

Answers to Two Questions
Regarding Imam Mahdi (p.b.u.h.)

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Abstract: There are two important questions about Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance). One of them is about the benefits of Imam, when he is disappeared and the other about his very long life, in addition to the possibility of it, according to historical similarities.

1-The Hidden Sun

An old question about the disappearance of Imam Mahdi which dates back to the time of the Prophet (*p.b.u.h.*) is: how can people benefit from their Imam during the time of his Disappearance?

When the Quranic verse, known as Olul-Amr (people of authority) (Quran 4:59) was revealed to the Prophet, Jabir-ibn-Abdullah Ansari, a very famous companion of the Prophet, asked him, “Oh Prophet of God, we know God and the Prophet, but who are the Olul-Amr that God orders us in this Quranic verse to follow, just as we follow Him?

The Prophet said: “O’ Jabir, they are my successors. After me, they are the leaders of the Muslims: the first one is Ali-ibn-Abi Talib; then Hassan; then Hussein; then Ali-ibn-Hussein (Imam Sajjad); then Muhammad-ibn-Ali, who is known as Baqir in the Torah (book of Laws of the Jews), and you will meet him. O’ Jabir, when you encounter him, give him my salam (peace). Then Jafar-ibn-Muhammad; then Musa-ibn-Jafar; then Ali-ibn-Musa; then Muhammad-ibn-Ali; then Ali-ibn-Muhammad; then Hassan-ibn-Ali; then one who has the same name and the same epithet as me (Imam Mahdi), who is the Hojjat (leader) of God on His earth, and the Baqiat-ullah (reminder of God) in the midst of His followers, and who is the son of Hassan-ibn-Ali (Imam Hassan Askari). It is through his hands that God Almighty will conquer the world. He is the one who will disappear from his followers and his companions. Nobody will stand firm in his belief of his Imamate, except those whose faith are affirmed by God.”

Jabir then asked the holy Prophet, “Do his followers benefit from his existence?” The Prophet replied, “Yes, by the God who has appointed me to the prophethood, for sure they (the followers) will benefit from him, and will benefit from the light of his vilayah (authority) during the time of his Disappearance, just as people benefit from the sun when the clouds cover it.”

Imam Mahdi, in one of his letters, states, “And how [the people] benefit from me during my Disappearance: It is comparable to the sun when the clouds conceal it from sight.”

An Imam, who is disappeared, is comparable to the sun that is hidden behind a cloud. When the clouds hide the sun, they are unable to turn day to night. The sun still gives light and heat, and the order of nature remains intact and in place. Even if the disappearance of sun is lengthy, the reappearance of the sun is to happen. Sometimes the sun may show its face from among the clouds, and its rays will warm portions of the earth.

2. A Very Long Life

Considering the date of birth of Imam Mahdi (*a.t.f.sh*), he has lived for more than 1168 years, and based on different reports of people who have had the honor of seeing him, he is completely healthy, young, and cheerful.

It is obvious that if one tries to consider his long life with an ordinary approach, such a consideration would be impossible. Yet if one looks at it and sees it as a miracle and the power of God, there is no doubt in its possibility. However if we take a look at this issue, we see that long life is not a mysterious nor a complicated topic as it seems. The holy Quran speaks of the very long life of Prophet Noah, which included more than 950 years of preaching.

“We send Noah to his folk. He remained among them for a thousand years less fifty twelve months. The floods seized them while they were doing wrong” (*The Holy Quran; 29:14*)

The aforesaid verse gives the period between the beginning of his prophetic mission until the beginning of the storm as 950 years. It is clear that Noah lived before the beginning of his mission and after the storm. According to the narrations he lived about two thousand years. The length of Noah’s life is a tradition which has been repeated in Imam Mahdi (*p.b.u.h.*). Imam Sajjad has said, “Al-Qaim (Imam Mahdi) shares a specific

characteristic with Noah, which is the length of his lifetime.” [Ayatollah Safi, Montakhab al-Asar, P. 275]

The contemporary Torah confirms the length of Noah’s life (with the only discrepancy that it recalls his entire life to be nine hundred and fifty years long). It also shows the lengthy lives of many of his forefathers:

Adam (<i>p.b.u.h.</i>)	930 years
Shaith	912 years
Anoush	905 years
Ghaynan	910 years
Mahlaleil	895 years

In the history of mankind, there have been so many people with long lives that authors have compiled their biographies into books, such as “Al-Moamaroon” by Abu Haatam Sajestani (D. 250 A. H.).

From a biological viewpoint, long-lasting life is neither strange nor impossible. Rather major researches have tried to find the ways to longer lifespan. By applying the Prophetic traditions and by adhering to the health guidelines concealed among them, such as: consuming clean food; fasting, being sociable; prohibition of unlawful acts; and activity extend the normal human lifespan. In Imam Mahdi’s case, in addition to all the physical and spiritual acts, there is also a certain strong power of God which preserves his respected health and youth.

Abu Salt Heravi said, “I asked Imam Reza (*p.b.u.h.*), ‘When will Qaim, [who is] from you Ahlul-Bayt, reappear and what are his characteristics?’ He replied, “His characteristics are that he has lived a very long life, yet he looks young, so that when someone sees him, he would think that he is forty or even younger. Furthermore, he does not look old by the passage of years, until one day, he would die.”