

Imam Mahdi (aj): Lecture Transcript for the 15th of Sha'ban (September 2006)
RSC YOUTH BIRMINGHAM

Introduction:

WHOEVER dies without knowing the imam of his time, dies the death of Jahiliyya.

This is a hadeeth narrated from the prophet. These are powerful words.

Jafar ibn Abi Talib has described Jahiliyya like this:

“We were a people in a state of ignorance and immorality, worshipping idols and eating the flesh of dead animals, committing all sorts of abomination and shameful deeds. Breaking the ties of kinship, treating guests badly and the strong among us exploited the weak.”

In this hadeeth the prophet (saw) is warning us.

WHOEVER admits there is no God but Allah, prays 5 times a day, fasts Ramadan, gives zakat and goes on hajj... but dies without knowing the imam of his time... has died as if he was in jahilliya. Someone can be equated with a person of the worst ignorance if he does not know his imam.

KNOWING YOUR IMAM is a very important part of your Islam, without which your entire identity as a Muslim is lacking, so that you will not be distinguishable from the kuffar.

So, who is the imam?

Do we know enough about him to recognise his signs? If he walked into the room right now, would we realise who it was?

More to the point, would HE recognise US as followers of his?

These are some very important questions we need to ask... and if any answers to the above questions were “I don't know”, that's something we need to work on.

Today the talk will be about imam Mahdi (aj), on the occasion of the anniversary his birth two weeks ago.

The purpose of Life

HOW CAN A BELIEVER BE LIKE SOMEONE WHO DIED IN JAHILIYYA?

to answer this we need to think. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF OUR LIVES?

Here are two verses from the Quran.

- وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ *I have only created Jinns and men, that they may serve Me.*
(51:56)

- *Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: "I will create a vicegerent on earth." ... (2:30):* in which Allah states has created all mankind to be his khalifs, the representatives of His will on earth.

These are our two most important goals. The first, is to **know and obey Allah.** The second, is to **become a true human being,** become like the khalifs of Allah. By the hadeeth we see, **not knowing the imam of the time can make you similar to someone in jahiliyya:** ie. Someone who has not fulfilled EITHER of these goals.

So how is the Imam (as) related to these goals?

FIRST GOAL: to know Allah & worship Him

In a hadeeth from Imam as-Sadiq: imam Hussain (as) came out to his companions. He called out: *O people, indeed Allah, May His Mention be Glorified, did not create the Servants except that they would know Him, and if they know him they will worship Him, and to be content through worshipping Him and no one else.*

A man said to him: "O son of the Prophet, my mother and father be sacrificed for you. What is the knowledge of Allah?". To which Imam Hussain (as), the Prince of Martyrs, said: *"The knowledge the people of every time will have of their Imam, the Imam for whom obedience has been ordered."*

This is because the Imams represent Allah's will perfectly: so by seeing what they do, you know what Allah likes. **And through acting as Allah would like, they are a reflection of His attributes of kindness, mercy, justice and so on; they reflect them to the maximum extent any human being can. Therefore, knowing their character will serve as an introduction to Allah's character and His attributes.**

In another famous hadeeth qudsi from imam Reza (as) called the "hadeeth of the golden chain" (because every link in the chain of narrators was ma'soom – it is a golden chain), we meet this subject. When passing through Nishapur Imam Reza (as) addressed a congregation of over 120,000 people, including many scholars who had asked for his advice.

he said: *Musa ibn Jafar (A.S.), my dignified father once quoted the words of his father Jafar ibn Muhammad Sadiq (A.S.), who in his turn related the words of his father Muhammad ibn Ali (A.S.), who narrated the words of his father Ali ibn Husain (A.S.), who likewise quoted Husain (A.S.), the master of the youth residing in paradise, who directly quoted the Holy Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.), who narrated the words of Gabriel(A.S.), who quoted the divine words of the Exalted Lord as follows:*

" Tawhid – [that is the belief "La ilaha il Allah"] is My stronghold (strong fortress) in which the reciter of this holy verse can enter and he will dwell there safely, and will not suffer My wrath"

The Imam (as) then added:

"But all this depends on some conditions, and I am considered to be one of those conditions".

The imam (as) was instructing the people, **that even fulfilling the most basic Islamic belief cannot be perfect without the condition of knowing and following Allah's representatives on earth, the Ahlul Bayt (as).**

This is written into even the most basic and fundamental part of our faith: the **shahadah.**

If we believe, Allah has commanded us to say:

ASHHADU AN LA ILAHA IL ALLAH – I swear there is no god but Allah

WA ASHHADU ANNA MUHAMMADAN RASOOL ALLAH – I swear that Muhammad (saw) is the messenger of Allah.

These two parts of the shahada are inseparable, and you must adhere to **BOTH** if you want to be Muslim. You cannot accept one and reject the other. Otherwise, you **may as well** be from Jahiliyya, because you will be **rejecting knowledge of Allah’s example for you, His leader sent to watch over you, and His wishes for you.**

If we do not learn from the teachings of the Prophet (saw) and ahlul bayt (as) we will never be able to appreciate what “La ilaha il Allah” truly means, and how to live so that our lives reflect the statement. Without knowing them the shahada would just be empty words, with no meaningful connection to us.

For the second goal: To be the khalif of Allah.

Being the khalif (vicegerent) of Allah means that you will accurately represent His will at all times, yet **independently** – i.e. **without direct specific orders from Him on what to do all the time.** The qualifications of a true khalif of Allah, as mentioned in various verses of the Quran, are:

- Complete and continuous remembrance of Allah
- Not being deviated by selfish desires, or the will of others, and perfect following of the revelation and establishment of every virtue
- Awareness of **ALL** of Allah’s moral and physical laws (as the khulafa must act in accordance with these laws in every second, they must understand what each of these laws are)
- Their hearts are in a state of “sakina” – whereby crisis and temptation do not sway them and cause them doubt or loss of faith
- They have pure birth, conduct, character, and are nearest to Allah
- They are just in ruling people

All of these points are logical to expect from a khalif, once you know that the role of khalif is to represent the will of Allah on earth. The ***only group of people*** who can be classed as fulfilling all of these criteria are **prophets and Imams, the leaders of men given authority by Allah. *They are the representatives of Allah, chosen for their merits, they know the laws of Allah, have perfect qualities, and are a reflection of Allah’s attributes.***

To follow Allahs religion, we need to know the ahlul Bayt (as). This is because they represent the perfect state of true guidance, and the form of humanity which is Allah’s wish for mankind.

If we are to become khalifs of Allah too, we MUST learn from those who have already attained this status, we must follow them, and try to be like them.

The specific requirement of knowing the Imam of the Time.

From the very start of history, Allah has sent prophets to mankind as teachers and examples of how to be khalifat Allah. One prophet followed the next in a long chain, so that every people in every time had a messenger. **This chain of prophets manifested the same state of khalifatullah – the same excellencies present in the Last Prophet (saw) and Ahlul Bayt (as), until the perfection of religion**

on earth with Islam, and their appearance. Therefore **KNOWING** and **FOLLOWING** the ahlul bayt (as), means we know and follow the examples of all previous prophets of Allah too.

But there is also a specific requirement to know the Imam of the time (as).

Allah has said in the Quran:

(Remember) the day when We will call every people with their Imam... [Quran, 15:71]

EVERY PEOPLE – including us - will be called on the day of judgement to stand behind their imam – whoever it was they followed when they were alive. On the Last Day, people are classified according to who they followed in life. We are instructed in the Quran:

"O' you who believe! Obey Allah, and Obey Apostle and those from among you who are given authority (by Allah)." (Quran 4:59)

it is made clear that there are some imams which we MUST follow:

"And We appointed from among them some Imams who guide by our authority since they were patient and believed firmly in Our Signs." (Quran 32:24)

and OTHER people who are just posing as imams, which will lead us to hell:

And We made them Imams who call to the Fire, and on the day of resurrection they shall not be assisted [Quran 28:41]

So we are warned, that **we need to follow someone, and not everyone we follow will lead us to heaven.** We are told in the first verse, Allah APPOINTED the imams who Guide by His AUTHORITY: these are who we should follow. **And we are warned in the second verse, Following the wrong Imam can lead you to hell.**

In some of the last words he spoke before he died, the prophet (saw) instructed his followers: ALL OF THE MUSLIMS WHICH WOULD COME IN ALL THE TIMES AFTER HIS DEATH. He said:

"It is probable that I be called soon and I will respond.

Then, I leave behind me among you two weighty things: The Book of Allah, which is a stretched rope from the heaven to the earth, and my progeny, my Ahlul-Bait; for verily Allah, The Merciful, the Aware, informed me that never, never, will these two get separated from each other until they meet me at the Pond of Kauthar.

Therefore, be careful how you will treat those two in my absence."

These words are as relevant to us as they were to the people who were physically there and listening to them. The prophet (saw) is telling ALL OF US the way to NEVER go astray.

In another hadeeth, the prophet (saw) shows that following the ahlul bayt (as) is what separates the believers from the party of Satan:

"The stars help prevent the inhabitants of the earth from being drowned, and my Ahlul-Bayt are the protectors of my community against disputes (in religious matters). Therefore, whichever group ... opposes my Ahlul-Bayt, shall be split up by dissensions and will become (a party of) Satan."

In a similar hadeeth, the prophet (saw) tells believers the imam is their representative:

*"In every generation of my followers there are going to be just and righteous members of my Ahlul-Bayt to counteract the alterations and corruption's which the misguided people will try to make in my religion, to remove the false allegations of the untruthful and contradict the misinterpretations of the ignorant. **Be aware! Your Imam shall be your representative before Allah, so be careful whom you adopt as your representative.**"*

And one of the most famous ahadeeth from the nabi (saw):

"THE PARABLE OF MY AHLUL-BAYT IS SIMILAR TO THAT OF NOAH'S ARK. WHOSOEVER EMBARKS IT CERTAINLY WILL GET RESCUED, BUT THE ONE WHO OPPOSES THE BOARDING OF IT, SURELY GETS DROWNED"

we should note: you have to actively BOARD the ark to be saved – if you either oppose it OR you don't care that much and don't act, the result is the same... you STILL DROWN.

Imam Al Mahdi (aj)

In another hadeeth the prophet (saw) told imam Ali (AS):

"There will be twelve Guides after me, the first of whom is you, O' Ali, and the last one will be al-Qa'im who, with the grace of Allah, will gain victory over the whole east and west of the world."

The Prophet (saw) has told us here about the imam of our time, the one WE need to follow: he is al imam al mehdi, who will come to lead the believers to victory.

al Mahdi (as) is the imam of this time. He is alive RIGHT NOW, just as we are. He can see what is going on in the world; he appreciates our trials and suffering, he witnesses the conflict and oppression **and is eagerly awaiting the time of his own reappearance, just as we await it.** Imam Mehdi's (as) coming will end injustice on the earth and will fulfill the divine promise that **GOOD WILL TRIUMPH**, made in every revealed faith. The concept of the awaited saviour of mankind occurs in most major faiths, Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism to name a few; but it is only Islam which gives a concrete form and structure to this hope of all humanity.

Ayatullah Baqir as Sadr writes, ***"The Mahdi is not to be born in the distant future. He is already living amongst us and shares our joys and sorrows: His appearance will mean not only the materialization of an Islamic aspiration, but will also be the realization of a hope cherished by the entire humanity."***

Firm faith in his reappearance (as) is a source of strength and motivation for all believers, to **strive to possess the characteristics and qualities of the imam's (as) companions**, as well as a comfort of faith in a happy future. Even if death claims us before his (as) coming, awaiting the Mahdi (as) will in itself become our deliverance. Imam Jafar as Sadiq (as) has said:

"One who is zealous about the companionship of Imam Mahdi (a.s.) should wait and act piously and in a noble manner. Such people, when they die before the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.s.), will have the reward of being his companion. Hence strive and wait. You deserve this, O Forgiven Ones!"

Salawat ala Muhammad wa ale Muhammad.