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## 16. Issues Of The Ghaybah: Reason For The Disappearance

The disappearance of the Mahdi, 'alaihi al-salam, is suggested in authentic Sunni ahadith, although the details are not given. A lot of them talk about his "coming out" during the end of time. For instance, Imam al-Hakim (d. 403 H) records this hadith:

أخبرني أبو العباس محمد بن أحمد المحبوبي بمرو ثنا سعيد بن مسعود ثنا النضر بن شميل ثنا سليمان بن عبيد ثنا أبو الصديق الناجي عن أبي سعيد الخدري رضي الله عنه أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال : يخرج في آخر أبو الصديق الناجي عن أبي سعيد الخدري رضي الله عنه أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال : يخرج في آخر أبو الصديق الناجي عن أبي سعيد الخدري رضي الله عنه أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال : يخرج في آخر

Abu al-'Abbas Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Mahbubi – Sa'id b. Mas'ud – al-Nadhr b. Shumayl – Sulayman b. 'Ubayd – Abu al-Siddiq al-Naji – Abu Sa'id al-Khudri, may Allah be pleased with him:

The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said, "The Mahdi will **COME OUT** at the end of my *Ummah*.1

Al-Hakim comments:

هذا حديث صحيح الإسناد

This hadith has a sahih chain2

Imam al-Dhahabi (d. 748 H) agrees:

صحيح

"Coming out" means that he would have been concealed from public view until then. It must be noted that this same term has been used to describe what al-Masih 'Isa b. Maryam, 'alaihi al-salam, the Dajjal and the Yajuj and Majuj will do as well. Imam Muslim (d. 261 H) has this:

وحدثني محمد بن بشار حدثنا محمد بن جعفر حدثنا شعبة عن النعمان بن سالم قال سمعت يعقوب بن عاصم بن عروة بن مسعود قال ... قال عبدالله بن عمرو قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم يخرج الدجال في أمتى

Muhammad b. Bashar – Muhammad b. Ja'far – Shu'bah – al-Nu'man b. Salim – Ya'qub b. 'Asim b. 'Urwah b. Mas'ud – 'Abd Allah b. 'Amr:

The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said: "The Dajjal will COME OUT in my Ummah."4

We all know that, according to *sahih* Sunni *ahadith*, the Dajjal was even alive during the lifetime of the Prophet, *sallallahu 'alaihi wa alihi*! That means he has been breathing for more than a millennium, or perhaps even several. But, he has been hidden from public view by Allah. He will be freed eventually; and then, he will become visible to everyone. That will be his "coming out".

We also read this *riwayah* of Imam Ahmad (d. 241 H):

حدثنا عبد الله حدثني أبي ثنا عبد الرحمن بن مهدي ثنا سفيان عن فرات عن أبي الطفيل عن حذيفة بن أسيد الغفاري قال أشرف علينا رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم من غرفة ونحن نتذاكر الساعة فقال لا تقوم الساعة حتى ترون عشر آيات طلوع الشمس من مغربها والدخان والدابة وخروج يأجوج ومأجوج وخروج عيسى بن مريم ....والدجال

'Abd Allah (b. Ahmad) – my father (Ahmad b. Hanbal) – 'Abd al-Rahman b. Mahdi – Sufyan – Furat – Abu al-Tufayl – Hudhayfah b. Usayd al-Ghiffari:

The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, came out to us from a room while we were discussing the Hour. Then, he said, "The Hour will not be established until you have seen ten signs: the appearance of the sun from its west, the smoke, the creature, **the COMING OUT of Yajuj and Majuj, the COMING OUT of 'Isa b. Maryam**, the Dajjal....5

Shaykh Shu'ayb al-Arnau® says:

إسناده صحيح

Its chain is sahih6

The Yajuj and Majuj have been in existence for thousands of years, and are still alive. However, they are

concealed from public view. When they "come out" – apparently from concealment, they will become visible to all human beings. The same is the case with Prophet 'Isa. He has been alive in the heavens for more than 2000 years. So, none can see him today. But, when he "comes out" as well, he will descend from the heavens and will be seen by everyone.

The Mahdi too will "come out". This raises a very strong possibility that he – like 'Isa, the Dajjal, and Yajuj and Majuj – would first be alive for a very long period, but concealed from public view. When his coming out occurs, he will then become visible to all human beings. These facts are confirmed in authentic Shi'i *riwayat*, with the necessary details. Shaykh al–Saduq (d. 381 H) records:

حدثنا محمد بن موسى بن المتوكل رضي الله عنه قال: حدثنا علي بن إبراهيم، عن أبيه، عن عبد السلام بن صالح الهروي، عن أبي الحسن علي بن موسى الرضا، عن أبيه، عن آبائه، عن علي عليهم السلام قال: قال النبي صلى الله عليه وآله: والذي بعثني بالحق بشيرا ليغيبن القائم من ولدي بعهد معهود إليه مني حتى يقول أكثر الناس:ما لله في آل محمد حاجة، ويشك آخرون في ولادته، فمن أدرك زمانه فليتمسك بدينه، ولا يجعل للشيطان إليه سبيلا بشكه فيزيله عن ملتي ويخرجه من ديني، فقد أخرج أبويكم من الجنة من قبل، وإن الله عز وجل جعل الشياطين أولياء اللذين لا يؤمنون

Muhammad b. Musa b. al-Mutawakil, may Allah be pleased with him – 'Ali b. Ibrahim – his father – 'Abd al-Salam b. Salih al-Harwi – Abu al-Hasan 'Ali b. Musa al-Ridha – his father – his ancestors – 'Ali, peace be upon him:

The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "I swear by Him Who sent me with the truth as a bearer of glad tidings, the Qaim from my offspring will surely become concealed from public view on the basis of a covenant that has been entrusted to him from me, such that most of the people will say "Allah has no need for the family of Muhammad" and the others will doubt in his birth. Whosoever meets his time, let him adhere to his religion, and he should not allow Shay an to get to him with his doubt, thereby bringing him down from my path and expelling him from my religion, for he had expelled your father from the Paradise in the past. And Allah has made the devils (shaya) leaders of those who do not believe."

Al-Haj Muhammad Zakariya says about it:

إسناده صحيح

Its chain is sahih.8

Verily, Allah and His Messenger speak the Truth! Today, we see Sunni brothers and sisters who claim that the Twelfth Imam is "useless", and we see lots of them denying his birth! This clearly is one of the miracles of the Prophet. Al-Saduq again documents:

حدثنا أحمد بن محمد بن يحيى العطار رضي الله عنه قال: حدثنا أبي، عن إبراهيم بن هاشم، عن محمد بن أبي عمير، عن صفوان بن مهران الجمال قال: قال الصادق جعفر بن محمد عليهما السلام: أما والله ليغيبن عنكم مهديكم حتى يقول الجاهل منكم: ما لله في آل محمد، ثم يقبل كالشهاب الثاقب فيملأها عدلا وقسطا كما ملئت . جورا وظلما

Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Yahya al-'Assar, may Allah be pleased with him – my father – Ibrahim b. Hashim – Muhammad b. Abi 'Umayr – Safwan b. Mahran al-Jamal:

Al-Sadiq Ja'far b. Muhammad, peace be upon them both, said: "I swear by Allah, your Mahdi will become hidden from you, such that the ignorant one among you will say, "Allah has no need for the family of Muhammad." Then, he will appear like the piercing star. He will fill it with justice and equity just as it had been filled with aggression and injustice."9

Al-Haj Muhammad Zakariya again comments:

إسناده معتبر

Its chain is reliable. 10

Therefore, it is authentically established. The Awaited Mahdi would disappear from public view and would later "come out" of the concealment to liberate the earth from aggression and injustice. The truth of this matter is further strengthened by the fact that several different sects declared *ghaybahs* for their self-chosen "Mahdis", long before the advent of the Twelfth Imam. In fact, there was a group which declared Imam 'Ali, 'alaihi al-salam, as the Mahdi and described his death as his "ghaybah"! That was less than four decades after the death of the Messenger of Allah. Obviously, these various sects must have learnt that the true Mahdi would go into occultation for a period from the authentic *riwayat*. However, they applied the right *ahadith* to the wrong persons, and thereby lost their ways.

But then, why would he need to hide from public view in the first place? After all, he is the Imam. Is he not supposed to be visible and accessible to his followers across the world? What exactly is the benefit of his concealment from the rest?

First and foremost, it must be noted that *any* human being – in ordinary circumstances – can be killed, including even prophets and messengers:

That was because they used to disbelieve in the *ayat* of Allah, **and also used to kill the prophets** wrongfully. 11

And:

Is it that whenever there came to you **a messenger** with what your souls did not desire, you grew arrogant? Some, you called liars and **some, you killed**. 12

And:

Say: "Verily, there came to you **messengers** before me, with clear signs and even with what you speak of. **Why then did you kill them**, if you are truthful?" 13

Therefore, the threat to the life of anyone sent by Allah is real and serious.

Moreover, it is permissible for a prophet, messenger or Imam – in certain circumstances – to flee or hide for his life from his enemies and opponents.

And when those who disbelieve plotted against you (O Muhammad) to imprison you, or to kill you, or to drive you out. They plot, but Allah (too) plots (against them); and Allah is the Best of plotters. 14

This was what forced Prophet Muhammad to flee Makkah, on the Order of his Lord. He was in grave danger and his defences were weak. During his flight to al-Madinah, his enemies still tracked him on the way to "take him out". Al-Hafiz Ibn Kathir (d. 774 H) gives some further details:

During the year of the *Hijrah*, the pagans tried to kill, imprison or expel him (i.e the Prophet). So, he ESCAPED with his friend and companion, Abu Bakr b. Abi Quhafah, to the *Thawr* Cave. They remained in there for THREE DAYS. So the scouts who were sent in their pursuit returned, and they proceeded to Madinah. 15

Here, the Messenger fled from his murderous enemies, and hid in a cave for three days in order to preserve his life. If the scouts in pursuit of his life had not left on the third day, he would have remained

there for much longer. He was hiding in the cave for days while his followers in Madinah had no guide to lead them 16. This was his own *ghaybah*, his disappearance from public view, due to dire security concerns. It was short, and could have been longer. Yet, its significance is heavy, especially in any discourse on Imam al–Mahdi.

There are circumstances when fleeing is forbidden, especially during a field battle between Muslims and their religious enemies 17. This was not one of such 18. Meanwhile, the case of 'Isa b. Maryam, 'alaihi alsalam, is even more serious than that of Muhammad. The Masih's life got into a true danger of imminent execution. Allah intervened on his behalf, and took him into the heavens to save him 19. Our Lord has certain future plans for 'Isa during the kingdom of the Mahdi. If he was killed – unless a raj'ah by him occurred – the plan would capsize, and Allah is above failure 20. That is his own ghaybah too. His true followers were suddenly left without a prophet or messenger! 21 By the logic of our brothers from the Ahl al–Sunnah, he has been "useless" for thousands of years.

Interestingly, even in our times, the life of the Masih is still not safe *at all*. If he came today and expressed ideas that agreed with the 'aqidah of any particular sect, the other Muslims would call him an impostor and would have him executed or assassinated as soon as they could. For instance, imagine Prophet 'Isa telling the *Ummah*: "The offspring of Muhammad, his Ahl al–Bayt, are his only genuine *khalifahs*, alongside the Book of Allah". Despite the presence of this fact in several *sahih* Sunni *ahadith*, most Sunnis would instinctively oppose him, and the extremists amongst them would immediately call for his head. He could even be targeted repeatedly with sniper fire and car bombs, by none other than Muslims!

Meanwhile, it definitely goes without saying that the Mahdi too is in exactly the same, or perhaps an even worse, situation. If he "came out" today, and said things that undermined the legitimacy of certain Muslim sects, he would be rejected instantly by a lot and his life could be terminated violently in no time. The armed drones, warplanes and guided missiles of the powerful Western and Eastern nations, blocs and alliances are also there, to bomb, or perhaps "nuke", him at the slightest opportunity. He will overthrow all juntas, regimes, kingdoms, administrations, and governments all over the earth, and will establish a unified worldwide Kingdom of Allah. Apparently, he will be fiercely targeted by all! This is why the Twelfth Imam has gone into hiding; and this is why he still remains invisible.

'Allamah al-Majlisi (d. 1111 H) copies:

إكمال الدين: ماجيلويه، عن عمه، عن البرقي، عن أيوب بن نوح، عن صفوان عن ابن بكير، عن زرارة، عن أبي عبد الدبح على نفسه الذبح الله على نفسه الذبح الله على نفسه الله على نفس

*Ikmal al-Din*: Majiluyah – his uncle – al-Barqi – Ayub b. Nuh – Safwan – Ibn Bukayr – Zurarah:

Abu 'Abd Allah, peace be upon him, said: "The boy will have a disappearance (ghaybah) before his

rise." I said, "And for what reason?" He said, "He will fear his being slaughtered."22

The *hadith* has **a** *mu'tabar* (**reliable**) **chain**, according to Ayatullah al–Muhsini. 23 Here, the Twelfth Imam is referred to as "the boy" by his sixth ancestor. This reveals that the Imam was predicted to become invisible very early, as a child. Moreover, his disappearance is of two stages. This is why it is sometimes also called the two *ghaybahs*. However, there was no time, since he first disappeared, that he was ever visible to the general public.

Al-Majlisi again records:

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إكمال الدين: العطار، عن سعد، عن ابن عيسى، عن خالد بن نجيح، عن زرارة قال: سمعت أبا عبد الله عليه السلام . يقول: إن للقائم غيبة قبل أن يقوم قلت: ولم؟ قال: يخاف وأوما بيده إلى بطنه
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Ikmal al-Din: al-'Allar - Sa'd - Ibn 'Isa - Khalid b. Najih - Zurarah:

I heard Abu 'Abd Allah, peace be upon him, saying: "Verily, there shall be a disappearance for the Qaim before he rises." I said, "And for what reason?" He said, "He will fear" and he gestured with his hand towards his stomach.24

Then, he cited six other chains for this *hadith*25, and Ayatullah al–Muhsini declares its *sanad* to be *mu'tabar* (reliable).26 This one probably refers to poisoning. The Imam would be killed violently or could get poisoned if he appeared before the right time.

Shaykh al-Kulayni (d. 329 H) too reports:

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وبهذا الاسناد، عن أحمد بن محمد، عن أبيه محمد بن عيسى، عن ابن بكير، عن زرارة قال: سمعت أبا عبد الله عبد الله عليه السلام يقول: إن للقائم غيبة قبل أن يقوم، إنه يخاف _ وأوماً بيده إلى بطنه _ يعنى القتل
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And with this chain – Ahmad b. Muhammad – his father, Muhammad b. 'Isa – Ibn Bukayr – Zurarah:

I heard Abu 'Abd Allah, peace be upon him, saying:

"Verily, there shall be a disappearance for the Qaim before he rises. **He will fear**" - and he gestured with his hand towards his stomach - meaning (he will fear) being killed.27

Al-Majlisi comments:

Muwaththaq ka al-Sahih28

But then, will there ever be the right time? Will his life ever be safe? Moreover, will he ever be able to take on all the world superpowers at a time, or even at different times, to topple them and establish the divine kingdom on their lands? We will address these queries soon in the chapter on how the Mahdi will conquer the world.

- 1. Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah al-Hakim al-Naysaburi, al-Mustadrak 'ala al-Sahihayn (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah; 1st edition, 1411 H) [annotator: Mustafa 'Abd al-Qadir 'Asa], vol. 4, p. 601, # 8673
- 2. Ibid
- 3. Ibid
- 4. Abu al-Husayn Muslim b. al-Hajjaj al-Qushayri al-Naysaburi, Sahih Muslim (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi) [annotator: Muhammad Fuad 'Abd al-Bagi], vol. 4, p. 2258, # 2940 (117)
- 5. Abu 'Abd Allah Ahmad b. Hanbal al-Shaybani, Musnad (Cairo: Muasassat Qur⊡ubah) [annotator: Shu'ayb al-Arnau⊡], vol. 4, p. 7, # 16189
- 6. Ibid
- 7. Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. 'Ali b. al-Husayn b. Babuyah al-Qummi, Kamal al-Din wa Tamam al-Ni'mah (Qum: Muasassat al-Nashr al-Islami li Jama'at al-Mudarisin; 1405 H) [annotator: 'Ali Akbar al-Ghiffari], p. 51
- 8. Muhammad Zakariya, al-Sahih wa al-Mu'tabar min Akhbar al-Hujjah al-Muntazar (Majmu'at al-Rasid; 1st edition, 1434 H), p. 14, # 1
- 9. Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. 'Ali b. al-Husayn b. Babuyah al-Qummi, Kamal al-Din wa Tamam al-Ni'mah (Qum: Muasassat al-Nashr al-Islami li Jama'at al-Mudarisin; 1405 H) [annotator: 'Ali Akbar al-Ghiffari], pp. 341-342, Ch. 33, # 22
- 10. Muhammad Zakariya, al-Sahih wa al-Mu'tabar min Akhbar al-Hujjah al-Muntazar (Majmu'at al-Rasid; 1st edition, 1434 H), p. 15, # 2
- 11. Qur'an 2:61. See also 2:91, 3:21, 3:112, 3:181, and 4:155
- 12. Qur'an 2:87. See also 5:70
- 13. Qur'an 3:183
- 14. Qur'an 8:30
- 15. Abu al-Fida Isma'il b. 'Umar b. Kathir al-Qurashi al-Dimashqi, Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim (Dar al-Taybah li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi'; 2nd edition, 1420 H) [annotator: Sami b. Muhammad Salamah], vol. 4, p. 155
- 16. We want to ask our Sunni brothers: was the Prophet "useless" during those three days?
- 17. Qur'an 8:15-16
- 18. There is a common mistake among our people who assume that awliya of Allah never have fear or sadness, based upon Qur'an 10:62. However, that ayah applies only to the Hereafter, as the authentic ahadith about it which we have quoted in the chapter "Is the Mahdi Superior to the Masih?" firmly establish.
- 19. Qur'an 4:157-158
- 20. This perhaps explains why Allah protected him, but did not protect many of the other prophets from death. He spared him because He had reserved a special job for him at the end of the world. Prophet Ibrahim, 'alaihi al–salam, too was protected by Allah (Qur'an 21:69–70). He too escaped, by Allah's Help, from his oppressors (21:71). Our Lord had placed a blessed lineage of prophets, messengers and Imams in his loins (2:124, 29:27), and his death would have caused a huge disaster over the earth.
- 21. Qur'an 5:19
- 22. Muhammad Baqir al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar al-Jami'ah li Durar Akhbar al-Aimah al-Aimah (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi; 3rd edition, 1403 H), vol. 52, p. 97, Ch. 20, # 18
- 23. Muhammad Asif al-Muhsini, Mashra'ah Bihar al-Anwar (Beirut: Muasassat al-'Arif li al-Ma®bu'at; 2nd edition, 1426 H), vol. 2, p. 221
- 24. Muhammad Baqir al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar al-Jami'ah li Durar Akhbar al-Aimah al-Aimar (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi; 3rd edition, 1403 H), vol. 52, p. 146, Ch. 22, # 70
- 25. Ibid, vol. 52, pp. 146-147, Ch. 22, # 70
- 26. Muhammad Asif al-Muhsini, Mashra'ah Bihar al-Anwar (Beirut: Muasassat al-'Arif li al-Ma®bu'at; 2nd edition, 1426 H),

vol. 2, p. 227

- 27. Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. Ya'qub b. Ishaq al-Kulayni al-Razi, al-Usul min al-Kafi (Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah; 3rd edition) [annotator: 'Ali Akbar al-Ghiffari], vol. 1, p. 340, # 18
- 28. Muhammad Baqir al-Majlisi, Mir-at al-'Uqul fi Sharh Akhbar Al al-Rasul (Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah) [annotator: Sayyid Muhsin al-Husayni al-Amini], vol. 4, p. 52

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