



IMAMAT

الإمامة

FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM

LEVEL 5

Lesson 1: Discussions on Imamat

In previous years, we have learnt some general facts about Imamat, and discussed the roles of the Imams. In this lesson, we will review these discussions briefly and also discuss the importance of the Ahlul Bayt.

THE MEANING OF IMAMAT

As we discussed in previous lessons, Imamat literally means leadership. However, we use it to specifically refer to divine leadership. This means that an Imam is one who was chosen by Allah to lead the Muslim community, both spiritually and socio-politically.

As Shi'ah, we believe that the position of leadership of the Muslim community is one of the most important issues in Islam. Without the most qualified leader, the Muslim community would stray from the right path and Islam itself would be compromised. When the Prophet (saw) was alive, he was obviously the leader of the Muslim community. However, after his death, there was much dispute and controversy about this position.

Unlike other Muslims, we believe that Allah and His Messenger would not leave the Muslim community without a leader who was chosen and appointed by Allah. In fact, we believe that Allah (SWT) instructed His Prophet to appoint twelve successors, each of whom in turn would lead the Muslim community.¹ We argue that it is impossible for the Prophet, who instructed the Muslims on the smallest of issues (such as which side to sleep on, which foot to walk out of the bathroom with) would not instruct them on who should be the leader after himself. Therefore, the Prophet definitely appointed leaders after himself, chosen by Allah, whom we refer to as Imams. There is a significant amount of

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Briefly review the previous discussions on leadership in past years
- Discuss the similarities and differences in the roles and tasks of the Imams and Prophets
- Understand the status of the Ahlul Bayt and the importance of love for the Ahlul Bayt
- Understand the concepts of al-Tawassul and al-Shafā'ah
- Briefly discuss the concept of al-Raj'ah
- Be reminded of the concept of sincerity in Islam
- Discuss some of the signs of sincerity and hypocrisy

documented historical evidence for this from all Muslim sects, evidence from the Quran itself and logical reasoning as seen above, all of which leave this matter beyond doubt.

Further References:

We have provided you with reference in the endnotes for your further research. These references are useful for learning factual information about our belief in Imamat and the differences between Shi'a belief and the belief of other sects.ⁱⁱ

TWELVE IMAMS

The Prophet appointed twelve Imams after himself. The first of these was Imam 'Ali (as). The last of these Imams is Imam al-Mahdi (as), who is still alive today. He was born over 1200 years ago, and lives in occultation. We will have further discussions on Imam al-Mahdi (as) in future lessons.

THE IMAMS ARE SINLESS (MA'SŪM)

One of our major beliefs is that the Imams, just like the prophets, were sinless (Ma'sūm). We have discussed in previous lessons that the prophets were sinless, why they must be sinless and we have refuted any objections against this belief. To quickly recap, we need a role model to follow, and the Imams are our greatest role models along with the prophets. If they were not sinless

- we would have no point of reference to check our actions against
- we would not be sure that what they are telling us is in fact the command of Allah or otherwise as they could be lying.

This would therefore shake the very foundations of our faith.

THE ROLES OF THE IMAMS

The Imams have very similar roles to the Prophets. Their purpose is to continue and maintain the message brought by Prophet Muḥammad (saw). Therefore, they must fulfil the same roles that the Prophet (saw) himself had with the exception of receiving revelation. The Imams do not receive revelation. Rather, they receive inspiration (ilhām) which is a lower form of communication with Allah (SWT). Also, the Imams receive their knowledge directly from the prophet (saw)

without the need for any chains or links in between.ⁱⁱⁱ Therefore, they have access to the revelation through the Prophet (saw). In fact, Imam 'Ali (as) would often hear or smell what the Prophet (saw) would hear or smell during the process of revelation.

Imam 'Ali (as) narrates that the Prophet (saw) said to him:

“O' Ali, you see all that I see and you hear all that I hear, except that you are not a Prophet, but you are a trustee...”^{iv}

The other difference in their roles is that while a miracle that a prophet perform are called a 'mu'jizah' in the religious terminology, the miracle that an Imam performs is called a 'karāmah'. The difference is only in the terms we use: the miracles are not different in any real sense.

<u>Roles of the Prophet</u>	<u>Roles of the Imams</u>
Religious leadership-teaching people about Islam	Religious leadership-teaching people about Islam
Judging in disputes between people	Judging in disputes between people
Political leadership	Political leadership
Receiving revelation	Receiving inspiration and having access to revelation through the prophet
Perform mu'jizah	Perform karāmah

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE IMAMS

The leader of the Muslim community must have the following characteristics.

1-The highest level of faith: for example, it is unanimously agreed that Imam 'Ali (as) never prostrated before any idol whilst Abu-Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān indisputably have been all worshipping idols at some time in their lives. Eight years had passed since the rise of Islam and 'Umar (the second Caliph) was still an

idolater! Even after embracing Islam he would question the Prophet's decisions and cast doubt on them on various occasions.^v

2-The highest level of knowledge: is also necessary for the leader of the Muslim community.

"Say: Are those who know equal to those who know not?" [39:9]

The Prophet said about Imam 'Ali (as):

"I am the city of knowledge, and Ali is its gate. Whoever wishes to enter the city, should enter it from its gate."^{vi}

In contrast to this, 'Umar would often be corrected in his Islamic knowledge, such as when a woman stood up in the mosque one day to correct 'Umar's ruling on dowries and when Imam 'Ali (as) stopped a woman from being wrongly executed due to Omar's mistake.^{vii}

3-The best in struggle in the way of Allah (Jihād): this is another necessity of leadership mentioned in the Qur'an:

"Allah has preferred in grades those who strive hard and fight with their wealth and their lives above those who sit." [4:95]

There is no doubt that no one came close to Imam 'Ali (as) and his progeny in this category. The examples of the Battles of Khaybar and Uḥud are two of the most famous.

SOME FINAL DISCUSSIONS

Other Muslim Sects

One of the issues we need to quickly touch on as part of the study of Imamat is that there are other Muslim sects besides the 'Sunna' and the 'Shi'ah'. Many of these sects believe, like us, that Imam 'Ali (as) was the rightful leader of the Prophet (saw) but they do not believe in all of the twelve Ma'sūm Imams that we believe in. Some of these continues to have followers while others do not. Further information is provided on this in the footnotes.^{viii}

THE CONCEPT OF AL-RAJ'AH

Believing in al-Raj'ah is the unique belief of the Shi'ah. Al-Raj'ah literally means 'the Return'. In Islamic theology it's an expression for the return of the most noble

people and the worst enemies of Ahlul Bayt (as) at the time of Imam Mahdi's universal government. According to this doctrine the most sincere followers of Ahlul Bayt will be returning to earth by the Will of God to support the Imam and the worst enemies will also be brought back to receive their worldly punishment.^{ix}

SINCERITY AND HYPOCRISY

As important as it is to learn the concept of Imamat, we also need to continue to learn and remind ourselves of the teachings of the Prophets and Imams. One of the major traits of the prophets and Imams (as) was their sincerity. Their absolute and complete sincerity made them unique and different to all other humans. They are the ones 'purified by Allah' (mukhlaṣīn) and so their actions are completely pure and sincere. Over the next two lessons, we will discuss sincerity and its opposite, hypocrisy.

In this discussion, what we mean by sincerity (al-ikhlaṣ) is the pure intention to do something for the sake of Allah (SWT). We never perform any action without a motivation. Sometimes this motivation is purely good and sometimes it is mixed with evil or even purely evil. When our motivation is purely for Allah (SWT), then our action can be called sincere, whereas when our motivation is for other than Allah (SWT) or only partly for Allah (SWT), then our action is not sincere and has an element of hypocrisy (nifaq).

We often feel that our actions are sincere, but when truly tested we see that in fact there are other motivations behind our actions. This form of hypocrisy can be very subtle. For example, we may do something for the sake of Allah but along the way we may:

- Feel pride because of our action
- Feel that we deserve praise for our action
- Magnify our action
- Boast about our action
- Make others feel low by mentioning our action

All the above things spoil the reward of the action. We get the full and true reward- in the Hereafter- not for actions that we perform, but for actions which we perform and protect until our death. Protecting the action means protecting from all the above feelings and

any others which may spoil it. Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) narrates that Allah, the Exalted says:

“I am the best partner. Whoever associates a partner with Me in his actions I will never accept them. I only accept those actions which have been performed purely and sincerely for me.”^x

Look at the following example:

Once there was a great scholar who had written tens of books about Islam, particularly the narrations of the Ahlul Bayt. His books were extremely valuable and beneficial. After he passed away, one of his students had a dream about him. He dreamt that while he was being judged he was asked what he had to offer. He mentioned his many books and how much effort had gone into them. He mentioned how hard he had worked, how much he studied and taught for the sake of Islam. However, he was told that none of these actions would benefit him, because he had not protected them from the above things. His books had his name on them, would he have agreed to put someone else’s name on them? His teaching and studies had made him famous and respected, would he have done it if they did not have these consequences? By now, the scholar had become very afraid and feared that he would have nothing to present before his Lord, and nothing that would save him from the Hell-fire. However, he was told that he was safe, because of one action. One day, he was walking home in strong rain when he noticed there was a homeless boy sitting on the side of the road, looking hungry and distraught. He had two apples which he was taking to his family to feed them. He was not wealthy and this is all he had. However, he felt for this young boy and so he handed him one of the apples. However, after doing this, he completely forgot about this action and never thought about it again. Because of this, the action was not spoiled by pride and was protected.

HOW TO REMAIN SINCERE

As we have seen from the story above, the best way to truly protect our sincere action is to:

1. **Forget about it.** When we help a friend with some money or assist our father with some house chores sincerely, try to forget about it because if we remember it, Satan will trap us with expectations

2. **Have no expectation-** When we do something good, we should not feel that we have come to deserve a reward from Allah or that we now have a pass into paradise. Instead, we should compare our action to the blessings of Allah and realise how insignificant they are.
3. **Real Reward is only from Allah.** When we do something good, we should always remember that it is only Allah, the Almighty, the most Generous, who will reward us. We should not expect rewards or recognition from people as this may ruin our sincerity.

Homework

- 1- Explain the meaning of **Imamat** in your own words.
- 2- List some of the roles the **Imams** had.
- 3- Briefly explain the concept of **al-Raj’ah**.

Lesson 2: Intercession

In our last lesson, we discussed different aspects of our belief in *Imamat*. In this lesson, we will discuss another aspect that is shared between *Imamat* and Prophecy: intercession. We will also continue our discussion of sincerity and hypocrisy.

INTERCESSION (AL-SHAFĀ'AH) AND SEEKING HELP (AL-TAWASSUL)

As we discussed in our previous lesson, the *Ahlul Bayt* have a very high status, given to them by Allah (SWT). Part of this amazing status is the following two rights:

- Allah (SWT) has ordered us to seek his help through the *Ahlul Bayt* (pbut), and we call this **al-Tawassul**, which literally means seeking help through an intermediary^{xi}. This is mentioned in the following ayah of the Holy Qur'an:

"O you who believe! Be pious and ask the means of approach to Him." [5:35]

- Allah (SWT) has given them the right to intercede with Allah on our behalf, and we call this **al-Shafā'ah**, which literally means intercession^{xii}. This is mentioned in the following ayah of the Holy Qur'an:

"On that Day no intercession shall avail, except the one for whom the Most Gracious (Allah) has given permission and whose word is acceptable to Him." [20:109]

As you already know, one analogy for intercession is that if a person wants to visit a king or leader of a nation that he has no access to, he asks someone whom the king respects- such as a minister- to speak to the king and intercede for this person, so that the king will see him. Sometimes, when we want to ask Allah (SWT) for something, we are veiled from Him due to our sins, and so He has instructed us to ask him through intercessors who have a special right with Allah (SWT) because of their high status. These intercessors are the *Ahlul Bayt*, all the *Ma'sūm* Imams (pbut) as well as the prophets (pbut). The absolute majority of the Muslims believe in these two concepts. The only exception is the Wahhabi sect^{xiii}. We will discuss some of the objections against

intercession and seeking help through the prophets and Imams in the following section and answer them.

OBJECTIONS AGAINST INTERCESSION

Objection 1: Is Intercession an act of Shirk (polytheism)?

This is one of the major objections posed by the Wahhabis against intercession. They claim that we are asking someone other than Allah, and therefore we are performing an act of polytheism. This objection has already been answered in our above explanation because we have said that:

- We do not believe the prophets or Imams have any independent power besides Allah (SWT). This is why we call them 'intercessors'. We simply believe that their prayers are more easily accepted than ours and so we ask through them.
- The intercessors we turn to have been authorised by Allah (SWT), as we will prove soon. He has commanded us to seek His help through them. We do not choose them randomly or senselessly like the Arabs of the Age of Ignorance who took idols as intercessors.^{xiv}

Objection 2: does the Qur'an prohibit intercession?

There are a number of āyāt in the Qur'an that seem to say that intercession is not allowed or at least that it is useless. Here are some examples:

"So the intercession of intercessors shall not avail them" (74:48)

"O you who believe! Spend out of what We have given you before the day comes in which there is no bargaining, neither any friendship nor intercession, and the unbelievers- they are the unjust." (2:254)

Although at first these āyāt seem to give the impression that intercession is prohibited, useless or even non-existent, when we look at the rest of the Qur'an, we see that these āyāt are saying that intercession is only useless in some situations: that is, when disbelievers or oppressors are seeking intercession through means that Allah (SWT) has not allowed or authorised. Let us look at some of the āyāt that prove this:

“...there is no intercessor except after His permission; this is Allah, your Lord, therefore serve Him; will you not then mind?” (10:3)

"On that Day no intercession shall avail, except the one for whom the Most Gracious (Allah) has given permission and whose word is acceptable to Him." [20:109]

The above two āyāt prove that the intercession that is useless is that which Allah (SWT) has not authorised. However, both āyāt clearly state that once Allah (SWT) gives His permission for an intercessor, then intercession is useful and allowed.

Let us look at some more āyāt:

“And they shall not have any intercessors from among their gods they have joined with Allah, and they shall be deniers of their associate-gods.” (30:13)

The above āyah shows that the intercession that is not allowed is the intercession in which people believed that the intercessors had independent power besides Allah and considered these intercessors to be ‘gods’. This type of seeking intercession is shirk.

So we can see from this brief look at the āyāt of the Qur’an dealing with intercession that the intercession through the prophets and Imams is allowed and beneficial, because it has been authorised by Allah and we do not attribute any independent power to our intercessors.

Further famous objections against intercession are discussed in the footnotes. Please refer to these if you would like more information.^{xv}

MODELS OF SINCERITY

Here, we continue our discussion on sincerity and hypocrisy that we began in the last lesson.

There are many stories related about our Imams and prophets (pbut) that show us wonderful examples of sincerity. One of the clearest examples is that it was the habit of a number of our Imams (pbut) to go out in the middle of the night, when it was pitch dark and when no one could see, to deliver food and clothing to the poor. Imam Ali (saw) was famous for this, as was Imam al-Sajjad (as). While they were alive, no one knew that it was they who brought these orphans food and clothing every night, or that it was they, under some sort of

disguise, would sit and speak to these orphans and make them happy and bring smiles to their faces. However, once they passed away, the orphans no longer had any visitors and the poor no longer received any nightly provision. Then they realised that it was the Imams (pbut) who in the middle of the night would come to them with assistance. The Imams (saw) maintained the secrecy of these actions for their entire lives and protected them from any form of insincerity.

EXAMPLES OF HYPOCRISY

As we discussed above, hypocrisy is the opposite of sincerity, and so in this discussion what we mean by hypocrisy is doing something with an intention that is not purely for the sake of Allah. There are many examples of hypocrisy in Islamic history that shows that an action cannot be performed completely and successfully except with sincerity. Look at the difference in outcome between the battles of Badr and Uḥud. In the battle of Badr, the spirituality among the Muslim was far stronger than it was in the battle of Uḥud. Almost all the Muslims fought with no fear and with complete sincerity, and thus they were able to defeat an army far larger than theirs.

In contrast, during the battle of Uḥud the lack of sincerity led to disastrous consequences which if not for the help of Allah and the bravery of a few sincere companions, may have led to the destruction of the Muslims and their city of Medina.

The Prophet had ordered one group among the army of Muslims to stand watch on the mount behind the battlefield and to protect the Muslims from any attacks from the rear. The group held this position until they saw that the Muslim army was almost victorious and that there was now a lot of war booty on the battlefield. They were afraid that if they stayed on that mountain, they would not get their share of the booty. Their intention was no longer purely for the sake of Allah, and the temptation for wealth overtook them.

They disobeyed the leader of their unit and the commands of the Prophet and descended from the hill, making the excuse that the war was almost over. This allowed the army of disbelievers to attack them from the rear and damage the Muslim army severely. This was the first act of insincerity, which stemmed from love for

wealth entering into the intention and motivation of these men.

The next act of insincerity was motivated by love of the self and the desire to protect oneself more than one's religion. Once the Muslim army saw it was being attacked from behind and that there were many casualties, they began to flee, leaving the Prophet (saw) behind. He called to them as they were fleeing, urging them to come back, but no one even turned around for fear of their lives.

Here now was the stage for the model of sincerity, Imam 'Ali (as), the Lion of the Lord, to again save Islam. He, along with very few of the companions who had stayed and fought, encircled the Prophet (saw) and defended him with all they could. The Prophet (saw) and Imam 'Ali (saw) fought very bravely in order to defend themselves against the attacks of a great number of soldiers.

They survived this incident and went back to Medina, where it was only after days that those companions who had fled returned, to find the Prophet and the Imam safe and sound. Because of their fear, they had been in hiding for days and had considered Islam to be destroyed. However, the Prophet (saw) sought forgiveness for them and they were forgiven.

THE SIGNS OF HYPOCRISY

Our Imams (pbut) have taught us some of the signs of sincerity and hypocrisy. The purpose of discussing this is so that we can examine ourselves and see whether we have the signs of hypocrisy or the signs of sincerity, or some from each group. We should endeavour as much as we can to remove the signs of hypocrisy from our personalities, and instil the signs of sincerity. Here, we discuss the most important of these signs:

- A sincere person does not like to be praised for actions that He performs for the sake of Allah^{xvi}
- A sincere person only has hope in Allah and only fears Allah^{xvii}
- A sincere person prefers to attain things through his own work rather than asking people^{xviii}
- A sincere person trusts Allah enough to spend in the way of Allah^{xix}

- A hypocritical person is lazy when they stand for prayers^{xx}
- A hypocritical person does not make a firm decision and does not take a firm side, he is torn between this side and that^{xxi}
- A hypocritical person remembers Allah (SWT) very little^{xxii}
- A hypocrite announces his actions and boasts about them^{xxiii}
- A hypocrite breaks his promises^{xxiv}
- A hypocrite lies most of the time^{xxv}
- A hypocrite betrays trusts^{xxvi}
- A hypocrite is not likeable and is arrogant^{xxvii}

Review Questions

Q1. List five signs of sincerity

Q2. Answer the following question: 'the Qur'an states in some āyāt that intercession will be useless and futile, so why do the Shi'ah believe in it?'

Q3. Why is intercession not an act of shirk?

Lesson 3: The Ahlul Bayt

THE STATUS OF THE AHLUL BAYT

Part of our belief in Imamate is our belief about the Ahlul Bayt and their great status. ‘Ahlul Bayt’ literally means ‘people of the household’, but it is a specific Qur’anic term referring to specific members of the household of the Prophet. These people are:

- the Prophet (saw) himself
- Imam ‘Ali (as)- his cousin and son-in-law
- Sayyedah Fāṭimah (as)- his daughter
- Imam Ḥaṣan (as) and
- Imam Ḥuṣayn (as)- his grandchildren.

In the Holy Qur’an, Allah (SWT) says the following about the Ahlul Bayt (try to memorise this ayah by next week’s lesson)

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ

تَطْهِيراً

“Allah only desires to keep away impurity from you, O People of the House (Ahlul Bayt), and to purify you a (thorough) purification.” (33:33)

The above ayah, by clearly stating that Allah has removed all impurity from the Ahlul Bayt, confirms that they are sinless and protected from any impurity due to Divine protection.^{xxviii} This is the sinlessness (*‘iṣma*) that we have discussed earlier.

There is some discussion about who this ayah applies to. However, numerous narrations, found in both Shi’ah and Sunni books of narration, indicate clearly that the ayah refers to the five people listed above.^{xxix xxx}

Now that we know that the Holy Qur’an confirms that the Ahlul Bayt are sinless and have a special divine protection and a great status in the eyes of Allah, let us look at what type of relationship we should have with the Ahlul Bayt.

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE AHLUL BAYT

As we discussed, the Ahlul Bayt are sinless. Therefore, they are the examples that we should follow in all aspects of our life, if we want to save ourselves from straying from the right path. In fact, the Holy Prophet (saw) says:

“The likeness of my Ahlul Bayt amongst my Ummah (followers) is similar to Noah's Ark. Those who embark on it are rescued and those who reject it are perished....”^{xxxix}

Not only are we urged to follow the Ahlul Bayt and to hold on to them as role models and guides, but we are also expected to train ourselves and our families to love the Ahlul Bayt. In fact, Imam al-Bāqir (as) equates love for the Ahlul Bayt with faith and lack of love for them as disbelief:

"Love for us (the Ahlul Bayt) is Faith and hatred for us is disbelief".^{xxxix}

Love for the Ahlul Bayt is not only a form of worship, but the highest one:

Imam Sadiq (as) says: "Surely, there are various degrees of serving Allah, but affection for us, the Ahlul Bayt, is the highest one."^{xxxix}

This is because if we love the Ahlul Bayt then we will naturally incline towards following their example, and since they are sinless and the people who are closest to Allah, we will naturally incline away from sins and closer to Allah.

Love for the Ahlul Bayt manifests itself in a number of ways which we have discussed in more detail in previous lessons:

- Taking them as role models
- Learning the knowledge they passed on to us
- Loving those who love them and disassociating ourselves from those who disassociate themselves from them

EXAMPLES OF LOVE FOR THE AHLUL BAYT

In previous lessons, we have discussed some of the definitions or descriptions of love for the Ahlul Bayt. Here, we will discuss some practical examples of love for the Ahlul Bayt, to get a better understanding of what we mean by love for the Ahlul Bayt.

1. Muslim ibn 'Awsajah and Habib ibn Mudāhir

These two men were among the closest companions of Imam Ḥusayn (as). They had a close relationship with the Imam (as) since they were young children and they had fought alongside Imam 'Ali (as) and Imam Ḥasan (as). They were loyal, trusted and tried companions. When Imam Ḥusayn (as) was heading towards Kufah, they saw that everyone in their city was betraying him, and instead of supporting him as they had promised, the Kufans were preparing to fight against him. Muslim and Ḥabib decided to leave Kufah and join Imam Husain's small army. Kufah was surrounded by the enemy's troops, but Ḥabib and Muslim found a way out. These men had spent their lives struggling alongside the Ahlul Bayt. They had been at Imam Ali's side and also at Imam Ḥasan's side and now they left their homes, their belongings and all they had to fight one last battle alongside their Imam.

Once they reached Karbalā', they were among the first to step out into the battlefield and die protecting their rightful Imam (as). Muslim ibn Awsaja went to battle before Ḥabib, and was mortally wounded. Ḥabib and Imam Ḥusayn (as) rushed towards Muslim and sat near him as he was breathing his last. This is the conversation that followed between Ḥabib and Muslim:

Ḥabib: "O Muslim, it is so difficult for me to see you like this. Receive glad tidings of paradise."

Muslim: "May Allah give you glad tidings too, my brother Ḥabib".

Ḥabib: "If I did not know that I was to follow you quickly (to death), I would have loved for you to ask me to do whatever you wish after your death."

At this point, Muslim pointed to Imam Ḥusayn (as) and simply said: "I ask you to take care of this man".

Ḥabib replied: "By the Lord of the Ka'bah, I will do so."^{xxxiv}

2. Maytham al-Tammar

Maytham was one of the special students of Imam 'Ali (as). He was a very close companion of the Imam, and the Imam had shared much of his knowledge with Maytham. One day, Imam 'Ali (as) called Maytham and said to him:

"What will you do when an evil man put in power by the Bani Umayyah- will call and ask you to disassociate yourself from me?"

Maytham said: "O Commander of the faithful! By Allah! I shall never disassociate myself from you."

Imam Ali (as) then said: "In that case you shall be killed and hanged on the gallows."

Maytham replied: "By Allah! I shall be patient, this is not much in the way of Allah".

After Imam 'Ali (as) passed away, and just before the events of Karbalā' occurred, Maytham was summoned by Ziyād, the tyrant ruler of Kufah who had been put in power there by Mu'āwiyah. This tyrant governor was told that Maytham was one of the most beloved friends of Imam 'Ali (as). As the Imam (as) had predicted, Ziyād ordered Maytham to disassociate himself from Imam 'Ali (as) and to speak evil of him. Maytham refused and instead answered Ziyād with praise of the Imam. He was first imprisoned and then hung on the gallows and left there for days to die. While he was in this state, he would call people to come closer to him and would speak to them of the virtues of the Ahlul Bayt (as). He kept this up till the last hours of his life. Towards the end, he was violently killed by the soldiers of Ziyād and he died for the sake of his religion and the rightful leaders of Islam, the holy Ahlul Bayt.^{xxxv}

3. A Regular visitor of the Prophet

There was a man living at the time of the Prophet who would come every morning and wait outside the Prophet's door. Just as the Prophet (saw) would come out, he would catch a glimpse of the Prophet (saw) and then leave. This continued for many days and it puzzled the Prophet. One day, the Prophet (saw) stopped him and asked: "why do you do this every morning?" The

man said: “O Messenger of Allah, I love you, and I wish to catch a glimpse of your face every morning before I set out on my business for the day”.

One day, this man was not there outside the Prophet’s house and so the Prophet made enquiries. He was told the man worked at the market. He went to the market and asked about him, and found out the man had passed away. When he heard this, the Prophet (saw) said that that man had ensured a place for himself in Paradise because of his love for the Ahlul Bayt (as).

Homework

Your homework is to find two more examples of people who showed extraordinary love for the Ahlul Bayt, and the result of this love on their lives.

ⁱ References for these narrations can be found in the books recommended below. However, we have also provided some specific references for you here:

-Bukhari 8:127

-Muslim 3:1452

-Refer to eHAWZA, semester 2, course 6, lecture 2 for more details

ⁱⁱ *Then I was Guided- SayedTijaniSimawi- available online at al-islam.org*

Al-Muraj’at, SayyedSharaful Din al-Musawi- available online at al-islam.org

Al-Nasswal-Ijtihad, SayyedSharaful Din al-Musawi, available in english as hard copy

Peshawar Nights, Sultanu'l-Wa'izinShirazi, available online at al-islam.org

ⁱⁱⁱ If the students ask: ‘how can the Imams communicate with the Prophet when he has passed away’, we can answer:

-they have been handed down the most comprehensive book of knowledge (Mushaf Fatima) from the previous Imam who had it from the previous Imam and so on until the chain reaches the Prophet (saw). Only the Imams have access to this book and it is protected from any alteration

-the Imams and the Prophet are on existence (or one light) in one realm of existence and so the knowledge the Prophet possessed is also possessed by them

^{iv} *NahjulBalagha, sermon 190*

^v Al-Nass wal Ijtihad, p.198-202. The story is regarding the treaty of

Hudaybiyah. The Prophet had a dream that the Muslims would perform Hajj

and so they all set out towards Mecca. Before they reached there, the

Quraysh confronted them in an aggressive manner and the Prophet (saw)

decided to enter into a treaty with them rather than engage in war. So the

Muslims stopped their journey to Mecca and the Prophet asked them to

shave their heads and to slaughter their animals of sacrifice, for they were not

going to Hajj that year. Umar was very upset by this and would not stop

objecting to the Prophet’s decision and even personally confronted the

Prophet. However, the Prophet told him that he had promised they would go

to Hajj, but not that year.

^{vi} Dua al-Nudba, Mafatihul Jinan

^{vii} The two stories are as follows:

-one day, Umar had become upset about the rising dowries within the Muslim community and so he ordered that there should be an upper limit on dowries.

A woman stood up in the crowd and quoted the ayah: ‘and if you had given her a heap of gold’, which clearly showed that it was permissible to give a woman a very large dowry. Thus, Umar was mistaken in his ruling and he admitted to this.

-One day, Imam Ali (as) saw an insane woman being prepared for execution.

He enquired why this was happening and they said that she had committed

adultery and was being punished. He stopped all the proceedings and brought

the woman back before Umar. He reminded Umar of the narration which says

that the pen (i.e. responsibility) is lifted from upon those who are insane

(among others) and so she could not be punished. Again, Umar admitted his

mistake and confessed that if it were not for the advice of Imam Ali (as), he

would have perished.

^{viii} eHAWZA, Semester 4, Course 3, lecture 11

- **Keesaniya**: after the death of Imam Husain (as), they followed Mohammad ibn al-Hanafiyya, one of the sons of Imam Ali (as), instead of Imam al-Sajjad (as)
- **Zaidiyah**: after the death of Imam al-Sajjad (as), they followed Zaid instead of Imam al-Baqir (as). Zaid never claimed to be the Imam and he himself was a pious and brave man and a strict follower of the Ahlul Bayt (as)
- **Ismailiah**: they followed Ismail, the son of Imam al-Sadiq (as), instead of Imam al-Kadhim (as).

^{ix} eHAWZA, Semester 1, Course 3, Lecture 4

^x The Scale of Wisdom, narration no.1876

^{xi} eHAWZA, Semester 1, Course 3, lecture 11

^{xii} Ibid

^{xiii} Ibid

^{xiv} eHAWZA, Semester 1, Course 3, Lecture 4

^{xv} **Objection 3: is Intercession limited to the Hereafter?**

Yet another objection is that intercession may in fact be useful and allowed, but only in the Hereafter, and that in this world the prophets and Imams cannot help us because they have passed away.

We can answer this objection by showing many examples from the Holy Qur’an, where people came to the prophets to ask them to ask Allah for forgiveness on their behalf:

- The brothers of Prophet Yusuf ask their father to seek forgiveness for them after they had hurt Prophet Yusuf (12:97)

- Allah (SWT) commands the prophet to seek forgiveness for his companions (3:159). If this was useless, then why would Allah (SWT) command the Prophet (saw) to do it?
- In another ayah of the Qur'an (4:64), Allah (SWT) makes his forgiveness conditional upon the Prophet (saw) asking forgiveness for his people. This ayah shows that not only is intercession permissible but it is sometimes necessary. A story that highlights this is the following:
 - When Hurr ibn Yazid al-Riyahi finally decides that 'he will not prefer anything to paradise, even if he is burnt alive', he rides his horse towards his Imam (as), his head lowered from shame before the family of the Prophet (saw), raising his voice and pleading: "O Allah, to you I turn back, so forgive me, for I have brought fear into the hearts of Your loved ones and the children of your prophet. O Abu Abdullah (Imam Husain saw) I am repentant, so will you forgive me?" Hurr realises that just as the Prophet's permission was needed for the repentance of the Prophet's companions to be accepted, the permission of Imam Husain (saw) is needed for his own repentance to be accepted and asks for his Imam (saw) to forgive him so that Allah (SWT) may forgive him.

The only remaining point from this objection is this: the prophet has now passed away, so how can we seek his intercession before the Day of Judgment? The answer is that even though he has physically passed away, his influence remains because he is alive, in the presence of His Lord, being given his sustenance. Part of the prophet's sustenance, as indicated by the narrations, is the right to intercede for his community.

"And do not consider those who are killed in Allah's way as dead; no, they are alive (and) are provided sustenance from their Lord" (3:169)

Objection 4: why do we need intercessors when Allah is so close?

Allah (SWT) says in the Qur'an: "and we are closer to him than his jugular vein". If Allah (SWT) is so close to us, then why do we need intercessors? This takes us to an interesting point, which is that although Allah (SWT) is always close to us, we are sometimes far away from Him. In other words, if we look at things from Allah's point of view, He is always closer to us than our own life-vein. However, if we look at things from our point of view, we are sometimes very far from Allah (SWT). This is because our sins veil us from Him. Allah (SWT) clearly states in the Qur'an that if a person follows his desire, this causes veils to be placed between Him and Allah (SWT):

"Have you then considered him who takes his low desire for his god, and Allah has made him err having knowledge and has set a seal upon his ear and his heart and put a covering upon his eye..." (45:23)

The reason we seek intercession through the prophets and Imams is because these veils do not exist for them, because they are absolutely pure and sinless. Therefore, in order to overcome these veils that we created by following our desires, we seek their intercession.

^{xvi} The Scale of Wisdom, narration no. 1880

^{xvii} Ibid, no. 1881

^{xviii} Ibid. no. 1883

^{xix} Ibid. no.1883

^{xx} The Holy Qur'an

^{xxi} Ibid.

^{xxii} Ibid.

^{xxiii} The Scale of Wisdom, narration no. 6208

^{xxiv} Ibid.

^{xxv} Ibid.

^{xxvi} Ibid.

^{xxvii} Ibid, no. 6210

^{xxviii} TafsirulMizan, discussion of ayah 33:33

^{xxix} Other schools of thought indicate that it may be referring to the wives of the Prophet (saw) because the above expression comes in the context of ayaat which are speaking about the wives of the Prophet. However, this opinion is clearly incorrect for the following reasons:

The ayah uses the expression 'ankum', which in Arabic refers either to the masculine or a group including male members. Therefore it cannot refer to the wives of the Prophet. If it was referring to them, the expression used would have to be 'ankunna'.

There are a great number of narrations that indicate that this ayah was revealed about the five people mentioned above. These narrations are narrated through both Sunni and Shii chains of narration. In fact, the Sunni chains of narration are greater in number, and they amount to more than forty.

^{xxx} Al-Kafi, 1:187

^{xxxi} ???

^{xxxiii} Biharul Anwar, 27:91

^{xxxiv} NafasulMahmum, ch.19

^{xxxv} NafasulMahmum, ch. 9