

A Brief History of The Fourteen Infallibles



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THE FOURTEENTH INFALLIBLE

THE TWELFTH IMAM



THE SACRED CELLAR (*SARDAB*) AT SAMARRA' (IRAQ).

MUHAMMAD AL-MAHDI

(Peace be on him)

Name: **Muhammad.**

Title: al-Mahdi, al-Qa'im, al-Hujjah, al-Gha'ib, Sahibu'z-Zaman, Sahibu 'l-Amr.

Agnomen: Abu 'l-Qasim.

Father's name: al-Hasan al-`Askari.

Mother's name: Narjis.

Birth: In Samarra', on Friday, 15th *Sha'ban* 255 AH.

He is still living and will appear before the end of the world.

Minor Occultation: 8th *Rabi`u 'l-awwal* 260 AH.

Major Occultation: 10th *Shawwal* 329 AH.

THERE EXISTED a good deal of harmony and uniformity between the aspects pertaining to the births of Prophet Muhammad, the last Apostle of Allah and Imam al-Mahdi, the last Apostolic Imam. Just as the coming of the Holy Prophet was prophesied well in advance by the preceding prophets, similarly the impending news of the gracious birth of Imam al-Mahdi was foretold by the Holy Prophet.

Innumerable traditions in this context, quoted right from the Holy Prophet, from the glowing contents of many books of *Masanid*, *Sihah* and *Akhbar*, and of Shiite scholars (*ulama'*) existed. Many Sunni scholars have accumulated these traditions in complete volumes also, e.g.: *al-Bayan fi akhbar Sahibi 'z-Zaman* by al-Hafiz Muhammad ibn Yusuf ash-Shafi'i and *Dhikriyyatu 'l-Mahdi* by al-Hafiz Abu Nu'aym al-Isfahani as well as *as-Sahih* of Abu Dawud and *as-Sunan* of Ibn Majah. All of the above books record the traditions bearing evidence of the coming of this Holy Imam.

The promised Mahdi, who is usually mentioned by his title of *Imamu 'l-'Asr* (the Imam of the Period) and *Sahibu 'z-Zaman* (the Lord of the Age), is the son of the Eleventh Imam. His name is the same as that of the Holy Prophet. He was born in Samarra' in 255/869 and until 260/874 when his father was martyred, lived under his father's care and tutelage. He was hidden from public view and only a few of the elite among the Shi'ah were able to meet him.

After the martyrdom of his father he became Imam and by Divine Command went into occultation (*ghaybah*). Thereafter, he appeared only to his deputies (*na'ib*) and even then only in exceptional circumstances.

The Imam chose as a special deputy for a time `Uthman ibn Said al-`Amri, one of the companions of his father and grandfather who was his confident and trusted friend. Through his deputy the Imam would answer the demands and questions of the Shi'ah. After `Uthman ibn Said, his son Muhammad ibn `Uthman al-`Amri was appointed the deputy of the Imam. After the death of Muhammad ibn `Uthman, Abu 'l-Qasim al-Husayn ibn Ruh an-Nawbakhti was the special deputy, and after his death Ali ibn Muhammad as-Samuri was

chosen for this task.

A few days before the death of Ali ibn Muhammad as-Samuri in 329/939 an order was issued by the Imam stating that in six days `Ali ibn Muhammad as-Samuri would die. Henceforth the special deputation of the Imam would come to an end and the major occultation (*ghaybatu 'I-kubra*) would begin and would continue until the day God grants permission to the Imam to manifest himself.

The occultation of the Twelfth Imam is, therefore, divided into two parts: the first, the minor occultation (*ghaybatu 's-sughra*) which began in 260/872 and ended in 329/939, lasting about seventy years; the second, the major occultation which commenced in 329/939 and will continue as long as God wills it. In a *hadith* upon whose authenticity everyone agrees, the Holy Prophet has said, "If there were to remain in the life of the world but one day, God would prolong that day until He sends in it a man from my community and my household. His name will be the same as my name. He will fill the earth with equity and justice as it was filled with oppression and tyranny."

On the Appearance of the Mahdi:

In the discussion on prophecy and the Imamate it was indicated that as a result of the law of general guidance which governs all of creation, man is of necessity endowed with the power of receiving revelation through prophecy, which directs him toward the perfection of the human norm and the well-being of the human species. Obviously, if this perfection and happiness were not possible for man, whose life possesses a social aspect, the very fact that he is endowed with this power would be meaningless and futile. But there is no futility in creation.

In other words, ever since he has inhabited the earth, man has had the wish to lead a social life filled with happiness in its true sense and has striven toward this end. If such a wish were not to have an objective existence it would never have been imprinted upon man's inner nature, in the same way that if there were no food there would have been no hunger. Or, if there were to be no water there would be no thirst and if there were to be no reproduction there would have been no sexual attraction between the sexes.

Therefore, by reason of inner necessity and determination, the future will see a day when human society will be replete with justice and when all will live in peace and tranquillity, when human beings will be fully possessed of virtue and perfection. The establishment of such a condition will occur through human hands but with Divine succour. And the leader of such a society, who will be the saviour of man, is called in the language of the *hadith*, the Mahdi.

In the different religions that govern the world such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism and Islam there are references to a person who will come as the saviour of mankind. These religions have usually given happy tidings of his coming, although there are naturally certain differences in detail that can be discerned when these teachings are compared carefully. The *hadith* of the Holy Prophet upon which all Muslims agree, "The Mahdi is of my progeny," refers to this same truth.

There are numerous *hadiths* cited in Sunni and Shi`ite sources from the Holy Prophet and the Imams concerning the appearance of the Mahdi, such as that he is of the progeny of the Prophet and that his appearance will enable human society to reach true perfection and the full

realization of spiritual life. In addition, there are numerous other traditions concerning the fact that the Mahdi is the son of the Eleventh Imam, Hasan al-Askari. They agree that after being born and undergoing a long occultation the Mahdi will appear again, filling with justice the world that has been corrupted by injustice and iniquity.

As an example, `Ali ibn Musa ar-Rida (the Eighth Imam) said, in the course of a *hadith*, "The Imam after me is my son, Muhammad, and after him his son `Ali, and after Ali his son, Hasan, and after Hasan his son *Hujjatu 'l-Qa'im*, who is awaited during his occultation and obeyed during his manifestation. If there remain from the life of the world but a single day, Allah will extend that day until he becomes manifest, and fill the world with justice in the same way that it had been filled with iniquity. But when? As for news of the `hour;' verily my father told me, having heard it from his father who heard it from his father who heard it from his ancestors who heard it from `Ali, that it was asked of the Holy Prophet, `Oh Prophet of God, when will the "support" (al-Qa'im) who is from thy family appear?' He said, `His case is like that of the Hour (of the Resurrection). *He alone will manifest it at its proper time. It is heavy in the heavens and the earth. It cometh not to you save unawares* (Qur'an, 7:187).'"

Saqr ibn Abi Dulaf said, "I heard from Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn `Ali ar-Rida (the Ninth Imam) who said, "The Imam after me is my son, Ali; his command is my command; his word is my word; to obey him is to obey me. The Imam after him is his son, Hasan. His command is the command of his father; his word is the word of his father; to obey him is to obey his father.' After these words the Imam remained silent.' I said to him, `Oh son of the Prophet, who will be the Imam after Hasan?' The Imam cried hard, then said, `Verily after Hasan his

son is the awaited Imam who is "*al-Qa'im bi 'l-haqq*" (He who is supported by the Truth). ""

Musa ibn Ja'far Baghdadi said, "I heard from Imam Abu Muhammad al-Hasan ibn `Ali (the Eleventh Imam) who said, `I see that after me differences will appear among you concerning the Imam after me. Whoso accepts the Imams after the Prophet of God but denies my son is like the person who accepts all the prophets but denies the prophethood of Muhammad, the Prophet of God, upon whom be peace and blessing. And whoso denies (Muhammad) the Prophet of God is like one who has denied all the prophets of God, for to obey the last of us is like obeying the first and to deny the last of us is like denying the first. But beware! Verily, for my son there is an occultation during which all people will fall into doubt except those whom Allah protects."

The opponents of Shi'ism protest that according to the beliefs of this school the Hidden Imam should by now be nearly twelve centuries old, whereas, this is impossible for any human being. In answer it must be said that the protest is based only on the unlikelihood of such an occurrence, not its impossibility. Of course, such a long lifetime or a life of a longer period is unlikely. But those who study the *hadiths* of the Holy Prophet and the Imams will see that they refer to this life as one possessing miraculous qualities. Miracles are certainly not impossible nor can they be negated through scientific arguments. It can never be proved that the causes and agents that are functioning in the world are solely those that we see and know and that other causes which we do not know or whose effects and actions we have not seen nor understood do not exist. It is in this way possible that in one or several members of mankind there can be operating certain causes and agents which bestow upon them a very long life of a

thousand or several thousand years. Medicine has not even lost hope of discovering a way to achieve very long life spans. In any case, such protests from "Peoples of the Book" such as Jews, Christians and Muslims are most strange for they accept the miracles of the prophets of God according to their own sacred scriptures.

The opponents of Shi'ism also protest that, although Shi'ism considers the Imam necessary in order to expound the injunctions and verities of religion and to guide the people, the occultation of the Imam is the negation of this very purpose, for an Imam in occultation who cannot be reached by mankind cannot be in any way beneficial or effective. The opponents say that if God wills to bring forth an Imam to reform mankind, He is able to create him at the necessary moment and does not need to create him thousands of years earlier. In answer it must be said that such people have not really understood the meaning of the Imam, for in the discussion on the Imamate it became clear that the duty of the Imam is not only the formal explanation of the religious sciences and exoteric guidance of the people. In the same way that he has the duty of guiding men outwardly, the Imam also bears the function of *waldyah* and the esoteric guidance of men. It is he who directs man's spiritual life and orients the inner aspect of human action toward God. Clearly, his physical presence or absence has no effect in this matter. The Imam watches over men inwardly and is in communion with the soul and spirit of men even if he be hidden from their physical eyes. His existence is always necessary even if the time has not as yet arrived for his outward appearance and the universal reconstruction that he is to bring about.

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ الْحَجَّةُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ :
 «اعْلَمُ، إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ بَيْنَ اللَّهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ وَبَيْنَ أَحَدٍ قَرَابَةٌ، مَنْ أُنْكَرَنِي فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي. وَأَمَّا
 ظُهُورُ الْفَرَجِ فَإِنَّهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ، وَكَذَبَ الْوَقَّانُونَ. فَأَمَّا وَجْهُ الْإِنْتِفَاعِ بِي فِي غَيْبِي فَكَأَلَا يَنْتَفِعُ
 بِالشَّمْسِ إِذَا غَيَّبَتْهَا عَنِ الْإِبْصَارِ السَّحَابُ، وَإِنِّي أَمَانٌ لِأَهْلِ الْأَرْضِ. وَأَكْثَرُوا مِنَ الدُّعَاءِ
 بِتَعْجِيلِ الْفَرَجِ فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ فَرَجُكُمْ.»

al-Imam al-Hujjah, peace be on him, said:

* Rest assured that no one has a special relationship with Allah. Whoever denies me is not my (follower). The appearance of the Relief (al-faraj) depends solely upon Allah; therefore, those who propose a certain time for it are liars. As to the benefit of my existence in Occultation, it is like the benefit of the sun behind clouds where the eyes do not see. Indeed, my existence is an amnesty for the people of the earth. Pray much to Allah to hasten the Relief, for therein also lies the release from your sufferings.

A CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF THE FOURTEEN INFALLIBLES
THE HOLY PROPHET, HIS DAUGHTER AND THE TWELVE HOLY IMAMS

NOTE: Where there are differences of opinion on the dates of birth or death, the most popular view has been quoted.

SL. No.	Designation	Agnomen (<i>Kunyah</i>)	Name	Father's Name	Title (<i>Laqab</i>)	Date of Birth	Date of Death	Martyred by means of	Place of Burial
1.	The Last Prophet of Allah	Abu'l-Qasim	Muhammad (Ahmad) (al-Mustafa)	`Abdullah	Rasulu'llah, Nabiyyu'llah, an-Nabiyy, Khatamu'n-Nabiyyin	17th Rabi` I, in the Year of the Elephant. (25. 8.570 AD)	28th Safar, 11 AH (25.5.632 AD)	Natural	Holy Medina al-Munawwarah, Saudi Arabia.
2.	One of the Fourteen Infallibles	Umm Abiha	Fatimah	Muhammad	az-Zahra, as-Siddiqah, al-Batul, Sayyidatu'n-Nisa'.	20th Jumada II, in the fifth Year after the declaration of the Prophethood. (2. 1. 615 AD)	3rd Jumadi II, 11 AH (26. 8.632)	Injured	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia.
3.	1st Imam	Abu 'l-Hasan, Abu'l-Hasanayn, Abu Turab.	`Ali	Abu Talib	Amir al-Mu'minin, al-Wasiyy, al-Murtada, (Haydar).	13th Rajab, 10 Years before the declaration of the Prophethood. (25.5.600 AD)	Struck on 19th Ramadan (25th January); Died on 21st Ramadan 40AH(27.1.661AD)	Sword - while he was engaged in prayers.	Holy an-Najaf al-Ashraf, Iraq. (al-Ghariyy)
4.	2nd Imam	Abu Muhammad	al-Hasan	'Ali	al-Mujtabi, as-Sibt (al-Akbar)	15th Ramadan, 3 AH (1. 3. 625 AD)	7th Safar, 50 AH (6. 3. 670 AD)	Poison	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia.
5.	3rd Imam	Abu 'Abdillah	al-Husayn	'Ali	Sayyidu'sh-Shuhada', as-Sibt (al-Asqhar)	3rd Sha'ban, 4 AH (8.1. 626 AH)	10th Muharram, 61 AH (10.10. 680 AD)	Sword -in the Battle of Ashura	Holy Karbala (at-Taff), Iraq.
6.	4th Imam	Abu Muhammad	'Ali	al-Husayn	Zaynu 'l-'Abidin, Sayyidu 's-Sajidin, as-Sajjad.	5th Sha'ban, 38 AH (6.1. 659 AD)	25th Muharram, 94/95 AH (31.10.712 / 20.10.713 AD)	Poison	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia.

7.	5th Imam	Abu Ja'far	Muhammad	'Ali	al-Baqir	3rd Safar, 57 AH (16.12.676 AD)	7th Dhi'l-Hijjah, 114 AH (28.1.733 AD)	Poison	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia.
8.	6th Imam	Abu 'Abdillah, Abu Musa.	Ja'far	Muhammad	as- Sadiq	17th Rabi' I, 83 AH (20. 4. 702 AD)	25th Shawwal, 148 AH (14. 12. 765 AD)	Poison	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia.
9.	7th Imam	Abu 'I-Hasan (<i>al-Awwal</i> = The First), Abu Ibrahim	Musa	Ja'far	al-Kadum, al-'Abd as-Salih, al-'Alim.	7th Safar, 129 AH (28.10. 746 AD)	25th Rajab, 183 AH (1. 9. 799 AD)	Poison	Holy al-Kazimi- yyah, Iraq.
10.	8th Imam	Abu 'I-Hasan (<i>ath-Thani</i> = The Second)	'Ali	Musa	ar-Rida	11 th Dhi'l-q'dah, 148 AH-(29.12.765AD)	17th Safar, 203 AH (24.8.818 AD)	Poison	Holy Mashhad, (Tus-Khurasan), Iran.
11.	9th Imam	Abu Ja'far (<i>ath-Thani</i> = The Second)	Muhammad	'Ali	at-Taqi, al-Jawad.	10th Rajab, 195 AH (8. 4. 811 AD)	30th Dhi 'l-q'dah, 220 AH (25. 11. 835 AD)	Poison	Holy al-Kazimi- yyah, Iraq.
12.	10th Imam	Abu 'I-Hasan (<i>ath-Thalith</i> = The Third) ,	'Ali	Muhammad	an-Naqi, al-Hadi.	2nd Rajab, 212 AH (27.9.827 AD)	3rd Rajab, 254 AH (28.6.868 AD)	Poison	Holy Samarra' (Surra-man-ra'a), Iraq.
13.	11th Imam	Abu Muhammad	al-Hasan	'Ali	al-'Askari	8th Rabi' II, 232 AH (3.12. 846 AD)	8th Rabi' I, 260 AH (1.1. 874 AD)	Poison	Holy Samarra, Iraq.
14.	12th Imam	Abu 'Iqasim	Muhammad	al-Hasan	al-Mahdi, al-Qa'im, al-Hujja, al-Gha'ib, Sahebuz-Zaman Sahibu 'l-Amr, al-Muntazar.	15 th Sha'ban, 255 AH (29. 7. 869 AD)	Still alive, but in occultation.	--	---