

## س، ص، ص S

**Sabeel** سبيل: path, way, avenue, same as Sirat

**Sabirin or Sabiroon** صابرين أو صابرون: people who are patient and steadfast, who persevere

**Sabr** صبر: patience, steadfastness, perseverance

**Sadaq or Sedaq** صداق: same meaning as *mahr*, dower

**Sadaqa** صدقة: (singular) charity offered voluntarily; plural: *sadaqat*

**Sadeed** صديد: pus collected from bleeding wounds and served to the sinners in hell to drink when they ask for water to quench their thirst

**Safa** صفا: a mound near the Ka'bah referred to in the Qur'an as one of the spots held sacred by Allah. It is in conjunction with Marwah.

**Safawis or Safavids or as-Safawiyyoon** الصفويون: Some ignorant fanatics apply the misnomer “Safawis” to taunt Shiite Muslims, not even knowing exactly what the word means. For this reason, we decided to go into details to narrate to you the history of these Safawis, perhaps one of these fanatics will wake up.

The Internet's Wikipedia tells us that the Safavids (Persian: صفويان; Azerbaijani: Səfəvi/Şir) formed one of the most significant ruling dynasties in Iran's history. They ruled one of the greatest Persian empires since the Muslim conquest of Persia and established the Twelver school of Shi'a Islam as the official religion of their empire, marking one of the most important turning points in Muslim history. This Shi'i dynasty was of mixed ancestry (Kurdish and Azerbaijani, with intermarriages with Georgian and Pontic Greek dignitaries), ruling Iran from 1501 to 1722 A.D.

The Safavid dynasty had its origin in the Safaviyya Sufi order which was established in the city of Ardabil in the Azerbaijan region. From their base in Ardabil, the Safavids established control over all of Greater Iran and reasserted the Iranian identity of the region, thus becoming the first native dynasty since the

Sassanid Empire to establish a unified Iranian state.

Despite their demise in 1736 A.D., the legacy that they left behind was the revival of Persia as an economic stronghold between East and West, the establishment of an efficient state and bureaucracy based on “checks and balances”, their architectural innovations and patronage of fine arts. The Safavids have also left their mark down to the present era by spreading Shi'a Islam in major parts of the Caucasus and West Asia. Perhaps this is why the Wahhabis of Saudi Arabia are so hostile to the Shi'ites in general and to Iranians in particular.

Even though the Safavids were not the first Shi'a rulers in Iran, they played a crucial role in making Shi'a Islam the official religion in all of Iran. There were large Shi'a communities in some cities like Qum and Sabzevar as early as the 8th century. In the 10th and 11th centuries, the Buwayhids, who were of the Zaidiyya branch of Shi'a Islam, ruled in Fars, Isfahan and Baghdad. As a result of the Mongol conquest and the relative religious tolerance of the Ilkhanids, Shi'a dynasties were re-established in Iran, Sarbedaran in Khorasan being the most important. The Ilkhanid ruler Öljaitü and converted to Twelver Shi'ism in the 13th century.

Following his conquest of Iran, Isma'il I made conversion mandatory for the largely Sunni population. The Sunni ulema, clergy, were reportedly either killed or exiled. Isma'il I, despite his heterodox Shi'a beliefs, brought in Shi'a religious leaders and granted them land and money in return for loyalty. Later, during the Safavid, especially the Qajar period, the Shi'a ulema's power increased, and they were able to exercise a role, independent of or compatible with the government. Despite the Safavid's Sufi origins, most Sufi groups were prohibited, except the Ni'matullahi order.

Iran became a feudal theocracy: The Shah was held to be the divinely ordained head of state and religion. In the following centuries, this religious stance cemented both Iran's internal cohesion and national feelings, provoking attacks by its Sunni neighbors. After the disastrous invasion of the Mongols, in the 1200s, migrated Turks and Mongolian tribes adopted the Persian customs and even language. In the 1300s, the Ilkhanids, a dynasty founded by "Genghis Khan's" grandson, Holagu Khan, had been an influential factor in Persia. During these turbulent years of 13th century, the Persians had submerged themselves deeper in Islamic devotion and Sufism.

Towards the end of the 14th century, Timur (Tamberlane) claimed to be a descent from Genghis Khan's family. The disturbed conditions in Mongol Transoxania gave him in the town of Kish the chance to build up a kingdom in Central Asia. He entered Iran in 1380, and in 1393 he reduced the Jalayirids' power and domination after taking their capital, Baghdad. In 1402 A.D., he captured the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid at Ankara and conquered Syria then turned his attention to campaigns to the east of his quickly acquired and ill-cemented empire. He died in 1405 on an expedition to China. He showed interest in Sufism, a form of mysticism. Timur may have hoped to find popular leaders whom he could use for his own purposes. But he encountered ill-treated Iranians who proved that they knew him perhaps better than he knew himself. His legacy was the reverse of stability to Iran; and division of his ill-assimilated conquests

among his sons ensured that an integrated Timurid Empire would never be achieved.

The Timurid state came to being an integrated Iranian empire under Timur's son, Shahrokh Shah (1405–47), who endeavored to weld Azerbaijan, which demanded three military expeditions, as well as western Persia to Khurasan (which means in Persian “land of sunshine”) and eastern Persia in order to form a united Timurid state for a short and troubled period of time. He only succeeded in loosely controlling western and southern Iran from his beautiful capital at Herat. He made Herat the seat of a splendid culture, the atelier of great miniature painters of Herat school, Behzad notable among them, and the home of a revival of Persian poetry and philosophy. This revival was not unconnected with an effort to claim for an Iranian center once more the leadership in the propagation of Sunni ideology; Herat used to send copies of Sunni canonical works on request to Egypt. The reaction in Shi'ism's ultimate victory under the Safavid shahs of Persia was, however, already in preparation.

In the mean time, the "*Qara Qoyunlu*" (Black Sheep) Turkman, used to dominate Western Iran. In Azerbaijan they had replaced their former masters, the Jalayirids. Timur had put these Qara Qoyunlu to run away, but in 1406, they regained their capital, Tabriz. On Shahrokh's death, Jahan Shah (reigned c. 1438–67) extended Qara Qoyunlu rule out of the northwest deeper into Iran. The Timurids relied on their old allies, the Qara Qoyunlus' rival Turkman of the "*Aq Qoyunlu*" (White Sheep) clans, whose Jahan Shah was destroyed by the Uzun Hassan of Aq Qoyunlu by the end of 1467.

Uzun Hassan (1453–78) achieved a short-lived Iranian empire, but under his son Yaqub (1478–90), the state was subjected to fiscal reforms associated with a government-sponsored effort to reapply hard purist principles of orthodox Islamic rules for revenue collection. Yaqub attempted to purge the state of taxes introduced under the Mongols and not sanctioned by the Muslim canon. His Sunni fanaticism was discredited when the inquiries made into his activities by the orthodox religious authorities.

The attempts to revive religious orthodoxy through revenue reform gave momentum to the spread of Safavid Shi'a faith. Economic decline, which had resulted from fiscal reforms introduced by Yaqub, must have been another factor as well.

Shaikh Jonayd's son, Shaikh Heydar (or Haider), led a movement that had begun as a Sufi order under his ancestor, Shaikh Safi ud-Din Ardabili (of Ardabil 1252–1334). This order may be considered to have originally represented a puritanical, but not legalistically so, reaction against the corruption of Islam, the staining of Muslim lands, by the Mongol infidels. What began as a spiritual, unearthly reaction against irreligion and the betrayal of spiritual aspirations developed into a manifestation of the Shi'a quest for dominion over Islamic authority.

By the 15th century, the Safavid movement could draw on both the mystical emotional force and the Shi'a appeal to the oppressed masses to gain a large number of dedicated adherents. Shaikh Heydar took his numerous followers to warfare by leading them on expeditions from Ardabil into the nearby Caucasus. He was killed on one of these campaigns in 1488. His son Esmail, then was one year old,

was to avenge his death and lead his devoted army to a conquest of Iran whereby Iran gained a great dynasty, a Shi'a regime, and in most essentials its shape as a modern nation state. Yaqub did not kill Shaikh Heydar's sons, whose mother was Yaqub's sister, but instead sent them to exile in Fars province. Death of Yaqub in 1490 caused turmoil and paved the path for Esmail and his brothers to leave their exile and secretly taking refuge in Lahijan, Gilan province, as its governor had sympathy toward Shi'a.

A militant Islamic Sufi order, the Safavids, appeared among Turkish speaking people of west of the Caspian Sea, at Ardabil. The Safavid order survived the invasion of Timur to that part of the Iran in the late 13th century. By 1500 the Safavids had adopted the Shi'a branch of Islam and were eager to advance Shi'ism by military means. Safavid males used to wear red headgear. They had great devotion for their leader as a religious leader and perfect guide as well as a military chieftain, and they viewed their leaders position as rightly passed from father to son according to the Shi'a tradition. In the year 1500, Esmail the thirteen-year-old son of a killed Safavid leader, Shaikh Heydar, set out to conquer territories and avenge death of his father. In January 1502, Esmail defeated the army of Alvand Beig of Aq Qoyunlu, ruler of Azerbaijan, and seized Tabriz and made this city his capital. Safavids went on and conquered rest of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Khorasan; They became the strongest force in Iran, and their leader, Esmail, now fifteen, was declared Shah (King) on 11 March 1502.

In that era Iran had a variety of settled peoples; in addition to Persians it had Kurds, Arabs, Turkmans and Baluchis to name a few. Safavid's power over various tribes was not strong enough to consolidate an absolute supremacy; tribal leaders remained those who had been tribal chieftains and consider their tribes to be independent. However, the Safavids laid claim to authority over all that had been Persia.

Turkish language was spoken at Shah Esmail's court, but having adopted Persian as official language and much of Persian culture the Safavids were mistakenly thought by outsiders to be Persian, but they were truly Iranian with a unifying spirit. To help organize the state the Safavids used Persian bureaucrats with a tradition in administration and tax collecting, and they tried to create a religious unity. Shah Esmail described himself as a descendant, on their father's side, of the Prophet Mohammad and claimed to have royal Sassanian blood as well. Shi'ism became the state religion, Esmail ignored the Sunni branch of Islam and tried to force people to become Shi'a, which was a difficult task with a variety of tribes and less than complete authority.

The newly established Iranian Empire lacked the resources that had been available to the Islamic Caliphs of Baghdad in former times through their dominion over Central Asia and the West in order to consolidate their power over the Islamic authority. Asia Minor and Transoxania were gone, and the rise of maritime trade in the West was unfavorable to a country whose wealth had depended greatly on its position on important east-west overland trade routes like the famous Silk Road. The rise of the Ottomans held back Iranian westward advances and contested with the Safavids' control over both the Caucasus and Mesopotamia. By 1506, Shah Esmail had conquered Arak, Esfahan, Fars, Kerman, Yazd, Kashan, Semnan, Astarabad (Gorgan or Jurjan) and, in 1507, he added Shi'a holy cities of Najaf

and Karbala' to Iran.

In 1507, the Portuguese invaded what is called the "Persian Gulf" and captured Hormuz Island. It became a naval base and a trade outpost which lasted for more than a hundred years. Shah Esmā'il, having no navy, reluctantly accepted this European presence. In the mean time, the Safavids extended their rule by capturing Baghdad and Iraq in 1508. Later on, after defeating the Uzbeks and killing their leader, Mohammad Sheybani (Shaibani), nicknamed Sheibak Khan, in a battle near Merv on December 1510, Shah Esmā'il absorbed the large province of Khorasan into his state as well as Merv, Herat and Qandahar. But Uzbeks remained a formidable rival to the Safavids' domination of Northern Khorasan throughout the 16th century.

In his message, the Ottoman sultan Bayezid II congratulated Shah Esmā'il on his victories and advised him to stop destroying the graves and mosques of Sunni Muslims. Shah Esmā'il was convinced of the righteousness of his cause, ignoring the request. With many Shi'a Muslims in Asia Minor under the authority of the Ottoman sultan, Bayezid II was concerned about the power of the Safavids. The new sultan in Constantinople after 1512, Sultan Selim (Salim), fought against Shi'a Muslims under his rule, killing thousands and displacing others. Sultan Selim waged war also against the Safavids.

On August 23, 1514, just west of Tabriz in the Chalderan plain, the army of Shah Esmā'il suffered a crushing defeat. His cavalry and infantry were armed with spears, bows and swords and were fighting against Ottoman's superior numbers as well as field artillery and musketeers. Shah Esmā'il and his followers firmly believed that Allah was on their side, but they were confused by their military setback. Tabriz, their capital, was briefly occupied. This battle and defeat of Safavid Shah paved the path for the Ottoman conquest of Diyarbakr, Erzinjan and other parts of eastern Anatolia as well as northern Iraq. Shah Esmā'il himself found relief from psychological depression in wine and died ten years later at the age of only thirty-seven.

Shah Esmā'il's descendants, namely Shah Tahmasp I (1524–1576), Shah Esmā'il II (1576–1577) and Shah Muhammad (1577–1587), ruling in succession, recovered some of the original Safavid confidence and expanded in the opposite direction of the Ottomans, as far as Transoxania. Safavid shahs tightened their controls over Iran; each district had its own Safavid leader, a "Qezelbash" chief who answered to the shah. In time of war, the Qezelbash chiefs were responsible for providing soldiers for the shah's army and to collect revenues to pay for war. The local Qezelbash chiefs grew wealthy in land and in collecting taxes. Shah Tahmasp I the eldest son of Shah Esmā'il ascended the throne at the age of ten, and for the first ten years of his reign, real power was held by a number of leaders of competing Qezelbash factions, which caused much political instability.

In 1533, Shah Tahmasp I asserted his authority. One of his legacies was the introduction of converted slaves into court and the military. They were drawn from thousands of Georgian, Circassian and Armenian prisoners captured in campaigns fought in the Caucasus in the 1540s and 1550s. Female slaves entered the royal harem, becoming mothers of princes and a force in court politics and dynastic

quarrels. Some of the male slaves began to acquire positions of influence, under Shah Abbas I, reaching high offices that challenged the supremacy of the Qezelbash.

During the reign of Shah Tahmasp I, Uzbeks launched as many as five major invasions of Khorasan with the intent of retaking the area. Safavids were successful in driving back the Uzbeks threat; and in 1545 they captured Qandahar from the Mughal Empire. The Safavid capital was moved to Qazvin in 1548, following the temporary capture of Tabriz by the Ottomans. Despite periodic wars between Iran and the Ottoman Empire, they maintained an extensive trade, especially in the highly prized Iranian silk, which large quantities of silk were shipped from Iran to commercial centers such as Aleppo and Bursa and from there re-exported to Marseilles, London, and Venice.

Shah Tahmasp I, encouraged carpet weaving on the scale of a state industry. The exquisite miniatures illustrating the Iranian national epic known as the "Shahnama" (Epic of Kings) were painted at the request of Shah Tahmasp. This masterpiece is known as "Shahnameh of Tahmaspi" and was presented by the Safavid ruler to the Ottoman sultan Selim II in 1568.

In 1576 Qezelbash faction interested in a prince whose mother was Turkman rather than Circassian or Georgian, brought Shah Esmā'il II son of Shah Tahmasp I to power. Shah Esmā'il II reign was marked by brutality and a pro-Sunni policy. Consequently in November 1577, he was poisoned with the participation of his sister Pari Khan Khanom.

Mohammad Shah was the only surviving brother of Shah Esmā'il II, proved to be a weak leader. His wife Mahd-e Olya initially dominated him; but after her assassination in 1579 the Qezelbash took control. Meanwhile Ottomans took advantage of Iran's political turmoil to launch a major invasion of the country. Consequently extensive territories were lost to Ottomans, including most of Azerbaijan, with Tabriz, and Georgia.

With their self-esteem and power derived from their increased wealth, some local Qezelbash chiefs wished to have more freedom from the shah's authority. They tried to convince Mohammad Shah that he should select a successor agreeable to them. Some of these chiefs tried to reduce the chances of another choice by executing the heir apparent, his mother and some other possible heirs within the royal family. As often happens, politics by murder was less than efficient. The younger brother of the murdered heir apparent was secretly sent away to Khorasan, and Qezelbash chiefs loyal to the royal family fought and defeated Qezelbash chiefs who were not, and full power was returned to the old dynasty of shahs.

Abbas I (1587–1629), who succeeded Mohammad Shah, learnt from his family's experience with the local Qezelbash chiefs, and he broke their power and confiscated their wealth. He extended state-owned lands and lands owned by the shah. Provinces were now to be administered by the state replacing the Qezelbash chiefs. He strengthened his government's bureaucracy and managed to relocate tribes in order to weaken their power. The Sufi bands, Qezelbash, which had been formed into artificial tribal units mainly for military purposes during the dynasty's formative period, as a source of

recruitment, were replaced by a standing strong army of his own. He recruited soldiers from Persian villages and from among Christians, Georgians, Circassian, Armenians and others, equipped them with artillery and muskets. The Christians were proud to serve the shah and to call themselves "*Ghulams*" (slaves) of the shah although slaves they were not. To finance the new army, Shah Abbas converted large pieces of land traditionally granted to tribal chiefs as assignments into crown lands that he taxed directly. This new military force was trained on European lines with the advice of Robert Sherley. Sherley was an English adventurer expert in artillery tactics who, accompanied by a party of cannon founders, reached Qazvin (the Caspian Sea) with his brother Anthony Sherley in 1598. In a short time Shah Abbas created a formidable army, consisting of cavalry, infantry and artillery.

Shah Abbas was open to the ideas and was mentally active as well. He was curious and in ways more tolerant than his predecessors. Previously, "infidels" (foreigners and non-Muslim subjects) had been denied entry to the shah's court. He welcomed foreigners and his non-Muslims subjects to his court, and enjoyed discussing with foreigners the complexities of religious ideology. He took an unusual step among Islamic rulers by allowing Christians to wear what they wanted and allowing them to own their own home and land.

Shah Abbas defeated the Uzbeks in April 1598 and recovered Herat and territories in Khorasan, including Mashhad, lost several years earlier. He consolidated the Safavid power strongly in Khorasan. He rebuilt and developed the shrine of Ali ar-Reza (Imam Reza or Rida) at Mashhad, the eighth Shi'a Imam, as a pilgrim, which was damaged by the Uzbeks. The shrine became a major center for Shi'a pilgrimage, and a rival to Shi'a holy places in Mesopotamia like Najaf and Karbala' where visiting pilgrims took currency and attention out of Safavid into Ottoman territory.

The Safavids had earlier moved their capital from the vulnerable Tabriz to Qazvin. Since the Uzbek threat from east of the Caspian had been overcome, Shah Abbas could move to his newly built capital at Esfahan (or Isfahan) in 1598, more centrally placed than Qazvin for control over the whole country and for communication with the trade outlets of the Persian Gulf.

Under Shah Abbas I, Iran prospered; he also transplanted a colony of industrious and commercially astute Armenians from Jolfa in Azerbaijan to a new Jolfa next to Esfahan. He patronized the arts, and he built palaces, mosques and schools, Esfahan becoming the cultural and intellectual capital of Iran. Shah Abbas encouraged international trade and the production of silks, carpets, ceramics and metal ware for sale to Europeans. Shah Abbas also founded a carpet factory in Esfahan. Royal patronage and the influence of court designers assured that Persian carpets reached their zenith in elegance during the Safavid period. He advanced trade by building and safeguarding roads. He welcomed tradesmen from Britain, the Netherlands and elsewhere to Iran. His governmental monopoly over the silk trade enhanced state revenues. Merchants of the English East India Company established trading houses in Shiraz and Esfahan. After Shah Abbas ousted the Portuguese from the island of Hormuz at the entrance to the Persian Gulf in 1622, Bandar Abbas (Port of Abbas) became the center of the East India Company's

trade. But Later the Dutch East India Company received trade capitulations from Shah Abbas. The Dutch soon gained supremacy in the European trade with Iran, outdistancing British competitors. They established a spice–trading center at Bandar Abbas. In 1623–24 Shah Abbas I launched an offensive against Ottomans and established control over Kurdish territories, Baghdad and the Shi'a Holy Cities of Najaf and Karbala'.

During his reign, Shah Abbas I paid considerable attention to the welfare institutions in Esfahan and other cities like establishing hospitals. Medical practice was still depended on medieval guides for the treatment of most illnesses. The standard reference work remained the Canon of Ebn Sina (Avicenna) (d. 1037), but new clinical works were written during the Safavid period as well. In the 17th century, a unique work, The Treasury of Surgery, was written by an army surgeon known as Hakim Mohammad and was dedicated to Shah Safi I. It included a detailed list of the instruments available to surgeons, including a special device for the removal of bullets; outlined various forms of anesthesia; and advocated surgery for cancerous tumors.

The bureaucracy, too, was carefully reorganized, bold reforms in the military, administrative, and fiscal structures helped to centralize state authority to a degree not achieved by Shah Abbas I predecessors. But the seeds of the sovereignty's weakness lay in the royal house itself, which lacked an established system of inheritance by primogeniture. One of Shah Abbas I innovations, however, weakened the Safavid state in the long run; fear of revolts by his sons led him to abandon the traditional practice of employing the princes to govern provinces. Instead, he instituted the practice of confinement of infant princes in the palace gardens away from the direct reach of conspiracies and the world at large. A reigning shah's nearest and most acute objects of suspicion were his own sons. Among them, brother plotted against brother over who should succeed on their father's death; and conspirator, ambitious for influence in a subsequent reign, supported one prince against another. The new practice, followed also by his successors, resulted in ill–educated, indecisive shahs of lower competence, easily dominated by powerful religious dignitaries to whom the Safavids had accorded considerable influence in an attempt to make Shi'ism the state religion

After the death of Shah Abbas I in 1629, his son, Shah Safi I, who ruled from 1629 to 1642, known for his cruelty, sat on the throne. He was the first of the Safavid shahs to be raised in the palace gardens. Shah Safi I put to death potential rivals to the throne as well as some of his male and female relatives on his accession. He executed most of the generals, officers and councilors he had inherited from his father's reign. The dominant influence of Mirza Taqi, known as Saru Taqi, the Grand Vezir (chancellor, prime minister) at the Safavid court allowed the government to be run smoothly despite the shah's lack of interest in affairs of state.

On May 17, 1639, a peace treaty with the Ottomans was signed which established the Ottoman–Safavid frontier and put an end to more than a hundred years of sporadic conflict. The treaty forced Shah Safi I to accept the final loss of Baghdad in Mesopotamia, recaptured by the Ottomans in 1638, and instead

gave Yerevan in the southern Caucasus to Iran.

The era of Shah Abbas II, who ruled from 1642 to 1667, was the last fully competent period of rule by a Safavid shah. Shah Abbas II took an active role in government matters. Under his rule Iran revived, and some of Persia's glory in the eyes of the outside world returned. He increased the central authority of the state by increasing crown lands and often intervened in provincial affairs on the side of the peasants, but with peace on the frontiers the army declined in size and quality. He stuck to the notion that the Safavid ruler was sacred and perfect and openly disputed with members of the Shi'a religious establishment who had begun to articulate the idea that in the absence of the occult Imam Zaman (twelfth Shi'a Imam, al-Mahdi), true temporal authority rightly belonged to the mujtahid who merited emulation by the faithful. Safavid Shi'ism had not improved monarchy as an institution, but instead recognized the state as a theocracy. The *'ulema*, religious leaders, rebuked the shahs, questioned the religious legitimacy of their power and claimed that the mujtahids had a superior claim to rule.

After Abbas II died in 1667, decline set in again when Shah Soleyman (Sulayman, Solomon) (Safi II), who ruled from 1667 to 1694, took power. He was renamed, superstitiously, to Soleyman because the first year and half of his reign was so disastrous. Shah Soleyman was not a competent ruler, and shortly after his accession food prices soared and famine and disease spread throughout the country. Although pressing problems faced him, he increasingly retreated into the harem and left his grand vezir to cope with affairs of state.

Shah Sultan Hossein, who ruled from 1694 to 1722, have been described as the most incompetent shah of Safavids. He was similar to some others who had inherited power by accident of birth. Indifferent to affairs of state, Shah Sultan Hossein effectively brought Safavid Empire to its sudden and unexpected end. He was of a religious temperament and especially influenced by the Shi'a religious establishment. At their insistence, he issued decrees forbidding the consumption of alcohol and banning Sufism in Esfahan.

In 1694 Shah Sultan Hossein appointed Mohammad Baqir Majlesi, the most influential member of Shi'a religious establishment, to the new office of "*Mulla Bashi*" (Head Mulla). Majlesi wrote "*Bihar al-Anwar*" (The Seas of Light), an encyclopedic work dedicated to the preservation of the prophet Mohammad's words and deeds. He devoted himself to the propagation of a legalistic form of Shi'ism and to the eradication of Sufism and Sunni Islam in Iran.

Under his guidance specifically Shi'a popular rituals, such as mourning for the martyred third Shi'a Imam Hossein (d. 680), Ashora, were encouraged, as were pilgrimages to the tombs of holy Shi'a personages. Majlesi's policies also included the persecution of non-Muslims in Iran, including Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians. Unchecked by the Safavid regime, Majlesi and the Shi'a clergy emerged with increased strength and independence from the ruling government in the 17th and 18th centuries.

The Safavid empire had also declined militarily, leaving it more vulnerable to invasion, which came out of

the east. In 1722 Afghan invaders under Mahmoud, a former Safavid vassal in Afghanistan, captured Esfahan and murdered Shah Sultan Hossein. The Afghan invasion was disastrous for Iran, which consequently in 1723 the Ottomans took advantage of the disintegration of the Safavid realm and invaded from the west, ravaging western Persia as far as Hamadan, while the Russians seized territories around the Caspian Sea. In June 1724 the two powers agreed on a peaceful partitioning of Iran's northwestern provinces.

**Safh** صفح: pardon, forgiveness, excuse

**Sahaba** صحابة: companions of the Holy Prophet Muammed (ص); singular *sahabi*

**Saheefa or Sahifa** صحيفة: page, tablet, scroll, parchment, manuscript, written document

**Sahih** صحيح: literally: authentic, correct, accurate; it is generally used to refer to the collection, group of collections, or book, of verified and authenticated *ahadith* of Holy Prophet (ص)

**Sajda** سجدة: prostration; it is also the title of Chapter 32 of the Holy Qur'an

**Salat or Salah** صلاة: *Salat* is an Arabic word which mean: a spiritual relationship and communication between the servant/being and his Creator. *Salat* is one of the five pillars of Islam. It is performed five times a day at these times: *fajr* (pre-dawn or pre-daybreak), *dhuhr* noon, *'asr* (afternoon), maghrib (sunset) and *'isha'* (late night). *Salat* is to be performed with mental concentration, verbal communication, vocal recitation, and physical movement to attain spiritual upliftment, peace of mind, harmony with the soul and with the Creator and concord. Congregational prayer services are held on Fridays at noon which they include a sermon (Khutbah) delivered by a religious leader (Imam) called *khatib*.

To perform the *salat* ritual, a Muslim has to first perform the ablution (*wudhu'*). He/she should make sure about that cleanliness of the body, clothing, and place before performing the *salat*. How many types of prayers are there in Islam?

There are many besides the daily prayers: The Ghufaila Prayers, the Sahu (forgetfulness or miscalculation while performing obligatory prayers), the Janaza Prayers for a deceased person whose coffin is being witnessed, the Ghaayib Prayers for the deceased person whose coffin is not present, Salat al-Wahsha which is performed for a deceased person in the same night of his death, Salat al-Layl which is performed from the time after midnight and before Fajr, Salat al-Aayaat which is performed at the time of eclipse of the sun or the moon, Salat al-Shukr, a form of thanks giving prayer, Salat al-Haja, a prayer performed when one wants to plea to his Maker so he may attain a certain objective, Salat al-Istikhara when one needs guidance from his Maker regarding a particular complex issue, a prayer to remove one's worries and concerns, Salat al-Tasabeeh in which one praises the Almighty a great deal, Eid prayers, prayers on certain other occasions such as Laylatul-Qadr, etc..., to name only a few. Each of these prayers has its own rules and regulations. Refer to your *mujtahid* for details. But if you have no *mujtahid* to guide you, for sure you are lost...!

**Salatul-`Id صلاة العيد**: late morning prayers comprised of two *rek`at* (prostrations) performed on the first day of `Id al-Fitr (the feast of fast-breaking) which signals the end of the fast of the month of Ramadan

**Sall Allahu 'alaihi wa Aalihi wa sallam عليه وعلى آله و سلم صلى الله**: This is an expression which Muslims articulate whenever the name of Prophet Muhammad (ص) is mentioned or written. The meaning is: "May the blessings and the peace of Allah be with him (Muhammad (ص))."

**Saqifah or Saqifa or Saqeefa سقيفه**: a shelter from the sun, a shed with a roof. The companions of the Prophet (ص) met in such a place in Medina known as "Saqifat Bani Sa'idah سقيفة بني ساعد" to "elect" the first successor to the Prophet (ص). The attendants actually represented a fraction of the Muslim community of the time and many dignitaries boycotted that "elections" and later cast doubts about its legitimacy, igniting a division among the Muslim the effects of which can still be felt even in our times and in all times to come. Many books have been written about this "saqifa" incident, and the controversy will most likely never dissipate.

On p. 215, Vol. 2 of Tabari's *Tarikh* (Dar al-Amira for Publication and Distribution, Beirut, Lebanon, 1426 A.H./2005 A.D.), we are told that the sacred body of the Prophet (ص) remained without being buried for three full days because some people were arguing with each other at the *saqifa* of Bani Sa'idah about who should be the successor to the Prophet (ص). How many Muslims were there when the Prophet (ص) was buried?

On p. 408, Vol. 6/2 (combined edition published in 1427 A.H./2006 A.D. by the Ihyaa al-Kutub al-Islamiyya, Qum, Iran) of al-Majlisi's *Bihar al-Anwar بحار الأنوار*, we read precise details about who gave the Prophet (ص) his burial bath and buried him. The sacred body of the Prophet (ص) was given the burial bath by none other than his son-in-law, cousin and the man whom he raised in his lap: Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع).

A handful of the Prophet's closest relatives and true companions buried him, and these included, in addition to Ali, Aws ibn Khawli, "Abu Talhah" Zaid ibn Sahl, al-Abbas ibn Abdul-Muttalib and his son al-Fadl ibn al-Abbas, Abu Ubaidah ibn al-Jarrah and Usamah ibn Zaid ibn Harithah. As for the rest, they were too busy fussing and arguing, almost fighting, with each other about who would be the next caliph to be concerned about burying the Prophet of Allah (ص)...

**Saraya سرايا**: (plural) military campaigns personally ordered by Prophet Muhammed (ص); singular: *sariya*

**Sarmadi سرمدي**: eternal, everlasting, perpetual

**Sawm صوم**: Sawm or Siyam implies a total abstinence from partaking of food, water or any liquid, smoking, intercourse, etc. from dawn till sunset for one whole lunar month. Sawm (fasting) takes place during the ninth month of the lunar calendar called Ramadan. It is one of the five pillars of Islam. How many types of fast are there in Islam? If you really want to know the answer, read my book *Fast of the Month of Ramadan: Philosophy and Ahkam* where you will find out that there are as many as forty types

of fast in Islam. Muslims take their religion very seriously.

**Sa'yee** سعي: the going back and forth seven times between the Safa and the Marwa during the *hajj* or *umra*. It symbolizes Hajar's search for water for her son Ishmael.

**Sayyid** سيد: leader, head or chief; also: a descendant of the Prophet (ص)

**Shafeer** شفيع: brink, verge, brim, edge

**Shafee`** شفيع: intercessor, preemptioner, one who intercedes on behalf of another. May the Almighty accept the Prophet of Islam (ص) as our Shafee` and yours, Allahomma Ameen.

**Shahada** شهادة: martyrdom; it also means testimony, declaration of faith. A person must recite the *shahada* in Arabic to convert to Islam. The *shahada* in Islam is: *Ashhadu an La Ilaha illa-Allah wa anna Muhammadan Rasul Allah*, that is, "I testify that there is no god except Allah and that Muhammad (ص) is the Messenger of Allah." Other meanings for this word: certificate, testimonial; **Shahadat Ashum** شهادة أسهم امتياز: share certificate or scrip; شهادة أسهم الحامل: share-warrant to bearer; شهادة أسهم أو حصص: certificate of preferred stock; شهادة اکتتاب (بأسهم): stock certificate; شهادة (سفينة) أمان: certificate of safety (of a ship/vessel); شهادة ايداع: certificate of deposit; شهادة تأسيس: certificate of incorporation; شهادة تسجيل سفينة: certificate of registry; شهادة تفريغ: unloading certificate; شهادة سوابق: certificate of police record (criminal record)

**Shaheed or Shahid** شهيد: a martyr, someone who dies in the way of Allah

**Shahr** شهر: month

**Shi'a or Shi'i or Shiite** شيعي: a follower of the Islamic faith according to the teachings of the Prophet's immediate family, the Ahl al-Bayt (ع). The largest Shiite sect is the Ithna-Asheri one which is detailed for you above.

**Shaikh or Sheikh** شيخ: The word "shaikh" is a title of an elderly person or a religious leader. This title is also given to a wise person, and it means, in this case, a mentor.

**Shaitan or Shaitan** شيطان: Shaitan (Satan) is the source of evil in the world. The plural name is Shayatin, devils or demons. His other name is Iblis or Eblis which means "one who has lost everything". The origin of this word is "shiyaat شياط", burning, and from it the term "burnt with rage استشاط غضبا" is derived. Rage surely burns! Among what it burns is homes: When a husband is angry with his wife, he goes ahead and divorces her, but rest assured that his divorce in this case is not legitimate at all. Read books of *fiqh* and learn the conditions for one's divorce to be acceptable in Islam.

**Shakk** شك: doubt, uncertainty, suspicion. In the Holy Qur'an, 49:12, we are told to avoid being too suspicious because sometimes suspicion/doubt can be a sin.

**Shari`** شارع: street, road, thoroughfare; **Musharri`** مشرع legislator, lawmaker; **Shar`** شرع law, doctrine, canon; **Shir`a** شرعه law, precept, concept; **Musharri`** مشرع legislator, lawmaker, jurist; **Shari`a** شريعة Islamic legislative system; **Shar`i** شرعي legitimate, lawful, legal, rightful, related to the Shari`a

**Shari`a** شريعة: path, method, way, manner, style, way of life, program; Islamic Shari`a is the legislative system in Islam which is derived from two sources: the Holy Qur`an and the Sunna of the Prophet of Islam (ص). This Sunna, which includes both actions and statements, is reported, narrated, detailed, chronicled and documented by two major groups of followers of Islam: 1) the Sahaba of the Prophet (ص), and 2) the immediate family members of the Prophet (ص) who are referred to the Holy Qur`an as **أهل البيت** Ahl al-Bayt, people of the house of the Prophet; see Qur`an, 33:33:

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا

***Allah only wishes to remove all abomination from you, you members of the (Prophet's) Family, and to make you pure and spotless.***

Followers of the first group like to be called “Sunnis” whereas followers of the other group are referred to as “Shi`ites”, “Shi`is”, “Shiites” or “Shi`as”. Unfortunately, some Sunni fanatics, instigated and paid by some politicians for one reason or another, have applied many derogatory names to the followers of Ahl al-Bayt (ع), the Shiites, such as “Rafidis” or “Rafidhis” رافضة which means rejectors, perhaps a reference to their rejection of the ascension to power of the first three “righteous caliphs” who saw with their own eyes and heard with their own ears how the Prophet (ص), as ordered by the Almighty, chose Ali (ع) to be his successor rather than this man or that. Anyhow, what is passed is past, and Islam is like one tree stem having two main branches each of which has sub-branches, too.

Throughout history, some Muslims, for reasons of their own which may include serious research in Islamic literature and history, have shifted their following from one group to another and this will always take place as is the case with all other religions of the world. An example of such “conversion” from one Islamic sect to another took place in the author’s populous tribe, the Jibouris عشيرة الجبور.

The author’s ancestors, because of an incident that took place about 130 years ago in north-western Baghdad, specifically the holy city of al-Kadhimiyya where two Imams, direct descendants of the Prophet (ص), are buried in a magnificent mausoleum visited daily by thousands of the faithful from all over the world, changed their sect from Sunni to Shiite. For this reason, his ancestors were subjected to untold persecution, discrimination and suffering which all strengthened their conviction rather than weakening it.

The Autobiography of the author of this book details this incident, and it is available for you if you click on this link and search for it: <http://www.scribd.com/yasinaljibouri> [1]/. Now, dear reader, who do you personally think know the Sunna best: the Prophet’s friends or his family members?!

May the Almighty keep the Muslim *umma* united and foil the efforts of those who try to divide it, *Allahomma Aameen* اللهم آمين. The root of this word is "shara'a شرع". Some other derivations of it are: *shar'*, *shir'a* and *tashri'*. Shari'a is the revealed and canonical laws of the Islamic faith. The Holy Qur'an and the sacred Sunna of the Prophet (ص) are the sources of the Shari'a, Islam's legislative code; **Shar`iyya** شرعيه legitimacy, legality. As for the misnomer "Rafidi", please refer to its place in this Glossary.

**Sharr** شر: evil, mischief; **Shirreer** شرير evildoer, mischief-maker, baneful, pernicious

**Shatm** شتم: revilement, insulting, calling someone bad names, cursing

**Shiite or Shi`i** شيعي: a Muslim following the Sunna of the Prophet (ص) as reported by the Prophet's immediate family, the Ahl al-Bayt (ع). The number of Shiites is estimated to range between 25% and 35% of the entire Muslim population of the world, but little is known about their beliefs for many reasons. Worse is the fact that their beliefs are often misrepresented, distorted, falsified and unjustifiably attacked by some of their ignorant Sunni brethren. This has been going on for centuries.

There are many Shiite sects which include, among others: **الشيعة الجعفرية الاثنا عشرية** the Twelvers, that is, the Shi`a Ja`feri Ithna-Asheris (the Twelvers, followers of the fiqh of Imam Ja`fer as-Sadiq (ع) who constitute the majority of Shiites of the world), **الزيدية** the Zaidis who follow Zaid son of Ali son of al-Husayn son of Ali son of Abu Talib (ع) who live mostly in Yemen; **الاسماعيلية** the Isma`ilis who mostly live in Turkey, **العلوية** the Alawis or Alawides who live in Syria, and **البيهره أو البحاريون** the Buhris or Biharis who live in India.

**Shiqaq** شقاق: discord, dissension

**Shirk** شرك: polytheism, the belief in the existence of partners with Allah. Shirk can also encompass any object that a person may regard as being higher in status than Allah. It is the most serious of all sins and can never be forgiven.

**Shubha** شبهة: (singular) doubt, suspicion, uncertainty; its plural is: shubuhaat

**Shura** شورى: the principle of mutual consultation, Islam's form of democracy; refer to verse 38, Chapter 42 (Shura or Consultation) of the Holy Qur'an: **وَأْمُرْهُمْ شُورَىٰ بَيْنَهُمْ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ** *Those who listen to their Lord and establish regular prayers, who (conduct) their affairs by mutual consultation, who spend out of what sustenance We bestow upon them...* (42:38). Some Muslim governments set up "shura assemblies" to advise top officials and resolve main contentions.

**Siddiq or Siddeeq** صديق: one who testifies to the truthfulness of a prophet

**Sifah** سفاح: cohabitation with a woman without a marriage contract, unlawful according to Islam and other divine religions, fornication or adultery.

**Sahr** صهر: relative by marriage, an in-law

**Sin al-Bulugh or al-Boloogh** سن البلوغ: This is the age of maturity and puberty. It is the age at which a Muslim is considered to be an adult and, hence, becomes accountable for his/her actions and responsible for the Islamic duties and obligations. There is no fixed age for that in terms of years, and it is decided by three signs: having menstruation or monthly period for girls, and being physically mature, encountering wet dreams growing pubic hair, or reaching the age of fifteen, whichever comes first for boys,.

**Sin at-Tamyiz** سن التمييز: This is the age of distinguishing. This age is used in *fiqh* to decide the age before which the mother has the right to keep the child after divorce. It varies from one person to another. The age is reached when the child can take care of himself or herself and no longer needs an adult to help him take care of himself/herself. In some Islamic schools of thought, it is seven years for the boy and nine for the girl. The girl is given longer time so that she can learn more about women's habits.

**Sinn** سن: literally, it means "tooth" or age such as: الإدراك سن: age of discretion (or mature realization, of distinguishing between right and wrong, lawful and lawful, etc.), سن البلوغ (الرشد) age of (physical) maturity, adolescence, سن الحداثه age of minors, سن الحضانه age of nurture, of nursing, سن الرشد legal age, full age, سن الرضا age of consent.

**Sira or Seera** سيره: collective writings of the companions of the Prophet (ص) about him, his personality, his life story, ways of handling different situations..., etc. is called *sira*. Among famous collectors of *sira* are: at-Tabari, Ibn Ishaq and Ibn Hisham.

**Sirat** صراط: path, highway; same as *sabeel* (*sabil*). As-*Sirat Al-Mustaqeem* الصراط المستقيم: The Straight Path is the one mentioned in Surat al-Fatiha and in numerous other verses under different other names, and it is a plea to the Almighty made by the faithful: اِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ Guide us (O Lord!) to the Straight Path" (Qur'an, 1:6), thus praying Allah Almighty to keep their feet firm as they pass on it so it may lead them to happiness in this life and salvation in the life to come.

All souls in the hereafter without any exception have to pass over it, and it is described as a bridge, a path, a passage that stretches from Hell to Paradise; only those who successfully cross it will enter Paradise, the ultimate goal of all believers where they will stay forever.

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (ع), as recorded on p. 41, Vol. 1, of Tabatabai's *Al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an* الميزان القرآن, was asked once about the meaning of this verse; so he said, "It means: Guide us to upholding the path that leads to Your pleasure, that ends at Your Paradise, that prohibits us from following our own desires and thus deviate, or follow our own views and thus perish."

By the way, Tabatabai's full name is: Muhammad Husayn ibn Sayyid Muhammad ibn Sayyid Husayn ibn Mirza Ali Asgher Tabrizi Tabatabai, the judge. He was born in 1892 in Tabriz and died in Qum in 1981.

His 21-Volume exegesis, *Al-Mizan*, is only one of his numerous works. The edition utilized for this book was published in 1991 by Al-A'jami Foundation of Beirut, Lebanon. Hujjatul-Islam Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi, recognized scholar and founder of the Bilal Muslim Mission of Tanzania, may Allah fill his resting place with *noor نور*, spent years of his blessed life translating some volumes of this valuable exegesis into English.

In his *Tafsir*, al-Ayyashi quotes Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (ع) as saying that as-Sirat al-Mustaqeem is the Commander of the Faithful Imam Ali (ع). *As-Sirat al-Mustaqeem* is referred to in verse 61 of Surat Ya-Sin (Ch. 36), in verse 52 of Surat ash-Shura (Ch. 42), in verse 16 of Surat al-Ma'ida (Ch. 5), in verses 126 and 161 of Surat al-An'am (Ch. 6), in verses 70 and 174 of Surat an-Nisaa (Ch. 4), in verse 42 of Surat al-Hijr (Ch. 15), and in other verses where it is described as the *Sabeel*, another word for path, leading to the Almighty.

Abdul-Rahman ibn Muhammad al-Hassam quotes Ahmed ibn 'Eisa ibn Abu Maryam quoting Muhammad ibn Ahmed al-'Arjami quoting Ali ibn Hatim al-Minqari quoting al-Mufaddal ibn Omer as saying,

"I asked Abu Abdullah (Imam as-Sadiq (ع)) about the Sirat, and he said, 'It is the Path to knowing Allah, the most Exalted, the most Great, and there are two such paths: one in the life of this world, and one in the life hereafter. The Sirat in this life is the Imam whose obedience is incumbent; whoever knows him in this life and follows his guidance will be able to pass on the (other) Sirat which is a path over hell in the hereafter, and whoever does not know him in this life, his feet will slip away from the Sirat in the hereafter, causing him to fall into the fire of hell.'"

This is recorded on pp. 13-14 of *Ma'ani al Akhbar معاني الأخبار* and also on p. 66, Vol. 8, of *Bihar al Anwar بحار الأنوار*. It is when you come to this Sirat, and you most certainly will, that you will find out how well you performed your prayers, fast and other religious obligations in the life of this world, how you dealt with your Maker, family, relatives and other members of the society.

As-Sirat al-Mustaqeem is the straight path over hell, a fire more intense in heat than boiling molten brass, and it has seven bridges over it: Each is three thousand years in length: one thousand to vertically ascend, one thousand to horizontally cross, and one thousand to descend. It is thinner than a human hair, sharper than the sharpest sword and darker than the darkest night inside a tunnel. Each bridge has seven branches, and each branch is like a long lance with sharp teeth: each servant of Allah will be confined on each and every one of them and be asked about all the injunctions the Almighty had required him to perform during his lifetime on this planet. In the first of such stops he will be asked about belief and conviction, *shirk شرك* (polytheism) and hypocrisy.

In the second he will be asked about prayers, what they entail, how to perform, and whether he performed them properly and on time. In the third he will be asked about *zakat*, its types, and whether he paid it or not. And it is in the fourth that he will be asked about the fast... It is there and then that he will

realize whether he upheld this important obligation or not, whether he offered charity or not, and whether he regretted and repented his sins during the month of Ramadan or not. In the fifth he will be asked about the *hajj*, pilgrimage, and *'umra*, why he did not perform them, or why he failed to perform them properly, and how they must be performed. In the sixth he will be asked about *wudu* (ablution) and *ghusul*, how he performed them, which one is compulsory and which is optional.

Finally, in the seventh, he will be asked about how kind he was to his parents and kin, and whether he did injustice to any human being. In the absence of sufficient optional good deeds such as offering charity, helping a needy Muslim, performing optional prayers or fasts..., etc., if one gives the wrong answer to any question in any of these stops, he will be prone to fall into the pit of hell underneath..., as Abdel-Jabbar ar-Rubay'i tells us in his book *Al-Tathkira fi ahwal almawt wal akhira* التذكرة في أحوال الموت و الآخرة, having collected such details from various books of *hadith* and Sunnah. He adds saying, on p. 130, that the bridges will be shaken by the weight of crossing people who will climb on top of each other, causing these bridges to move like a ship tossed by a wind storm in the midst of the sea.

As-Sirat separates Paradise from hell. With reference to those who will fall into hell, the Almighty says the following:

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ بَدَّلُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ كُفْرًا وَأَحَلُّوا قَوْمَهُمْ دَارَ الْبُورِ؟

**"Have you not considered those who have changed Allah's favor into blasphemy and caused their people to fall into the abode of perdition?" (Holy Qur'an, 14:28)**

where the "abode of perdition" connotes Hell;

وَمَنْ يَحْلِلْ عَلَيْهِ غَضَبِي فَقَدْ هَوَىٰ

**"... upon whomsoever My wrath descends shall fall therein" (Holy Qur'an 20:81)**

where the "fall" here means falling into Hell;

فَمَنْ اتَّبَعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا يَضِلُّ وَلَا يَشْقَىٰ

**"Whoever follows My guidance will not lose his way nor fall into perdition" (Holy Qur'an, 20:123);**

وَمَا يُغْنِي عَنْهُ مَالُهُ إِذَا تَرَدَّىٰ

**"... Nor will his wealth benefit him when he falls headlong (into the pit of fire)" (Holy Qur'an,**

92: 11).

So, if one is found as having been derelict in performing any of his obligations, the angels questioning him will try to find out whether he somehow made up for it with optional good deeds. Once he is cleared, he will be escorted into Paradise. It is to such stopping and questioning that the Almighty refers when He addresses His angels to

وَقَفُّوهُمْ إِنَّهُمْ مَسْتَوْلُونَ

**"Stop them, for they must be questioned" (Holy Qur'an, 37:24).**

On p. 133, Vol. 17, of his book titled *Al-Mizan*, `allama Tabatabai quotes various views regarding what the questions on this Sirat will be. He says that some scholars are of the opinion that they will be asked about the Unity of Allah, while others believe it will be about the *wilayat* ولاية of Imam Ali (ع), but he also concedes that such stopping and questioning will take place on the Sirat over hell.

On p. 107 of as-Saduq's *A1-Amali* لأماليا, and also on pp. 64–65, Vol. 8, of al-Majlisi's *Bihar al-Anwar* بحار الأنوار, al-Waleed quotes as-Saffar quoting Ibn 'Eisa quoting Muhammad al-Barqi quoting al-Qasim ibn Muhammad al-Jawhari quoting Ali ibn Abu Hamza quoting Au Busayr quoting Abu Abdullah Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (ع) as saying, "People will pass on different levels on the Sirat, and it is thinner than hair and sharper than the sword. Some will pass as swiftly as lightning, while others will pass as fast as a horse, while some of them will crawl on it, some will walk on it, while some others will pass hanging, so the fire will consume some of their body parts and leave others."

Imam Abu Ja'far al-Baqir (ع) is quoted on p. 65, Vol. 8, of al-Majlisi's *Bihar al-Anwar* as saying, "When the verse saying 'And hell is brought that Day' was revealed, the Messenger of Allah (ص) was asked about what it meant, so he (ص) said, 'The trusted Spirit (Gabriel) has informed me that when Allah, the One and only God, resurrects all people and gathers their early generations and the last, hell will be brought by a hundred thousand angels, very stern and mighty angels, and it will be coming roaring, inhaling and exhaling. The force of its exhalation is such that had Allah not delayed them for the reckoning, it would have caused everyone to perish.

Then a flame will come out of it and encircle all humans, the good and the bad, so much so that any servant of Allah, be he an angel or a prophet, will call out: 'Save me, O Lord, save me,' except you, O Prophet of Allah, for you will call out: Save my nation, O Lord, save my nation!" Muqatil, `Ataa and Ibn Abbas are among the greatest traditionists in the history of Islam without any contention. They are the ones who transmitted the *ahadith* أحاديث of the Messenger of Allah (ص) for all posterity.

All three of them, as stated on p. 67, Vol. 8, of *Bihar al-Anwar*, have interpreted the verse saying:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا تَوْبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَوْبَةً نَّصُوحًا عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَن يُكَفِّرَ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَيُدْخِلَكُمُ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا  
الْأَنْهَارُ يَوْمَ لَا يُخْزِي اللَّهُ النَّبِيَّ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ نُورُهُمْ يَسْعَىٰ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَبِأَيْمَانِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا أَتْمِمْ لَنَا نُورَنَا وَاغْفِرْ  
لَنَا إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

**"O you who believe! Turn to Allah with sincere repentance: In the hope that your Lord will remove your ills and admit you into gardens beneath which rivers flow, the Day that Allah will not permit the Prophet and the believers with him to be humiliated. Their light (نورُهُم) will shine before them and on their right hands, while they say, 'Lord! Perfect our light for us, and grant us forgiveness, for You have power over all things'" (Qur'an, 66:8)**

to mean: "Allah will not torment the Prophet (that Day, the Day of Judgment)," and the phrase "and those who believed with him" to mean that He will not torment Ali ibn Abu Talib, Fatima, al-Hassan, al-Husayn, peace be with them, al-Hamza, and Ja'far, Allah be pleased with them, that "their light runs before them" means "Their light shall illuminate the Sirat for Ali and Fatima seventy times more so than light in the life of this world." Their light will then be before them as they continue to cross. The intensity of their light will be indicative of their *iman* بِأَيْمَانِهِمْ, conviction.

Others will follow. "Members of the Ahl al-Bayt (ع) of Muhammad (ص) will pass over the Sirat like swift lightning. Then they will be followed by those who will pass like a speedy wind. Then there will be those who will pass as fast as a racing horse. Then another group of people will pass in a walking pace followed by those who will crawl on their hands and bellies, and finally by those who will crawl on their bellies (with extreme difficulty). Allah will make it wide for the believers and very narrow for the sinners." Then these narrators interpret the verse saying:

رَبَّنَا أَتْمِمْ لَنَا نُورَنَا

"Lord! Complete our light for us" to mean "complete it for us so that we may be able to pass on the Sirat."

Ibn Shahr Ashub, in his *Manaqib Ali ibn Abi Talib* مناقب علي بن أبي طالب, comments, as quoted by al-Majlisi on the same page, saying, "The Commander of the Faithful (ع) will pass in a howdah of green emeralds accompanied by Fatima on a conveyance of red rubies, and she will be surrounded by seventy thousand *huris*, as fast as lightning."

On p. 182 of his *Amali*, at-Tusi quotes al-Fahham quoting Muhammad ibn al-Hashim al-Hashimi quoting Abu Hashim ibn al-Qasim quoting Muhammad ibn Zakariyya ibn Abdullah quoting Abdullah ibn al-Muthanna quoting Tumamah ibn Abdullah ibn Anas ibn Malik quoting his father quoting his grandfather quoting the Prophet (ص) saying, "On the Day of Judgement, the Sirat will be spread over hell. None can pass over it except one who carries a permit admitting the *wilaya* (mastership) of Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع)."

Also with reference to the Sirat, Abu Tharr al-Ghifari, may Allah be pleased with him, is quoted by both al-Majlisi on p. 67, Vol. 8, of his book *Bihar al Anwar*, and by al-Kulayni on p. 152, Vol. 2, of his *Al-Kafi*, as saying, "I have heard the Messenger of Allah (ص) say, 'The edges of our Sirat on the Day of Judgment will be kindness to the kin and the returning of the trust. When one who is kind to his kin and faithful to his trust passes (over the Sirat), he will make his way to Paradise, but when one who is unfaithful to the trust and severs his ties with his kin passes, none of his good deeds will avail him, and the Sirat will hurl him into hell.'"

There are so many references to *noor* نور, divine celestial light, throughout the Holy Qur'an, in the *hadith*, and in *du'a*, supplication. It is the light of guidance whereby the Almighty guides whomsoever He pleases both in the life of this fleeting world and in the hereafter. Such light will be most sorely needed especially in the life hereafter. The reader is reminded that the intensity of his light, be it during the period of the *barzakh* برزخ, when most graves will be almost as dark as hell, during the time when people are judged on the Day of Judgment, or as one passes over the Sirat..., all depends on the depth and sincerity of his conviction, on his *iman* إيمان.

No good deeds, no matter how great, will avail him as will his sincere and deep conviction regarding the Unity (توحيد *tawhid*) and Justice (عدل *`Adl*) of the Almighty, the truth which He revealed to His prophets (نبوة *Nubuwwah*), and that we will most certainly be resurrected and judged (معاد *Ma'ad*), so that one will be either rewarded or punished.

There will be no sun in the life hereafter as we know it, nor will there be electricity; so, one's own light will be his guiding star. Everything in the life hereafter will have a light of its own; there will be no reflection, nor can one walk in the beam of another's light, nor can one be benevolent and give of his light to another; it is non-transferable! There will be no giving. The time of giving is right here, in this life, folks; so, it is now your golden opportunity to give your all to your Maker, to worship Him and obey Him as He ought to be worshipped and obeyed—or at least try; pay Him His dues, and be aware of your responsibilities towards His servants, the believing men and women, and to all mankind, your extended family, regardless of their creeds, for they are your brothers and sisters in humanity Give others of what Allah has given you; pray for your believing brethren; be kind to everyone; do not hurt the feelings of anyone. Think well of others so that they may think well of you, too. Observe the fast in months other than the month of Ramadan in order to remind yourself of the hunger from which others, especially indigent Muslims, suffer, and give by way of charity; otherwise, keep everything to yourself, hoard, treasure, and be forever damned. Hell is characterized by its darkness, yet its residents will still be able to see things, and whatever they will see will not please them at all. May Allah Subhanahu wa Ta'ala keep us all away from it and keep it away from us, *Allahomma Ameen* اللهم آمين .

Nobody in the entire lengthy history of Arabia has ever been known to be more courageous and daring, when confronting his foes on the battlefield, than Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) who was the right hand of the Messenger of Allah (ص). Ali was the man who single-handedly uprooted the main gate of the fort of

Khaybar of Medina's Jews of the time, that is, in the year 628 A.D., a gate so heavy it required forty men to close or open. Ali (ع) once was suffering acutely from an inflammation of the eye, and he was in extreme pain, screaming, the hero that he was. The Messenger of Allah (ص) visited him and saw him scream, so he asked him whether he was suffering from an acute pain or whether it was due to his frustration and agony.

The Imam (ع) said, "How intense my pain is! I have never felt such pain...", whereupon the Prophet (ص) said to him, "When the angel of death comes to take away the soul of a disbeliever, he brings with him a rod of fire whereby he takes his soul away. It is then that hell itself will scream because of the intensity of his pain and suffering." Having heard him say so, the Imam (ع) stood up then sat and said, "O Messenger of Allah! Please repeat what you have just said, for it has made me forget my own pain."

Then the Imam (ع) asked the Messenger of Allah, "Will the soul of any member of your nation be taken away as you have described?" The Prophet (ص) answered, "Yes! The soul of an unjust ruler, or of one who consumes the wealth of an orphan, or of one who falsely testifies [will be thus taken away]." The disbeliever referred to in this tradition is one who is unfair to Allah, Glory to Him and Exaltation, regarding one of the commandments which He has required him to uphold, one who does not recognize the Prophethood of Muhammad (ص) and his sacred Sunnah **السنة النبوية الشريفة** or anything required by Islam; such is the disbeliever.

You can reduce the agony of your death, or that of your loved one, by offering charity, fasting, or praying *nafl* (optional) prayers. Among such prayers is one performed in two *rek'ats* **ركعات**; in each *rek'a*, you should recite Surat al-Fatiha once and al-Ikhlās thrice. The intention for that prayer is to pray it seeking nearness to Allah. Once you complete it, you supplicate to the Almighty thus: "O Allah! Send blessings to Muhammad and the Progeny of Muhammad and send the rewards for these two *rek'ats* **ركعات** to so-and-so", naming the dead person, be he/she one of your parents, or both of them, or anyone else. How about you send it as a gift to all Muslims, alive and dead?

Imagine how many rewards you will then get, if your imagination can really grasp it! Never underestimate the extent of kindness and mercy of the Almighty; they are unlimited, infinite, and His doors of mercy are always open; how Great He is! If you fast either a few days or all of the months of Rajab and Sha'ban, according to your ability, the Almighty will reduce the agony of your death and the pain of loneliness in the grave. If you are truly concerned about these matters, and you most definitely should be, the month of Ramadan is your golden opportunity to earn as many blessings as Allah enables you to. It is an opportunity that may not recur, for nobody knows when his/her turn comes to die. We pray the Almighty to enable us to cross over His Sirat with hardship only in the life of this world, and without any hardship in the life hereafter, to forgive our sins, and to accept our fast and repentance, *Allahomma Ameen* **اللهم آمين**.

**Sirwal** **سروال**: long under garment worn by the Arabs

**Siwak** سواك: a piece of tree branch or root used as a toothbrush, also called *miswak*

**Siyam** صيام (or **Sawm**): Islamic fast, abstention from eating, drinking, smoking, intercourse or just speaking; in my book titled *Fast of the Month of Ramadan: Philosophy and Ahkam*, you can read about the 40 (forty) types of fast in Islam.

**Subhanahu wa ta'ala** سبحانه و تعالى: This is an expression used by Muslims use whenever the name of Allah is pronounced or written. It means: "Praise to Allah above having any partners, the most Exalted One above having a son". Muslims believe that Allah has neither partners nor offspring. Sometimes Muslims use or articulate other expressions when the name of Allah is written or pronounced. Some of these expressions are: "Azza Wa Jall", that is, He is the Mighty and the Majestic; "Jalla Jalaluh", His Greatness is Great.

**Suffa** صفة: a raised platform that was used by the Prophet as a welcoming point for newcomers or destitute people; rows of rooms accommodating poor and indigent Muslims who had no houses of their own. They were adjacent to and formed part of the Prophet's *masjid*, mosque, at the time.

**Sufi** صوفي: an ascetic, a mystic; it is derived from suf or soof, wool, because early Sufis used to wear coarse wool clothes; if we discuss Sufis and Sufism, we will need to write an entire book!

**Suhoor or Suhur** سحور: time or meal taken before daybreak in preparation for fasting during the day

**Suhuf** صحف: pages, manuscripts, tablets

**Sujud or Sujood** سجود: The root of those word is *sajada*, prostration to Allah, usually done during one's daily prayers. When in the position of *sujud*, a Muslim praises Allah Almighty and glorifies Him.

**Sultan** سلطان: ruler who rules in the name of Islam, a Muslim monarch

**Sunan** سنن: plural of *sunna*, a highly commended act of worship or way whereby a Muslim seeks nearness to Allah

**Sunna or Sunnah** سنة: In general, the word Sunna means: way of life, habit, practice, customary procedure, action, norm and tradition followed by tradition. Usually, the word Sunnah refers to what Prophet Muhammad (ص) had said and done or approved of when said or done by someone else. It includes the Prophet's sayings, practices, living habits, etc. The *hadith* reports on the Sunna. The two major legal sources of jurisprudence in Islam are the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

**Sunni or Sunnite** سني: a follower of the Islamic faith as reported, narrated and recorded by the Prophet's *sahaba* صحابة, companions, and *tabi'in* تابعين, those who learned from the *sahaba*, may the Almighty be pleased with the good ones among them. Shi'ite Muslims differ from their Sunni brothers when it comes to these *sahaba*: The Sunnis believe that they all were great, like stars in the heaven shining on earth, and whoever follows any of them, he is rightly guided.

Sunnis believe that if a scholar from amongst them acts on his *ijtihad*, and if his *ijtihad* is sound, he will be rewarded twice. But if he errs, he will be rewarded only once, something with which the Shiites totally disagree. Shiites differ: They say that not all of those *sahaba* were good folks, that many of them were interest seekers who did not hesitate to sacrifice Islam to achieve their objectives. Shi'is say that if a *mujtahid* errs, he will have to bear the burden not only of his own error but that of all those who follow him as well.

The Sunni branch of the Islamic faith is comprised mostly of 4 sects: 1) Hanafi, after "Abu Haneefah" Nu'man ibn Thabit ibn Zuta ibn Maah ibn Marzuban, who was born in 80 A.H. and died in 150 A.H. (699 – 767 A.D.); 2) Hanbali, after its founder, namely Ahmed ibn Muhammad ibn Hanbal ibn Hilal ibn As'ad ibn Idrees ibn Abdullah ibn Hayyan ibn Abdullah ibn Anas; he was born in 164 A.H. and died in 241 A.H. (781 – 856 A.D.); 3) Shafi'i after its founder, "Abu Abdullah" Muhammad ibn Idris ibn Abbas ibn Othman ibn Shafi'i ibn Saa'ib ibn Ubayd ibn Abd Yazeed ibn Hashim ibn Muttalib ibn Abd Munaf, of a Quraishi Muttalibi Hashimi lineage; he was born in 150 A.H. and died in 204 A.H. (767 – 820 A.D.); and 4) Maliki after Malik ibn Anas ibn Malik ibn Abi Aamir, "Abu Abdullah," who was born in 95 A.H. (some say 93 A.H.) and died in 179 A.H. (714 – 795 A.D.); may the Almighty shower His blessings on each and every one of these imams, *Allahomma Aameen* اللهم آمين.

**Sura or Soorah** سورة: The Qur'an is composed of 114 chapters or *suras*. The plural of *sura* is *suwar* سور, chapters.

### **S.W.T.**

These letters are acronyms for "Subhanahu wa Ta'ala". When the name of Almighty Allah is pronounced, a Muslim is expected to show his veneration to Him. The meaning of this statement is that Allah is too pure to have partners or sons or any family members or relatives.

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