ibn Masʿūd.”

I went with him until we came to a house crowded with Banū Hāshim.

The Messenger of God, peace be upon him, said to them:

“Whoever among you has someone with him who is not from your family, let him leave.”

Those who were with them but were not from them stood up and left, until only Banū Hāshim remained—specifically Banū ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib and Banū al-ʿAbbās.

The Prophet said to them:

“O ʿAlī, Gabriel has informed me that you will be killed after me, and I wanted to appeal to my Lord concerning it, but ʿAlī refused.”

He said:

“It is as though I see the Umayyads becoming your rulers. They will subject you to hardship and seek to make things difficult for you.

“Then the Abbasid state will come, and in it they will act like tyrants.

“Woe to my descendants, my People of the House, and the Umayyads because of what they will suffer at the hands of the Abbasids.

“Some men from the Umayyads will flee and reach the farthest West, where they will regard prohibited things as lawful for a period.

“Then a man from my descendants will emerge, angered by what has befallen my People and my descendants.

“He will fill the earth with justice just as it was filled with oppression and injustice.

“God will give him drink from the rain clouds.”

Some men from the Abbasids said:

“O Messenger of God, will this happen while we are still alive?”

The Messenger of God, peace be upon him, looked at them with the look of someone who detested them.

Then he said:

“By Him in whose hand is my soul, among the loins of the Persians and Romans there are those who are more hopeful, in my view, for my People of the House than the Abbasids.”

His statement:

“The rain of the clouds”

Al-ṣawb means rain.

Al-ghamām means thin cloud.

From ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn, peace be upon him, who said:

“The Qaʾim from among us”—meaning al-Mahdi—“will arise, and after him there will be twelve Mahdis,”

meaning twelve imams from among his descendants.

From Abū al-Ḥārith Bilāl ibn Furwa, who traced the report back to the Prophet, peace be upon him:

“This community will not perish until twelve caliphs from the People of the Prophet rule over it, all of them acting according to truth and the religion of guidance.

“Among them are two men: one will rule for forty years and the other for thirty years.”

This resembles the preceding report.

From the narration of Yaḥyā ibn Sallām, traced back to ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar, who said:

“Rejoice, for the days of the tyrants are soon to end.

“Then there will come after them the one who repairs what has been broken, through whom God will repair the community of Muḥammad, peace be upon him: al-Mahdi, then al-Manṣūr, followed by a number of guided imams.”

This is something that ʿAbd Allāh could only have said because he heard it from the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, or because it reached him from him.

This concerns reports of things that will occur, and such a statement could only come from someone who had received knowledge from God Most High.

Al-Mahdi existed, as did al-Manṣūr and those who came after them, and likewise there will be guided imams.

God will fulfill for them what He promised them in His Book and through the tongue of His Messenger, by His power and strength.

From the narration of al-Daʿshī, traced back to Abū al-Ḥārith, who said:

“There will be al-Mahdi and seven after him from his descendants, all righteous; no one like them has been seen.”

This too is among what has reached him from the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, and confirms what we have previously mentioned.

Al-Daʿshī narrated, tracing it back to the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, who said:

“After me a man from Banū Hāshim will emerge. He will receive allegiance between the Corner and the Station.

“He will defeat the ruler of Syria with four thousand men. The earth will swallow them up at al-Bayḍāʾ, and then he will proceed toward them.

“The one deprived is the one deprived of their spoils.

“After that, he will rule for seven years.”

This is among the matters that are awaited and will occur.

People will pledge allegiance to the Imam at that time between the Corner and the Station.

God Most High will destroy his enemy, as He promised through the tongue of His Prophet, by His power and strength.

From him, tracing it back to ʿAbd Allāh ibn Masʿūd, who said:

While the Prophet, peace be upon him, was sitting among a group of his companions, some young men from Quraysh passed by him.

His face changed.

Someone present said:

“O Messenger of God, what we saw on your face distressed us.”

He said:

“My People of the House: God has chosen the Hereafter for them over this world.

“After me, they will suffer expulsion, tribulation, and displacement.

“Until a people emerge from here”—and he gestured toward the East—“carrying black banners.

“They will ask for their rightful due, but it will not be given to them.

“Then they will hand them over to a man from my People of the House, and he will fill the earth with justice.”

From Ṣafwān al-Jammāl:

He said:

I once said to Abū ʿAbd Allāh Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad, peace be upon him, while I was with him:

“O son of the Messenger of God, is al-Saffāḥ from among you?”

He lowered his gaze toward the ground for a long time.

Then he said:

“O Thābit, from us is al-Saffāḥ; from us is al-Naffākh; from us is al-Ṣiddīq; from us is al-Fārūq; from us is al-Hādī; from us is al-Mahdi; from us is al-Muhtadī; from us is the one through whom others are guided.

“And from us is the one upon whose head the sun will set and from whose setting place it will rise.

“We are God's band.

“Among us is the Lion of God.

“We are the custodians of God.”

Then he said:

“O Thābit, we are not custodians of gold or silver. Rather, we are custodians of what He has kept concealed of His knowledge.

“We are the supports of God.

“We are God's reserve.

“His Messenger is our greater father, and ʿAlī is our lesser father.

“Fāṭima is our mother.

“Khadīja daughter of Khuwaylid is our maternal ancestor.

“Jaʿfar al-Ṭayyār, who is in Paradise, is our uncle.

“Ḥamza, the master of the martyrs, is our paternal uncle.

“Who possesses lineage like ours, or ancestry like ours?

“God entrusted His secret to us and entrusted us with His revelation and knowledge.

“He made us speak through His wisdom.

“This is our status with Him.”

Those whom he named as imams: some have already passed away, while others are yet to come. He referred to them through descriptions of their qualities and deeds.

His statement:

“We are God's band”

Al-thulla in the Arabic language means a group or community.

It is also said of a man's closest people and associates—that is, his group.

The meaning here is that they are those especially close to God Most High, whom He singled out for His favor.

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From Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī, peace be upon him, who said:

“When the Qaʾim of the family of Muḥammad rises, he will be given the staff of Moses.

“He will bring out the Torah from Antioch.

“God will remove fear from the hearts of his Shiʿa and place it in the hearts of their enemies, so that their hearts become like pieces of iron.

“A man will call out, and his neck will be struck.

“He will be asked: ‘For what did you kill him?’

“He will not be able to say that he killed him knowingly.”

Al-Mahdi and the Evidence Concerning Him in Yemen

Among what was reported by reliable men from the companions of Abū al-Qāsim—the possessor of the Yemeni *daʿwa*—namely al-Ḥasan ibn Faraj ibn Ḥawshab ibn Dādān al-Kūfī:

He was among the eminent, excellent, and trustworthy *dāʿīs*. He was among the people of truthfulness, piety, virtue, religion, and sincere allegiance to the friends of God Most High.

Such was his character, and he died upon it, may God have mercy upon him.

Because of his connection with the friends of God, he possessed numerous indications supporting the truth, the details of which would take too long to mention.

We have mentioned them in the book *al-Dawla al-Ṭāhira al-Marḍiyya*.

His connection and his being sent as a *dāʿī* to Yemen occurred before al-Mahdi appeared, during the lifetime of the Imam who would hand the authority over to him, since the matter was entrusted to that Imam.

Abū al-Qāsim therefore went to Yemen among a group who performed the pilgrimage that year.

He arrived in Yemen at the beginning of the year 290 AH, after receiving permission to do so and permission to engage in fighting.

He was victorious, and no one opposed him, so he was given the title **al-Manṣūr**.

It has been mentioned in a report that:

“A man called Abū al-Qāsim will arise in Yemen before the rise of al-Mahdi and will prepare the way for him.”

Footnotes

[1] Qur'an 14:34.

[2] Qur'an 3:141.

[3] Qur'an 7:71.

[4] Qur'an 4:80.

[5] Qur'an 4:59.

[6] Qur'an 19:59.

[7] Qur'an 48:28.

[8] Qur'an 9:32.

[9] Qur'an 17:60.

[10] Qur'an 21:30.

[i] Between Mecca and Medina.

When he heard someone calling him al-Mansur, he would say: “Al-Mansur is the Imam of the family of Muhammad. Have you not heard the poet say:

When al-Mansur from the family of Ahmad appears,
Tell the sons of Abbas: ‘Rise against a man.’”

This is among what has been reported concerning what is to come. For this could only have come from the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him, from what God had informed him.

Someone said: “This verse, when it reached him, and likewise what happened when al-Mansur arose—he was the leader of the Abbasids—although before that time and until today he had been weak, like one standing on one leg, as the author of the verse said: ‘Whoever raises himself up falls, and it is only a weakened leg.’” And God will cause His ally to prevail over them and over all his enemies, by His power and might.

It was reported that trustworthy companions of Abu al-Qasim, the man whom we mentioned earlier, the leader of the Yemen mission, said:

“I was given glad tidings several times concerning the mission of the Mahdi, and that I would undertake it before I actually undertook it and before I knew him. Among these occasions was when I was traveling toward Yemen, intending to go to San'a. I was traveling for a day near one of its villages when the strap of my sandal broke. I turned toward a rock that was nearby, sat upon it, and began repairing it.

“I looked up and saw an old man hurrying toward me. He stopped before me, breathing heavily, and said: ‘Where is the man from?’

“I replied: ‘A stranger.’

“He said: ‘Do you have any news about the Mahdi?’

“I said: ‘The Mahdi? What is the Mahdi? I do not know him.’

“He said: ‘If you do not know him, then I think this is something that has happened by coincidence.’

“I asked: ‘What is it?’

“He said: ‘There was an old man in this village whom we regarded as one of the Shi'a. He used to tell us: “The Mahdi's missionary will enter this land and pass through this village. The strap of his sandal will break, and he will sit here to repair it.”’

“I said: ‘There is much talk among the Shi'a.’

“He said: ‘Yes, by God, there is much of it.’

“He turned away from me, and I saw no acceptance in him, so I did not approach him further.”

He said:

“I entered San'a and went to its congregational mosque. I prayed two units of prayer, and fatigue had overtaken me. I wrapped my cloak around me, lay down, and placed it beneath my head. I raised one of my legs over the other.

“When I had settled there, an old man came up to me, kicked me with his foot, and said: ‘Get up!’ He rebuked me.

“I said: ‘What have I done, old man? I chose a place apart from these people in the mosque, even though they have stretched themselves out and reclined.’

“He said: ‘Get up. Do not resemble the one for whom this place is intended.’

“I said: ‘And who is that?’

“He said: ‘Some of our elders have reported that the missionary of the Mahdi will enter this mosque and lie down against this column in this very manner. Therefore, we do not allow anyone to imitate him.’

“I got up and sat down. A man approached him.

“He said: ‘How strange your situation is. Do you suppose this is the missionary of the Mahdi?’

“And he began talking about things of this kind. I saw no acceptance in either of them, so I did not approach them. I got up and withdrew from the place.”

The author explains the word “kicked”:

“Rafasa”—to kick—is to strike someone in the chest with the foot.

Abu al-Qasim, the leader of the Yemen mission, heard a report that the Shi'a in Yemen used to transmit after his authority had become established. The Shi'a had historically been numerous in Yemen because of the residence among them of Ali, Commander of the Believers, peace be upon him, when the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him, sent him there.

It was said that some men from among them went to Ja'far ibn Muhammad, peace be upon him, to learn from him and hear his teachings. He asked them about their places of origin. One of them said that he was from al-Mudhikhara,[i] and explained that it was one of the villages of Yemen.

Ja'far ibn Muhammad, peace be upon him, said:

“It is a city of such-and-such a description,”

and he described it in such detail that it was as though he could see it before him.

They said: “Yes.”

Then he said:

“Know that we will always have an enemy there.”

Others said that they were from a city called al-Jund,[ii] and described it in such-and-such a manner. He described it until it was as though he were one of its inhabitants.

They said: “Yes.”

He said:

“How far apart it is from al-Mudhikhara! The Jund will always contain people loyal to us who remain.”

Another group stood and said:

“We are from Jayshan.”

He said:

“It is a city of such-and-such a description.”

They said: “Yes.”

He said:

“It is a city with a lote tree above it and a lote tree below it.”

They said: “Yes.”

He said:

“Between the two lote trees there is a treasure belonging to the family of Muhammad.”

When they told Abu al-Qasim, the leader of their mission, he said:

“My master Ja'far ibn Muhammad, peace be upon him, said this.”

He continued:

“And everything that was mentioned concerning these cities has become clear to me. As for the treasure that he said was in Jayshan between the two lote trees, by God, I extracted it. I brought out seventy men from there and appointed all of them as missionaries. Through them, God established a great cause for the family of Muhammad.

“The people of Jayshan were predominantly Shi'a, and the poet Ibn Jiran was from among them.”

Abu al-Qasim said:

“As for al-Mudhikhara, I have always known it to contain an enemy of the family of Muhammad, peace and blessings of God be upon him, just as al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, said. I sifted it as one sifts a waterskin, and turned it over as one turns over a vessel, and they remain in that same condition to this day, as he taught them.”

“As for al-Jund, I had great success there. I entered it while concealing my identity. I went to its congregational mosque and prayed there the noon, afternoon, and sunset prayers. I saw some people carrying what appeared to be bedding, so I asked them:

‘Do people spend the night in this mosque? I am a stranger and wish to spend the night here.’

“They said: ‘Yes. We are all strangers, and we spend the night here.’

“I sat down. When we had prayed the night prayer, a group gathered in circles, debating matters of knowledge. They continued into the night. There were two circles: one of the Shi'a and one of the general body of people.

“I sat between the two circles, listening to both sides, until the Shi'a departed. The others got up to leave, but one of their men said:

‘Sit down.’

“They sat. He watched those Shi'a as they departed until the last of them had gone. Then he turned toward his companions and said:

‘Do you know of any report concerning this night that has been transmitted beforehand?’

“They said: ‘No.’

“He took a book from his sleeve and said:

‘Do you recognize this book, which relates what it contains from so-and-so—or the book that these Shi'a transmit from?’

“He named the book.

“They said: ‘Yes.’

“He read to them from it many reports from the Shi'a concerning the Mahdi and what would happen through him. He mentioned that the Mahdi's missionary would enter the land of Yemen and that he would spend such-and-such a night in the congregational mosque of al-Jund.

“Then he turned to the people and said:

‘Have you not heard this report?’

“They said: ‘Yes, by God, we have heard it.’

“He said:

‘Then look at the negligence of these people’—meaning the Shi'a—‘in failing to mention that this is the night.’

“Abu al-Qasim said:

“My skin bristled, and a severe fear entered me.

“Then he said:

‘What do you think?’

“They said: ‘We think whatever you want.’

“He said:

‘What I think is that we should expel everyone in the mosque and that no one should spend the night here. Tomorrow, we will know that their report is false and that whoever transmitted it to them lied.’

“They said: ‘That is the right opinion.’

“He stood and said:

‘Everyone who is in the mosque must leave. No one is to spend the night here.’

“His companions began driving the people out. I took refuge in a corner of the mosque until most of them had left. Only a man who was extinguishing the lamps remained. He came to me, saw me, and said:

‘Who is this?’

“I said: ‘A stranger.’

“He said:

‘Get up and leave. Did you not hear what the elders said?’

“I said:

‘I am a man who, by God, does not know where to go. For the sake of God's reward, let me spend this night in your house.’

“He said:

‘By God, I have no place for you.’

“I said:

‘My friend, you are driving me out of the House of God, yet you will not shelter me in your own house, thereby exposing me to destruction.’

“He seemed embarrassed and said:

‘Get up, if you wish.’

“He left and locked the door. This filled me with great fear. I spent the night cautiously, not certain that they would not inspect the mosque the following day to see whether anyone had spent the night there.

“But they did not inspect it for that purpose, and God protected me and dealt graciously with me.”

Abu al-Qasim later related this to those of them who had been present in the mosque that night after his mission had become established. They regarded this as one of the proofs supporting him.

Abu al-Qasim said:

“I left al-Jund intending to go toward one of the regions of Yemen. As I traveled along the road I had taken, I saw a great army approaching. A number of men were with me. They said:

‘By God, this is the army of Abu Ya'far. He has come to fight Ja'far ibn Ibrahim, the ruler of al-Mudhikhara.’

“They dispersed into the rugged terrain in which we were hiding, so that the army would pass without discovering them.

“I went alone toward a rugged area and came upon a cave. I entered it and sat down. A man entered, greeted me, sat down, and said:

‘Where is the man from?’

“I said:

‘We were traveling together when the army came upon us. We became afraid and separated, hiding until the army passes.’

“He invoked blessings and good things, and began talking with me. Then he said:

‘Do you have any knowledge of religious legal answers?’

“I said:

‘I possess as much of that as someone like me would possess.’

“He asked me several questions, and I answered them. When I reached the last of them, he stared at me, and tears flowed from his eyes. Then he kissed my head, my hand, and my feet, and said:

‘My master, the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him, sent me to you so that you might rescue me and take me by the hand.’

“I said:

‘How is that, my friend?’

“He said:

‘I was a man who saw the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him, in my dreams every year on a particular night. I would prepare myself for that night, and I was never deprived of seeing him.

“But when that night came this year, I did not see him, either on that night or afterward. I became extremely distressed.

“When I spent the night yesterday, I saw him. I began weeping before him and said:

‘O Messenger of God, my longing for you has grown intense. I have been deprived of what I was accustomed to receiving from you, and because of this I have begun to think badly of myself.’

“He said:

‘Do not think badly of yourself. The missionary of the Mahdi has arrived in the land where you are, among its people. Go to him.’

“I said:

‘And where will I find him, O Messenger of God, and who is he?’

“He said:

‘Tomorrow, go to such-and-such a cave’—and he named this very cave—‘for you will find him there in concealment.’

“I said:

‘O Messenger of God, describe him to me.’

“He described you to me and said:

‘Ask him such-and-such’—and he mentioned the questions you asked me. ‘If he answers you in such-and-such a way’—and he mentioned the answers you gave me—‘then he is your man.’”

Abu al-Qasim said:

“I was seized by fear, and said to myself: ‘What can I possibly do with a man whom the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him, has sent?’

“I revealed my identity to him and invited him to join me. He accepted, and I took his pledge while he remained there. This man was known as one of his most distinguished companions.”

Abu al-Qasim said:

“When the Imam sent me to Yemen, he ordered me to go to Aden-La'a,[iii] but when I traveled to Yemen and asked about Aden-La'a, everyone I asked said:

‘We only know of Aden Abyan.’

“I thought to myself: ‘Perhaps this name has been altered from what the Imam knows.’

“I went to Aden Abyan to see what I could find. I asked what goods were brought there for trade, so that I could use this as a cover. I was told: ‘Cotton’—meaning raw cotton. I was also told:

‘There are Shi'a there, for it is the port of India and the principal city of the region.’

“I bought cotton and went there. When I arrived, I asked about the market where cotton was sold, and I was directed to it. I rented a shop there and stored the cotton I had with me in it.

“In that market I saw some people discussing the virtues of Ali, peace be upon him. Persistent rain came upon us. One day I was sitting inside the shop while the rain was pouring down, when a group of them entered. They sat and talked with me.

“Then one of them took me by the hand and withdrew with me. He said:

‘This is not the face of a cotton seller. Rather, you possess something of the knowledge of the family of Muhammad.’

“I said:

‘I am a merchant.’

“He said:

‘Leave that aside. Perhaps you have heard of the Banu Musa?’

“I said:

‘Yes.’

“He said:

‘We are they, and we are his Shi'a. This is the time when we are awaiting the arrival of the missionary of the Mahdi among us, according to the reports that have reached us. We recognize his description in you, and that is why we came to you. Give us what you have; we are your brothers.’

“Abu al-Qasim said:

“He persisted with me until I disclosed the matter to him, and he did not leave me until I had taken his pledge.

“He went and brought me his companions, and I took their pledges. They insisted that I come with them, so they took me to their place. I stayed among them, and they brought me men from that locality who were their companions, and I took their pledges as well.

“Then they said:

‘Our Shi'a brothers in Aden-La'a—what do you think? Shall we send to them?’

“I said:

‘There is also an Aden-La'a?’

“They said:

‘Yes.’

“I said:

‘It was to Aden-La'a that I was sent, but I found no one who could tell me anything about it.’

“They sent word to it, and some men from there came to me. I took their pledges and traveled with them. I found a house belonging to Shi'a. They told me about one of their men named Ahmad ibn Abd Allah ibn Khulayi', who was knowledgeable among them. He had been awaiting my arrival and used to tell them:

‘This year the missionary of the Mahdi will come to you.’

“He had purchased weapons and prepared them for my arrival, and they brought them to me.

“They said:

‘News of him reached Ibn Ya'far, the ruler of Yemen. He reported him to his superior, who imprisoned him, and he died in prison.’

“They lodged me in one of their houses. Abu al-Qasim married the daughter of Ahmad, the deceased. He sent his nephew, al-Haytham, as a missionary on his behalf. He was his first missionary, and a great number of his family responded to him.

“The mission there has remained strong and has grown to this day. It has become manifest and has overcome those who opposed it. Its authority has prevailed, by the praise of God Most High.”

Abu al-Qasim said:

“When matters became established for me in some of the ways I desired, I wrote to the Imam informing him of this. A reply came to my letter stating that he was the Imam al-Mahdi and that he had entrusted the matter to him.

“Before his reply reached me, however, my position had already become established and strengthened. I witnessed a degree of victory and conquest that I had never known before.

“When the letter finally reached me concerning the matter of the Mahdi, I knew that what had happened had occurred through his blessing and through the one whose mission and state I was advancing.

“Matters concerning the affairs of the believers became available to me, so I sent them to him, together with Yemeni textiles and other fine products of Yemen. These were the first things of this kind to reach him.”

Abu al-Qasim subsequently sought permission from him to wage war, and he gave him permission. Abu al-Qasim openly proclaimed his cause and began fighting. He conquered cities in Yemen, overcame their rulers, and captured San'a, expelling the Banu Ya'far from it. He dispatched missionaries throughout Yemen and the neighboring lands.

His authority continued to rise and increase until a trial occurred through which God purified the believers and annihilated the unbelievers and hypocrites in one region. What befell the others is related in reports whose explanation would be lengthy.

Abu al-Qasim, may God have mercy upon him, died in Yemen, far from his homeland but secure, surrounded by a delegation of believers and in a flourishing state of religion. Events and reports followed his death whose account would be lengthy.

In North Africa

Among the signs of the Mahdi were those manifested through the mission with which God supported him and whose victory He strengthened through the people of that land. This was the mission undertaken by Abu Abd Allah al-Husayn ibn Ahmad ibn Zaki al-Kufi among the Kutama. We have related his career there, from beginning to end, in *The Book of the State*. Here, however, we shall mention something of it because of what happened in connection with the Mahdi.

We begin with the fact that, a long time before this, two men from the East had come to the Maghrib on his behalf. The first was known as al-Hulwani and the second as Abu Sufyan. Each settled in a different region.

When they reached Marmajanna, one of them—the man known as Abu Sufyan—settled there in a place called Tala, in the territory of Marmajanna. A mosque known as the Mosque of the Romans was built there, and he married a woman. He had a male slave and a female slave.

He was a devout and learned man. He fasted during the day and spent the night in prayer, remaining constantly in his mosque. The people of that region had come to recognize his virtue. He transmitted reports from Abu Abd Allah Ja'far ibn Muhammad, peace be upon him. He was ascetic, devout, and virtuous, and many reports were transmitted from him concerning these qualities.

Many people became Shi'a through him. Because of this, the Shi'a became firmly established in ancient times in the cities of Andalusia and Majanna.

As for al-Hulwani

Al-Hulwani settled at Sujmar, near the land of the Kutama. His circumstances were similar to those of Abu Sufyan. Through him as well, many people of that region became Shi'a.

Among the reports attributed to him is that he said:

“Abu Sufyan and I were sent to this region, and it was described to us. We were told:

‘You will come to a barren land. Plow it and tame it until the owner of the seed comes and sows it.’

“He used to say:

‘The missionary of the Mahdi will come.’

“He described Abu Abd Allah by his characteristics and used to say:

‘There is a finger in his mouth’—

in connection with reports that he had related.”

The Missionary of the Maghrib

The Imam who had sent Abu al-Qasim, once the mission had become established and its authority had been openly manifested, sent a message to Abu al-Qasim, the missionary of Yemen, instructing him to have Abu Abd Allah al-Husayn ibn Ahmad, the missionary of the Maghrib, remain with him so that he could learn from his conduct and actions and observe them. He would then travel to the Maghrib and make for the land of the Kutama.

He went to Yemen and remained with Abu al-Qasim for several months. Abu al-Qasim was greatly impressed with him, spoke of his virtue, and praised him highly.

It is said that when Abu Abd Allah was taking his leave from him at the fortress of La'a, at the place where it had been built, Abu al-Qasim watched him descend from it with a group of his companions.

Abu al-Qasim looked at him and then said to those around him, pointing toward Abu Abd Allah:

“Between his shoulders lies the salvation of a great multitude of people.”

Abu Abd Allah was among the best and most virtuous of the believers. His religious devotion was at its highest, as was his scrupulousness. He was gentle, intelligent, knowledgeable in interpretation, and skilled in what he said.

He departed from Abu al-Qasim in Yemen at the time when the pilgrims were leaving Yemen for the pilgrimage. He traveled to Mecca. When the pilgrims had settled at Mina during the Days of Tashriq, Abu Abd Allah began asking about where the people of the Maghrib were staying, intending to leave with them when they departed.

He passed by some men from the Kutama who had performed the pilgrimage that year. Some of them had become Shi'a through the efforts of al-Hulwani, while others had not yet encountered him.

He heard them discussing the virtues of Ali, peace be upon him. He sat with them and engaged them in conversation about this. They were drawn to him and found in him knowledge they had never heard before. They were impressed by him and asked him about his homeland.

He told them that he was from the East but intended to travel to the Maghrib. They were delighted by this and were happy to have his company. They treated him with honor and respect.

What occurred between him and those who accompanied him is lengthy to relate and has already been mentioned in this book in the account we composed.

He left Mecca with them and traveled to Sujmar, where al-Hulwani had lived. It was in the land of the Kutama, a day's journey away.

They stayed with some of their Shi'a elders, some of whom had encountered al-Hulwani. Those elders gathered around Abu Abd Allah. He found in them a degree of understanding and readiness to accept his teaching that he had not found among those with whom he had first traveled.

He disclosed some of what he possessed to them. They withdrew with him that night, and they submitted to him after he explained his mission to them.

One of those who had encountered al-Hulwani said:

“By God, our master described you to us with your characteristics without omitting anything. He mentioned that there is a finger in your mouth.”

Abu Abd Allah smiled. They continued until he revealed his mission to them and took their pledges that very night.

When he took their pledges of secrecy, he placed his finger in his mouth, as one does when commanding silence, and said:

“This is the finger that al-Hulwani mentioned in his mouth.”

When morning came, they summoned their companions and displayed toward Abu Abd Allah a degree of reverence that they had not shown before.

They said to their companions:

“We will go out with you, so remain with us today.”

Then they informed them of what had happened, and he took their pledges as well.

He entered the land of the Kutama in the year 208 AH. The men who had pledged allegiance to him at Sujmar traveled with him.

When he reached the mountains of the Kutama territory, those who had accompanied him from among the Kutama disagreed over which route he should take and with which group he should stay.

They eventually agreed to ask him about the matter.

He said:

“Where is the pass of al-Akhyar?”

Some of them looked at one another in surprise at his words.

They said:

“How do you know about this pass?”

He said:

“I do not know it myself, but I was instructed that my entrance into the land of the Kutama should be through it. Whichever of you came by that route, I would travel with him and approach my destination from his direction.”

That route was the road to Jimla, so he traveled with them.

He said to the others:

“I will visit you and come to each group among you in your respective places.”

He settled at Ikjan in the land of the Kutama, in the territory of the Banu Suktan.

Abu Umar said:

“I bought a garment from al-Zahafi and merchandise that I had purchased and carried with me to Baghdad.

“The garment was requested for a caliph who was then newly installed. I was brought into the palace to receive its price. I was taken to an elderly man of dignified appearance who was seated, with a handsome, well-presented young man sitting to his right.

“The old man bought the garment from me and ordered that its price be paid to me. Then he asked me where I was from.

“I said:

‘From the Maghrib.’

“He said:

‘Which part of the Maghrib?’

“I said:

‘From a city called Majanna.’

“He said:

‘And where are you in relation to a place called Jihal?’

“I said:

‘Is there a place called Jijal?’

“He said:

‘Have you never heard of this place?’

“I denied knowing it and said:

‘Perhaps you mean Jihan?’

“He said:

‘And is there a place called Jijan?’

“I said:

‘It is in the land of the Kutama. It is five days' journey from us.’

“He said:

‘It may have been corrupted in transmission.’

“Then he struck the young man on the shoulder and said:

‘When the one who rises emerges from this Jijan, his emergence will be the cause of the end of your dynasty, O sons of Abbas.’

“He frequently sent letters from the Abbasids to their governors in Africa, particularly toward the end of his life. In them he urged them to strengthen the frontier garrisons with horses, men, and equipment, saying:

‘The record is rolled up from its end.’

“This was in accordance with the reports they regarded as authentic concerning what would happen and concerning the end of their dynasty there.”

This, and similar reports concerning what is to come, comes only from the prophets of God, whom He informed through His knowledge of the unseen—a knowledge that He does not disclose except to those of His messengers whom He has chosen, as God Most High said.

Thus, these matters came to those to whom they came through them, peace be upon them, and were transmitted to those who related and mentioned them, in accordance with what we have already said concerning such matters and other reports having the same meaning.

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Among this same category is the report transmitted by Muhammad ibn Sallam al-Kufi, through his chain of transmission, from Abd Allah ibn al-Hasan.

During the days of the Umayyads, whenever he was alone with someone he trusted, he would tell him the secret circumstances surrounding the Umayyads and hint at rising against them.

When Abu Muslim appeared in Khurasan, however, he stopped speaking about it.

He was asked:

“Abu Muslim has now risen, calling people to support the chosen one from the family of Muhammad. He has donned black clothing and made his banners black in support of Husayn, peace be upon him. You used to speak of something like this, yet today you no longer mention it. What is the matter?”

He said:

“By God, these banners will be more harmful and more severe for you than the banners of the Umayyads. But see whether banners have appeared from the Maghrib.”

They said:

“No.”

He said:

“Then those are the banners with which relief will come. When they appear, hasten to them.”

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Yahya ibn Sallam, the author of the commentary, transmitted through his chain of transmission, attributing it to the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him, that he said:

“The sun will rise from its setting place at the head of the three-hundredth year of my Hijra.”

This is a famous report. The sun did not rise from its setting place at that time, nor before it, nor afterward. Rather, by this statement the Prophet, peace and blessings of God be upon him, meant the appearance of the Mahdi through his emergence from the Maghrib.

The Arabs say, “So-and-so has risen upon us,” and “He rose from such-and-such a place,” when someone approaches from that place.

They also call an excellent man a “sun.” The poet said:

“You are a sun, while kings are stars;
When you rise, none of them can be seen.”

God Most High called His Prophet a lamp, saying:

“Indeed, We have sent you as a witness, a bearer of good news and a warner, and as one who calls to God by His permission, and as an illuminating lamp.”[1]

God Most High also called the sun a lamp, saying:

“And He made the sun a lamp,”[2]

and He said:

“A blazing lamp,”[3]

meaning the sun.

The Mahdi is the one intended by the “sun” that the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him, said would rise from the Maghrib at the beginning of the three-hundredth year of his Hijra.

Likewise, he appeared in the year 297 AH. The “beginning of the three-hundredth” had not yet entered another decade of its count—that is, the final ten years of the three-hundreds. At that time, neither before nor after it, did any sun rise from the Maghrib, nor did any other person resembling the sun and taking its name appear.

Among such reports is what al-Fihri said about the Mahdi, peace be upon him, in a lengthy poem:

“At ninety-six, the argument and excuse were cut off,
For a matter concerning which people say:
‘The selling of pearls for dung.’

The concealed jewel became fodder of value,
An orphan who had been behind the door
Then descended upon the nest."

In the year 296 AH, Abu Abd Allah appeared over the kingdom of Ifriqiya and established the mission of the Mahdi.

People saw that those who were noble among them had become the despised, while their sovereignty had been taken from them by people possessing no share in honor—namely, the companions of Abu Abd Allah and the supporters of the state of truth.

As for the poet's words, "An orphan who had been behind the door," they refer to the Mahdi, and this was indeed the case. His father died while he was young, just as this was also the case with the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him.

This is among what we mentioned previously: that its speaker had received such information from the prophets of God Most High, concerning reports of what was to come.

Among such reports is the statement of al-Harbi, who was an old man from a village in Tunisia called A'rabi. He had become very old, and possessed reports concerning future events.

His reports reached Ibrahim ibn Ahmad al-Aghlabi, who had investigated such reports. He sought them out and lived through the days of Abu Abd Allah.

He sent a message to Abu Abd Allah while the latter was in the land of the Kutama, calling upon him to abandon what he was doing and warning him against himself.

I have already related what passed between them in *The Book of the State*.

When it became clear to him that Abu Abd Allah was the man of the matter, he turned away from opposing him. Whenever he was alone with someone he trusted and Abu Abd Allah was mentioned, he would say:

"By God, if he entered through the last gate of this city of mine, I would leave through another gate."

Footnotes

[1] Qur'an, al-Ahzab 33:45–46.

[2] Qur'an, Nuh 71:16.

[3] Qur'an, al-Naba' 78:13.

Endnotes

[i] The name of a fortified castle at the summit of Mount Sabir. It contains a spring whose water supplies several villages in Yemen. (*Mu'jam al-Buldan*, 5/90.)

[ii] One of the highland cities of Yemen, located 58 farsakhs from San'a. (*Mu'jam al-Buldan*, 2/169.)

[iii] A village beside the city of La'a, in the administrative territory of San'a. (*Mu'jam al-Buldan*, 4/89.)

Then his day came, and he departed from Ifriqiya to the land of the Byzantines, waging war. Its ruler submitted when he realized that the affair of Abu Abd Allah and his emergence over Ifriqiya had drawn near.

When the report of al-Harbi reached him, he sent for him. Al-Harbi was brought before him when he was ninety-four years old. He asked him to tell him what he knew concerning the duration of their rule and dynasty.

Al-Harbi denied having any knowledge of this and avoided speaking about it. The ruler pressed him, then assured him of his safety, swore to him that if he told him he would treat him well and that nothing would happen to him except what he desired, and threatened him with harm if he persisted in concealing the matter from him.

Al-Harbi was a poet, and he had composed a lengthy poem about this subject, known as al-Harbi's Poem. In it he alluded to what was to come without stating it explicitly, because he feared that doing so would provoke the ruler and bring harm upon him. It begins:

“I say, and I have surrendered poetry to its people,
And I have lived through an age in which it was the finest of amusements.

Is it after ninety years that I count,
And four further years following them in succession,

That I should compete with the poets in poetry, reciting verse?
God has forbidden this after He has cut off my strength.

But I hope for God's forgiveness,
With a safe return, sincere in heart and repentant.

And I hope for forgiveness through the virtue of recitation,
Which I repeat at night with a returning heart.

I have entrusted my affairs to Him whose servant I am,
To the Lord of the Throne, Giver of all that is desired.

So throughout my life I have not asked anyone of exalted rank,
Otherwise I would have cut off the joints of my right hand.

O trusted one of God, son of His trusted one,
And tenth of the masters of kings, O unconquered one!

I found a book whose age had grown old,
Transmitted by noble and worthy elders,

A narration of Wahb from Satih and Dinil,
From learned elders, truthful and false,

Seven banners follow one another from the East,
Toward the West, black and fluttering at their ends.

With eyes slanted, you see them at Khazar,
Their smiles appearing, their long moustaches hanging."

He also says in the poem:

"Twenty rulers from the sons of Abbas,
To whom, unwillingly, the lands of the West submit.

In ninety-six, a banner descends from the West,
With a multitude of dense processions.

Their army tears through the Berber lands,
With horses like migrating partridges.

And the sun of God rises from the West of His earth;
There, no repentance will be hoped for by a repentant.

Named after the Prophet of God and the son of his heir,
The noblest-born and most honored seeker.

He fills God's earth with justice and mercy,
Through days of truth, good and blessed.

And against the one-eyed Antichrist his army collapses,
Except for a group remaining upon the lofty mountain.

And after that, the son of Mary will kill him,
By the power of a Lord against whom there is no challenger.

And after that comes the death of the son of Mary,
Returning to God according to a decree of God that must be fulfilled."

Thus, he encoded the matter in the poem, obscured its meanings, and made his words poetry so that they could bear omission and ambiguity.

As for his statement, "I have surrendered poetry to its people," he means: "I abandoned the composition of poetry," meaning that he had done so before this.

The word *qarid* in the language means composing and reciting poetry. One says of a person, "He *yaqrid al-shi'r*," meaning that he composes poetry. *Qarid* is also the noun for this, as in a poem.

Rawatib means "standing upright." One says, "A man *rataba*," when he rises and stands upright.

As for his statement, “After He has cut off my *ghارب*,” *jabb* means removing entirely something that is cut from a hump or something similar. It is said: “He *jabb* it,” and “it is *majbur*,” meaning that he completely cut it.

The *gh ارب*is the upper part of the back and the top of the hump. It is also called the *ghارب*. Hence the expression, “Your rope is upon your *ghارب*,” comparing a person to a camel that has its reins thrown over its back and remains there.

When a camel's hump is cut off, it becomes weak. Thus the poet compared the weakness brought about by old age to a camel whose hump had been cut away.

Awbah means returning—that is, returning to God through repentance. *A'ib* means one who returns.

As for his statement, “Otherwise I would have cut off the *rawajib* of my right hand”: *jabb*, as we have explained, means cutting off and completely removing.

Rawajib is the plural of *rajiba*. The *rajiba* is the area between the joints of the fingers, between the small bones and joints. It is also used for the prominent part between the cheeks of the legs. The poet means that otherwise he would cut his fingers at those joints, swearing by this.

“Slanted eyes” (*khizr al-'uyun*): *khazar* in the eye means that the pupil turns toward the outer corner of the eye, which is an unattractive condition. It is said that a person does this when looking sideways.

The rajaz poet said:

“I made my eyes slant, and there was nothing in that slant;
Then I narrowed the eye without being one-eyed.”

He is describing them as angry. It is also said of a man with long fingers that he has “spread-out fingers.”

Kathif comes from *kathafa*, meaning abundance and things being closely packed together. The verb is *kathufa*, “to become dense.” *Kathif* is a noun meaning numerous or dense, and can describe an army, clouds, or water.

Mawakib is the plural of *mawkib*, meaning a gathering of horsemen or a large mounted procession.

Jamm means “many” or “a great multitude.”

Taud means a lofty, prominent mountain.

Rātib means “standing” or “stationary.”

This explains the unusual words occurring in these verses. As for their meanings and what was intended by them:

His statement, “Seven banners follow one another from the East,” refers to the banners that entered Ifriqiya from the land of the Maghrib.

It has been said that there must be an eighth banner that enters and conquers the Maghrib. This will be for the allies of God when they possess the East and send it forth from there, God willing.

His statement, “In ninety-six,” means what we mentioned previously: that this occurred in the year 296 AH, namely, Abu Abd Allah's conquest of Ifriqiya and the removal of the Abbasid dynasty from it.

His statement, “And the sun of God rises from the West of His earth,” has already been explained above.

As for his statement, “Against the one-eyed Antichrist his army collapses”: the one-eyed Antichrist is the unmistakably one-eyed, accursed, long-lived figure. He shattered the forces of God through his falsehood, and none remained of them except those who took refuge on the White Mountain at Mahdiyya.

Those who lived there fled to them from the surrounding regions of Ifriqiya.

His statement, “And after that the son of Mary will kill him,” means al-Mansur. Some reports say: “Al-Mansur will kill him, and he is the son of Mary.”

In this same sense Ibn A'qab said in verse:

“I said, when sleep had fled from me:
‘When will this night ever become morning?’

Grief tormented me, and the loss of sleep;
Both of them have sworn never to depart.

How could one who sees no relief from what he witnesses
Not grieve, O Musattah?

For an age in which the Imam of guidance is seen,
Opening his power through righteousness,

Building the White City in a green expanse,
In which its creature swims,

Whose inhabitants escape from terrors,
And from it the whole earth is opened.

Had my life been extended to his lifetime,
I would have been in the generation that prospers.

Alas! What is life compared with what I see,
When death allows me to witness it?”

Karā means sleep.

By “the White City” he meant the city of Mahdiyya.[i]

As for his statement, “Its inhabitants escape from terrors,” they likewise escaped from the terrors of the trial of the Antichrist Mukhalid.

Among these reports is also what Ibn A'qab said in verse:

“Hear the truth and abandon playfulness,
And here is a truthful statement that was deemed false.

In ninety-six, the wonder will come to you,
After the completion of two hundred, in Rajab.

An army with a mighty roar emerges from Jihal,
More powerful than embers when the fire blazes.

Berbers come from every direction,
Mounted and on foot, never tiring of hardship.

They have filled the East with fear and terror,
And brought humiliation and distress upon the West.

When you see the long-tailed star,
Then an obvious event has drawn near.

Ninety thousand between its head and tail,
Their mark being hatred and the display of anger.

The rider strengthens it among the caravan,
Led by an elderly man of great knowledge of books.

He takes refuge in prudence when the mountain trembles,
And derives knowledge of distant matters from books.

The dynasty is overturned in the midst of its overturning,
And Mahdiyya awaits the arrival of the books,

From Daniel and Satih,
For the Arabs.”

As for the expression “the army with a mighty roar”: *lajab* means the noise of an army.

Hadab means a raised portion of land.

Kutub means nearness or approach.

His statement, “In ninety-six after two hundred,” was fulfilled in this way: Abu Abd Allah entered Ifriqiya and removed the rule of the Aghlabids from it in the year 296 AH, in Rajab.

Likewise, fear of him entered the people of the East. He removed the enemies of God Most High from the Maghrib.

His army was likewise predominantly Berber, with groups from Quraysh and the Arabs among them, consisting of people from the cities he had previously conquered.

Abu Abd Allah was likewise, at that time, a knowledgeable man learned in books and skilled in political affairs.

The dynasty likewise passed through him to the Mahdi.

Of all the reports we have heard concerning this matter, we know of none more accurate in meaning than this poetry.

Abu al-Yusr Ibrahim ibn Muhammad al-Shaybani[ii] recited this poetry to Abu Abd Allah when he arrived in Ifriqiya, in the presence of the leading people of Qayrawan.

Abu Abdun the judge said:

“We have never heard anything concerning future events more accurate than this poetry.”

Ibrahim ibn Ahmad had previously become angry with the people of Balzama over something they had done, but he was unable to overcome them.

He therefore dealt with them subtly. He displayed kindness and generosity toward those who came to him, granted them estates, increased their stipends, and showed them favor.

A group of them came to him. He lodged them in Rafada, in a place where he had built a wall and installed gates around them.

When enough of them had gathered with him that he believed no others would come, he attacked them one night and killed them all.

At that time there was a Shi'a man in Balzama named Muhammad ibn Ramadan, from Nafuta, one of the cities of Constantine. He was a poet.

He had received some knowledge concerning future events and used to speak of the end of the Aghlabid dynasty. He described the Mahdi and mentioned the nearness of his appearance.

This information reached Ibrahim ibn Ahmad, who ordered that Muhammad be sought.

When Muhammad learned of this, he fled to Balzama and praised its leaders. They gave him refuge and protected him.

When Ibrahim ibn Ahmad carried out his massacre against those whom he killed and the news reached Muhammad, he composed these verses:

“Great indeed is the calamity, if what they have reported
Is among the news and reports that have reached us:

That a thousand brave men, like lions, were killed
In a single hour of the dark night, when they betrayed them.

If they had been from the house of lions,
Their awakening would have prevented such misfortune and calamity.

Tell Ibn Ahmad, Ibrahim, its ruler,
From one knowledgeable about what comes and what does not,

About the one exiled because of his love for the Imams
From the family of the Prophet, the best of mankind when they are mentioned:

Know that the worst of people are those whose hands are longest in treachery,
Plotting against others whenever they gain power,

Especially against the guest, the near neighbor,
And those to whom they previously granted protection, only to violate it.

What excuse will you offer for the shame and disgrace
You deliberately committed, if an apologist should rise?

You made your guest drink a cup
From which you yourself will drink shortly, while God's command awaits.

The days of the state of the Qa'im, the Mahdi, have drawn near,
As the reports have foretold.

From the Prophet, and in it is the end of your period,
O Aghlabids, people of treachery.

So restrain yourselves; the affair of the Abbasids after you will be cut off,
And the affair of the Marwanids will be cut off, when they became arrogant."

Malika means "the message."

Azifat means "has drawn near."

He was reporting the nearness of the Mahdi's rising, and it happened as he said. He lived to witness his rising and his days, and the Mahdi appointed him as judge over the region in which he lived. He died during the Mahdi's lifetime, having nearly reached one hundred years of age.

Among what he had said earlier concerning the appearance of the Mahdi was this verse in a poem:

"It is as though I see the sun of the earth already risen for us
From the West, with its crescent joined to it.

He fills God's earth with equity through his justice,
Over its plains and mountains alike,

When what I fear and guard against becomes secure,
Then I attain through him nearness, and I am one who seeks it."

He said:

"'The sun of the earth' means the Mahdi, according to the explanation we have already given and according to the reports concerning this matter.

"As for his statement, 'with its crescent joined to it,' the crescent he mentioned is his successor, the Qa'im after him.

"We do not know of anyone before him who mentioned such a thing and subsequently lived to see what he had said concerning his Imamate and attained the nearness to him that he described."

We were also informed of this by some of the African elders whom we encountered, men who had accompanied the Aghlabid rulers and their relatives. Shi'ism was predominant among them.

Among them was an Aghlabid man named Ya'qub ibn al-Masa. One of those who knew him and shared his Shi'a sympathies informed us that he had an estate on the coast, near an island on which cities were later built.

Whenever he went to his estate, he would visit this island, pray there, walk around it, and look at it. He would say:

"By God, this is the description of the island which is said to be the place where the Mahdi will build Mahdiyya."

He added:

"I know of no place on the African coast where the Mahdi is said to build a city that more closely resembles the description than this island."

Ibn Ahmad, known as al-Hulwani, had frequently visited the fortified frontier stations along the coast from his youth, for the purpose of guarding them and remaining stationed there.

Later he fortified al-Mufassar among them, and his reputation became well known. He was placed in command there.

He used to relate that he once came to the palace of Jumma, which was near the island upon which Mahdiyya was built.

He said:

"This palace had a virtuous and devout man named Sulayman al-Ghalfani. I used to visit him seeking blessing through him.

"Once we came to him and stayed at the palace of Jumma, visiting him repeatedly.

“The island upon which Mahdiyya was built was near this palace. The Byzantines would land there in their raids, conceal themselves, and seize whatever people and property they could.

“When the frontier guards assembled at the palace of Jumma to march with their equipment along the seacoast, they would enter this island and inspect it to make certain that none of the enemy was there.

“Once we entered it with al-Ghalfani and searched it, but found no one there.

“Then we went with al-Ghalfani to a cave that was there, at the place where the Mahdi later built his palace. We searched it but found no one inside.

“We left the cave, and al-Ghalfani prayed several units of prayer beside it. We prayed with him.

“Then he sat and spoke to us. Among what he said was:

‘God Most High will cause this place to become known through the most beloved of His creation to Him.’”

This is among what had reached him according to what we mentioned earlier. It came from what had reached us of the glad tidings given by the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him, concerning the Mahdi and the Imams from his descendants, and concerning what would occur through them.

The prophets had likewise given glad tidings concerning him, peace and blessings of God be upon him, before his mission began.

Reports concerning him likewise came from those who possessed the most ancient forms of knowledge. Such reports also appear in poetry, as in the verses attributed to Umayya ibn Abi al-Salt, Waraqa ibn Nawfal, Zayd ibn Amr, As'ad ibn Abi Karb, Sayf ibn Dhi Yazan, Quss ibn Sa'ida, Khalid ibn Sinan, and others.

Among the matters concerning the Mahdi and the Imams from his descendants, peace and blessings of God be upon them, were the visible proofs and signs demonstrating their Imamate, in addition to what we have already mentioned concerning the Mahdi's departure from his homeland to the Maghrib during his Hijra, and the protection God Most High afforded him and the plots of the oppressors that He diverted from him.

They had exerted every possible effort to find him. Messengers were sent ahead of him, carrying his description and information about him to all their governors, ordering them to seize him.

Yet God Most High blinded their eyes to him, protected him, and preserved him until he reached the city of Sijilmasa.

Whenever he arrived in a town, he would bestow favor upon its governor. The governor would receive him and give him gifts. Some did not recognize him and honored him for that

reason. Some recognized him but refrained from interfering with him because of what they had heard about him. Others recognized him and were warned by that knowledge.

Their reports concerning this are lengthy.

All of this occurred because of what God Most High cast into their hearts concerning him.

When he reached Sijilmasa, its governor, Ibn Midrar, who was its ruler, treated him in this way. He singled him out for special attention, honored him, and recognized his rights.

This continued until messengers from the ruler of Baghdad and from the ruler of Ifriqiya reached him, and reports arrived from many directions informing him that this was the man for whom Abu Abd Allah was calling.

He was ordered to seize him and warned not to let him escape or to show leniency concerning him.

He questioned the Mahdi about himself, and the Mahdi told him that he was a direct descendant of Husayn, peace be upon him.

He said:

“Why did you not tell us this before?”

The Mahdi replied:

“I had no need to mention it. I mentioned it when you asked me about it. When you asked me, I had no way to deny my lineage or conceal it from you, so I informed you of what you had asked.”

He said to him:

“This man is said to be in the land of the Kutama and has taken control of parts of Ifriqiya. He is calling people to you.”

The Mahdi said:

“I have not seen the man, nor do I know him.”

And this was indeed the case: he did not know him, as we have related previously.

He said:

“But it has reached me that he is calling people to a Mahdi from the family of Muhammad.”

The governor said:

“He has seized Ifriqiya and is approaching with his armies. He is calling only to you.”

The Mahdi replied:

“There are many people of noble lineage in the Maghrib. If he is calling to me, that will benefit you through him and will not harm you. If he is calling to someone else, I have no authority in the matter.”

Thus the wretched man deprived himself of the opportunity. His misfortune overcame him. He seized the Mahdi, placed guards over him, isolated him, and openly showed hostility toward him.

Abu Abd Allah fled from him and wrote to him courteously, explaining that he had come for him and asking him not to harm him, promising him good treatment.

Ibn Midrar killed Abu Abd Allah's messengers, tore up his letter, and displayed anger and indignation at what had been written to him.

Yet God restrained his hand from the Mahdi and limited his ability to harm him, until Abu Abd Allah reached Sijilmasa, came against him with his forces, and fought him.

Abu Abd Allah defeated him, and Ibn Midrar fled. He was captured and brought back after the Mahdi had departed and his supporters had met him.

Abu Abd Allah ordered that the wicked Ibn Midrar be killed.

He had previously restrained his hand from harming the Mahdi while the Mahdi was in his possession, yet he persisted in opposing him because of his wretchedness.

This became a sign of admonition and a proof concerning the Mahdi.

Abu Abd Allah used to say to his companions who had responded to his mission:

“God will protect the Mahdi, preserve him, and repel harm from him until he appears and his victory is strengthened.”

When they witnessed this, their insight became stronger and their intentions became sincere.

Abu al-Abbas, the brother of Abu Abd Allah, was older than him and had long been especially close to him in allegiance. He had traveled with the Mahdi until they reached Tripoli.

The Mahdi then sent him ahead to his brother while the Mahdi was in the land of the Kutama.

The Mahdi intended to go toward Abu Abd Allah and wanted to inform him of this. Abu al-Abbas therefore appeared in Qayrawan.

The authorities learned that he was Abu Abd Allah's brother and that he had arrived with the Mahdi. They punished him for this and sent him toward the region of Constantine.

The Mahdi did not think it safe to go to Abu Abd Allah, fearing that Abu al-Abbas's true circumstances might be discovered and that he would be killed.

He therefore forced himself to endure the difficulty and traveled to Sijilmasa, writing to Abu Abd Allah about this.

Abu al-Abbas had poor conduct.

When Madlaj rebelled against Ziyadat Allah, the prisoners came out, and Abu al-Abbas was among those who left. He headed back toward the East.

Ziyadat Allah caught up with him at Tripoli while he was fleeing and arrested him, but later released him.

When Abu al-Abbas joined Abu Abd Allah, he became hypocritical and corrupted the men of the state after the Mahdi had arrived in Ifriqiya.

He whispered to his brother Abu Abd Allah and corrupted him. He wanted all authority to command and prohibit, to issue orders and receive matters, to belong to the two brothers rather than to the Mahdi, with the Mahdi becoming like a person under their guardianship.

Abu Abd Allah had previously accustomed the elders of the Mayamiyun to managing the affairs of their tribes themselves, with the wealth that God had granted to His ally placed in their hands.

When the Mahdi arrived, he took possession of that wealth, and it came under his authority. He alone assumed the command, just as God had made it his alone.

Abu al-Abbas deprived the elders of this position and confused them about the matter. He persuaded most of them to join him and made an agreement with them to rise against the Mahdi, just as the hypocrites before them had agreed to rise against the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him.

Every time they made an agreement, it came undone in their hands.

Every time they established a plan, God caused it to collapse upon them.

When they entered his presence to address him concerning what they had agreed upon and to rise against him, they were rendered speechless concerning what they intended to say, and their hands were restrained from harming him.

He knew what they were plotting, yet this neither frightened him nor altered his conduct.

They would enter his presence carrying weapons, but he neither barred them nor went beyond what he allowed them.

Only a few remained faithful to the pledges they had made to him, until God scattered their affair and destroyed them.

Some were killed. Others fled from his door and went to the land of the Kutama.

They remained there, and the worst of their men began calling people to their cause.

They intensified their mission and permitted forbidden things within it, committing grave acts.

The Mahdi sent his heir apparent against them. He destroyed their gathering, killed their men, and captured many of them.

Most of them repented, so he pardoned them and restored their affairs.

There occurred in this matter signs, proofs, miracles, and reports whose explanation would be lengthy and whose full enumeration would exceed the scope of this book.

As for those who rose against him and against the Imams among his descendants, and those who rebelled against them as dissidents, and the proofs that appeared for them in those events as well, mentioning them would interrupt the expansion of this book and take it beyond its intended scope.

The greatest of these matters was what occurred during the trial of the accursed Antichrist Mukhalid in the days of the Qa'im and al-Mansur, and of al-Mu'izz, peace and blessings of God be upon them, when he arose after them.

We have set out at length the reports concerning the trial of the accursed Antichrist Mukhalid, together with the signs, proofs, and miracles that occurred during it for the Qa'im and al-Mansur, peace and blessings of God be upon them, in a large and substantial book in which we recorded everything that happened during that affair.

We also composed a separate book detailing the career of al-Mu'izz up to the point at which the matter came to him.

Among what God singled him out for and favored him with, and among the clear proofs and evident signs belonging to him, even a small portion of which is sufficient for people of understanding and for those whom God has guided to the truth and enabled to attain what is correct, are these matters.

We have deliberately composed this book in a concise form, limiting ourselves to the outstanding reports.

Although it has become lengthy, and although we have abridged it and omitted much that ought to have been mentioned, we omitted it because of the great abundance of the virtues of the allies of God whom we intended to discuss, and because of the many gifts God Most High bestowed upon them and singled them out with.

God will connect this with further increase for them from His grace, as He promised them; and God does not break His promise.

End of Part Fifteen of *Sharh al-Akhbar fi Fada'il al-A'imma al-Athar*

By the composition of our master, al-Qadi al-Nu'man ibn Muhammad.

May God sanctify his spirit and grant him His favor.

Endnotes

[i] It lies seventy miles south of Qayrawan and is surrounded by the sea on three sides.

[ii] Al-Baghdadi by origin. He was born in 223 AH and settled in Qayrawan, where he became head of the chancery (*Diwan al-Insha'*) first under the Aghlabids and later under the Fatimids, until his death in 298 AH.