

Lubbul Maarif The Essence of the Knowledge

Sayyidnā ‘Alī ibn Ḥanzala, 6th dai

In the name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate

Praise be to God, the One who illuminates the truth by the imams of the ages, who saves by their loyalty from destruction and ruin, who guides through them from the darkness of doubts to the light of illuminations. And blessings be upon the orb of encompassing religion, the recipient by His subtle and luminous grace of the benefits of the pure world — Muhammad, the shining sun of God’s religion, the source of the radiant truths — and upon His successor, the breaker of the crowds and armies, who issues from between his jaws the brilliant sciences and wonders, the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib; upon the imams from his pure, guiding progeny, whose guardianship is mandated over all people of the East and West. And upon the green, fragrant branches, the most special of the radiant stars, the closest in existence and being, our master and lord, the Imam al-Ṭayyib Abū al-Qāsim, Commander of the Faithful, the Proof of God upon all creation.

As for what follows:

O fortunate brother, may God make your beginnings and ends happy and grant you the fulfillment of righteous hopes and aims. Your letter has arrived, your causes connected to goodness. In it, you mentioned some questions asked by Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ḥuḍayfī — may God forgive his slip and envelop him in His vast mercy by His generosity and will. And you did not find answers for them nor reach the proper understanding. You sought my response regarding their content, to unveil the earliest meanings and assist you. I hastened to answer you, aiming for your purpose and seeking to increase your insight and guidance. Though I may fall short compared to the great authors and consider myself lesser in composition and classification, because of my duty toward you and your generous gifts, I speak freely, relying on God, the Glorious and Trustee on His earth.

I composed this in a treatise titled The Kernel of the Knowledges and the Essence of the Subtleties. Whatever it contains of correctness is from the grace of my Patron; whatever errors, God forbid, are from my shortcomings and deficiencies. It is divided into seven chapters on seven questions.

First Question

It concerns what our master, the authorized virtuous one, perceives about the advent of the Qa’im (peace be upon him) in the world of nature. Whether his coming will be by renewing his grandfather’s law and reviving its rituals, or whether his coming will be purely with the inner essence of the laws, without the external forms, thereby nullifying the outward acts of

worship — prayer, almsgiving, fasting, pilgrimage, jihad, and all other acts of the law. And after his pure soul passes away (peace be upon him), will those in his era act by the outward law, since his era is the longest era, as God says of a day whose measure is fifty thousand years? Or will they act purely by the inner meaning without the outward? And will the acts of the law be nullified after his departure from the physical world?

The consensus among scholars is that the First Intellect and the intellects that emanated from it, which are active intellects, constitute the First End; the Qa'im is the Second End. The First Intellect holds the honor of primacy, and the Qa'im holds the honor of the second end, being the second end corresponding to the first end. If this is so, then nothing that comes after it can bear the name of existence, since an end is the ultimate limit. If there is existence after the Qa'im (peace be upon him), in the form of natural creatures such as minerals, plants, and animals — of which humans are a kind — then the Qa'im cannot be called the "end," nor deserves that rank. Instead, after him comes one who deserves the rank of the second end. Also, nothing before the First Creator can bear the name of the first except itself. If anything else preceded it in existence, it would be more worthy of the rank of unity and first end. Likewise, if the Qa'im is the second end, nothing after him can bear the name of existence, because if something exists after him, then he would not be the second end, and what comes after would be more worthy of that rank.

If the natural world with its stars, planets, elements, and creatures has no end at which it stops, and is eternal without limit, and these beings born of fathers and mothers remain forever, then the Qa'im cannot be called the end, because after the period of unveiling, the period of concealment appears; after the period of concealment, the period of unveiling appears; and thus according to this order, there are the Qa'im and twenty thousand Qa'ims after him — endless in number. How then can each be called the second end, and yet after each there is one more worthy of it? Moreover, the first precedes the last, so how can existence be after the second end but not before the first end? What is the difference between the two, given they are both ends? This is the text of the question.

Answer:

By the help of God, His grace, and the assistance of His trustee on earth, we say that the Qa'im appears in the world of nature by manifesting the comprehensive interpretation and the true unveiling. As God says, "Do they not await its interpretation? On the day its interpretation comes, those who forgot it before will say, 'The messengers of our Lord have come with the truth.'" This applies to those who deny the interpretation and refuse it at his appearance and disclosure. The Qa'im (peace be upon him) abrogates the law of the Prophet (peace be upon him) concerning legal prescriptions such as prayer, almsgiving, fasting, pilgrimage, and jihad, because his people are pure and do not need those acts for their purity. What remains are the rational ordinances by which the world is maintained and built.

Our master Ḥumayd al-Dīn (may God exalt his sanctity) clarified this in the ninth chapter of the book *al-Riyāḍ*, saying that the regulations that were before Adam and continue after the Qa'im include drawing near to God, laws of retaliation and justice among souls and persons, marriage contracts, distribution of wealth such as inheritance, laws concerning the concealment of the dead, reclaiming rights and returning them to their owners. The work of his era is by pure interpretation and the true sciences revealed from symbols and allegories which were observed in the era of concealment. This period lasts fifty thousand years, after which the cycle returns to what it was in the era of concealment.

Regarding the consensus of scholars that the First Intellect and what emanated from it are the First End, and the Qa'im is the Second End: the scholars' words, may God elevate their ranks, differ slightly from what was mentioned. Our master Ḥumayd al-Dīn (may God exalt his sanctity) said the First End is the intellect itself, not what emanated from it, thus granting it the honor of primacy because it precedes what precedes it and holds the rank of the number one. The Qa'im is the last end, holding the last rank in the numbers, which is a thousand. This was demonstrated and clarified in the book *Rāḥat al-ʿAql*. By this correspondence, the First Intellect is rightly the First End since it holds the rank of one, and nothing can precede it except its creator, who is beyond the numbers. Since the rank of a thousand is the last rank in numbers, the Qa'im is the second end. What follows it is repetition, hence the repetition of Qa'ims is permitted, but no rank can precede the First Intellect except its creator, and no rank can precede the one except the well-ordered number that precedes it.

This is an evident fact in the earliest intellects, undeniable. This is what Ḥumayd al-Dīn explained in *Rāḥat al-ʿAql*.

As for the reality, not by correspondence, the First End is the creator of the primordial body (*al-juththa al-ibdāʿiyya*) which was first extracted, and it was the ultimate effect of the agent directing it — the world of nature — until it was completed. It was the actual end of his act, for the name "end" is derived from the act. The First Intellect has no such derivation, know this. The Qa'im is the second end of that first end. If he succeeds it in managing the world of nature, he is the first end of what follows him, and the Qa'im who extracts it has the second end.

Accordingly, by proportions and additions until the world becomes purified, as in the ranks of numbers, every rank is the first of what follows — units followed by tens — and so on for all numbers by proportions and extensions.

The First Intellect, which is the First Creator, is not properly called the end except metaphorically, as it has no peer in its rank. The Qa'im is the second emanation. If he were like the first in all his states, there would be no difference between creation and emanation,

which contradicts the doctrine of the Da‘wa and what Ḥumayd al-Dīn presented in Rāḥat al-‘Aql regarding the proofs of the manner of creation differing from that of emanation.

As for whether the natural world with its stars, planets, elements, and creatures has no end: know that everything with a beginning must have an end, however long.

Regarding how existence after the second end is possible but not before the first end, and what the difference is: the first end is like the number one in numbers, which nothing like it precedes, and the second end is like a thousand, the last rank in numbers, and repetition continues endlessly after it. This suffices and is convincing, know this.

The Second Question

Regarding the hyle (prime matter) and form, and their existence emanating from the First Intellect by the lower ratio; and the origination of the spheres, planets, and elements from them. Also, whether they have remained until now as they were at the time of their emanation from the First Intellect, or whether they have transformed into spheres, planets, and elements. If they have transformed from what they were at the time of emanation, then it is impossible to call the form among them the Tenth Intellect of the Intellects. It is also impossible for transformation to occur in the realm of intellect, since it has been granted its perfection and completeness at its first existence. But if it has not transformed, then why were they not spheres, planets, and elements at the time of emanation from the First Intellect by the lower ratio? And where is the center of the form among them?

If it is said: the Sun, and that it is like the heart of the small world which is man, then what is the cause of its constant, uninterrupted movement? This small world sometimes moves and sometimes is at rest. The scholars say that one infers what is in the greater world by what is in the smaller world, but this is contradictory to that, for human movement is voluntary, while the movement of the spheres is contrary to that; humans sometimes move and sometimes rest, but the spheres continuously move without ceasing. Therefore, it is contradictory.

If it is said: its movement is glorification and praise of its Creator, exalted beyond all attributes, then it would have glorified God and sanctified Him by negating the attributes in itself and in the celestial intellects that preceded it in existence, and it would be independent of movement in its subject, which is the body and the entire greater world.

Does it have knowledge of what has originated from it among the offspring, and how a father can be ignorant of his child? Is it aware that it is the cause of the existence of the natural offspring such as minerals, plants, and animals, or is it only necessary for it to know itself and the things that preceded it in existence? If it knows what is below it and what originated from it, this is a low intention by which no perfection is attained, and its intention is the most noble. It is impossible that it must know what is below it because that does not grant it perfection, and it is already perfect. If it is only necessary for it to know itself and the things

that preceded it in existence from the intellects, then why is it incumbent upon the rational being, peace be upon him, who stands in the religion like the First Intellect in the realm of creation, like the hyle and form in the realm of the body, to strive and turn attention to what is below him while that is not necessary for him? He only needs to know the limits in the realm of intellect, and that he is the final intellect of the natural world. How then was he obligated to turn attention to what is below him and to manifest his law? How could God command him something not incumbent on him or necessary? God only commands what is obligatory, and he is devoted only by knowing the intellects. Not every limit among limits is required to know what is below it, but rather what is above it. The rational being is not required to turn attention to what is below him; he knows he is the cause for what is below him among the limits, whose first is the Gate (al-Bāb) and whose last is the Mādhoon (licensed one). What is the truth about this?

The Answer:

We say, with God's help, substance, and support, and from Him the Guardian on His earth and the bestower, that the question about the hyle and form and their existence from the First Intellect by the lower ratio is a general statement. We clarify the reality of its detail, and say that their existence from it indicates the second existence.

This means that if it were not for what proceeded from Him, namely the matter and consideration of what is below the creative intellects until it reached the Tenth Intellect, the Governor of the natural world, and with that matter and that consideration the hyle and form attained true existence — which is what becomes refined from it and ascends after the divine attentions, returning to its original subtlety, and stripping off what was imposed upon it of impurity and density — after it was freed from what it fell into, it returns not to its Lord but remains.

As for the phrase "by the lower ratio," that is a metaphor for the hyle and form's deficiency in responding and recognizing the virtue of what preceded them. They fell from the rank of the celestial intellects connected to the First Intellect by the nobler ratio of receiving the overflow of its matter and preceded it to His intention, and the hyle and form degraded due to their deficiency. This is the reality of the two ratios, the nobler and the lower; know this.

As for whether the hyle and form were spheres and planets at the time of emanation and have remained in their original state or have transformed — know that the existence of the created beings of the world of creation occurred simultaneously, with no precedence of one over another. This has been proven by our Master Hamid al-Din Qas in his book *Rahat al-'Aql*, where he likened it to the bud, pomegranate flower, and pomegranate fruit entering the dark house simultaneously, and also like light entering a dark house all at once.

But what happened to the hyle and form is what we mentioned of their deficiency; they transformed due to their falling short from the rank of the celestial intellects, which were created as living beings with power, capacity, and primordial knowledge. When they fell short of the ranks of the celestial intellects, they became ready for transformation from their original state, which was life possessing power, ability, and primordial knowledge.

They were called the first dark hyle because of their lack of knowledge and the introduction of the indefinite into themselves due to their deficiency and denial of the rank of what preceded them. Because they came from that creative existence, which is a characteristic shared with the celestial intellects, the latter inclined towards them with their lights to purify them from the fault, deficiency, and shortcoming they had fallen into. They made some of them active instruments, and some receptive mothers capable of generating offspring, ending with man, who is the goal of the offspring, seeking from that true human being who is the end of the action of nature and the ultimate purpose of the Creator.

As our Master Hamid al-Din, may God sanctify him, said in *Rahat al-'Aql*, the realm of the First Intellect and the first emanation inclined towards the hyle and form with its lights. Among them are those that are active like the spheres, which are the fathers, and those that are receptive like the elements, which are the mothers. The result was the offspring. Divine care established for the soul causes by which it ascends to the rank of intellects, and these causes are the limits that attract it to what it should attain of ranks. Know this.

As for whether the hyle and form have transformed into spheres and planets, if they did transform from their state at emanation, then it is impossible to call the form among them the Tenth Intellect of the intellects, and transformation cannot enter the realm of intellect because it was given its perfection and completeness at first existence.

Know that their transformation from what they were was by the will of the Governor, so that the corruption of their first state would be a cause for their reform, elevation, and purification from what they were polluted with from the elements, just as the corruption of seeds when sown causes their sprouting and reform.

As for the statement that it is impossible to call the form the Tenth Intellect, if by "form" he means the companion of the hyle, one of the two parts of the body, it is impossible to call it the Tenth Intellect except metaphorically by power, because in its power there is the possibility of an intellect from the intellects of the natural world emerging from it resembling the intellects of the realm of creation.

As for the form truly meant by the Tenth Intellect, it is the form of the whole world and its essence extracted from it, referred to as the Second Emanation, parallel to the First

Emanation, which is present at the end of time — peace be upon his mention — and it is truly the Tenth Intellect, known only to the knowing ones.

As for the question about the center of the form, if he means one of the two parts of the body, it is the life widespread in its hyle; it is truly the form that moves it to what it should reach, and it is that creative ferment. Its center in every existing thing is according to the preparation and rank of that thing. It is widespread and latent in the fathers and mothers, and varies in the offspring. When the state reaches the animal, the last of the offspring, its center is the heart, the origin of life and movement, as the questioner mentioned about the sun in the sphere which is its heart. But the entire sphere does not perceive or feel, as it is like a sleeper; rather, the origin of the effective movement is from the planets by the influence of the sun as part of the action of the Governor of all, not that the spheres themselves perceive or think. They are perfect instruments for a living, capable agent. Know this.

As for why the movement of the spheres is not like the movement of the small world, which sometimes moves and sometimes rests, know that the small world is a part of the greater world, and whatever occurs in the part occurs in the whole more so, and its duration is longer. Therefore, the movement of the greater world is slow to cease, and it must have rest and pause when the spheres' bonds loosen, as the deeply knowledgeable know. But according to the majesty of its Governor and the precision of its structure, the occurrence of rest after movement is slow. Know this.

As for the statement that human movement is voluntary and the movement of the spheres is the opposite, know that the mover of the spheres is chosen, capable, and wise, and the spheres themselves in their movement are not chosen, just as the human soul's movement of its body is voluntary, but the body's movement is not voluntary but compelled by the soul that moves it. Know this.

As for if it is said: their movement is glorification and praise of their Creator, know that the glorifier and praiser must be a living, rational, worshiping being. The spheres, as we said, are not rational or knowing; they are like a sleeper who does not perceive or know. The praiser and glorifier is the active agent moving them with glorification and praise of their Creator, thanking Him for the favors bestowed.

As for the phrase "it glorified and sanctified by negating the attributes in itself and in the celestial intellects that preceded it in existence and is independent of this movement in its subject, which is the body," know that if it did so like others, it would be humbled and not transformed from its state. But because of its deficiency in the action of its predecessor, it fell into what it fell into. Know this.

As for whether it knows what offspring have originated from it, it has already been stated that it is devoid of knowledge. How can an instrument know what its maker has done with it? Only the maker knows that through it.

As for how a father can be ignorant of his child, know that the father, when purified and refined from the realm of nature, is the mover and governor of the world. His child is truly the perfect child for whom he moved and governed; that child is the absolute human mentioned earlier. Know this.

As for why it is incumbent on the rational being, who stands in the world of religion in the rank of intellect in the world of creation, to strive and turn attention to what is below him while that is not necessary for him and he only needs to know the limits in the realm of intellect — know that the rational being's honor and perfection is, as mentioned, by knowing the intellects that preceded him in existence. But when he is perfected and receives the overflow of the realm of holiness, he inclines by the virtue of that matter and the nobility of the rank to the message of his Lord, moving with the movement of thanks to his Benefactor.

He moves in the world of religion, and the effect upon him is the dryness of that matter and that overflow, which precedes him in purity and readiness. It is from that that he thanks the Bestower and inclines with compassion and mercy toward those below him, as God said: "And We have not sent you except as a mercy to the worlds."

Third Question

About the saying of God Almighty:

"They will come out of the graves as if they were locusts spreading" (Quranic imagery).

If this verse is taken literally, the belief becomes flawed and misguided, because reward and punishment apply to the soul, not the body. The body serves as an instrument or vehicle for the soul. If the "graves" are understood as bodies, and their emergence is like locusts spreading, then their emergence cannot be in a single state but rather in varying states and different conditions. If it were true that they emerge from the graves in one state, then the simile with locusts in their multitude would be correct.

Answer:

By God's help, and the grace and support of His Guardian in His land, this verse alludes to what happens at the time of the appearance of the Qa'im (the Resurrector) and the gathering of creation to him, as God said:

"Say: The former and the latter generations will all be gathered to a known Day appointed."

The "graves" here signify their emergence like scattered locusts—meaning the dispersal and fleeing of the opponents from their teachers and leaders when the blast (the trumpet) sounds, filled with terror and dread. Their flight from them and their turning to the presence

of the Qa'im for judgment is likened in the simile to the multitude and speed of locusts spreading.

The Prophet used a metonymy of "two graves":
either a garden from the gardens of Paradise or a pit from the pits of Hellfire.

Regarding this, our master the supported one, the Qasim, explained that the "two graves" mean souls that, if righteous, are in a garden of Paradise, and if wicked, are in a pit of Hellfire.

As for the claim that reward and punishment are only for souls and not bodies, bodies must also be subject to reward and punishment corresponding to their nature, since they share in the souls' deeds of good and evil. This is mentioned in al-Jami'a and other treatises. Know this.

Fourth Question

Regarding the statement of our master the judge al-Nu'man ibn Muhammad Qasim about our master al-Mu'izz in the Book of Councils and Journeys:

"If these heavens and earth are perishable, what then about what is beneath them?"

It has been established that these heavens and earth are not perishable, because corruption does not come to them from within since they are unlike other composite bodies that receive changes in their mixture due to the increase of some humors over others. Nor does corruption come to them from outside, since they govern all bodies beneath them and are not governed by anything. Hence, it is correct that they are imperishable.

Similarly, the religious heavens and earth are imperishable and are even more deserving of being everlasting. If the reference is to the bodies of the religious heavens and earth, then this attribute does not apply to those bodies. So what is the wisdom behind this?

Answer:

By God's help and the support of His Guardian in His land, the statement that the heavens and earth are imperishable is a view that approaches the philosophy of the eternalists (Dahriyyah) and requires the bodies to be eternal, which is impossible. Eternity belongs only to the intellects of the world of creation, purified from the intellects of the natural world.

If one of those intellects is eternally ultimate (not eternally first), then the heavens and earth belong to the world of creation and decay.

His saying that corruption does not come from within them because they are not like composite bodies whose parts increase or decrease in mixture, know that corruption can

come to human bodies without increase, but by the soul ceasing to operate them—like a person who suddenly dies without illness.

The great world (the cosmos) is a body with a soul that moves it. If the soul stops operating it, its bonds loosen, and its system collapses one day.

Our master the virtuous person, the author of the treatises, has explained this clearly in al-Jami'a by saying:

"The world will be destroyed, the earth and the lowest center, if its soul leaves it, the celestial spheres stop revolving, the stars cease moving, the elements lose their mixture, plants, animals, and minerals perish, the soul takes away shapes and forms and engravings, and the body remains empty as it was at first."

As for the religious heavens and earth, they are neither impossible nor perishable, nor are their offspring perishable if they join their ranks and ascend to the world of eternity and unity. Know this.

Fifth Question

Regarding the statement of our master al-Mustanşir bi-llāh, Commander of the Faithful, in his response to Prince 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Şulayḥī, may God sanctify his soul:

In the mention of the Qa'im, we have said he is the seventh speaker and the counterpart of the noble boundary that supports and assists them. Whoever holds this rank has the spiritual and bodily limits in his care except the Creator who is called the Creator and the Created (i.e., God's names of creation and creativity).

How can this be true, since the intellects emanating from the First Intellect were given their perfection at their first existence? What does it mean for them to be "in the care of the Qa'im," when they exist independently and do not need others? The Qa'im now is only potential (bi-l-quwwa), and those intellects were never potential but perfect and complete from the start, unlike the intellects of the natural world, which are first potential and then actualized. The Qa'im is first potential and last actual.

The noble intellects were never potential but are eternally complete. The reference may be to those who have transitioned from the corporeal world to the Barzakh (intermediate realm), as God said:

"And behind them is a barrier until the Day they are resurrected."

So what does it mean that the Qa'im and his spiritual and bodily limits are in his care except the Creator? Every intellect there exists independently and does not need others, all perfect and eternal. How is this wise?

Answer:

By God's help and the grace of His Guardian in His land, the reference to the Qa'im as the seventh speaker and counterpart to the noble boundary who supports them means that he is the one who manages the natural world and supports all the speakers.

Whoever holds this rank has the spiritual and bodily limits in his care except the Creator. The spiritual limits are all the pure stations ascending to the tenth horizon from Adam to the Qa'im — they all are parts of him and he is their whole.

The bodily limits mean the people of his time and mission whom he leads — all are in his care and under his authority, moving by his will.

The phrase "except the Creator" means the tenth, who in that rank is like the First Creator in managing the natural world and in his rank in the world of intellect. He is called the Creator because he has become in all his states like the Creator for the intellects of the world of creation. There is no difference between him and them except the precedence of rank.

This noble boundary is not in the care of the Qa'im because it is the limit extracted for him, the one who originates him and deputizes him in his rank. This is the indication of our master al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh regarding this truth.

The pure separate intellects, which are actualized and do not exist potentially, were never potential. They have their first and second perfection. The indication is not that they are in the horizon of the Qa'im, but rather to what we have explained. Understand this.

Question Six

Sayyiduna Hamid al-Din Qas said in his well-known book al-Masabih on Imamate:

The community is in need of an Imam, who collects their zakat, leads their prayers, delivers justice to the oppressed against the oppressors, solves what is difficult for them in matters of the Book and the Sharia, commands the good and forbids the evil. Whenever an Imam does not do these things, he is not an Imam.

If this period (of not seeing the Imam) prolongs, it might be said that the three concealed Imams (al-'Uthmāniyyūn) stayed concealed for even longer, but it is correct that their da'wah representatives (dā'īs) and boundaries (ḥudūd) were present to the believers. It is not correct that anyone claimed an Imam after our Master al-'Āmir, while the earth never became void of one who establishes God's proof (qā'im bi-ḥujjatihi), whether outwardly manifest or inwardly hidden. Those who know recognized him; those who did not, remained ignorant.

The outward appearance of the Imam has become null by obvious observation here, and the hidden one necessarily requires the appearance of boundaries and da'īs calling to him, even if they remain in the state of taqiyya (concealment), as was the case during the days of the three concealed Imams.

If this is so, and during this period the da'īs and boundaries were never absent from the believers, despite severe fear, concealment, and domination by the tyrants of the Umayyads and Abbasids, then what is the wisdom in now delaying the one who calls to the Imam, while today, peace be upon him, he is more supported and more powerful? I am poor in understanding; please explain.

Answer:

We say, with God's help and support of His Wali on earth, that the statement of Sayyiduna Hamid al-Din Qas is true and undeniable. This applies during the days of the Imam's manifest appearance (ẓuhūr). When concealment (istitār) occurs, his boundaries act in his stead to lift the period of occultation and remove the trial. During this time, the boundaries of our Master the Imam al-Ṭayyib son of al-'Āmir were present as they were in earlier periods, though the blessings and support by their hands were greater and more abundant, and the da'wah through them, despite the intensification of darkness due to opposing powers, was made more clear and public. Through their presence the da'wah was preserved, the Imams' proofs were upheld, and the path of salvation and guidance was clarified for seekers.

Perhaps this questioner's rejection stems from denying their virtue or from a desire to alert the questioner to recognize them, or from eagerness to compel the recognition of their legitimate existence and succession.

If it is said that our Master al-Ṭayyib (peace be upon him) was in a state of childhood, then who maintains these boundaries? Know that they were established by the command of his father, our Master al-'Āmir (peace be upon him), who mentioned his son in his famous register, during sessions and on minbars. The trustworthy and knowledgeable Ja'far ibn Mansur al-Yamani testified to this in his account of his father's life: when the Imam concealed himself, his da'wah was not absent even in some corner of the earth, by his command or by the command of the one authorized over him. He exists by the existence of his boundaries, who point to him, call to him, uphold the rites of his da'wah, its obligations and customs, its lawful and forbidden matters. The appearance of his da'wah is established by three ranks: the absolute da'ī, the absolute authorized one (madhūn mutlaq), and the restricted authorized one (madhūn maḥṣūr). The gates, proofs, and da'īs of communication never abandon him even behind the veil of concealment.

Sayyiduna al-Nu'mān ibn Muḥammad Qas said in the introduction to his Iftitāḥ al-Da'wah: when the conquerors prevailed and the pure, preserved Imams concealed themselves in taqiyya, each island of the earth had a da'ī calling to them, and each region had a guide pointing to them.

As for the statement that the trial during the days of the concealed Imams was more severe because of the domination of the Umayyads and Abbasids, this is apparent from outward circumstances. Yet with reflection, one knows this period was the darkest and most trying, as

said by the noble author of Al-Rasa'il, who divides the periods into four: the first during Muhammad ibn Isma'il, the second during the concealment of the three concealed Imams, the third during the appearance of the Dajjal against the Qa'im and the Mansur, and the fourth, the greatest darkness and trial, during the seventy-third (years).

Those concealed Imams guarded against the plots of the devils of the Abbasids, and God informed that Satan's plot was weak. Our Master (peace be upon him) was vigilant against the devils of his da'wah and the devils rising in the religion of truth, appearing with its cloak and deceiving its followers. They are the holders of the rank of envy, akin in the pure sect to the commanding soul of evil in the body, guarding a rank of the defected proofs who were wounded in their beliefs. God referred to them as "your plot is great," so how much greater the plot against those of whom God says the plot was weak!

Hence, the claimants to the rank of Imamate without its legitimacy — usurpers — are the worst of creation and the lowest of human kinds. The Turks and foreigners poured upon them harshness and made them taste the consequences of their wrongdoings. God willing, the dawn of truth will break the accumulated darkness, and the sun of guidance will rise with its blazing light, hastened by God's mercy.

This is a brief answer suitable for the question. Those who desire further elaboration may consult Risalat al-Wa'z wa al-Bayān, al-Risalah al-Hāṭimiyyah, and similar works clarifying the rank of the da'i of the Yemeni island, holder of the exalted, luminous rank, honored by the prophetic command of the noble master. This noble da'i, Hātim ibn Ibrāhīm ibn al-Ḥusayn, elevated God above the lanterns of the righteous, shining with the pure light of his followers, carrying the burdens of da'wah on behalf of his father the master king, the earnest guide and sovereign Ibrahim ibn al-Ḥusayn, clear-eyed about the path of salvation. Also the loyal Dhū'ib ibn Mūsā al-Wādī'ī who defends the sacred precincts of the da'wah with proofs, nourishes its children with pure benefits, and acts on behalf of our noble master the judge of Yemen, Yahyā ibn Lamk ibn Mālik al-Muḥyī, reviver of the dead in knowledge, rescuer of followers from drowning in the flood of error.

All act by the command of the proof of the free island (Yemen), working and speaking according to its religious ceremonies, as our master al-'Āmir confirmed in his register to Ibn Najīb al-Dawlah. He said Yemen was among the regions overseen by the Commander of the Faithful, who cared for all its affairs and preferred reform of its great and small matters, being one of the first Muslim settlements and a place of the faithful since the strengthening of Islam until now. It has never been without members of the Fatimid da'wah and the Alawite rulers. Hence, it is true that it was never without members of the Fatimid da'wah. If it is never without children, then the presence of the children necessitates the presence of the parents, who are the da'īs. The existence of the effect necessarily proves the existence of the cause.

This is confirmed by the prophetic command of our master, blessings be upon him and his founder, affirming the existence of da'īs and boundaries in the Yemeni island.

Praise be to God who guided us to this and without whom we could not be guided.

Question Seven

Sayyiduna al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān ibn Muḥammad said in his well-known book *Asās al-Ta'wīl*: The Nāṭiqūn (speakers or manifest Imams) took covenants and oaths from whoever was an Imam in the last period of the first Nāṭiq. He supported this with the verse, "And when We took from the Prophets their covenant, and from you and from Noah and Abraham," and explained its allegorical meaning. The Nāṭiqūn take from the boundaries (ḥudūd) similarly to what God mentioned in the story of Abraham and his saying to the star: "This is my Lord," which was a boundary among the boundaries. When he saw the moon rising he said, "This is my Lord," and when it set, "I do not like those who set." When he saw the sun rising he said, "This is my Lord; this is greater." These are signs to the Imam, the proof (ḥujjah), and the da'ī. God also mentioned in the story of Moses and Shu'ayb the saying "Look to the mountain" as explained by Sayyiduna Hamid al-Din in his famous book *al-Riyāḍ*.

If the boundaries say that the Nāṭiqūn take from others who are in the natural world, and they argue with the Book of God, while knowing the trustworthiness, piety, and knowledge of Nu'mān ibn Muḥammad, who only speaks the truth, and Sayyiduna Hamid al-Din says in his book *Rāḥat al-'Aql* that revelation connects to the soul which is sent forth while in the sensory rank — and that the Nāṭiqūn took from a physical boundary — how can a sincere person reject the statements of these two authorities and the established Book of God? Clarify this with a rational and legal proof, supported by the blessing of the Wali of God on earth. May God's peace be upon Muhammad and his family.

Answer:

We say, with the help of God and the grace of His Wali on earth, that the statements of these two noble authorities are true, and their meanings, though expressed differently, are one in essence.

Sayyiduna Nu'mān ibn Muḥammad's statement that the Nāṭiqūn take from the boundaries of the past Imam is true, referring to their origin and ascension in ranks. God says in His clear Book, "And God brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers while you knew nothing." This verse encompasses all humanity, the elite and the less privileged. Each must learn from the boundaries who preceded him — the boundary of the Imam who was uncovered for him, specified for him, and testified to. Without this, the special followers of the da'wah would not recognize the text from the past Imam. As for the general public, this is known through miracles after the connection of revelation and support.

This is why the Prophet spent forty years before revelation and prophecy, progressing in religious ranks. He symbolized this by saying, "I stayed with Gabriel ten years, and with Michael ten years," and the rest of the words symbolized the boundaries he learned from. He said, "I took from five and delivered to five, between me and my Lord are five." This confirms what Sayyiduna Nu'mān Qas said, supported by the Quran.

Sayyiduna Hamid al-Din Qas said that revelation connects to the soul sent forth while in the sensory rank, meaning that in his human state he was not yet fully spiritualized and was under the command of his boundary, symbolized by him. Every high boundary speaks to the one following him below. He means that the soul of the speaker (Nāṭiq) is called sensory relative to his establisher, who raises him to the rank he deserves. At that point, revelation connects to him. When he completes his service to his establisher and deputizes him, the veil occurs.

His statement that the Nāṭiqūn took from a physical boundary means after the revelation reached them and the matter connected with them and the veil. Their substance then becomes from the spiritual world. This is his meaning. Both statements are truthful, and their differing words agree in meaning by God's grace. Know this well.

And now I conclude the message as I began it, with praise to God, the Bestower upon His servants of guidance through His evidences, who saves His followers from the darkness of polytheism and error; and with blessings upon the sun of the faith, Muhammad, the revealer by proofs of His unity and the dispeller of the darkness of misleading disbelief; and upon his Successor, the Gate of His City, appointed as the qibla (direction) for those turning to him, the upholder of God's religion in detail and in entirety; and upon the Imams from their progeny, the luminaries of God's religion and its family; and upon the heavens showering down generous benefits on their devoted followers; and upon our Master and Lord, the Imam al-Ṭayyib Abū al-Qāsim, the Commander of the Faithful, the uniter of the pure essence and sanctity, wearing the crowns of virtue, dignity, and honor. May peace be upon them all forever and ever.

The copy of this book entitled Lub al-Ma'ārif (The Essence of Knowledge) and Zubd al-Laṭā'if (The Cream of Delicacies) was completed on the computer, by the help of God Almighty and the grace of His Guardian and Caller, on Sunday the tenth of the month of Rajab al-Aṣab in the year 1423 AH (Islamic calendar), corresponding to the year 2002 CE, in the era of the noble Da'ī, our Master and Lord and Master, Abū al-Qā'id Juḥar Muḥammad Burhān al-Dīn. May God perpetuate his paternal shadow over us and all the believers forever and ever.