

## Section Twenty-Nine

The traditions that indicate the reason behind his occultation

Comprised of nine traditions<sup>1</sup>

632. Kamāl al-dīn<sup>2</sup>: Narrated to us `Abd al-Wāhid b. Muḥammad b. `Abdīs al-`Aḥḥār, may Allah be satisfied with him, from `Alī b. Muḥammad b. Qutayba al-Nāsībī from Ḥamdān b. Sulaimān al-Nāsībī, from Aḥmad b. `Abd-Allah b. Ja`far al-Madīnī, from `Abd-Allah b. al-Faḥl al-Haḥshimī who said:

I heard al-ḥadiq Ja`far b. Muḥammad, peace be on him, say, “The master of this affair will definitely have an occultation in which every liar will become doubtful.” I asked, “Why, may I be sacrificed for you?” He replied, “Because of an affair that we have not been given permission to disclose to you.” I asked, “What is the rationale behind his occultation?” He answered, “The rationale behind his occultation is the same rationale behind the occultations of the Proofs of Allah, High be His Remembrance, who preceded him; Surely, the rationale will not be disclosed until he reappears, just as the rationale behind al-Khiḥr’s acts of drilling a hole in the ship, killing the boy, and erecting the wall were not disclosed to Moses, peace be on him, except at the time of their separation. O son of Faḥl! This affair is from the affairs of Allah, the Exalted, a secret from Allah’s secrets, and an unseen from Allah’s unseens. Once we know that He, Mighty and Majestic be He, is wise, then, we will acknowledge that all His actions are wisdom even if their reason is not disclosed [to us].”

633. Kamāl al-dīn<sup>3</sup>: Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. `Iḥḥām al-Kulainī, from Muḥammad b. Ya`qūb al-Kulainī, from Isḥāq b. Ya`qūb, from the Master of Time (Ḥabīb al-Zamān), Allah’s blessings be on him, in his last signed letter (al-tauqī) which was in reply to a question asked from him by Muḥammad b. Uthmān b. al-`Amrī:

As for the reason behind the occultation, then surely Allah, Mighty and Majestic be He, says, “O you who believe! Do not ask about things which if disclosed to you will upset you.”<sup>4</sup> Verily, all my forefathers had the allegiance of the tyrant of their time on their necks [i.e. were forced to pledge allegiance to them] but

when I reappear, I will not have the allegiance of any oppressive king on my neck. As for benefiting from me during my occultation, then indeed, it will be like benefiting from the sun when the clouds conceal it from the eyes. I am security for the inhabitants of earth just as the stars are security for the inhabitants of the sky. So, don't ask about things that you don't need and don't strain yourself in learning the knowledge of things that you will not be questioned about. Pray as much as you can for the hastening of the relief (al-faraj) because it is your relief. Peace be on you, O Isḥāq b. Ya'qūb, and [on] whoever follows guidance.

634. `Uyayn akhbār al-Riḥl<sup>5</sup>: Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Isḥāq, from Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Hamdānī, from `Alī b. al-Ḥasan b. `Alī b. Faḥr al-Dīn, from his father, from Abū I-Ḥasan `Alī b. Mūsā al-Riḥlī, peace be on him, who said: "It is as if I am with the Shias who are [wandering] like livestock—during the occultation of my third descendant—in search of pasture, but will not find it." I asked, "And why will it be so, O Son of Allah's Messenger?" He answered, "Because, their Imam will be concealed from them." "Why?" I asked again. He answered, "So that he will not have the allegiance of anyone on his neck when he rises with the sword."

635. Ghaybat al-Shaykh<sup>6</sup>: Al-Ḥusayn b. `Ubaid Allah, from Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Sufyān al-Bazāfarī, from Aḥmad b. Idrīs, from `Alī b. Muḥammad b. Qutayba, from al-Faḥr b. Shādhān al-Niṣṣībārī, from al-Ḥasan b. Maḥbūb, from `Alī b. Riḥlī, who said: "Zurāra said, 'The Q'īm will have an occultation before he appears.' I asked, 'Why?' He replied, 'He will fear for his life.'"

The following traditions also prove the above concept: 337, 626, 654, 656, and 669.

<sup>1</sup> Even though the reason behind the occultation is concealed from us, this cannot be used as a pretext to deny it hasn't occurred or the existence of a benefit in its occurrence. For, Allah's customs regarding this event and other events that occur by Allah's Wisdom are one. Just as there is no way to deny the benefits in some of His actions whose rationale and advantage are not known to us, likewise, there is no way one can deny the benefits in His Assigned-Guardian (walī) and Proof's occultation. Surely, our senses and intellect fall short of perceiving the benefits of most things including Allah's customs in his creations and religious laws. We have not even been given the power to comprehend many of the unknown things. Thus, it is best to acknowledge the deficiency in our understanding.

It has been narrated from our master, (Imam) Abū `Abd-Allah Ja'far b. Muḥammad al-Ḥādī, peace be on him: "O son of Adam! If a bird eats your heart, it will not be satiated and if your eye is poked with a needle you will become blind; Yet, you intend to recognize through these two [i.e. heart and eye] the kingdom of the heavens and the earth!" Thus, basically, we shouldn't ask about these matters after the Prophet and the Infallibles from his Ahl al-Bait, Allah's blessings be on them all, informed us about their occurrence, and the indication of correct traditions about them, and such things occurring in the previous nations, just as the Imam mentioned in the long tradition narrated by Saḍīr. Al-Mufīd says in al-Fuḥrī al-`ashara: "One of Allah's friends travels in the earth while worshipping his Exalted Lord and keeps away from the oppressors through his actions and distances himself from the abode of the criminals. Through his religion he stays far away from the place of the disobedient. None of the creatures is aware of his residence and no human from them can claim to have met him or to have been in his company. He is Khīr, peace be on him, who lived before the time of Moses [and still lives] today. This is a universally accepted fact amongst the traditionists and completely agreed on by historians and narrators. He travels in the earth and no one knows his abode and no one can claim to be in his company except what has been mentioned in the Holy Quran about Moses, peace be on him. Some people mention that he sometimes appears but he is not recognized. Some who have seen him think that they have met a God-fearing and abstentious person and when he leaves, they assume him to be Khīr even though they are neither sure nor convinced about it. Sometimes, he believes that

he is one of the people of this time.” Then, he mentions the occultations of Moses, Joseph, Jonah, and others. (Imam) Abū `Abd-Allah, peace be on him, has explicitly stated that the reason for his occultation will not be revealed except after his reappearance and it is a divine secret—as has been discussed in the first tradition of this chapter from `Abd-Allah b. al-Faḥr al-Haṣhīmī. On this basis, it will be correct if we say: the real reason (for his occultation) is concealed from us in His Wisdom and it will not be revealed completely except after his reappearance.

Of course, there are numerous benefits and obvious advantages other than this. Some of these are:

The people will be tested by his occultation and the level of their submission, recognition, and belief in what was revealed to the Holy Prophet, Allah’s blessings be on him and his family, will be examined. Indeed, it is the custom of Allah, the Exalted, to test the people. The creation of people, sending of Messengers, and ascension of divine scripts was naught but for testing. Allah, the Exalted, says: “We have created man from a mixed semen [and] We [will] test him” (Quran 76:2). He, Honorable is His Glory, also says: “[He] Who created death and life to test you as to which of you is the best in conduct” (Quran 67:2), and “Do the people think that they will be left alone if they say ‘we have believed’ and they will not be tested” (Quran 29:2). From the traditions that you will be acquainted with in this book, it can be understood that testing using the medium of occultation is one the most difficult of tests and fastening to religion in this period is like pulling thorns through your fist.

This is in addition to the fact that there is a special test and examination for acknowledging, believing from the depth of the heart, and being bound by what the Prophet, Allah’s blessings be upon him and his family, has informed about the hidden affairs. The fruit of these will be internal purification and a strength to practice the religion of Allah, the Exalted. Through his occultation, the peoples actions, beliefs, and knowledge will be tested. As for their actions, during the occultation severe and intense fitnas will take place and the people will be placed in great dilemma in a way that the most difficult of things will be to remain steadfast in performing one’s religious duties. As for knowledge and belief, then believing in the occultation is believing in the unseen (al-ghayb) and no one will believe in it except he whose faith has been perfected, his recognition strengthened, and his intentions purified.

To sum it up, the people will be tested for belief in Allah and their submission and acknowledgement regarding the Holy Prophet, Allah’s blessings be on him and his family, and what he has said. It is likely that the tests regarding having faith in the unseen affairs is more severe than the other tests. Such believers have been clearly described in Allah’s saying: “That Book which there is no doubt in, is guidance for the God-fearing, those who believe in the unseen” (Quran 2:2–3). This is because believing in everything that is hidden from us—from the things that the Holy Prophet, Allah’s blessings be on him and his family, has informed about—is not possible except for those who possess certitude and are God-fearing. Those who have been saved from the darkness of temptations and satanic doubts. Those who illuminated their souls with the light of recognition, certitude, and complete belief in Allah, His Messengers, and His Books.

The perfection of human preparedness for his reappearance; because his advent is not like that of others from the Divine Proofs and Prophets and it is not based on apparent and normal causes. His actions—as you will observe in the coming chapters—will be based on realities and he will judge relying on actualities. In his government, dissimulation (taqiyya) and tolerance will be done away with in religious affairs. He will be very strict regarding the governors and sinners. Such affairs will only be achieved when the world reaches a special capacity and mankind progresses in the fields of science, recognition, thought, ethics, and morality; so that they become prepared to accept his superb teachings and reformative programs.

Fear of being killed: History bears witness that apparently, the cause of his occultation is fear of being killed, because his enemies—as you will see in the coming chapters—were determined to kill him and to extinguish his light. They desired to eliminate this holy and blessed generation, but Allah wanted nothing except the perfection of His Light.

Other reasons which have been mentioned in books specially authored on this subject.

If someone objects and says: What is the use of an Imam who cannot be seen? There is no difference between him existing or not! Then I will answer:

The benefit in the presence of a divine proof is not confined to his authority in apparent affairs. Rather, the greatest advantage of his existence is the survival of the universe—by the permission of Allah, the Exalted—and his order. Just like what he, Allah’s blessings be on him and his family, has said: “My Ahl al-Bait are a cause of safety for the inhabitants of earth. If my Ahl al-Bait cease to exist, the inhabitants of the earth will also cease to exist.” He also said, “This religion will

continue to survive while twelve leaders from the Quraish exist in it. When they pass away, the earth will swallow its inhabitants.” Amr al-Mu’minin `Al b. Abi Lib, peace be on him, has said: “Yes, by Allah! The earth will not become empty of Allah’s Proof...” In the next chapter, we will mention some of the traditions about how people will benefit from him during his occultation.

If he is not doing anything, it is not because this is what he wants. The people are themselves the cause of this problem. Al-`Allas has pointed to two aspects in his book ‘al-Tajrid’ using the following words: “His existence is a grace and his authority is another grace, and we are the cause of his absence (‘adamuh minn).”

We don’t claim with certainty that he is concealed from all his special followers—like it has been recorded in al-Shafiq and Tanzih al-Anbiy’—and hence, some important affairs are performed by him through his followers and special companions and they will benefit from him.

What is certain and clear is the fact that he is concealed from the people and no one has access to him during his occultation except some of his special companions—and occasionally others, because of special reasons—but this does not mean that the people are also concealed from him. For, according to what can be derived from the traditions, he attends the Hajj pilgrimage every year and visits the shrines of his grandfather and infallible forefathers, accompanies the people, attends their gatherings, helps the distressed ones, visits some of the sick, and etc. Perhaps, he even fulfills their needs himself, may Allah sacrifice me for him. The impossibility of having access to him during the occultation means it is impossible to see him.

It is not compulsory for the Imam to execute his authority. Rather, he implements his authority through others just as he did during his minor and major occultations. Thus, he appointed the jurists and the just scholars who were learned about the laws of judgment. He made them as proofs upon the people. So, during the occultation, they apparently protect the sharia, explain the Islamic laws, spread Islamic sciences, dispel the doubts, and take care of anything which the affairs of the people are maintained with. A detailed discussion can be found in the books on jurisprudence. If you seek more elaboration, refer to the books of our great scholars like al-Mufid, Sayyid al-Murta, al-`Allas, al-`Adiq, al-Majlis, etc. May Allah reward them on account of religion the best of rewards.

[2.](#) Kamal al-din, vol. 2, chap. 11, pp. 481–482, no. 44; `Ilal al-shar`i, pp. 245–246, no. 8; Bihar al-anwar, vol. 52, chap. 20, p. 91, no. 4; Ithbat al-hudat, vol.3, chap. 32, sect. 5, p. 488, no. 217 (short version).

[3.](#) Kamal al-din, vol. 2, pp. 483–485, no. 4; Ghaybat al-Shaykh, pp. 290–293, no. 247; `Ilm al-war, chap. 3, sect. 3; Kashf al-ghumma, vol. 2, pp. 530–532; al-Khar`ij wa l-jar`iq, vol. 3, pp. 1113–1117, no. 30; al-Itiq, vol. 2, pp. 281–284; Bihar al-anwar, vol. 53, chap. 31, pp. 180–182, no. 10, and vol. 75, chap. 30, p. 380, no. 1, citing al-Durrat al-bahira.

[4.](#) Quran 5:101.

[5.](#) `Uy`n akhb`r al-Ris, vol. 1, chap. 28, p. 273, no. 6; Kamal al-din, vol. 2, chap. 44, p. 480, no. 4; Bihar al-anwar, vol. 51, chap. 8, p. 152, no. 1. I say: The third means Imam Abi Muhammad al-`asan—the father of al-`ujja, peace be on him—and the concealed Imam refers to his son, al-`ujja, peace be on them both.

[6.](#) Ghaybat al-Shaykh, p. 332, no. 274; similar to it in al-Kaf, vol. 1, chap. 138, p. 338, no. 9, from ibn Bukair from Zur`ara; Ghaybat al-Nu`man, pp. 176–177. Similar to it through numerous chains of narrators and similar wordings can be found in numbers 19–22 from ibn Bukair; `Ilal al-shar`i, p. 246, no. 9; Kamal al-din, vol. 2, chap. 44, p. 481, no. 9, and similar to it from ibn Bukair and Khalid b. Naj` al-Jaww`n and ibn Bukair from Zur`ara in numbers 7, 8, and 10; similar to it in Ithbat al-hudat, vol. 6, p. 359, no. 23, with a difference in the narrators and minor differences in meaning.

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