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Original Source of Belief in Imamah and Faith in The Appearance of the Twelfth Imam (peace be upon him)

Question:

From which Islamic sources has the position and esteem (*i'tibar*) of the *Imamah* and leadership and faith in the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his return) been understood? And what effect have events and the passage of time had on the completion of this principle?

Answer:

According to a verse of Qur'an, *Imamah* is a station that was granted to Ibrahim al-Khalil (peace be upon him) after that great test—trial by *kalimat* (words)¹. According to traditions that are consecutively narrated (*mutawatir*) and which both Shi'a and Sunnis have related, this station was also placed in the Ahl al-Bait of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) and they have been singled out for this great Divine grant.

On this basis it has been established that in every era an individual from this family who possesses the necessary capabilities, including knowledge and infallibility, will be responsible for the station of *Imamah* and leadership.

Such an individual is the proof (*hujjat*) of Allah, equal of the Qur'an, guide of the people, and protector of the religion and Divine law. *Imamah* is a principle that has been established from the time of the Prophet of Allah (peace be upon him and his family) until our time and will continue from our time until the end of the world. The point of its apparent perfection and complete flowering will be during the age of the gladdening reappearance of Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his return) and establishment of his united

just world government, during which the world will be filled with equity, justice, goodness, and blessings through the blossoming of all human potentials and evolution of thoughts and becoming apparent of terrestrial and celestial blessings.

The agenda of forming a new world community which must end in spreading justice and the sovereignty of *tawhid* (Divine unity) is understood from the core of Islamic teachings. The Noble Qur'an in several chapters has announced this and hundreds of prophetic traditions have related the world's adoption of Islam and the government of justice and establishment of complete security in the land after the reappearance of the promised Mahdi (may Allah hasten his return), who is from the descendents of 'Ali and Fatimah (peace be upon her) and shares the name and agnomen (*kunya*) of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family).

Belief in the appearance of Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his return) with the mentioned qualities is something which has been mentioned in Islam's primary texts. According to consecutively-narrated (*mutawatir*) traditions, the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) has given news of this blessed event and requested his *'ummat* (community) to be in wait of that consequential day.

Though the issue of appearance is deduced from the general tidings pertaining to Islam's becoming supreme in the world and truth overcoming falsehood, this does not mean that the issue of appearance is solely a concept deduced from the purport of traditions, since the text and very words of narrations point to it independently, and most of the faithful rely on these very texts that explicitly point to the appearance of Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his return) and its signs.

Once it is known that the foundation of the existence of this belief is the general tidings and texts of traditions, it can be said that historical conditions and events that occurred after the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) had no role in its coming into existence.

This is because the origin of this idea is the era of prophecy and the traditions related to it exceed one thousand traditions, which are narrated in books traditions, commentary, and many other books. Prominent Sunni scholars have also written independent books about it, and books written more than twelve centuries ago by the greatest experts and researches of Islamic sciences clearly indicate that the person of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) gave tidings about the issue of the appearance of the Promised Mahdi (may Allah hasten his return), and his companions, the followers (*tabi'in*) of the companions, and after them other generations of people have narrated them.

1. Surah al-Baqara (2), Verse 124: "When his Lord tried Ibrahim by words, then he completed them."

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