

Section Thirty-Three

The traditions that indicate his birth will be concealed

Comprised of thirteen traditions

653. Kifayyat al-athar1: Abū `Abd-Allah al-Khuzaymī informed us, from Muḥammad b. Abū `Abd-Allah al-Kāfi, from Sahl b. Ziyād al-Ḥadāmi, from `Abd al-`Aḥm b. `Abd-Allah al-Ḥasan, who said:

I said to (Imam) Muḥammad b. `Alī b. Mūsā, peace be on him, “I hope that you are the Qa'im from the Ahl al-Bait of Muḥammad who will fill the earth with fairness and justice just as it will be filled with injustice and unfairness.” He replied, “O Abū I-Qasim! There is no one from us but that he rises with Allah's commands and is the guide towards the religion of Allah. But the Qa'im through whom Allah, Mighty and Majestic be He, will cleanse the earth from the disbelievers and deniers and will fill it with justice and fairness, is the one whose birth will be concealed² from the people.

He will disappear from them and they will not be allowed to say his name. His name will be the same as the Messenger of Allah, Allah's blessings be on him and his family, and also his epithet. He is the one for whom the earth's distances will be shortened, every difficulty will be eased for, and for him will gather his companions—who are equal to the ones who participated in the Battle of Badr, three hundred and thirteen men—from distant places on earth. This is the [meaning of the] saying of Allah, Mighty and Majestic be He,

‘Wherever you may be, Allah will bring forth all of you. Surely, Allah has power over all things’ (Quran Surah Baqarah 2: 148).

When this number of sincere people gathers for him, he will make his affair evident. When ten thousand men are complete, he will emerge with Allah's permission. Then, he will continue slaying Allah's enemies until Allah, Blessed and Exalted be He, becomes satisfied.” I said to him, “My Master! How will he know that Allah has become satisfied?” He answered, “Mercy will be inspired in his heart . . . (to the end of the tradition).”

654. Kamāl al-dīn3: Through the same chain of narrators— meaning `Alī b. Aḥmad al-Daqqāq and Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Shaibānī, may Allah be satisfied with them, from Muḥammad b. Abī `Abd-Allah al-Kāfī, from Mūsā b. `Imrān al-Nakha`ī, from his uncle al-Ḥusayn b. Yazīd, from Ḥamzat b. `Umrān, from his father `Umrān b. A`yun, from Sa`d b. Jubair—from `Alī b. al-Ḥusayn, the Master of the Worshipers, peace be on him, who said: “The birth of our Qa`im will be concealed from the people until they will say, ‘He hasn’t been born yet.’ [It is concealed] so that when he reappears, he will not have pledged allegiance to anybody.”

655. Kamāl al-dīn4: Narrated to us Aḥmad b. Ḥarīr al-Farmī and `Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. Shādhawayh al-Mu`addib Ja`far b. Muḥammad b. Masrūr and Ja`far b. al-Ḥusayn, may Allah be satisfied with them, from Muḥammad b. `Abd-Allah b. Ja`far al-Ḥimyarī, from his father, from Ayyūb b. Nāṣir, from al-`Abbās b. `Ḥmir al-Qaḥabānī, from Ja`far b. `Alī b. al-Ḥasan b. `Alī b. `Abd-Allah b. al-Mughaira al-Kāfī, from his grandfather al-Ḥasan b. `Alī b. `Abd-Allah, from al-`Abbās b. `Ḥmir al-Qaḥabānī, from Mūsā b. Hilāl al-Ḥabbābī, from `Abd-Allah b. `Aḥmad who said:

I said to (Imam) Abī Ja`far, peace be on him, “Your followers in Iraq are plenty. By Allah, there is no one in your Ahl al-Bait like you! So, why do you not rise [against the government]?” He replied, “O `Abd-Allah b. `Aḥmad! You have filled your ears with nonsense. By Allah, I am not your Master (Ḥāḥibikum).” I asked, “So, who is our Master?” He answered, “See [who is the one] whose birth is concealed from the people; he is your master.”

656. Kamāl al-dīn5: `Abd al-Wāḥid b. Muḥammad al-`Aḥḥār, from Abī `Amr al-Laithī, from Muḥammad b. Mas`ūd, from Jabra`īl b. Aḥmad, from Muḥammad b. `Ḥsīn, from Muḥammad b. Abī `Umair, from Sa`d b. Ghazwān, from Abī Baḥār, from (Imam) Abī `Abd-Allah, peace be on him, who said: “The birth of the Master of this affair will be concealed from these people so he will not have pledged allegiance with anyone when he reappears. Allah, Mighty and Majestic be He, will set right his affairs in one [single] night.”

657. Ghaybat al-Nu`mān6: Al-Kulainī, from a number of our companions, from Sa`d b. `Abd-Allah, from Ayyūb b. Nāṣir who said:

I said to Abī l-Ḥasan al-Riḥābī, peace be on him, “We hope that you are the master of this affair and that Allah will hand it to you by pardoning [the people] and not by using the sword; because they have pledged allegiance to you and the coins have been forged with your name inscribed on them.” He responded, “There is no one from us except that when letters are sent to him or is pointed at by fingers [i.e. he becomes famous] or is asked questions or wealth is taken to him, that he is either assassinated or will die in his bed until Allah sends a boy7 from us for this affair. His birth and upbringing will be hidden but his parentage will not be concealed.”

658. Ithbāt al-Wāḥiyā8: From Sa`d b. `Abd-Allah, through his chain of narrators from (Imam) Abī Ja`far, peace be on him: “The Qa`im is the one whose birth will be concealed from the people.”

659. Ghaybat al-Nu`mān: Narrated to us `Alī b. A`mad, from `Ubaid-Allah b. Mūsā al-`Alawī, from Mu`ammad b. A`mad al-Qalānisī—in Mecca in the year 267 AH—from `Alī b. al-`asan, from al-`Abbās b. `amir, from Mūsā b. Hilāl, from `Abd-Allah b. `A`ad al-Makkī who said:

I started the Hajj pilgrimage from Wāsiq and I met (Imam) Abū Ja`far Mu`ammad b. `Alī, peace be on him, who asked me about the people and the prices. I replied, “I left the people while they were yearning for you. If you rise, the people will indeed follow you.” He answered, “O son of `A`ad! You have listened to [the speech] of foolish people. By Allah, I am not your master (ʿibukum). None of us is pointed at with fingers or with eyebrows but that he will be killed or that he will die naturally.”

I asked, “What do you mean by he will die naturally?” He replied, “He will die in his deathbed but in a state of anger, until Allah raises the one whose birth is unknown.” I said, “And who is the one whose birth is unknown?” He answered, “See who is the one that the people are not sure whether he has been born or not. He is your master.”

The following traditions also prove the above concept: 539, 574, 610, 645, 686, and 688.

1. Kifāyat al-athar, chap. “What has been narrated from Abū Ja`far Mu`ammad b. `Alī al-Riḍī, peace be on him,” p. 277, no. 2; Kamāl al-dīn, vol. 2, chap. 36, p. 377, no. 2, with an addition at the end; l`līm al-warī, chap. 2, sect. 2, with the aforementioned addition at its end; al-Itijā, vol. 2, p. 449; Kifāyat al-muhtadī, pp. 100–101, no. 26, citing Kamāl al-dīn.

2. The reason of his concealed birth was that when the Abbasids found out about the traditions from the Holy Prophet and the Imams from the Ahl al-Bait, peace be on them, that the Mahdī is the twelfth Imam who will fill the earth with justice, will conquer the forts of deviation, annihilate the governments of the merciless, will kill the tyrants, and will takeover the East and West of the earth, they decided to extinguish His light by killing him. Hence, they appointed spies, secret agents, and midwives to keep a watch on the house of the father of the ʿujja, Imam Abū Mu`ammad al-`asan al-`Askarī, peace be on him. But Allah desired to complete His light. Therefore, He, Mighty and Majestic be He, concealed the pregnancy of his mother Narjis from the people. It has been narrated that al-Mu`tamid, the Abbasid Emperor, sent midwives secretly and ordered them to enter the houses of the Banū-Hāshim, especially the house of Imam al-`Askarī, peace be on him, without permission whenever they wanted to investigate and find out about his condition and affairs. But they were unable to find anything for Allah had decided to repeat the custom of His Prophet, Moses, in His proof, just as his enemies adopted the tradition of the Pharaoh and implemented his policies. When the Pharaoh found out that his kingdom would be destroyed by a man from the Israelites, he appointed inspectors to check the pregnant women and monitored their births with strict surveillance. If the new-born was a male, they would kill him instantly and if it was a female, they would spare her. Consequently, they killed thousands of infants in their quest to find Moses. Allah, Mighty and Majestic be He, says: “They killed your sons and let you daughters live” (Quran 2:49). In this situation, Allah, the Exalted, placed His Prophet under His protection and concealed his birth from them. Allah, the Exalted, says: “And We revealed to the mother of Moses, ‘Suckle him and when you fear for him, throw him in the river and neither fear nor grieve. Surely, We will return him to you and appoint him as a messenger’” (Quran 28:7). His similarities with Abraham and Moses have also been mentioned in numerous traditions.

It has been narrated in llzīm al-nūbīb from one of the books of the highly learned scholar, Mu`ammad Yūsuf al-Dikhḥrī, which he authored during the reign of Shah Abbās II: “One day, he [i.e. Imam al-Mahdī] was in the room of his mother in the courtyard when Narjis realized that some midwives were near. She became extremely anxious but did not have enough time to hide that light. An announcer called out to her, ‘Throw the Proof of Allah, the defeater (al-qahhār), in the well in the courtyard.’ So she did. The midwives heard the voice of the child and rushed into the house. They thoroughly

searched the house but found no trace of him. They went out confused and perplexed. When the house became empty of strangers, Narjis went towards the well to find out what had happened to the apple of her eye. As she looked over the well, she saw that its water had risen to the level of the ground of the house and the Divine Proof was floating on the water, safe and sound, like a shining full moon. His diaper had not become wet at all. So she took him, suckled him, and praised Allah and prostrated to express her gratitude for Him . . .”

From what we have mentioned, it becomes clear why al-ʿUjja’s birth was concealed—but not his forefathers’ births. The reason is the glad tidings that were given about him: that he would conquer the forts, destroy the foundations of polytheism and hypocrisy, and inherit the earth and rule it in the end of times. The enemies of his forefathers knew they were practicing dissimulation (taqiyya) and would not rise with the sword until the voice would be heard from the sky and the signs were manifested. They also knew that the Mahdī—who is the last Imam and their seal—would rise with the sword, would put aside dissimulation (al-taqiyya), and would kill the enemies of Allah and cleanse the earth from polytheism, merciless rulers, oppressors, and disbelievers.

3. Kamāl al-dīn, vol. 1, chap. 31, pp. 322–323, no. 6; l’līm al-warā, chap. 2, sect. 2; Biʿār al-anwār, vol. 51, chap. 4, p. 135, no. 3; lthbāt al-hudūt, vol. 3, chap. 32, p. 466, no. 126.

4. Kamāl al-dīn, vol. 1, chap. 32, p. 325, no. 2; l’līm al-warā, chap. 2, sect. 2; Kashf al-ghumma, vol. 2, pp. 522–523; lthbāt al-hudūt, vol. 3, chap. 32, p. 467, no. 129.

I say: Other traditions have also been recorded with this meaning, see al-Kāfī, vol. 1, chap. 138, p. 342, no. 26; Ghaybat al-Nu`mān, pp. 167–168, no. 7–9; Biʿār al-anwār, vol. 51, p. 128.

5. Kamāl al-dīn, vol. 2, p. 480, no. 5; Biʿār al-anwār, vol. 52, chap. 20, p. 96, no. 15.

6. Ghaybat al-Nu`mān, chap. 10, p. 168, no. 9; Kamāl al-dīn, vol. 2, chap. 35, p. 370, no. 1, similar to it.

7. The author of Lisān al-ʿArab writes: “It is said ‘so and so is the boy of the people’ even if he is old, which is like saying, ‘so and so is the youth of the army’ even if he is old” (Lisān al-ʿArab, vol. 12, p. 440).

8. lthbāt al-wāʿiyya, pp. 222–223.

I say: Here, ‘people’ means ‘non-Shias’ because in numerous traditions ‘non-Shias’ have been referred to as ‘people.’

9. Ghaybat al-Nu`mān, chap. 10, p. 168, no. 8.

I say: As we already mentioned above, ‘people’ refers to ‘non-Shias.’

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