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Publication of this issue has coincided with the third three months of the Islamic Lunar Calendar i.e. Rajab, Sha‘bān and the holy month of Ramaḍān.

In this period, there are very important occasions. The anniversary of birth of Imam Javad (A) on the 10th of Rajab, birth of Imam Ali (A) on the 13th of Rajab, eid of Mab‘ath on the 27th of Rajab, birth of Imam Husayn (A) on the 3rd of Sha‘bān, birth of Abu‘a–Faḥl al–Abbas (A) on the 4th of Sha‘bān, birth of Imam Sajjad (A) on the 5th of Sha‘bān, birth of Ali al–Akbar (A) on the 11th of Sha‘bān, birth of Imam Mahdi (A) on the 15th of Sha‘bān, birth of Imam Hasan (A) on the 15th of the holy month of Ramaḍān, the Night of Qadr and eid al–Fitr are some of the greatest and happy occasions of this period.

In this period there are also very sad occasions such as the anniversary of the martyrdom of Imam Hadi (A) on the 3rd of Rajab, the demise of Lady Zainab (A) on the 15th of Rajab, the martyrdom of Imam Kazim (A) on the 25th of Rajab, the demise of Lady Khadijah (A) on the 10th of the holy month of Ramaḍān and the martyrdom of Imam Ali (A).

Thus, this season is full of opportunities for reflection and inspiration. In these three months the blessings of God come down to the inhabitants of the world more than any other time. In this period, there are times that are spiritually of the utmost importance, such the night of the 15th of Sha‘bān and the Night of Qadr. For more study on the spiritual significance of these three months, the readers may refer to the editorial of the Issue 38 (Vol. 10, No. 2) and the sixth paper in this issue. In what follows, I will focus on the 15th of Sha‘bān as one of the highlights of this period and that of which marks the middle of this season.

According to a well–known hadith from Imam Sadiq (A), his father Imam Baqir (A) in response to a question about the merits of the night of the 15th of Sha‘bān, said:

“After the Night of Qadr, that night is the best night. In this night, God grants His favours upon His servants and out of His grace, forgives their sins. So try to do your best in order to approximate to Him. It is the night in which God has vowed not to disappoint and return empty–handed anyone who asks Him as long as he does not ask for the unlawful”.

The birth of Imam Mahdi (A) has added to the significance of this night. God, the Almighty, out of His endless mercy in the month of Sha‘bān and where His mercy is at its peak and is most accessible to His servants, gave a child to Imam Askari (A) and Lady Narjis whose name was the same as the Prophet’s (S), whose nickname was the same as the Prophet’s (S) and whose mission is to “fill the earth with justice and equity.”

In his *Muntakhab al-Athar*, Grand Ayatollah Safi Golpayegani has cited 130 hadiths from both Shi'a and Sunni sources, in which the phrase: "He fills the earth with justice after it has been filled with injustice and oppression" occurs. Here I would like to mention a hadith from the *Sunan* of Ibn Majah, in which the Prophet is quoted as saying:

حَدَّثَنَا عُثْمَانُ بْنُ أَبِي شَيْبَةَ، حَدَّثَنَا مُعَاوِيَةُ بْنُ هِشَامٍ، حَدَّثَنَا عَلِيُّ بْنُ صَالِحٍ، عَنْ
 يَزِيدَ بْنِ أَبِي زِيَادٍ، عَنْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، عَنْ عَلْقَمَةَ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، قَالَ بَيْنَمَا نَحْنُ عِنْدَ
 رَسُولِ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - إِذْ أَقْبَلَ فِتْيَةٌ مِنْ بَنِي هَاشِمٍ فَلَمَّا رَأَاهُمُ النَّبِيُّ -
 صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - اغْرُورَقَتْ عَيْنَاهُ وَتَغَيَّرَ لَوْنُهُ قَالَ فَقُلْتُ مَا نَزَالُ نَرَى فِي
 وَجْهِكَ شَيْئًا نَكْرَهُهُ . فَقَالَ " إِنَّا أَهْلُ بَيْتِ اخْتَارَ اللَّهُ لَنَا الْآخِرَةَ عَلَى الدُّنْيَا وَإِنَّ
 أَهْلَ بَيْتِي سَيَلْقَوْنَ بَعْدِي بَلَاءً وَتَشْرِيدًا وَتَطْرِيدًا حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ قَوْمٌ مِنْ قِبَلِ الْمَشْرِقِ
 مَعَهُمْ رَايَاتٌ سُودٌ فَيَسْأَلُونَ الْخَيْرَ فَلَا يُعْطَوْنَهُ فَيُقَاتِلُونَ فَيَنْصَرُونَ فَيُعْطُونَ مَا
 سَأَلُوا فَلَا يَقْبَلُونَهُ حَتَّى يَدْفَعُوهَا إِلَى رَجُلٍ مِنْ أَهْلِ بَيْتِي فَيَمْلُوهَا قَسْطًا كَمَا
 مَلَّوْهَا جَوْرًا فَمَنْ أَدْرَكَ ذَلِكَ مِنْكُمْ فَلْيَأْتِهِمْ وَلَوْ حَبْوًا عَلَى التَّلَجِّ . "

We (I and my family) are members of a household, for whom God has chosen the life of the Hereafter over the life of this world; and the members of my household shall suffer great affliction. They will be forcefully expelled from their homes after my death; then there will come people from the East carrying black flags, and they will ask for some good to be given to them, but they shall be refused service; accordingly, they will wage war and emerge victorious, and will be offered that which they desired in the first place, but they will refuse to accept it, and will hand it over to a man from my family who will appear to fill the Earth with justice as it has been filled with corruption. So whoever is alive at that time should go and join them, even if they have to crawl across ice, for among them will be the Vicegerent of Allah (*Khalifatullah*), al-Mahdi. (*Sunan* of Ibn Majah, Kitab al-Fitan, Bāb-u Khuruj al-Mahdi, First hadith, serial no. 4220)

Thus, Imam Mahdi (A) will complete the task of all the Prophets:

“Certainly We sent Our apostles with manifest proofs, and We sent down with them the Book and the Balance, so that mankind may establish justice” (57:25).

Interestingly, the Qur'an says that God sent the Prophets not to establish justice by themselves; rather

they have come to guide and help people so that “people themselves establish justice (*li-yaqum an-nas-u bi'l-qist*).”

Imam Mahdi (A) will also do the same. He is not going to miraculously fill the earth with justice and equity by himself. If that were the case why would he have to wait for centuries? He will come only when there will be enough number of qualified helpers who will have established justice and other values that Imam will call for among themselves and then invite others to share with them. When people of the world see that values such as justice, equity, peace, security, brotherhood and mercy that form their own ideals are called for by Imam (A) and his people and moreover they are implemented by them

“you will see the people entering God’s religion in throngs” (110:2).

Here I should emphasise that according to the teachings of Ahl al-Bayt (A), Imam Mahdi (A) will manifest universal and inclusive mercifulness for all people. In a hadith narrated by Jabir b. Abdullah al-Ansari, Imam Mahdi (A) is described as “*rahmatan lil-‘ālamīn*” which means “mercy for all the intelligent inhabitants of the world”. (*Al-Kāfi*, Vol. 1, p. 528; *Al-Ghaybah* by Shaykh al-Tusi, pp. 145 & 146)

This is a title for the Prophet Muhammad (S), the last Prophet (2:157) which is shared by the last successor. Indeed, it is an established idea that Imam Mahdi (A) will act according to the conduct and manner of the Prophet. (*Bihar al-Anwār*, Vol. 51, p. 123)

We also find in a hadith from the Prophet Muhammad (S) that “the inhabitant of heaven and the inhabitant of the earth will be pleased with Mahdi.” (*Al-Ghaybah* by Shaykh al-Tusi, p. 178)

A similar hadith is narrated by Ibn Hajar, in which the prophet is quoted as saying: “The people (*ahl*) of heaven and the people of the earth and the birds in sky will be pleased with his governorship (*khilāfah*). (*Al-Saw‘īq al-Muhriqah*, p. 164) According to a hadith from the Prophet Muhammad (S) about Imam Mahdi (A), “His nation (*ummah*) will take refuge to him like bees who take refuge to their queen”. (This hadith is narrated by Abu Sa‘id al-Khuddari and cited in *Al-Hawī lil-Fatāwā*.)

The Qur’an tells us that the reason people gathered around the Prophet Muhammad (S) and remained with him was that

“by God’s mercy you are gentle to them; and had you been harsh and hardhearted, surely they would have scattered from around you. So excuse them, and plead for forgiveness for them, and consult them in the affairs, and once you are resolved, put your trust in God” (3: 159).

Thus, Imam Mahdi (A) will also show such an inclusive passion, love and mercy to the people of the world and even to animals and birds that everyone will be pleased with him and find his console in him. Of course, like the Prophet Muhammad (S), Imam Mahdi (A) will also be faced with the transgressors and all those who do not understand any language other than power. Fights will be imposed on Imam (A) and his helpers, but this will be temporary and in the transient situation before the establishment of

his government.

One of the ideas that we find in the hadiths is that after the advent of Imam Mahdi (A) not only 'hostility will go away' but there will also be a perfect friendship and brotherhood among the people. For example, Imam Baqir (A) says:

When al-Qa'im uprises, perfect friendship comes and a man may go and take what he needs from the pocket of his brother and he will not stop him. (*Bihar al-Anwar*, Vol. 52, p. 372)

In a conversation with Sa'id b. Hasan, Imam Baqir asked: "Does one among you go to his brother and put his hand in the pocket of his brother to take what he needs without being stopped?" He replied: "I know of no such a thing among us." Then Imam (A) said: "So, nothing." Sa'id asked: "Are we then destroyed?" Imam replied: "This people have not yet been given their [full] intellect." (*Al-Kafi*, Vol. 2, p. 174)

Let us try hard and pray day and night to be included among those qualified helpers of Imam Mahdi (A) who will have established justice, brotherhood, mercy and piety among themselves and then offer them to others.

Thanks to God, we are now able to present to you a new issue of the *Message of Thaqaalayn*. Similar to previous issues, this issue contains seven papers on different aspects of Islamic thought.

The first paper is entitled: "Key Concepts in Islamic Spirituality." Continuing the discussion on spirituality in the last five issues, in this paper Dr. Mohammad Ali Shomali refers to three major qualities that everyone needs to acquire for his spiritual progress. Having or lacking faith is directly connected to one's degree of his or her love for God. By increasing one's knowledge of God and His Creations, and reflecting upon this, love for Allah can be achieved and this will improve one's spiritual state.

Related to love is being thankful, as the one who is thankful will love God. Finally, ultimate humbleness is held to be of utmost importance, on which servitude to God and many other good qualities depend. Hujjatu'l-Islam Dr. Shomali is an associate professor and the Director of the International Institute of Islamic Studies, Qum. He is also the Dean of Postgraduate Studies for the International Students at Jami'at al-Zahra, the Islamic University for Women in Qum. God-willing, this series of papers will continue in the forthcoming issues.

The second paper is entitled: "Divine Justice and the Problem of Evil." In this paper, Dr. Ghulam Hossain Adeel briefly studies the question of divine justice and evil, a subject meticulously studied by scholars for thousands of years.

Dr. Adeel analyzes the problem of evil and the occurrence of pain and suffering under the authority of a Just God. This leads to the question of why so much evil exists if there is divine justice. The notion of divine justice from the viewpoint of Augustine theodicy, a largely adopted perspective held by the

Western church, is also examined. Hujjat'ul-Islam Dr. Ghulam Hossain Adeel has obtained his doctorate from the University of Birmingham and is currently based in Manchester.

The third paper is entitled: "Nasir al-Din Tusi and His Socio-Political Role in the Thirteenth Century." In this paper, Dr. Abbas Ali Shameli refers to scientific and socio-political role of Khajah Nasir al-Din Tusi in one of the most critical eras of Islamic history and examines some of the controversies that exist about his affiliations.

The paper illustrates Tusi's socio-political function, which included Tusi's flexible nature in communicating with Muslim scholars from different schools of thought, his long-term residence among the Shi'i Seveners, and his cultural influence of reviving Islamic knowledge. Hujjat'ul-Islam Dr. Shameli is an assistant professor in the Dept. of Education at the Imam Khomeini Education & Research Institute, Qum.

The fourth paper is entitled: "Bayt al-Ma'ad and the Distribution of Zakat." In this paper, Dr. Mahmood Namazi introduces the Islamic concept of the Bayt al-Ma'ad, and its objective in reducing inequality between the wealthy and the deprived by distributing wealth with the goal of the society's financial welfare taken into consideration. In giving a full description, Namazi explains the philosophy, concept, and sources of the Bayt al-Ma'ad, as well as examining zakat and its socio-economic role in creating financial equality in Muslim countries. Hujjat'ul-Islam Dr. Namazi is an assistant professor in the Dept. of Philosophy at the Imam Khomeini Education & Research Institute, Qum.

The fifth paper is entitled: "The Doctrine of Mahdi and Pluralism." In the paper, Dr. Mohammad Hussein Mokhtari explains the idea of religious pluralism and examines its relation with the doctrine of Mahdi (A) in Islam. Hujjat'ul-Islam Dr. Mokhtari is an assistant professor in the Dept. of Kalām at the Imam Khomeini Education & Research Institute, Qum.

The sixth paper is entitled, "The Merits of Fasting and the Month of Ramadan." This paper elaborates on the concept of divine banquet and refers to some of the bounties of Allah SWT in the month of Ramadan and for those who fast. This paper is a transcript made by Mr Morteza Karimi of a lecture delivered by Dr Mohammad Ali Shomali in July 2010 at the Islamic Centre England, London. Along with

The seventh and final paper is the second part of "Islam and Nationalism: A Theoretical Point of View." In this part, Dr Sayyid Ahmad Rahnamaei examines the position of nationalism in Islam and whether or not it prevents Islam from fulfilling its role in developing a just society. He highlights the fact that nationalistic biases never stemmed from religion itself; rather, its followers possessed prejudices that often led to disputes.

Thus, Islam and nationalism, in reality, have few similarities. He demonstrates this by using Qur'anic passages on *millah* as a divine path and religion, defines the term *ummah* as stated in the Qur'an, and sheds light on the concept of an Islamic Ummah. In establishing a Muslim brotherhood, this not only creates an Islamic community between all nations and tribes, but it is the only way a believer can gain

success in this world and the next.

Only religion plays a fundamental role in forming an *Ummah Wāhidah*. For unity to occur, people of all nations and races are asked to follow the guidelines set by the Prophets of God to form one single community. Taking pride in one's nation is encouraged in Islam, though it is to be for the sake of advancement in all fields of knowledge and to avoid dependence on other countries. Adhering to traditions is also not a problem, provided that this does not conflict with divine teachings. Hujjatu'l-Islam Dr. Rahnamaei is an assistant professor in the Dept. of Education at the Imam Khomeini Education & Research Institute, Qum.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all who have contributed to this volume and pray for their success. I would also like to thank the Ahlul Bayt (A) World Assembly and the Islamic Centre of England for their support and encouragement. And last, but not the least, I thank God the Almighty for His guidance and favour upon us in the past and present and to help us all achieve a unified worldwide community.

Mohammad Ali Shomali

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