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Chapter 1: Characteristics of the Imam

Lexical Definition of Imamate

Imamate means leadership and Imam is attributed to someone –either righteous or vicious– whose conduct and ideas are followed by the people. The leader of the pious and the leader of the evildoer are both called Imam. Both meanings are mentioned in the Holy Quran too.

The Holy Quran states,

"And We appointed, from among them, leaders, giving guidance under Our command, so long as they persevered with patience and continued to have faith in Our Signs."1

"And we made them (but) leaders inviting to the Fire; and on the Day of Judgment no help shall they find."2

Definition and Position of Imamate

Imamate has been a fundamental Islamic belief since Early Islamic Era. It has divided the Islamic Ummah (nation) into two group; the Sunni and the Shiah, each of which having different definitions of Imamate. Abdur Rahman Lahiji, a Sunni scholar, defines Imamate as:

Imamate is not an Islamic fundamental for us; rather it is one of obligatory commandments, unlike the Shiah that consider it as an Islamic principle. Some have defined Imamate as the leadership of the public in worldly and religious issues. However, a better definition of it is the caliphate of Prophet Muhammad (S) in establishing the religion and maintaining the Muslims' unity. Obeying such a caliph is

then obligatory for all the Muslims.3

As is clear, the Sunni Muslims consider Imamate a worldly position, and an Islamic fundamental. They regard the necessity of appointing Imam a jurisprudential issue and appointment of him the duty of Islamic Ummah, unlike the Shiah, who know Imamate as an Islamic fundamental, after Prophethood. The Shiah define Imamate as succession and caliphate of the Messenger of Allah (S) in all prophetic duties and ranks, except relation with the invisible world and receiving revelation, which are only for the prophets (a.s.).

The Prophet's Positions

It is proved in *Kalam*⁴ books that Prophet of Islam (S) had several positions during his lifetime:

- 1. Having relation with the invisible world and getting revelation from the Almighty Allah,
- 2. Maintaining religious knowledge, teachings, commandments, and laws descended as revelation,
- 3. Propagating this heavenly collection among the people, answering their questions, and fighting superstition,
- 4. Enforcing political, social, judiciary, economic, legal, and punitive Islamic commandments, defending Islam and the Muslims, and establishing Islamic government.

Prophet Muhammad (S) was always away from mistakes and forgetfulness in fulfilling these duties. He was also infallible and away from committing sins and crimes. If a prophet is not infallible, religious commandments and rules are not guaranteed and Divine Mercy is not accomplished.

This is, in fact, the Shiah viewpoint, who believe that just as human being needs Divine knowledge, teachings, and rules revealed to prophets (a.s.) for reaching material and spiritual perfection, he needs to have an infallible leader who undertakes the Prophet(S)'s responsibilities and follow his goals in the absence of the Prophet (S) throughout history. Otherwise, the prophets' (a.s.) mission in guiding human beings will remain incomplete.

Human need for religious sciences and teachings is not limited to the Prophet (S)'s age; humans need this Divine Source of knowledge in all ages. The short time of Prophet Muhammad (S)'s prophetic mission did not secure this continual need; especially because of termination of prophetic missions ever.

The Shiah Muslims know the Imam as a brilliant complete human, who succeeds the Prophet of Islam (S) and undertakes all his duties, except receiving revelation.

The Duties of the Imam

The characteristics and duties of the Imam are as follows.

- 1. He knows all sciences, teachings, commandment, and rules of the religion, not from revelation, but through the Prophet (S)'s training and other sources that will be mentioned later.
- 2. He tries to propagate Islamic teachings and commandments and fight religious deviations.
- 3. He enforces political, social, judiciary, legal, punitive, and economic rules of Islam; that is he continues the Prophet (S)'s Islamic government based on Islamic criteria.
- 4. The Imam, like the Prophet (S), is completely away from mistakes, forgetfulness, and intentional wrongdoing. He is, in fact, infallible; otherwise, Allah's purpose of guiding humans and introducing the true path toward perfection would remain incomplete and His Mercy would not be accomplished.

The Shiah argue for human need to the Imam, his knowledge and infallibility, and the necessity of his appointment by the Almighty Allah based on the famous Mercy (lutf) principle, considering the existence and appointment of the Imam as a sign of Allah's Mercy.

The late Allamah Hilli writes, "The existence of Imam is because of Allah's Mercy and appointing the Imam is obligatory upon the Exalted Allah, so that His purpose is accomplished!"5

The Imamiyyah (Shiah) Muslims know the Imam a noble person, who is the best one in his age in regard to belief, commitment to ethical virtues, true knowledge of Islamic commandments and rules, and devoutness, after the Messenger of Allah (S). He is infallible and away from mistakes, forgetfulness, wrongdoing, and sins. Only such a person can be the Prophet (S)'s successor and the people's leader.

The Sunni Muslims, however, do not necessitate these conditions for the successor of Prophet Muhammad (S). They even do not nullify the probability of mistakes or wrongdoing for him. They think that qualification for ruling and managing worldly issues suffices for the Imam. The Sunni Muslims consider obeying the Imam obligatory for the people and opposing him forbidden.

The Imam as Mentioned in Traditions

There are many traditions, which define the Imam and Imamate, one of which we mention here. The eighth infallible Imam of the Shiah, Imam Ridha' (a.s.) stated,

Imamate is the position of the prophets (S) and the heritage of their successors. Imamate is caliphate of Allah and His Messenger and the position of Amiral Mu'minin, Imam Ali (a.s.), Imam Hasan (a.s.), and Imam Husayn (a.s.). Imamate is governing Muslims' religion and system, worldly prosperity and honor.

Imamate is the basis of blossoming tree of Islam and its young branches. The Imam manages well the

issues related to *Salat* (regular prayers), *Sawm* (fasting), *Zakat* (statutory Islamic levy), *Hajj* (pilgrimage of the ka'bah), *Jihad*, developing government properties, *Sadaqat* (alms), execution of commandments and *Hudud* (Islamic punishment defined for specific sins), and guarding the boundaries.

The Imam is Allah's trusted servant among the people, His *Hujjat* (sign) for the servants, His caliph in lands, inviter to Allah's religion, and protector of Allah's sanctuary. The Imam is infallible and away from sins and vices. He is abound with knowledge and patience, the pillar of religion, honor of Muslims, and the cause of anger and perish of the infidel and the heterodox. The Imam is a unique personality in his own age; no one can replace him and no scholar reaches his scientific stance. The Imam's virtues and goodness are not obtainable; rather he has reached such a position by Allah's Mercy.6

Characteristics of the Imam

According to the tradition of Imam Ridha' (a.s.), the Imam is a noble personality with the following characteristics:

- 1. He is completely away from committing sins; he is infallible.
- 2. He has unobtainable sciences, which are granted to him by the Exalted Allah.
- 3. He is patient in dealing with the people and fulfilling his duties.
- 4. His position is the position of the prophets (a.s.).
- 5. He is Allah's caliph and the successor of the Messenger of Allah.
- 6. His government organizes Muslims' affairs and gives them honor and prosperity.
- 7. Islamic rules and commandments are enforced in his government; *Salat*, *Sawm*, *Zakat*, *Hajj*, and *Jihad*. Religious *Hudud* are executed and Islamic country's boundaries are protected.
- 8. The Imamate is steady tree of Islam, whose branches are always spreading in the world.
- 9. The Imam is Allah's trustee and His *Hujjat* for the servants. He invites the people toward Allah and defends Allah's commandments.
- 10. The Imam is a unique person in his own age; no one is like him, nor can anyone reach his position.
- 11. The Imam honors Muslims, but angers and perishes the infidel and the heterodox.

The Necessity of Obeying the Imam

The Holy Quran has placed obeying the Imam in the same rank as obeying the Almighty Allah and His Messenger (S);

يا أَيُّها الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِى الأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنْ تَنازَعْتُمْ فِى شَىءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَاليَوْم الآخِرِ ذ لِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا

"O ye who believe! Obey God, and obey the Messenger, and those charged with authority among you. If ye differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to God and His Messenger, if ye do believe in God and the Last Day: That is best, and most suitable for final determination."

In this verse, obeying three ones is considered obligatory for the believers:

1. The Almighty Allah has created humans and all the blessings for them, so appreciating the Creator is a logical issue.

One of the Divine blessings is sending the prophets (a.s.) along with Divine guidelines. Allah's Mercy necessitates that He regulate guidelines and plans for humans' worldly and spiritual perfection and send them by His messengers, so that the people are guided to the true path and warned against evilness and wrongdoing. In other words, following the Divine commandments and obeying the prophets (S) are to the benefit of the servants, hence logically obligatory.

2. The Prophet of Islam (S) is the second one whose obeying is considered obligatory in the mentioned Quranic verse. Prophet Muhammad (S) received messages from Allah through revelation and declared them to the people. Moreover, the Almighty Allah had allowed him to issue commandments in two cases. First he was allowed to issue commandments in various jurisprudential fields based on heavenly revelations and propose them to the believers. Second, since he was the Muslims' leader and managed their social and political issues, he was permitted to make rules based on the expediency of the Islamic Ummah and in framework of general Islamic commandments and execute them. These rules are literally called 'governmental commandments'.

Based on the mentioned Quranic verse, obeying the Prophet (S) is obligatory in this case too. This verse is also a proof for Prophet Muhammad (S)'s infallibility, or else obeying him absolutely was unjustified.

3. The Ulul Amr (those charged with authority). Although ulul amr apparently includes all the leaders and rulers, it should only mean the infallible rulers, because obeying them is considered absolutely obligatory. As mentioned before, obeying the fallible is religiously and logically baseless. As a result, ulul amr –as mentioned in the Quranic verse under discussion– means the Prophet (S)'s successors or the infallible Imams (a.s.), who are responsible for ruling the Islamic ummah after the Messenger of Allah (S) and manage the Islamic country. Some traditions interpret ulul amr as the infallible from the Prophet (S)'s Household.

Husayn Ibn Abil 'Ala' says, "I asked Imam Sadiq (a.s.), 'Is obeying the successors of Messenger of Allah (S) obligatory?' Imam Sadiq (a.s.) answered, 'Yes. They are the people about whom the Exalted Allah said.

أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِى الأمْرِ مِنْكُمْ

'Obey Allah and obey the Apostle'

And He stated.

'(Your (real) friends are (no less than) God, His Apostle, and the (fellowship of) believers, - those who establish regular prayers and regular charity, and they bow down humbly (in worship). 8)"9

Therefore, the infallible Imams (a.s.) were the possessors of the Prophet (S)'s sciences and attempted in circulating them. Moreover, Prophet Muhammad (S) had allowed them to make necessary laws in case there was no explicit text in Holy Quran, based on Muslims' expediency and time and place requirements and execute these so called 'governmental laws'.

The Imam's Knowledge from a Logical Point of View

The main goal of Prophet Muhammad (S)'s mission was training and refining humans. In addition to reciting and teaching the Holy Quran, the Messenger of Allah (S) interpreted Quranic verses and explained vague points when necessary. He mentioned transformer and obsolete, general and specific, absolute and conditional verses. He presented religious commandments and rules that he obtained from revelation to the people. He spread true beliefs and fought superstition and wrong ideas. He invited the people to moral virtues and prohibited from vices. He had necessary knowledge about all these teachings and sciences from revelation or logic; hence he could accomplish these duties well, directing his followers to the right path.

The Imam, who is the successor to the Prophet (S) and continues his path, should possess all these sciences to be able to fulfill his responsibilities; otherwise there will be no valid guarantee for continuation of religion. In other words, the Imam should have all the sciences of the Prophet (S), except that the Prophet gets them directly via the Divine revelation but the Imam gets them from the Prophet (S).

The Imam's Knowledge in Traditions

In various traditions, knowing religious sciences, teachings, and commandments is considered a necessary condition of the Imam. Imam Ridha' (a.s.) has stated, "In fact, the Almighty Allah grants success to the prophets and Imams and benefits them from His treasure of sciences and maxims like no one else. Therefore, their knowledge is superior to that of the people in their own age. The Holy Quran states,

أَفْمَنْ يَهْدى إِلَى الْحَقّ أَحَقٌّ أَنْ يَتَّبِعَ أَمَّنْ لا يَهدّى إِلّا أَنْ يُهْدى فَما لَكُمْ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ

"Is then He Who gives guidance to truth more worthy to be followed, or he who finds not guidance (himself) unless he is guided? What then is the matter with you? How judge ye?" 10

And also,

He to whom wisdom is granted receiveth indeed a benefit overflowing; but none will grasp the Message but men of understanding. 11

When the Almighty Allah selects one of His servants for managing other servants, He grants him patience, fills his heart with knowledge, and continuously reveals His sciences to him. Therefore he is not disabled from answering questions and does not become bewildered in finding the truth." 12

Imam Ali (a.s.) stated, "O people! The most deserving person for Imamate is the most powerful one among you in managing the issues and the most learned one in Divine commandments. If someone was going to plot sedition after taking oath of allegiance, he is asked to leave it and if he did not accept, he is fought with." 13

Amiral Mu'minin, Imam Ali (a.s.), also stated, "The Imam is aware of the lawful and the unlawful, the obligatory and recommended deeds and Allah's commandments. He is needless to the people and everyone needs him." 14

He has also stated, "Learn the true path to salvation from those who know this path (the Ahlul Bayt). They are revivers of knowledge and removers of ignorance. Their commandments reveal their knowledge to you. Their silence shows their speech style. Their appearance is the sign of their inside. They never oppose the religion and have no controversy over it."15

The first infallible Imam of the Shi'ah also described the Prophet (S)'s Ahlul Bayt this way, "They pondered in the religion as they should, learned it, and used it, not merely hear it and transfer to others. The narrators of knowledge are numerous, but safe guarders of it are little." 16

Conclusion of Prophethod and Accomplishment of Religion

As the Holy Quran explicitly states, the Prophet of Islam is the last prophet and there will be no prophets after him.

Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but (he is) the Apostle of God, and the Seal of the Prophets: and God has full knowledge of all things. 17

The end of prophet hood is a fundamental idea in Islam and the Islamic Ummah has consensus over it. Therefore, Islam is a religion forever and suffices human need for a religion in all times and all places. Moreover, since Prophet Muhammad (S) is the last prophet, revelation has ended after him. This is explicitly stated in Nahjul Balaghah of Imam Ali (a.s.) and some traditions.

Amiral Mu'minin (a.s.) stated, "The Exalted Allah sent Prophet Muhammad (S) at a time when there were no prophets and the people were in controversy. Therefore, He sent the Prophet (S) after other prophets and the revelation ended after him." 18

As a result, at the time of Prophet Muhammad (S)'s demise all religious commandments and rules should have been presented to the people and the religion been completed, as is explicitly stated in the Holy Quran.

The Holy Quran says,

This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion. 19

There is controversy among Quran interpreters about the important day mentioned in this verse, in which Islam is completed and stabilized and the infidels got disappointed of nullifying it. After precise detailed discussions and reviewing some traditions, the late Allamiyi Tabataba'i concludes that the important day mentioned in the Quranic verse is eighteenth of Zil Hajjah (the last lunar month) and during Prophet Muhammad's Hajjatul Wida' (the last *Hajj* pilgrimage)20.

As mentioned in traditions and history books, the Messenger of Allah (S), who was returning from his last *Hajj* pilgrimage, gathered the pilgrims in Ghadir land on this day. After performing a sermon, he formally appointed Ali Ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) to the Imamate position and during a long tradition he said, "Anyone whose Imam is I, so now Ali (a.s.) is his Imam. O Lord! Love those who love him and dislike those who dislike him!"

The Messenger of Allah (S) did two things in that historical day. First, he introduced the Holy Quran and his Household (the Ahlul Bayt) as two valid scientific sources, saying, "Anyone who follows these two sources will not go astray." Second, he introduced Imam Ali (a.s.) as his first successor and Imam from the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.).

Since the Prophet of Islam (S) had chosen Ali (a.s.) as the guardian of prophet hood sciences during his prophecy and attempted well in training him, Islam was completed by appointing him as the Imam of the ummah; a trustworthy guardian and executer of religious sciences. In such conditions, the mentioned verse was revealed to the Messenger of Allah (S).

How the 'completion of religion' by the Almighty Allah is justified, except that the Prophet (S) taught all religious commandments and rules part by part or wholly to Imam Ali (a.s.) during his lifetime and to other Imams (a.s.) via Imam Ali (a.s.).

It should also be remembered that the rules and commandments mentioned in the Holy Quran or left from Prophet Muhammad (S) do not satisfy the needs of people in that age and later eras. That is why the Sunni jurisprudents were forced to use qiyas (analogy), istihsan (using Imams' speech), or other principles for deducting religious commandments.

The Range of Imam's Knowledge

The range of Imam's knowledge is similar to that of prophet hood knowledge for fulfilling the prophet hood mission and conveying Allah' guidance to human beings. It is understood from the Mercy Theorem that since human is not able to provide his own physical and spiritual salvation he needs divine guidance sent by the prophets (S).

Therefore, the prophet receives from Allah everything humans need for seeking the path toward Allah and presents them to humans. The Imam, as the Prophet (S)'s successor, continues the Prophet (S)'s mission, hence he should know the prophet's sciences. The necessary prophet hood and Imamate sciences can be divided to six parts, as follows:

First, worshipping issues have the greatest role in guaranteeing heavenly salvation. These are, in fact, religious obligatory and recommended deeds, such as prayer, fasting, *Hajj*, supplication, alms–giving, *Jihad*, etc. The Prophet (S) and the Imams (a.s.) are completely aware of the quality, prelude, conditions, and other related issues of performing these worshipping duties and they guide the people in this regard.

Second, unlawful worshipping deeds are considered obstacles to seeking the path to salvation. Examples of such deeds are usury, bribery, drinking wine, oppression, usurp, dishonesty in transactions, adultery, etc. The Prophet (S) and Imams (a.s.) are quite aware of these vices and forbid people from committing them.

Third, belief principles –that are theology and Resurrection– are the basis of the Prophet (S)'s and Imams' (a.s.) mission. Although attention to Allah and Resurrection is set in human temperament and can be discovered by thinking, they are often neglected and need to be revitalized and completed in human nature by the Prophet (S) and the Imams (a.s.).

This way Allah's hujjah (reasoning) is completed for the servants. To this end, the first human on the earth was a prophet. Therefore, the prophet and the Imam should have a firm belief in belief principles and know the related issues to be able to guide the people to it too.

Fourth, attending to ethics as well as avoiding the vices have a major role in human worldly and heavenly salvation. Though, understanding goodness of morality and obscenity of evilness is set in human temperament, he needs a guide in recognizing good and evil and having a desirable behavior, because of his powerful carnal instincts. That is why refinement of the soul has been considered a major purpose of the prophets. The prophet and the Imam should be familiar with virtues and vices. They should be adorned with virtues and away from vices to lead the people in this way by their knowledge and behavior.

Fifth, political and social issues or government–related rules and commandments, such as judgment, retaliation (*Qisas*), *Hudud*, *Diyah* (blood money), *Ta'zirat* (Islamic punishment limits), *Jihad*, defense, *Khums* (Islamic one–fifth tax), *Zakat* (Islamic statutory levy), war booties, state property, etc. One of the jobs of Prophet Muhammad (S) was governing the Islamic society.

This needed certain rules, some of which were descended by revelation and he was allowed by the Exalted Allah to deduct some others and then execute them based on expediency of Islamic system. This type of rules called governmental rules was obligatory for Muslims. After the Prophet (S)'s demise, this duty was put to his successor, who was permitted to deduct and execute necessary rules according to the interests of Islamic ummah. Therefore, the Imam should know all the social and political rules.

Sixth, customary issues that are related to different transactions, heritage, will, matrimony, divorce, etc. Although such issues are customary and have existed in all ages including the Prophet (S)'s era, they are considered Islamic commandments because they have been rejected, validated, modified, or completed by the Messenger of Allah (S). As a result, the Imam should know the related issues. Certainly the Imam can modify such issues too, considering the interests of Islamic ummah and time and place necessities.

The Prophet (S)'s Traditions as Source of Imams' Knowledge

The main source of infallible Imams' sciences is the traditions presented by Messenger of Allah (S) to Imam Ali (a.s.) and Imam Ali (a.s.) recorded. He then presented these to his successor, Imam Hasan (a.s.), and later to other infallible Imams (a.s.) in the same way.

Here is how this tradition collection was compiled: Islamic rules and commandments were revealed to Prophet Muhammad (S) during his 23-year mission in two ways; first, in the form of the Holy Quran, whose illuminating verses were descended to Prophet (S)'s heart and second, as traditions, whose phrases were revealed to his heart in various instances.

The Messenger of Allah (S) recited the very Quranic verses to the Muslims and especially to Imam Ali (a.s.). He recommended Imam Ali (a.s.) –who was able to read and write—record and maintain Quranic verses for future Muslims. There were, of course, other people, who wrote all Quranic verses or memorized them. Still there were some others who wrote or memorized only some of the verses.

The traditions were, however, dealt with differently. Though Prophet Muhammad (S) conveyed the rules and commandments he received through revelation for his companions, they were not committed to write or memorize the exact words of the Prophet (S) and transmit them to others. They either quoted from the Prophet (S)'s traditions approximately or ignored them and forgot them later. Of course there were people among the companions who were committed to writing or memorizing the traditions of the Prophet (S), but unfortunately they were scarce.

Islamic general issues and jurisprudential minor points were very enormous. They should have been kept for Muslims outside Medina –Prophet Muhammad' city– and later generations. Moreover, many jurisprudential issues were not related to simple life of the people in that age to be asked from Prophet Muhammad (S) and answered by him. That is while Islam is the everlasting religion and should respond to human needs in all ages and places.

The Messenger of Allah (S) who was aware of present and future conditions of Islamic ummah should have found a solution for this scientific problem; maintaining all religious rules, commandments, teachings, and sciences in a safe position, which was immune from mistakes and forgetfulness. This position was not but the luminous heart of Imam Ali (a.s.). Prophet Muhammad (S) attended to this important duty –by Allah's revelation and support– from the outset of his mission to his demise. He transmitted whatever he received from revelation to Imam Ali (a.s.). Imam Ali (a.s.) in turn attempted at exact recording and maintaining the information and was supported by the Almighty Allah in this major duty.

Imam Ali (a.s.) stated, "Once, the Messenger of Allah (S) embraced me and said, 'The Exalted Allah has ordered not to distance you from myself so that you hear my words and remember them.' Then this Quranic verse was revealed.

...and that ears (that should hear the tale and) retain its memory should bear its (lessons) in remembrance. 21" 22

الله Abbas has quoted from the Prophet (S), "When the holy verse وَتَعِيَها أُذُنُ واعِيَةٌ was revealed, I asked my Lord to set that retaining ear Ali's ear." Ibn Abbas then says, "Therefore, Ali (a.s.) recorded and kept what he had heard from Allah's Messenger and never forgot it."23

Imam Ali (a.s.) says, "I visited Messenger of Allah (S) every day. We were alone for an hour or so. I

followed him everywhere he went. The Prophet (S)'s companions know that he did not behave so with others. Sometimes he came to my house and sometimes I went to him. We then went to a solitude place. Prophet Muhammad (S) even sent his wives out. When he came to my house, however, Hadrat Fatimah (s.a.) and my children were present. I asked him questions and he answered. When my questions finished, he began speaking. He recited all newly-revealed Quranic verses for me and I wrote them down. He explained exegesis, transformer, outdated, strong, similar, specific, and general of the verses.

He had asked Allah to grant me ability to understand and memorize them; therefore, I did not forget any Quranic verse or scientific information I had written down. Prophet Muhammad (S) taught me the whole knowledge Allah had taught him, including *halal* and *haram*, recommended and prohibited, past and future information, all the heavenly Books of past prophets (a.s.), and any worship and wrongdoing. I memorized them all and forgot not even a letter of them. The Messenger of Allah (S) put his hand on my chest and prayed that the Almighty Allah replete my heart with knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and light. Then I told him, 'O Messenger of Allah! I did not forget anything from the time you prayed for me. Do you fear that I forget something?' He said, 'No, I do not fear that you may be forgetful or ignorant."24

Imam Ali (a.s.) was asked, "Why is it that you have quoted more traditions from the Messenger of Allah (S) than other companions?" He answered, "Because when I asked him questions he answered and when I became silent he began speaking."25

Imam Ali (a.s.) also said, "By Allah that no verse is revealed except that I know where and about which subject or person it is revealed. My Lord has granted me conscious mind and fluent speech." 26

The Prophet Confirms Ali's Scientific Mastery

Imam Ali (a.s.) could acquire all Islamic sciences, teachings, rules, and commandments in Prophet Muhammad (S)'s 23-year mission due to his extraordinary talent, Allah's support, and the Prophet's especial attention to him. This way he became the treasurer of prophet hood sciences, as confirmed by the Prophet (S) in various occasions too. The Prophet (S) stated, "O Abal Hasan27! You have drunk out of science beverage and you have drunk it much."28

The Messenger of Allah (S) also stated, "I am the house of wisdom and Ali is its door." 29

Anas Ibn Malik has quoted from the Prophet, who told Imam Ali (a.s.), "You will state the truth whenever the ummah has controversy over something after me." 30

Salman Farsi has quoted from Prophet Muhammad (S), "Ali Ibn Abi Talib is the most learned one in my ummah."31

Inscription Order

Although Imam Ali (a.s.) was away from mistakes and forgetfulness in keeping traditions, Prophet of Islam (S) ordered him to write down the sciences the Prophet (S) taught him in a book to be left for next Imams (a.s.).

Amiral Mu'minin (a.s.) has quoted, "The Prophet (S) told me, 'Write down what I tell you.' I said, 'O Messenger of Allah! Do you fear that I may forget?' He said, 'I am not afraid of your forgetfulness, because I have asked the Almighty Allah to set you as guardian of sciences. But write them down for the Imams from your progeny.'"32

Transmission of Science Books to Other Imams

By Imam Ali's (a.s.) constant attempt and Prophet Muhammad (S)'s supervision, prophet hood sciences and religious rules and commandments were recorded in some books, inherited to each of the infallible Imams (a.s.) and used by them. The infallible Imams (a.s.) sometimes made reference to these books in their speeches, calling the books 'Ali's book', 'sahifah', or 'jami'ah'.

Various traditions include this fact, some of which are pointed out here:

Abu Maryam has quoted from Imam Baqir (a.s.), "The jami'ah book is with us (the Prophet's Ahlul Bayt). It is a script as long as seventy dhara'33; everything is recorded in it even the diyah (compensation) of a scrape on the skin. This book is dictated by Messenger of Allah (S) and hand written by Imam Ali (a.s.). Another book is owned by us called jafr that is written on a piece of tanned skin. Past, present, and future sciences until the Hereafter are recorded in it."34

Abdullah Ibn Sanan has narrated that Imam Sadiq (a.s.) said, "There is a piece of skin of seventy dhira' with us, dictated by Prophet Muhammad (S) and in Imam Ali's (a.s.) handwriting. Whatever the people need exists in it, even the compensation for a scrape on someone's skin."35

Mu'alli Ibn Khanis has narrated from Imam Sadiq (a.s.) who stated, "The books were with Imam Ali (a.s.). When he traveled to Iraq, he entrusted them to Umm Salamah. After his demise, they were given to Imam Hasan (a.s.). After Imam Hasan (a.s.), they were given to Imam Husayn (a.s.) and after his martyrdom to Ali Ibn Al-Husayn (a.s.), the fourth infallible Imam. After his demise, they were with my father."36

Jabir Ibn Hayyan says that Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) told him, "O Jabir! By Allah that if we narrated traditions with our own opinion, we were certainly perished. Rather, we state traditions from what we have inherited from Messenger of Allah (S). Just as the people save gold and silver, our fathers have saved traditions to leave them for us."37

Ibn Hayyan considers Ja'far Ibn Muhammad, Imam Sadiq (a.s.), as a trustworthy narrator, saying, "He is

among the nobles of Ahlul Bayt regarding jurisprudence, knowledge, and virtues; his traditions are reliable. I examined the traditions I narrated from him and found all of them true. I found nothing opposing the reliable traditions in them."38

Conclusion

Some points can be understood from mentioned traditions and many other similar ones:

- 1. Islam was completed during Prophet Muhammad(S)'s lifetime and all required sciences, teachings, and rules were received through revelation.
- 2. The Messenger of Allah (S) attempted in publicizing and imparting the commandments in two ways; first, imparting them to the people and recommending they maintain and follow the commandments and second, saving all of the commandments in a secure place completely immune to forgetfulness and mistakes, that is Imam Ali's (a.s.) luminous heart.
- 3. Prophet Muhammad (S) recommended Imam Ali (a.s.) to record and write the traditions and leave them for the following Imams (a.s.).
- 4. Therefore, some books were compiled by Imam Ali (a.s.), who used them after Prophet Muhammad (S)'s demise. After Imam Ali's martyrdom the books were given to Imam Hasan (a.s.) and to other infallible Imams (a.s.) successively.

Reference to the Books

The mentioned books were with the infallible Imams (a.s.) and they attributed their knowledge to them. Each of the Imams (a.s.) transmitted religious sciences and commandments to his successor in two ways; verbal training and granting of books and permission to narrate from them. Each of the Imams attributed his traditions to the Prophet (S) through his fathers, as is seen in traditions.

Husham Ibn Salim, Hamad Ibn Uthman, and other people have narrated from Imam Sadiq (a.s.), "My tradition is the tradition of my father and his tradition is the tradition of my grandfather. The tradition of my grandfather is the tradition of Imam Husayn (a.s.) and his tradition is the tradition of Imam Hasan (a.s.), whose tradition is the tradition of Amiral Mu'minin (a.s.). The tradition of Amiral Mu'minin (a.s.) is the tradition of Messenger of Allah (S) and his tradition is the speech of the Exalted Allah." 39

Jabir says, "I told Imam Baqir (a.s.), 'When you recite a tradition for me, please mention its document.' Imam Baqir (a.s.) said, 'My father has narrated traditions from my grandfather and he from Gabriel and he from the Almighty Allah. Every tradition I recite for you has the same document. O Jabir! If you acquire a tradition from a truthful narrator, it will be better than the whole world for you.'" 40

Hafs says, "I told Imam Sadiq (a.s.), 'I have heard a tradition, which I am not sure is from you or your

father.' He stated, 'What you hear from me you can narrate from my father and the Messenger of Allah (S)."41

With regard to above-mentioned discussion it can be said that a major source of knowledge of infallible Imams (a.s.) is the traditions compiled from Prophet Muhammad's speech by Imam Ali (a.s.), which is transmitted to infallible Imams (a.s.). As a result, although the Imams (a.s.) were deprived of direct revelation, they benefited from revelation sciences indirectly. Each of the Imams (a.s.) narrated traditions with the most reliable documents –all whose narrators were infallible– from direct revelation. What an honor!

The Contents of the Books

Unfortunately, the content of the books is not completely known to us. We do not know if they only included jurisprudential issues and commandments or other religion–related issues such as ethics and mental teachings, or they contained all sciences. We do not know if all jurisprudential trivial points were recorded in detail in those books or they only contained principles of jurisprudence, from which the infallible Imams (a.s.) deducted the minor points. Some traditions imply that all required issues of the Muslims existed in the books.

Muhammad Ibn Muslim says, "I asked Imam Sadiq (a.s.), 'Does your scientific heritage of the Prophet (S) include main principles or the exegesis of all the topics people need, such as divorce and legacy as well?' Imam Sadiq (a.s.) replied, 'Imam Ali (a.s.) has written all scientific issues, even divorce and legacy in that book. If our Imamate be accepted, we have a tradition in every field, which will be executed."42

Traditions similar to above-mentioned ones reveal that everything, even the compensation ('arsh) for a scrape on body skin is recorded in those books.

Nevertheless, it is improbable that the mentioned books also include all minor issues in all jurisprudential topics. Everyone familiar with extensive Islamic jurisprudence confirms that including all related issues in a single book —even if it is seventy dhara'— is impossible, especially if it contains other religion—related sciences too. In sum, the exact content of the books is not known.

The Holy Quran

The second source of infallible Imams' sciences is the Holy Quran. This heavenly book is the main most valid source of Islamic sciences, teachings, commandments, and rules. The reliability of Holy Quran is certain, because successive narrations and Muslims' consensus throughout history prove that the present text of Quran has revealed from Almighty Allah to Prophet Muhammad (S)'s luminous heart. He has recited it —with its rich content— and Imam Ali (a.s.) and other revelation writers have recorded it and transmitted to Muslims in that era and finally to us.

The Holy Quran has a very rich content to the extent that whatever human being needs for his salvation in this world and the Hereafter –and has necessitated sending of the prophets (S) for the Generous Alwise– exists in it. The sciences and teachings mentioning which have been necessary because of Allah's Mercy as pointed out in Holy Quran are: major principles about the world Creator, theology and the Almighty Allah's Attributes, some of His blessings, the after–death life, Resurrection, reckoning human deeds in the Hereafter, the Paradise and rewards of good deeds, the Hell and punishment of evil deeds, Prophet Muhammad (S) and other prophets (S) and their role in guiding mankind throughout history, good conduct and its result in human salvation, bad behavior and its harm, duties of the servants before the Creator, and the methods of worshipping and thanking Him.

Human should know these issues, ignoring which brings about irreparable harms. Therefore, common sense necessitates that the All–Merciful never leaves human without guiding him; rather He sends prophets (S) equipped with sciences to guide people to the true way.

The Prophet of Islam (S) was appointed to prophet hood for the same reason and his mission plan is mentioned in the Holy Quran. Prophet Muhammad (S) is the last messenger and there will be no prophet with a heavenly book after him. Since human mind is always progressing, reaching new findings every day and evolving his life, sciences and teachings of the Holy Quran should be so comprehensive that they fulfill religious requirements of all times, places, and conditions. The Holy Quran introduces itself this way,

And We have sent down to thee the Book explaining all things, a Guide, a Mercy, and Glad Tidings to Muslims. 43

In other words, all sciences and teachings that are related to religion and human beings need are present in the Quran.

It should be borne in mind, however, that though the Holy Quran is an explanatory guiding book from which every human can benefit as much as his understanding, it has a very deep inside, which is not captured by everyone. Different people have different understandings from the Quran internal meanings, which have led to appearance of Quranic exegesis (tafsir).

The Quranic verses are not alike; there are indisputable and analogous verses, cancelling and cancelled verses, general and specific verses, and absolute and conditional verses. The exegetists of Holy Quran can compare the verses, ponder, use related sciences, and refer understanding of analogous verses to the indisputable ones, thus finding the truth of verses.

An expert exegetist is someone who is completely familiar with Arabic language, literature, and minute linguistic points, speculative theology (*ilmul kalam*), philosophy, and other related sciences, as well as all

Quranic verses and traditions of Prophet Muhammad (S). However, not all exegetists have equal knowledge in these fields. Everyone can benefit from deep meanings of this heavenly book to the extent of his innate genius and curiosity.

The honorable Prophet of Islam (S) was a brilliant Quran exegetist. He was quite aware of indisputable vs. analogous, cancelling vs. cancelled, general vs. specific verses, and absolute vs. conditional verses, revelation reason of verses, and minute literary points of Quranic verses. Moreover, he was familiar with interpretation of verses and was considered a pioneer in Quranic sciences. His understanding of Quranic themes was chiefly different from other exegetists; ordinary exegetists get Quranic teachings by their apparent or inner senses and are not aware of objective realities, while Prophet Muhammad (S) –the first addressee of Holy Quran– observed Quranic realities through his inner sense in their own places, which helped have mental understanding of them too.

This unseen means of understanding was always a powerful aid for him. The secret of his infallibility is also rooted in this important privilege.

As a result, Prophet Muhammad (S)'s understanding of theology, theism, or Allah's attributes is different from and much deeper than our understanding of these themes, because his knowledge is intuitive while ours is acquirable. When the honorable Messenger of Allah (S) gave news of the after-death life, Resurrection, the Paradise, and the Hell, he had already witnessed their true setting; his mental understanding resulted from objective realities.

The Prophet (S)'s understanding of enjoining and forbidding, obligations and prohibitions, religious rules and commandments was different from our understanding. During revelation, Prophet Muhammad (S) saw true expediency or imperfection of religious rules and their sources and roots —which show the true path to humanity and guarantee salvation in this world and the Hereafter—through his insight. Moreover, he witnessed the goodness of good deeds and evilness of wrongdoing directly.

Considering this background about Prophet Muhammad (S)'s sciences, we can conclude that some commandments –which are not mentioned as revelation– have been general revelation. Or they have been issued by the Prophet (S); he was religiously allowed to issue verdicts because of his known purified conduct.

Transmission of Quranic Sciences to the Infallible Imams

The honorable Messenger of Islam (S) attempted to teach Quranic sciences and teachings as well as exegesis of the verses to Imam Ali (a.s.) to be left for later Muslims. Imam Ali (a.s.) recorded this information exactly and transmitted to other Imams (a.s.). Therefore, all infallible Imams (a.s.) can be considered knower of Quranic exegesis and truth and pioneers in Quranic sciences, as was Prophet Muhammad (S). The difference, however, was that the Prophet (S) received the revelation –and Quranic sciences—directly, while the Imams (a.s.) acquired the sciences through Prophet Muhammad (S)'s

guidance and Allah's especial attention -which is a key necessity for being an Imam.

In sum, the Holy Quran is a major source of infallible Imams' sciences and the Imams (a.s.) are knower of Quranic sciences and exegesis, as is mentioned in many traditions.

Abus Sabah says, "By Allah that Imam Baqir (a.s.) stated, 'The Almighty Allah taught Quranic sciences and exegesis to His Prophet (S). The Prophet (S) taught them to Ali (a.s.). By Allah that Ali (a.s.) taught them to us."44

Imam Sadiq (a.s.) said, "I know Allah's Book by heart completely. The news of heaven and the earth from the past to the future are in it. The Almighty Allah stated, 'Everything is mentioned in the Quran." 45

Barid Ibn Mu'awiyyah has narrated Imam Sadiq (a.s.) or Imam Baqir (a.s.) who said about the Quranic verse,

(no one knows its hidden meanings except God and those who are firmly grounded in knowledge46), "The Messenger of Allah (S) was the best pioneer in science. The Almighty Allah taught him whatever He had revealed to other prophets (S) in addition to their exegesis, not leaving anything untold. The Prophet (S)'s successors know all these too.

Those who are now aware of Quranic exegesis say that they believe in what Allah has revealed when they hear it from a scholar (Prophet's successor). The Holy Quran has absolute and conditional, cancelling and cancelled, and specific and general verses. Pioneers in science know them all."47

Abdur Rahman Ibn Kathir has quoted from Imam Sadiq (a.s.), "The pioneers in science are Amiral Mu'minin (a.s.) and the Imams (a.s.) after him." 48

The mentioned traditions and many other similar ones indicate that the infallible Imams (a.s.) knew Quranic exegesis, the scientific sources, the real advantages and reasons for issuing religious commandments and rules, just like Prophet Muhammad (S). The difference, of course, was that the Prophet (S) received the revelation directly, while infallible Imams (a.s.) were deprived of it.

Therefore, what was mentioned about the commandments issued by the Prophet (S) is true about the commandments issued by the Imams (a.s.), which are not seen in Holy Quran and Prophet (S)'s tradition. In other words, they are issued by the Imams; they were allowed to issue verdicts because of their known purified conduct. And Allah knows best.

The Infallible Imams and Mental Sciences

Human being is wise. He uses his wisdom and logical measurement to discover some unknown things from his definite general data. Human, for instance, understands the cause–effect relationship and that everything requires a cause. Therefore, when he sees something, he is certain that it has a cause and seeks that cause. This is a privilege for human being, which is idiomatically called theoretical mentality.

Such mental reasoning is used in proving belief principles, such as theology, Resurrection, or prophet hood. All humans have the Divine blessing of mentality, but their intellectual levels are very different. The prophets (S) and the infallible Imams (a.s.) have been the wisest of the people in their own age.

The Messenger of Islam (S) states, "The Almighty Allah did not send a prophet or messenger except when his wisdom was perfect and superior to that of his people."49

The honorable Messenger of Allah (S) used his perfect wisdom in understanding belief principles, such as theology, Resurrection, and human need to prophets' guidance sent by the Almighty. In fact, he believed in these facts through his mentality. Therefore, he had certainly believed in Allah even before his appointment and hated disbelief and polytheism. It should be pointed out that mental belief –the belief that is acquired by pondering– is not beyond conception and acquirable knowledge, even if it reaches certainty.

After being appointed to prophet hood, direct relationship with the unseen world, and receiving revelation, however, Prophet Muhammad (S)'s mental belief got beyond meaning and reached the level of intuition. In this level, he observed the facts that cannot be understood with conceptual knowledge. Intuitive knowledge and heavenly observations of Prophet Muhammad (S) can be considered as a support for his mental sciences.

The belief and heavenly sciences have special effects that do not exist in case of mental sciences. The infallible Imams (a.s.) –as testified in the history and their traditions– have been the wisest of the people in their own age. Therefore, they perceived sciences related to Creation and the Resurrection by their perfect mentality. They were away from disbelief and infidelity even before being appointed for Imamate.

These chosen people did not receive the revelation directly, but they benefited from the Prophet (S)'s heavenly sciences indirectly due to Allah's especial blessings and Prophet Muhammad (S)'s guidance. As a result, their knowledge about the Creation and the Resurrection was above conceptual science and had reached the level of intuition and certainty. They sometimes talked about Creation—or Resurrection—related facts in a way as if they directly observed them. Some examples of this manner can be studied in tradition, biography, or history books.

Amiral Mu'minin, Imam Ali (a.s.) stated about knowledge of the infallible Imams (a.s.), "Knowledge has been perceived by their insight and they have touched certainty. They have easily accepted what is

considered difficult by the mollycoddle and are accustomed to what the unwise fear. They relate with the bodies whose souls have ascended to the Heavens. They are Allah's caliphs on the earth and inviters to His religion. How much I desire meeting them!"50

Imam Ali (a.s.) also stated about the sciences of infallible Imams (a.s.), "They revitalize knowledge and perish ignorance. Their patience reveals their knowledge and their appearance shows their inside. Their silence is a sign of their strong logic. They do not oppose the truth and have no difference about it. They are pillars of the religion and refuge of the people. They replace the falsehood with the truth, drive falsehood away and abandon it forever. They ponder on and use the religion as it deserves, not merely hearing it and narrating for others. In fact, narrators of science are many, but its guardians are few."51

The infallible Imams (a.s.), just as prophet Muhammad (S), used mental and logical methods in inviting people to the belief principles, as is seen in their traditions and discussions. They talked to everyone as much as his recognition and understanding. Some of their words are so deep and complicated that are only understandable for the scholars. However, they sometimes speak so simply for the ordinary people. These different speech styles can be found in Imam Ali's (a.s.) Maxims in Nahjul Balaghah as well as various traditions of infallible Imams (a.s.).

As a result, the wisdom of the infallible can be considered a science source of the Prophet (S) and Imams (a.s.). Mental and logical reasoning is their propaganda method too. Of course, they were way from fallacy and wrong doing in deploying these tools.

The Role of Mind in Recognizing Ethics

Human being has an innate power that –if used properly– can recognize moral codes and follow them in the interest of the society and perfection of his soul. It knows wrongness too and considers it to the detriment of his life in this world and the Hereafter as well as the society. This precious innate power is called practical wisdom or the conscience. The Holy Quran considers this recognition as an innate sense.

By the Soul, and the proportion and order given to it; And its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right; Truly he succeeds that purifies it, And he fails that corrupts it!52

This invaluable force exists more or less in all humans and can be used in ordinary conditions, provided inhumane forces have not overcome human wisdom. Unfortunately, some people are so much surrendered to carnal instincts, such as selfishness, lust of position and property, greediness, wrath, hatred, and revenge that they forget their human spirit.

Therefore, the light of their pure instinct is darkened and they cannot recognize virtues and vices; they even sometimes consider vices as virtues. That is why human being always needs the guidance of selected infallible individuals to brighten his nature and help him know virtues and vices.

These selected people are the prophets (S) and infallible Imams (a.s.). Since the infallible Imams (a.s.) have perfect mentality and are away from faults and wrongdoing, they completely recognized ethical values and their outcomes in this world and the Hereafter. They followed these values and invited others to them too. They also knew ethical vices and their undesirable consequences in this world and the Hereafter.

They avoided the vices and forbade others from them too. Therefore, practical wisdom and ethical conscience –in addition to the Holy Quran and Prophet (S)'s traditions– can be considered a source of infallible Imams' (a.s.) ethical knowledge. The thousands of traditions about ethics, which are recorded in tradition books, are rooted in this rich infallible source.

The Prophet (S) and Guardianship Commandments

The commandments issued by Prophet Muhammad (S) were of two types; religious and guardianship. The religious commandments are the ones directly issued from the Exalted Allah and revealed to the Prophet (S). The Prophet (S) was ordered to convey them to the people. These commandments form the religion of Islam and no one except Allah has the right to issue them. Such commandments are either mentioned in Holy Quran or revealed to the Messenger of Allah (S) in different occasions and presented to the people.

The guardianship commandments, however, are the commandments that are not directly issued by the Almighty Allah. Rather Prophet Muhammad (S) —who was the guardian and ruler of Islamic government—was allowed to issue and execute the commandments necessary for managing social affairs of the society, such as defining tax for the expenses of Islamic government, issuing the order of *Jihad* (the holy war) or peace, relations with other Islamic or non–Islamic governments, judicial commandments, the limits of personal or governmental ownership, expropriating or limiting personal ownership in certain cases, and ordaining necessary commandments for various fields of Islamic government. In fact, since the ruling was given to the Prophet (S), wide authority was given to him too.

The Holy Quran states,

"The Prophet is closer to the Believers than their own selves."53

What was mentioned above was about government-related commandments.

According to some traditions, Prophet Muhammad (S) was permitted to ordain commandments in minor religious issues too and even in case of worships and present them to the people.

Abu Basir says, "I asked Imam Sadiq (a.s.) about the Quranic verse:

'Obey God, and obey the Messenger, and those charged with authority among you.'

The Imam (a.s.) said, 'This verse is revealed about Ali Ibn Abi Talib, Imam Hasan (a.s.), and Imam Husayn (a.s.).' I said, 'People wonder why the names of Imam Ali (a.s.) and the Ahlul Bayt are not mentioned in the Holy Quran.' Imam Sadiq (a.s.) replied, 'Tell people that *Salat* (the prayer) is mentioned in the Quran, but not the number of rak'ahs (unites); the Messenger of Allah defined it.

Zakat (statutory Islamic levy) is mentioned in the Holy Quran, but its amount –which is one dirham in every forty dirhams– was defined by Prophet Muhammad (S). The *Hajj* issue is mentioned in Quran, but the obligation of seven rounds of *Tawaf* (circumambulation around the ka'bah) was only mentioned by the Prophet (S). The mentioned verse was revealed about Imam Ali (a.s.), Imam Hasan (a.s.), and Imam Husayn (a.s.) and then Prophet Muhammad (S) said about Imam Ali (a.s.) in *Hajjatul wida*' (the last *Hajj*), 'Everyone whose leader is I, now Ali is his leader."54

Based on such traditions, it can be said that the guardianship commandments go beyond governmental commandments and include issuing obligatory commandments too. All the commandments issued by Prophet Muhammad (S) are so, unless they are mentioned in Holy Quran or the Prophet (S) had announced them as revelation. Anyway, if such commandments are narrated with true document, they are religiously valid and should be followed by the Muslims. According to the text of Holy Quran, obeying Prophet's order and avoidance is obligatory for the believers.

We read in the Holy Quran,

"Obey God, and obey the Messenger, and those charged with authority among you."55

It should be said that guardianship commandments of Messenger of Allah (S) were never issued out of carnal desires and without criterion. Being aware of real interest of the Muslims –through revelation– and away from fault or wrongdoing, he issued necessary commandments to maintain these interests. The Holy Quran states,

"Your Companion is neither astray nor being misled. Nor does he say (aught) of (his own) Desire.

It is no less than inspiration sent down to him: He was taught by one Mighty in Power."56

Therefore, intuitive awareness of real interests and detriments can be considered a source of the Prophet's sciences.

Fuzayl Ibn Yasar said, "I heard from Imam Sadiq (a.s.), 'The Almighty Allah trained His Prophet with the best method. When his learning completed, Allah told him,

'And thou (standest) on an exalted standard of character.'57

Then He presented the command of religion and the Ummah (Islamic nation) to the Prophet (S) to guide the people. Allah then told the people,

'So take what the Apostle assigns to you, and deny yourselves that which he withholds from you.'58

The Messenger of Allah (S) was supported by *Ruhul Qudus* (Gabriel). He was away from fault in managing people's issues and observed Allah's rules. Next Allah religiously set the prayers two units by two units until they were ten units a day. The Messenger of Allah (S) added another two units to all the two–unit prayers and one unit to the Evening Prayer (*Salat*ul Maghrib).

What was added by Prophet Muhammad (S) was included in wajib (obligatory) prayers, whose leaving is not permitted unless in travel. The one unit added to Evening Prayer should not be left even in travel. The Exalted Allah confirmed these alterations, therefore, the wajib prayers became seventeen units (rak'ahs).

Afterward, the Messenger of Allah (S) set the *nawafil* (recommended prayers) 34 units –twice the unit of obligatory prayers– which was confirmed by Allah too. This way the obligatory and recommended prayers became 51 units; *nafilah* of Night Prayer (*Salatul 'Isha'*) is two units that is performed while sitting and is considered one unit. The Almighty Allah obliged the *Sawm* (fasting) of Ramadan and His Messenger (S) recommended the fasting of Sha'ban month and three days in every month, which were confirmed by the Almighty.

The Almighty Allah prohibited drinking wine, but the Prophet (S) prohibited every intoxicating drink and was supported by Allah's confirmation. Prophet Muhammad (S) prohibited the Muslims from doing some deeds in the form of undesirability not complete forbiddance, giving option to the people. Therefore, the

servants should use the options, but avoid the prohibited deeds altogether.

The Messenger of Allah (S) did not permit avoiding the obligations and doing the prohibitions. One such prohibited deed is drinking any intoxicating drink, which is forbidden for everyone. The Prophet (S) did not allow the people to abandon the two units he added to all the obligatory prayers, except while in travel, so they should be stuck to. As a result, Prophet Muhammad (S)'s enjoining and forbidding is obligatory to be obeyed by the servants just as Allah's enjoining and forbidding."59

Moreover, Imam Sadiq (a.s.) has stated, "The Exalted Allah trained His Prophet (S) until he reached perfection. Then Allah told him, 'And thou (standest) on an exalted standard of character.', presented the religion to him, and said, 'So take what the Apostle assigns to you, and deny yourselves that which he withholds from you.' Allah defined the heritage shares of family members, but set nothing for the forefather. The Prophet (S) defined one–sixth of the dead property for the forefather and Allah verified it. That is why Allah said,

'Such are Our Bounties: whether thou bestow them (on others) or withhold them, no account will be asked.'60"61

Imam Baqir (a.s.) stated, "The Messenger of Allah (S) defined the compensation for eye loss and murder and prohibited wine and any intoxicating substance." The narrator asked Imam (a.s.), "Did the Prophet (S) issue any commandments without being first revealed by Allah?" Imam Baqir (a.s.) said, "Yes. It was for recognizing those who obeyed and those who disobeyed the Prophet (S)."62

Imam Sadiq (a.s.) stated, "By Allah that the Exalted Allah relegated the religious issues to no one but His Messenger (S) and the Imams (a.s.). Allah stated,

'We have sent down to thee the Book in truth, that thou mightest judge between men, as guided by God: so be not (used) as an advocate by those who betray their trust.'63

The same is true about the Prophet (S)'s successors."64

The Imams and Guardianship Commandments

The Imams (a.s.) are successors to Prophet Muhammad (S). They have all the Prophet (S)'s duties and the necessary authority. The Prophet (S) ruled the people and was permitted to issue commandments in the same filed. An Imam, too, has the government position and can issue and execute the necessary

commandments related to ruling. Although, none of the infallible Imams (a.s.) –except Imam Ali (a.s.) – were formally in office, they were religiously the rulers of Islamic country and had guardianship.

They were also permitted to issue commandments in the field of their guardianship. The traditions about minor issues of judgment, testimony, *Hudud*, *Diyah*, *Qisas*, *Ta'zirat*, duties, authority, and qualifications of rulers and judges, *Jihad*, defense, *Khums*, and *Zakat*, which are narrated from infallible Imams (a.s.) and have no similar theme in Quran or traditions of Prophet Muhammad (S), are considered guardianship commandments of infallible Imams (a.s.). Rulers and officials of government should follow these guidelines. The Muslims should ask the rulers to execute these useful principles. This is the least of what infallible Imams (a.s.) could do in the hard conditions of oppressed governments in their ages to show the true image of Islamic government.

Some jurisprudential commandments transferred to us from infallible Imams (a.s.), which are not mentioned in Holy Quran or Prophet Muhammad (S)'s traditions. They may be guardianship commandments too. One may say, "Just as the Prophet (S) was permitted to issue these commandments from Allah, the infallible Imams (a.s.) are allowed to do so from Prophet Muhammad (S). Such commandments are rooted in their guardianship, which is mentioned in Holy Quran and approved by the Prophet (S). If these kinds of commandments are narrated to us with valid religious documents, they are religiously reliable and should be obeyed."

It should be said that guardianship commandments of infallible Imams (a.s.) were not issued without regulation and out of carnal desires; rather they were based on real personal and social interests of Muslims in this world and the Hereafter. The Imams (a.s.) had received general regulations for issuing commandments from Prophet Muhammad (S) and issued necessary commandments based on time and place requirements and presented them to the people. They benefitted from Divine support and their infallibility—as a strong aid—and were away from faults and wrongdoing.

The Infallibility of Imams and its Limits

One of the brilliant characteristics of the Imams (a.s.) is infallibility. Infallibility means being safe. An infallible person is someone who is completely safe from committing faults, forgetfulness, and wrongdoing. Just as the Prophet (S) should be infallible, the Imam should be infallible, since he is the Prophet (S)'s successor.

If the Prophet (S)'s successor is not infallible, there will be no guarantee for execution of religious commandments revealed for people' guidance and Allah's blessings will not be completed. Various qualities of an infallible person are:

- 1. He has no superstitious or wrong opinion.
- 2. He commits no fault in understanding religious facts and issues.

- 3. He is away from fault and forgetfulness in recording and maintaining religious commandments, sciences, and teachings.
- 4. He commits no fault in presenting religious commandments, sciences, and teachings to the people.
- 5. He commits no unlawful or irreligious deed.

The Secret of Infallibility

The infallibility of the Prophet (S) and the Imams (a.s.) does not mean that they do not have the factors for or ability to commit sins. It does not mean that if they intended to commit sins, the Almighty Allah directly or through His angels avoided them. Rather, the infallible Imams (a.s.) –like other people— had lust and anger and could do wrong, but they avoided it.

The secret of their infallibility is twofold; first, their strong belief in Allah, the Hereafter, the Hell and the Paradise, the Reckoning, and punishments and rewards, and second, inner intuition of outcomes of wrongdoing, which is granted to them by the Almighty Allah.

The secret of infallibility of the Imams from faults and forgetfulness is their knowledge type. The Imams' (a.s.) knowledge of religious facts is intuitive, which originates from their insight. They intuitively know the true path to humanity and the sources of religious commandments and rules without any forgetfulness.

Moreover, their physical structure is created by the Exalted Allah in a way that they can state their intuitive knowledge in words for the people. This in another Devine blessing and support from the Almighty Allah.

Infallibility in Traditions

The main reason for the infallibility of the Imams (a.s.) is the very mental reason, which was mentioned before. Furthermore, infallible Imams (a.s.) have considered infallibility as a brilliant characteristic of an Imam in their traditions. As an example, Imam Ridha' (a.s.) stated, "The Imam is away from faults and wrongdoing. He possesses especial knowledge and patience. He causes the organization of religion, the honor of Muslims, anger of the heterodox, and perishing of the infidel."65

Imam Ridha' (a.s.) also stated in the same tradition, "When the Exalted Allah selects a servant to manage others, He grants the selected servant an open chest for this duty, illuminates his heart with wisdom, and inspires the necessary sciences to him, so that he will be able to answer any question and tell the truth. This selected person will thus be away from sins or faults and supported by the Almighty. Allah has given him these qualifications to be as a reason for other servants. This is Allah's blessing that grants everyone He wishes. And Allah possesses great blessings."66

Imam Sadiq (a.s.) described the Imam this way, "The Imam is a selected person from the Household of Prophet Muhammad (S), who is always observed and supported by Him. Allah guards him, saves him from Satan's deceits, bad reputations, and calamities. He is away from all faults and wrongdoing."67

Amiral Mu'minin (a.s.) stated, "The greatest level of *wilayat* (guardianship) of the Imam –whose obedience is obligatory– is considering him as infallible from faults, slip, and intentional offense. He does not commit major (*kabirah*) or minor (*saghirah*) sins, nor does he commit irreligious deeds or debauchery."68

- 1. Surah Al-Sajdah, 320: 24.
- 2. Surah Al- Qasas 28: 41.
- 3. Sharhul Mawaqif, Vol 8, p. 344.
- 4. Speculative theology.
- 5. Sharhi Tajrid, p. 284.
- 6. Usul Al-Kafi, Vol 1, p. 200.
- 7. Surah Al-Nisa' 4: 59.
- 8. Surah Al-Ma'idah 5: 55.
- 9. Usul Al-Kafi, Vol 1, p. 189.
- 10. Surah Al-Yunus 10: 35.
- 11. Surah Al-Baqarah 2: 269.
- 12. Usul Al-Kafi, Vol 1, p. 202.
- 13. Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 173.
- 14. Biharul Anwar, Vol 68, p. 389.
- 15. Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 147.
- 16. Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 239.
- 17. Surah Al-Ahzab 33: 40.
- 18. Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 133.
- 19. Surah Al-Ma'idah 5: 3.
- 20. Al-Mizan Exegesis, Vol 5, pp. 214-277.
- 21. Surah Al-Haqqah 69: 12.
- 22. Biharul Anwar, Vol 35, p. 327; Hilyatul Awliya', Vol 1, p. 108; Managib Kharazmi, p. 199.
- 23. Manaqib Kharazmi, p. 99.
- 24. Al-Kafi, Vol 1, p. 64.
- 25. At Tabaqatul Kubra, Vol 3, p. 338.
- 26. At Tabaqatul Kubra, Vol 3, p. 33.
- 27. Imam Ali's (a.s.) nickname.
- 28. Dhakha'irul 'Uqba, p. 78.
- 29. Yanabi'ul Mawaddah, p. 82.
- 30. Mustadrak Hakim Niyshaburi, Vol 3, p. 122.
- 31. Mustadrak Hakim Niyshaburi, Vol 3, p. 80.
- 32. Mustadrak Hakim Niyshaburi, Vol 3, p.22.
- 33. Plural of dhar', a measure of length equal to 104 centimeters.
- 34. Jami' Ahadith Al-Shi'ah, Vol 1, p. 185.
- 35. Jami' Ahadith Al-Shi'ah, Vol 1, p. 186.
- 36. Jami' Ahadith Al-Shi'ah, Vol 1, p. 195.
- 37. Jami' Ahadith Al-Shi'ah, Vol 1, p. 195.
- 38. Jami' Ahadith Al-Shi'ah, Vol 2, p. 104.

- 39. Al-Kafi, Vol 1, p. 53.
- 40. Jami' Ahadith Al-Shi'ah, Vol 1, p. 181.
- 41. Jami' Ahadith Al-Shi'ah, Vol 1, p. 181.
- 42. Jami' Ahadith Al-Shi'ah, Vol 1, P. 192.
- 43. Surah Al-Nahl 16: 89.
- 44. Jami' Ahadith Al-Shi'ah, Vol 1, p. 184.
- 45. Al-Kafi, Vol 1, p. 229.
- 46. Surah 'Ali 'Imran 3:7.
- 47. Al-Kafi, Vol 1, p. 113.
- 48. Usul Al-Kafi, Vol1, p. 213.
- 49. Mizanul Hikmah, Vol 3, p. 2034.
- 50. Nahjul Balaghah, Maxim 147.
- 51. Nahjul Balaghah, Maxim 239.
- 52. Surah Al-Shams 91: 7-10.
- 53. Surah Al-Ahzab 33: 6.
- 54. Jami' Ahadith Al-Shi'ah, Vol 1, p. 247.
- 55. Surah Al-Nisa' 5: 59.
- 56. Surah Al-Najm 53: 2-5.
- 57. Surah Al-Qalam 68:4.
- 58. Surah Al-Hashr 59: 7.
- 59. Al-Kafi, Vol 1, p. 266.
- 60. Surah Al-Sad 38: 39.
- 61. Al-Kafi, Vol 1, p. 267.
- 62. Al-Kafi, Vol 1, p. 267.
- 63. Surah Al- Nisa' 4: 105.
- 64. Al-Kafi, Vol 1, p. 268.
- 65. Usul Al-Kafi, Vol 1, p. 200.
- 66. Usul Al-Kafi, Vol 1, p. 202.
- 67. Usul Al-Kafi, Vol 1, p. 204.
- 68. Biharul Anwar, Vol 68, p. 389.

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