

Home > Shiism: Imamate and Wilayat > Knowledge of the Ahlul Bayt > 6. The Concept of "al-Qur'an an-Natiq"

Knowledge of the Ahlul Bayt

1. Introduction

The universal *wilayat* is in a way linked to the knowledge that Almighty Allah has bestowed upon the person holding the *wilayat*. The universal *wilayat* of Imam 'Ali, for example, is described in the Qur'an by the words "the person who has knowledge of the Book."

What is 'ilmu 'l-ghayb? Our means of gaining knowledge are through the senses that Allah has created in us.

"And Allah brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers while you did not know anything; and He made for you the ears, the eyes, and the hearts (i.e., minds) so that haply you may be thankful." (16:78)

We see things through our eyes and listen to sounds by our ears, and then we analyze the information in our minds and deduce the conclusion.

There is another kind of knowledge that cannot be acquired by human senses; it comes from God. That knowledge is known as *'ilmu 'l-ghayb*, knowledge of the unseen. For example, knowledge about the future events or the inner thoughts and intentions of a person, etc.

"*Ghayb*" is the opposite of "*shuhud* – the present, the seen". Sometimes the *ghayb* is absolute (e.g., the inner most intentions of a person) and at other times it is relative (e.g., what a person has hidden inside his house, it is 'unseen' for outsiders). The term "*ghayb*–unseen, hidden" is used from the perspective of the created beings only. For Allah there is no difference between *ghayb* and *shuhud*. The Qur'an describes Allah as:

"...Knower of the unseen and the seen..." (39:46 ; 62:8)

2. The Qur'an & 'Ilmu 'I-Ghayb

According to the Qur'an, the only independent source of *'ilmu 'l-ghayb* is Allah.

"And with Him are the keys of the ghayb, no one knows it except Him..." (6:59)

"Say, 'Those who are in the heavens and the earth do not know the ghayb except Allah.'" (27:65)

"And to Allah belongs the ghayb of the heavens and the earth." (7:49 ; 18:26)

The import of these verses is that the knowledge of *ghayb* belongs to Allah, He knows the *ghayb* by Himself.

Can anyone else have access to 'ilmu 'I-ghayb?

Almighty Allah, out of His infinite grace and wisdom, bestows the *'ilmu 'l-ghayb* upon whomsoever He chooses. The Qur'an says:

"(My Lord) knows the ghayb and He does not expose His ghayb to anyone except to one with whom He is pleased from the messenger..." (72:26-27)

"...And Allah is not about to inform you about the ghayb, but Allah chooses from His messengers whomsoever He pleases [for the ghayb]." (3:179)

"He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they cannot comprehend anything of His knowledge except what He pleases." (2:255)

The import of these verses is that Allah bestows *'ilmu 'l-ghayb* to some created beings.

When you put all the verses about the knowledge of the unseen together, you get the overall conclusion that (1) Allah is the only original and independent possessor of *'ilmu 'l-ghayb*, and that (2) whosoever from the angels, prophets, messengers, Imams and other virtuous persons that have *'ilmu 'l-ghayb* is totally dependent on Allah's discretion and power.¹

After commenting on the last verses of surah 72, 'Allamah at-Tabataba'í reaches the following conclusion:

"The exclusive possession of the *'ilmu 'l-ghayb* by Almighty Allah is in the sense of originality that we have explained, and so He, the Almighty, knows the *ghayb* by Himself while the others know the *ghayb* by Him informing them about it. And so it becomes clear that what has been mentioned in His words about others not having the *'ilmu 'l-ghayb* actually means 'not having it by themselves and independently,' it does not deny what others know [of the ghayb] through revelation..."²

3. 'Ilmu 'I-Ghayb of the Prophets

The Qur'an not only talks about the possibility of others having access to the *'ilmu 'I-ghayb*, it actually gives various examples of those who had been given the *'ilmu 'I-ghayb* by Almighty Allah.

1. While counting the miraculous powers that he possessed, Prophet 'Isa (a.s.) says:

"I will inform you of what you are eating and what you store in your houses..." (3:48)

2. In reference to Prophet Yusuf, we have the following verses:

"And thus does your Lord choose you and teaches you the interpretation of words." (12:6 , 12:21)

"...And when they agreed to put him into the bottom of the pit, We revealed to him that (a time shall come when) you will inform them of this affair of theirs..." (12:15)

"...I shall inform you two of its interpretation before comes to you (the food): this is from what my Lord has taught me..." (12:37)

3. Prophet Sulayman were taught the language of the birds:

"And Sulayman...he said, 'O men! We have been taught the language of the birds." (27:16)

4. According to the Qur'an, Allah had bestowed *'ilmu 'I-ghayb* upon the Prophet of Islam as can be seen in the following verses:

Referring to the events of the past, Allah says, ***"These are the news of the ghayb that We reveal unto you..." (11:49)***

Referring to the story of Prophet Yusuf, Allah says: ***"These are the news of the unseen (ghayb) that We reveal unto you..." (12:102)***

Allah informed the Prophet about the on-going war between the Eastern Roman Empire and the Sasanid Persian Empire: ***"The Romans are vanquished in a nearby land; and they, after being vanquished, shall overcome (the Persians) within a few years..." (30:1-4)***

On the conquest of Mecca at the hand of the Muslims, Allah said, ***"Certainly Allah had shown to His Apostle the vision with truth: you shall most certainly enter the Sacred Mosque (in Mecca), if Allah pleases, in security..." (48:27)***

The Prophet is also informed about the inner most thoughts of the hypocrites: ***"...And they say in their own hearts, 'Why does not Allah punish us for what we say?'" (58:8)***

As you can see, these examples cover all aspects of *ghayb*: history of the past, events of the future, language of the birds, and also the intentions of other people. The Prophet is described as someone "*who was not niggardly of the ghayb*," (81:24) he used to share the information with others.

Before we end this section, let me remind the readers that the knowledge of *ghayb* of a human being or an angel is not his own but is always and constantly dependent upon the will of Allah. That is why the Messengers were instructed to say that they do not possess *'ilmu 'l-ghayb*. (6:50 ; 11:3) It is for the same reason that Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) was instructed to say:

***"Had I knowledge of the ghayb, I would have acquired much good, and evil would not have touched me."* (7: 188)**

This is not a denial of having *'ilmu 'l-ghayb*; it is affirmation of the belief that whatever knowledge he has is according to the wish and pleasure of Almighty Allah.³

4. 'Ilmu 'l-Ghayb of the Imams

Imam 'Ali was also blessed with the *'ilmu 'l-ghayb* as attested by verse 13:43 discussed in the last chapter on *wilayat*. It was on the basis of the "knowledge of the Book" that Imam 'Ali has the universal *wilayat*. Moreover, according to Shí'a *ahadith*, Allah had instructed the Prophet to convey whatever knowledge was given to him to 'Ali bin Abi Talib. After all, the Prophet "*was not niggardly of the ghayb*." The other Imams, as successors of 'Ali, also had access to *'ilmu 'l-ghayb*.⁴ Shaykh al-Muzaffar explains the Shí'a position on this issue as follows:

"We maintain that the powers of the Imams to receive inspiration have reached the highest degree of excellence, and we say that it is a Divinely-given power. By this means the Imam is able to understand information about anything, anywhere, and at any time, and he understands by means of this Divinely-given power at once, without recourse to methodological reasoning or guidance from a teacher.

When he desires to know about some matter, it is reflected in his pure mind as if in a polished mirror. It is clear from the histories of their lives that, like the Prophet, the Imams were not trained or taught by anyone at all, not even in reading and writing, from their childhoods to the maturing of their minds.

No author or teacher was seen to instruct one of them, but they were incomparable masters of knowledge, so that they never asked about any problem without being able to answer it immediately, and they never said that they did not know. They never required time to consider a question before replying."⁵

Soon after the people accepted him as their leader, Imam 'Ali (a.s.) came to the mosque dressed in the turban and robe of the Prophet, and sat on the pulpit. Then he said: "O People, ask me before you lose me for this is the basket of knowledge, this is the breath of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), and this is

what the Messenger of Allah fed me. Therefore, ask me for I have the knowledge of the first ones and the last ones.

"By Allah, if a cushion is set up for me so that I may sit on it, I shall give verdicts to the people of Tawrat according to their Tawrat until it will say, "Ali is true; he has not lied. He has given you the verdict according to what Allah has revealed in me.' And I shall give verdicts to the people of the Injil according to their Injil until it will say, "Ali is true; he has not lied. He has given you the verdict according to what Allah has revealed in me.' And I shall give verdicts to the people of the Qur'an according to their Qur'an until it will say, "Ali is true, he has not lied. He has given you the verdict according to what Allah has revealed in me.'

"You read the Book (i.e., the Qur'an) at night as well as day; so is there anyone among you who knows what was revealed in it? If it had not been for a verse in the Book of Allah, I would have informed you of what has happened (in the past), what will happen, and what shall happen until the Day of Resurrection. And that is the verse: ***'Allah erases and confirms what He wishes, and with Him is the Mother of the Book.'*** [Ra'd 39]..."⁶

This last passage is significant; in it, Imam 'Ali claims to have the access to *'ilmu l-ghayb* but also acknowledges that it is totally dependent upon the will of Almighty Allah.

Here we shall just quote one or two examples from the life of Imam 'Ali (a.s.). Jundab bin 'Abdullah al-Azdi narrates the following: I took part with 'Ali in the battles of Jamal and Siffin. I never had any doubts about fighting against those who fought him until I took part in the battle of Naharwan (against the Kharijites). Then doubts came to me about fighting against these people. I said, "It is our reciters of the Qur'an and our choice men whom we are killing. This matter is dreadful."

In the morning I went for a walk (taking) a vessel of water with me, until I left the lines (of the army). Then I fixed my spear in the ground, fitted my shield on it and shaded myself from the sun. While I was sitting, Amiru l-Mu'minin 'Ali (a.s.) came along. He said to me, "O' Brother from (the tribe of) al-Azd, do you have water for ritual purification with you?"

"Yes," I answered and I gave him the vessel.

He went aside so that I could not see him. Then he came back after he had purified himself. He sat down in the shade of the spear. Suddenly a horseman appeared asking for him. I said, "O' Amiru l-Mu'minin, there is a horseman who wants you."

"Make a sign to him (to come here)," he told me.

I made a sign and he came. He said, "O' Amiru l-Mu'minin, the people (i.e., the Kharijites) have crossed the river."

"No," he retorted, "they have not crossed."

"Yes, by God, they have crossed." the man insisted.

"No," he retorted, "they have not crossed."

Then another man came. He said, "O' Amiru 'l-Mu'minin, the people have crossed."

"No," he replied, "they have not crossed."

"By God," the man said, "I did not come to you until I saw the standards and the baggage on that side."

"By God," he declared, "they have not done so. (What you want) is to kill them and shed their blood."

Then he rose and I rose with him. I said to myself, "Praise be to God, who has given me insight into this man and enabled me to recognize his affair. He is one of the two men: he is either a bold liar or he has an evidence (for his authority) from his Lord and a covenant from his Prophet. O God, I give You a solemn undertaking which You can ask me about on the Day of Resurrection. If I find that the people have crossed, I will be the first to fight against him, the first to thrust my spear into his eye. If the people have not crossed, then I will go forth with him and fight alongside him."

We returned to the lines (of the army) and we found that the standards and baggages were as they had been (before).

Then 'Ali took me by the scruff of the neck and pushed me. Then he said, "O' Brother of (the tribe of) al-Azd, has the matter become clear to you?"

"Yes, Amiru 'l-Mu'minin." I replied.

"Your business is with your enemy," he said.

I killed one man from the Kharijites and then I killed another. I and another of them were exchanging blows. I struck him and he struck me. We both fell together. My comrades carried me back. By the time I recovered consciousness, there were none of the Kharijites left.

After quoting this incident, Shaykh al-Mufid makes the following comment: "In it, 'Ali provides information about the unseen, gives clear evidence of his knowledge of the inner conscience (of man) and his knowledge of what is in men's souls. The evidence in it is outstanding which could not be equalled by evidence of a similar nature in terms of the greatness of the miracle and its clear proof." 7

Now I would like to quote another example from the forthcoming book of my father where he has also discussed the issue of prophetic foresight. He writes:

"There are numerous, well-documented prophecies of the Prophet and 'Ali which were fulfilled later...An important historical event is referred to in Sermon 128 in *Nahju 'l-Balagha*. Sayyid Razi gives this sermon the caption 'From the Sermon describing the attributes of the Turks.' He quotes portions

describing fierce invaders, their features, their clothes, the invincibility and their killing of multitudes.

Now Sayyid Razi died in 406/1016, two hundred and forty-two years before the fall of Baghdad in 1258. Ibn Abil Hadid, who wrote the *Sharh* (commentary of *Nahju 'l-Balagha*) died seventeen years before the fall, he identifies the invaders with the Mongol hordes who had in his days already conquered Khorasan, Iran and Syria. He describes the havoc they created in the neighbouring countries up to 643/1245. He says:

"And know that this prophecy of the unseen by 'Ali (a.s.), we have seen it by our own eyes and it has happened in our time. And the people, since the early days of Islam, were waiting for its fulfillment, until the firm decree (of Allah) made it appear in our day.'

"There are no clear details in his version of the sermon of who the conquered were. But this same sermon in its full form was in the hands of the learned Shi'a and had been since 'Ali's day.

"Allama al-Hilli was born eight years before the fall of Baghdad to Hulagu Khan. His father, Sadídu 'd-Din Yusuf al-Hilli was the most learned man of his time in *fiqh*, principle of jurisprudence and theology. Referring to the prophecies of future events by 'Ali, 'Allama writes:

And among them is his prophecy of the foundation of Baghdad and the Kingdom of the 'Abbasids and their circumstance in which the Mongols shall take away the kingdom from them. My father has narrated it, and that [prophecy] was the reason for the citizens of Kufa, Hilla and the two sacred cities [Karbala and Najaf] being saved from the massacre.

When Hulagu reached Baghdad, and before he conquered it, the majority of the people of Hilla fled away to the deserts, except a few of them. Among those who remained was my father (may Allah have mercy on him), Sayyid Majdu 'd-Din bin Tawus, and the faqih, Ibn Abi 'l-'Izz. They decided to write to the sultan [Hulagu] that they accepted his rule and were under the Il Khanid authority. They sent the letter with a Persian man.

Hulagu sent a firman (order) with two person, Nikalah and 'Ala'uddin, saying, 'If your hearts are as your letter shows, then come to us.' The two officers came [and conveyed Hulagu's message]. However, the others [who had signed the letter] were afraid to go as they did not know what the result would be. Therefore, my father (may Allah have mercy on him) asked the officers, 'Would it be enough if I alone come there?' They said, 'Yes.' Therefore, he went with them.

When my father came before the Sultan (and it was before Baghdad was conquered and the caliph killed), he asked my father, 'How is it that you ventured upon writing to me and coming to my court even before you knew how the matter between me and your king would be decided? How can you be sure; perhaps he would make peace with me and I would go away?'

My father (may Allah have mercy upon him) said, 'We took that step because we have been told of the

prophecy of Amīru 'l-Mu'minīn 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) that he said in his Sermon of Zawra':

'...And what would make you know what Zawra' is? A land of deep-rooted splendour. Strong buildings will be built in it and its inhabitants will increase in number; and there shall be therein servants and treasurers.

The children of 'Abbas will make it their dwelling place and a showplace for their vanities; it shall be their house of amusement and sport; there shall be in it overpowering oppression, frightful fear, debauched leaders, sinful rulers, and embezzling ministers; these shall be served by the natives of Fars and Rum. They shall not perform any good even after knowing it and shall not leave any evil even after knowing it. Their males shall satisfy their lust with males, and the females with females.

Then there shall be the overwhelming grief, long weeping and destruction, and crying for the inhabitants of Zawra' from the assault of the Turks. And they are a people of small eyes, their faces like hammered shields, their clothes are iron, they are hairless, beardless. There will lead them a king who will come from whence their (the 'Abbasids') kingdom had begun. He will be of a very loud voice, powerful authority and high courage; he will not pass by a town but that he will conquer it, and no standard will be raised against him but that he will put it down. Woe unto him who would become his enemy, he shall remain like it until he is victorious.'

After quoting the sermon, my father said, 'As these qualities had long been described to us and we found the very qualities in you, we put our hope in you and came towards you.'

Thereupon the Sultan was satisfied and he wrote for them (i.e., the citizens of the four towns) a firman, in the name of my father (may Allah have mercy upon him) giving tranquility to the hearts of the people of Hilla and the nearby towns.

"Clearly the leading Shi'a had the Sermon in a form which gave details of who the vanquished were—the 'Abbasids. It is inconceivable that 'Ali would give such detail of the victor without any reference to the vanquished. They believed so completely in its authenticity that they took such an irreversible step as to correspond with and go in person to the court of Hulagu. As for Sayyid Razi, one can understand his omission of details about the conquered. He did not omit them because of lack of high literary merit but because he lived in Baghdad under the very nose of those who were to be so signally vanquished, the 'Abbasid Caliphs."⁸

Jundab's personal example during the lifetime of Imam 'Ali and al-Hilli's example of the seventh Islamic century, clearly prove that the Imams had access to *'ilmu 'l-ghayb* by the blessing of Almighty Allah, and that this belief is not "certain extravagant claims made for them by their fanatical associates."⁹ In the words of Shaykh al-Mufid, "(The evidence for) this kind (of miracle) by Amīru 'l-Mu'minīn ['Ali] is such that it can only be denied through stupidity, ignorance, slander and obstinacy."¹⁰

5. 'Ilmu 'I-Ghayb & Personal Life

So why did not the Prophet or the Imams use the *'ilmu 'I-ghayb* to avert tragedies in their personal lives? This is a very commonly asked question in regard to the *'ilmu 'I-ghayb*. I always use an example I had seen in my childhood in East Africa. I remember seeing vehicles assigned to government officials with the sign "For Official Use Only" clearly visible on them. The *'ilmu 'I-ghayb* given to the prophets and Imams is just like that: "For Official Use Only," it is not for use in their personal lives.

Recently, in response to a question from a Philippine Shí'a, my father wrote: "Allah (s.w.t.) had given fore-knowledge of many future events to the Prophet and the Imams. But at the same time they were strictly ordered not to use that knowledge in their dealings with the people. In other words, they were to deal with the people as if they did not know what was going to happen in the future.

They had to live with the people on the level of the common people. They were not to use their supernatural knowledge or power for their own benefit or for averting any harm from themselves. (In fact, it was a very tough test for them to know that a certain man or woman would harm them or their children and then behave with him/her in the normal way.) That is why 'Ali (a.s.) did not punish or imprison Ibn Muljim, although he knew that the latter would assassinate him."¹¹

Shaykh Muhammad Ridha al-Ja'fari explains, "The Prophets and the Imams, it should be well observed, share with the rest of humanity the means for obtaining knowledge which Allah has given: the senses, the intellect, etc. They also possess a special power or means which other people do not have.

"In the carrying out of the commands of Allah's *sharí'ah* in which all have a responsibility, and likewise in ordinary behaviour, the Prophets and the Imams only make use of the first way of knowing, the commonly available means: the second means is only made use of by them in duties and works which are connected with their positions of prophethood and Imamate. Thus in matters like knowing the beginning of the month, passing judgement, finding out if something is unclean or pure, etc., they make use of the means, such as the sighting of the moon, and so forth, which everyone else employs.

"Also the knowledge that Prophets or Imams have concerning, for example, the time of their death, cannot be the basis for action for them. What they volitionally do must be determined by the means available to everyone. Such knowledge thus has a spiritual aspect to it related to the Encounter with Allah, and the reason for it must be sought on this level, but it is not for the purpose of influencing and controlling events on the level of ordinary understanding."¹²

The same applies to the universal *wilayat*: the Prophet or the Imams do not use it for their personal interest, it is only used for proving the truth of the faith.

6. The Concept of "al-Qur'an an-Natiq"

"*Al-Qur'an an-natiq*" means the "speaking Qur'an." This is a famous title given to the Shi'a Imams to describe their proximity to the Qur'an; they are the custodians of the Qur'anic message and its interpretation; they are the embodiment of the Qur'anic values and its ideals. This concept is based on the various sayings of the Prophet in which the Qur'an and the Ahlul Bayt are shown to never separate from one another.

The famous hadith of *thaqalayn* says:

"I am leaving two precious things behind among you: the Book of Allah and my Ahlul Bayt. The two shall not separate from one another until they come to me at the fountain of Kawthar (on the Day of Resurrection)."¹³

In another hadith, Umm Salama, the wife of the Prophet, quotes him as follows:

"Ali is with the Qur'an and the Qur'an is with 'Ali; they shall never separate from one another until they reach to me at the Fountain (on the day of Resurrection)."¹⁴

Abu Sa'id al-Khudari reports that one day we were sitting waiting for the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) to come out. He came to us while we saw that the strap of his shoe was broken; he gave it to 'Ali to repair. Then he said,

"One of you will wage war for the interpretation (*ta'wil*) of the Qur'an just as I waged war for its revelation (*tanzil*)."

Abu Bakr said, "Am I the one?" The Prophet said, "No." Then 'Umar said, "Am I the one?" The Prophet said, "No, but the one who is repairing the shoe."¹⁵

Imam 'Ali himself said, "Ask me before you lose me, for by the One who split the grain and created the soul, if you ask me as to which verse was revealed at night time or at day time, whether it is of Meccan or Medinite [era], during journey (of the Prophet) or while in Medina, whether it is abrogator or abrogated, whether it is clear or allegorical, and whether you need its interpretation or context of its revelation—I shall inform you about it."¹⁶

It is based on these facts supported by the Sunni sources that the Shi'as use the title "*al-Qur'anu 'n-Natiq*" for their Imams. As we saw above, Imam 'Ali himself claims to have the true and inner meanings of the Qur'anic verses. This claim and belief has been there from the earliest days of Shi'ism. So it is incorrect to place the beginning of this concept in the latter period by saying that "the belief that the Imams were the 'speaking (al-natiq) Qur'an,' who knew the esoteric interpretation of the Book, most probably began during al-Baqir's time."¹⁷

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1. For an excellent discussion on the Qur'anic verses on 'ilmu 'l-ghayb and their relevant ahadith, see Ahmad Mutahhari and Ghulam Raza Kardan, 'Ilm-e Payambar wa Imam dar Qur'an, Qum: Dar Rah-e Haq, 1366 (solar) A.H.
 2. At-Tabataba'i, al-Mizan, vol. 20, p. 131-132.
 3. For a precise and clear picture on the knowledge of God (which is absolute and unchanging, and is described as "al-lawh al-mahfuz – the protected tablet") vis-à-vis the knowledge of chosen human beings and angels (which is not necessarily absolute, and is described as "lawhu 'l-mahw wa 'l-ithbat –the tablet that can be erased and re-written"), see S. Saeed Akhtar Rizvi, The Justice of God, p. 21-26. The book clearly explains that bada' (change) does not occur in the knowledge of God, it can only occur in the knowledge of humans and angels.
 4. Al-Majlisi, Biharul 'Anwar, vol. 26, chapters 1, 3, and 5 as quoted in Rizvi, The Justice of God, p. 21-26.
 5. Al-Muzaffar, M.R., The Faith of Shi'a Islam, p. 33-34.
 6. Al-Mufid, al-Ikhtisas, p. 235; a shorter version of this narration may also be seen in al-Irshad, p. 34 (in English, p. 21). For other references on this claim of Imam 'Ali that "Ask me before you lose me," see al-Amini, al-Ghadir, vol. 6, p. 193-194; vol. 7, p. 107-108.
 7. Al-Mufid, al-Irshad, p. 317-319; in its English translation, see p. 239-240. This narration can also be seen in the following Sunni sources: Muttaqi al-Hindi, Kanzu 'l-Ummal, vol. 11, p. 289 quoted from at-Tabarani's al-Wasit; Ibn Abi 'l-Hadid, Sharh Nahji 'l-Balagha, vol. 2, p. 271.
 8. The forthcoming book of 'Allama Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi on Shi'a faith and history. He cites al-Hilli's Kashfu 'l-Yaqin, p. 28 as the source for the narration.
 9. Abdulaziz Sachedina writes about the evolution of Imamate as follows: "The Imams were now believed to possess divine knowledge which enabled them to predict future events...The highly speculative aspects of the doctrine of the Imamate should be attributed to the circumstances in which the Imams manifested political quietism but did not object to certain extravagant claims made for them by their fanatical associates. These claims included the possession of esoteric knowledge inherited through designation by the Imam." (Islamic Messianism, p. 18-19)
 10. Al-Mufid, al-Irshad, p. 314; in English, see p. 236.
 11. In the forthcoming Your Questions Answered, vol. 8.
 12. See the explanatory note of Shaykh Muhammad Ridha al-Jafari in al-Kulayni, al-Kafi (Arabic with English translation), vol. 1, Part Two, Book 4 (iii) p. 259. Sayyid Muhammad Ridha al-Jalali has extensively dealt with this question and its responses by the Imams (a.s.) themselves and the Shi'a 'ulama' of the last ten centuries. See "'Ilmu 'l-Aimma bi 'l-Ghayb wa 'l-'I'tiradh 'alayhi bi 'l-'Ilqai ila 't-tuhlika wa 'l-'ijabat 'anhu 'ibaru 't-ta'rikh," Turathuna, no. 37 (Shawwal, 1414) p. 7-107.
 13. At-Tirmidhi, Sahih, vol. 5 (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, n.d.) p. 328-329, hadith # 3874, 3876; as-Suyuti, ad-Durru 'l-Manthur, vol. 6, p. 7, 306; Ibnu 'l-Maghazili ash-Shafi'i, Manaqib 'Ali bin Abi Talib, p. 234, hadith # 281.
 14. Al-Hakim, al-Mustakrak 'ala 's-Sahihayn, vol. 3 (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifa, n.d.) p. 124; al-Khuwarazmi, al-Manaqib, p. 110; Majma'u 'z-Zawa'id, vol. 9, p. 134 as-Suyuti, Ta'rikhu 'l-Khulafa', p. 173.
 15. An-Nasa'i, Khasa'isu Amir 'l-Mu'minin 'Ali bin Abi Talib, p. 134; Muhibbu 'd-Din at-Tabari, Dhakha'iru 'l-'Uqba, p. 139.
 16. Al-Mufid, al-Ikhtisas, p. 236.
 17. Abdulaziz Sachedina, Islamic Messianism, p. 15.

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