

# The 12 Imams



**M**ahdi is the name of the last of the 12 Imams. The first Imam was Ali, son-in-law of Mohammed. According to Islam and in particular the Shiites, Mahdi comes at the time of the Last Judgement to save the world. The return of Mahdi constitutes the most frequent prophetic theme of the Imams. Al-Kultani and al-Nu'mani consecrated an entire chapter and Ibn Babyne passed down in 13 chapters the predictions of the Prophet, Fatima and the 11 Imams on the subject of the Twelfth Imam.

The obscured presence of Mahdi totally dominates the religious conscience of Imamism during the period of his disappearance until the return of the awaited Saviour.

At the moment of birth a light pierced the top of the child's head and reached into the depths of the sky.. This child is the Mahdi, he who will fill the earth with equality and justice just as it is now filled with oppression and injustice.

The Imam says: "As to the way of benefiting from my presence (literally "to benefit of me") during my disappearance, it is similar to the profit we gain from the sun while it is hidden from sight by the clouds". (Ibn Babyne, bab 45, no.4, 11/485)

The universal precursory "Sign" of the return of Mahdi, He who guides, consists of the general invasion of the earth by Evil, the victory of the forces of Evil over those of Good, which in some way demands the manifestation of the ultimate and final Saviour (eschatological). If this does not happen, the result is that the entirety of humanity is engulfed by darkness.

Here we find extracts from the eulogies of Ali b. Abi Tali describing various components of the "Sign", the return of Mahdi. The "sign" manifests as follows: people will neglect prayer, squander the divinity which is conferred on them, legalise untruths, practise usury, accept bribes, construct huge edifices, sell religion to win this lower world, employ idiots, consort with women, break family ties, obey passion, and consider insignificant the letting of blood. Magnanimity will be considered as weakness and injustice as glory, princes will be debauched and ministers will be oppressors, intellectuals will be traitors and the readers of the Koran vicious. False witness will be brought openly and immorality proclaimed in loud voices. A word of promise will be slander, sin and exaggeration.

The sacred Books will be decorated, the mosques disguised, the minarets extended. Criminals will be praised, the lines of combat narrowed, hearts will be in discord and pacts broken. Women, greedy for the riches of this lower world, will involve themselves in the business of their husbands, the vicious voices of man



will be loud and will be listened to. The most ignoble of the people will become leaders, the debauched will be believed for fear of the Evil they will cause, the liar will be considered as truthful and the traitor as trust- worthy.

They will resort to singers and musical instruments... and women will ride horses, they will resemble men and the men will resemble women. The people will prefer the activities of this lower world to those of the Higher world and will cover up with lambskins the hearts of wolves. (Kamal, bab 47, no. 1 11/525–28)

The Qa'im (Mahdi) comes to re-establish the lost sense of sanctity. Firstly he will re-establish Islam to its original purity and integrity. (al-Nu'mani, op. cit., pages 333–59 ("The Qa'im"))

He will do as did the Prophet, destroying that which was before just as the Prophet destroyed the rituals of the period of ignorance, and he will establish once again Islam. Our Qa'im will repair the Mosque and will reconstruct his Mecca. The Qa'im will bring a new Order, a new Book, a new Legislation and a new Tradition. (Yaqumu I-qa im bi-amrin jadid wa kitabin jahid wa Qadaim jadid wa sunnatus jadida.)

The other religions, also abandoned and disfigured, will be equally re-established in their original Truth and Purity by Mahdi. (Ibn Babyne, bab 129, 1/161; ibn-Ayyash, Mugtad-ab 18159)

He will extract the Torah and the other Divine Books from their caverns and will judge amongst the faithful of the Torah according to the Torah, amongst the faithful of the Evangiles according to the al-Zabur and amongst the faithful of the Koran according to the Koran. It is the universal initiation by the Imam for all men into the secrets of existence and of their own religions, and this is without doubt the meaning which much be understood by the term "Mahdi" given by the fifth Imam al-Bagir: "Mahdi ("the guide") is named as such because it is he who will guide (yahdi) us in the secret teachings." (al-Nu'mani, op. cit., page 342)

In this way the awaited Imam (al-Muntazar) Mahdi, Qa'im, will prepare the earth for the Last Judgement and the Resurrection.

The battle of Qa'im will mark the ultimate victory of the "believers" against their "enemies" and the universal and final establishment of the "religion" of the Imams.

Imam Ja'far recounting a vision he had about the coming of Mahdi says that at one moment, "9000 angels descend from the sky and then 313 more angels (the first), those who accompanied Noah in the Ark, and Abraham when he was thrown into the fire, and Moses when the seas of the ocean were parted for him, and with Jesus when he was lifted up by God to be with Him".

The number of Companions of Qa'im-Mahdi (ashab al-Qa'im), "the men of sincerity" (ahl al-ikhlas), "the sincere devotees" (al-khullas) is, as the number of fighters of Badr, 313. Each one of these 313 companions carries a sword on which is written "a thousand words, each one giving access to a thousand more." At the moment of the Advent, these 313 men will be dispersed in different parts of the world.

Says the Koran: "Surpass yourselves in doing good works, wherever you may be God will gather you all



together.” (Q.II, alBagara/148)

The fifth Imam says: good works (al-kayrat). This is the faithful love towards the Imam (al-walaya), “where ever you may be God will gather you all together,” describes the Companions of Qa’im, the 313 who will gather together within one hour just as the clouds rush together in Autumn. (al-Kulayni, al-Rawda, II/45)

...Some amongst them will walk upon the clouds. Their names as well as the names of their fathers, their qualities (hilya) and their ancestry (nasab) are known to us. (al-Nu’mani, op.cit., bab 20, page 445sq; Ibn Babyne, op.cit., bab 58, no. 24, II/672)

All or some of them (according to the different traditions) will be sent by the Imam to different places on the earth where they will dominate everything, even the birds and wild animals will obey them.

All the faithful joining the ranks of Mahdi will be gifted with special miraculous powers, in particular those of super-sensitive communication with the Imam. At the time of Advent of our Qa’im, says Ja’far, God, may He be exalted and glorified, will develop the hearing and sight of our faithful in such a manner that, without there being a messenger between the Qa’im and themselves, he will speak with them, and they will hear and can see him without him having left the place where he is (al-kulayni, al-Rawda, II/49)

For decisions which they have difficulty in taking, they will receive instructions and direction from the Imam who will write on the palms of their hands, they need only look and then execute the orders, (al-Nu’mani, op.cit., bab 214)

God speaks: “O Mohammad, these are My friends, My pure elect, and My proof after you for mankind. They are your legatees and your priests and the best of My creatures after you. By My Glory and My Majesty I Will manifest through them My religion and I will raise through them My Word; by the last of them (Mahdi) I will make the earth pure of my enemies. I will establish him from the sunrise to the sunset throughout the entire earth; I will confer to his power the wind and will lower for him the stubborn clouds. I will help him with My Army and aid him with My Angels until he raises My Name and the creatures acknowledge My uniqueness, and then I will prolong his reign and I will ensure the succession of My Friends over the time until the Day of Resurrection.”

— Masjid

