

# **HISTORY OF THE FOURTEEN IMMACULATE**

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## **1) Prophet Muhammad**

Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh (born in the Year of the Elephant, 571 CE, in Mecca – died 11/632 CE, in Medina) is the prophet of Islam, whose mission was primarily the promotion of monotheism and moral values. He (peace be upon him) was also a social reformer and a political leader. Muhammad (s) is considered the final prophet of God, and his major miracle was the Qur'an.

Although the Prophet (s) was born into the polytheistic society of Arabia, he never worshiped idols and consistently avoided the immoral practices common in pre-Islamic Arabia. At the age of forty, he was chosen by God as a prophet. Despite enduring severe persecution from the polytheists of Mecca and facing immense hardships, he and his followers never abandoned the message of Islam.

After thirteen years of preaching in Mecca, Prophet Muhammad (s) emigrated to Medina. This event, known as the Hijra, marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar. In Medina, he established a rapidly growing community of believers, the Muslim Ummah.

Through the Prophet's (s) efforts, the pre-Islamic Age of Ignorance came to an end, and the polytheistic society of Arabia was swiftly transformed into a monotheistic one. By the end of his life, the majority of the Arabian Peninsula had embraced Islam. The number of Muslims has continued to increase exponentially, and Islam is now the fastest-growing religion in the world.

The Prophet (s) emphasized to his followers the importance of adhering to the teachings of the Qur'an and the Ahl al-Bayt (the family of the Prophet). He explicitly designated Imam 'Ali (a) as his successor on multiple occasions, most notably during the event of Ghadir.

## 2) Imam Ali

Ali ibn Abi Talib, known as Imam Ali (a) (born 23 BH/600 - died 40/661), is the first Imam for all branches of Shia Islam. He was a companion, a narrator, and a scribe of the Qur'an. He is also regarded as the fourth caliph among the Rightly Guided Caliphs in Sunni Islam. Ali (a) was the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad (s), the husband of Lady Fatima (a), and the father of Imam al-Hasan (a) and Imam al-Husayn (a). All subsequent Imams in Shia Islam are his descendants.

According to Shia historians and many Sunni scholars, Ali (a) was born inside the Ka'ba, and he is considered the first Muslim. Based on evidence from the Qur'an, hadith, and historical accounts, Shia Muslims believe that Ali (a) was directly designated by the Prophet Muhammad (s) as his successor. Several verses in the Qur'an are interpreted by Shia scholars to point to Ali's infallibility. It is reported in both Shia and some Sunni sources that around three hundred Qur'anic verses were revealed in relation to his virtues.

When the Quraysh plotted to assassinate the Prophet (s), it was Ali (a) who took the Prophet's (s) place in bed, enabling him to secretly leave Mecca for Medina. In the pact of brotherhood in Medina, the Prophet (s) chose Ali (a) as his brother. Except for the Battle of Tabuk, where he stayed in Medina as the Prophet's (s) deputy, Ali (a) participated in all other battles alongside the Prophet (s) and proved to be one of Islam's most esteemed commanders.

After the death of the Prophet (s), Ali (a) accepted the caliphate at the insistence of the Muslim community, after the rule of Abu Bakr, Umar ibn al-Khattab, and Uthman. During his brief reign, he faced three major rebellions. He was ultimately assassinated by a Kharijite while praying in the mihrab (prayer niche) of the Kufa Mosque and was secretly buried in Najaf.

Ali (a) is regarded as the father of many Islamic sciences, including Arabic literature, Islamic theology, jurisprudence, and exegesis. Scholars from various fields have traced the origins of their hadiths back to him. *Nahj al-Balagha* is a famous compilation of his speeches and letters, showcasing his eloquence and wisdom.

### 3) Fatima al-Zahra

Fatima (a), commonly known as Fatima al-Zahra (a), was the daughter of Prophet Muhammad (s) and Lady Khadija (a), and the wife of Imam Ali (a). She is one of the People of the Cloak and, in Twelver Shia belief, one of the Fourteen Infallibles. Fatima (a) was the mother of the second and third Imams, as well as Lady Zaynab and Umm Kulthum. Among her many epithets are *al-Zahra*, *al-Batul*, *Sayyidat Nisa' al-'Alamin* (Lady of the Women of the Worlds), and *Umm Abiha* (Mother of her Father).

Fatima (a) was the only woman chosen by the Prophet (s) to take part in the Mubahala with the Christians of Najran. She opposed the decisions made during the event of Saqifa and regarded the caliphate of the first caliph as illegitimate, never pledging allegiance to him. In defense of Imam Ali's (a) rightful caliphate and protesting the usurpation of Fadak, she delivered the famous *al-Fadakiyya* sermon.

After the death of the Prophet (s), Fatima (a) was injured when an armed group, acting under the orders of the first caliph, stormed her house. She was advised to rest due to both emotional and physical wounds that severely affected her health. Tragically, she passed away shortly after, at the age of 18, on the 3rd of Jumada II, 11 (August 26, 632), in Medina. As she had requested, Fatima's (a) burial took place at night and in secrecy, and to this day, the exact location of her grave remains unknown.

Several Qur'anic verses and hadiths emphasize Fatima's (a) virtues, such as the *Tathir Verse* (Purification Verse), the *Mawadda Verse* (Love Verse), and the *It'am Verse* (Feeding Verse). Many traditions also highlight her unique status, including the Prophet's (s) saying, "Fatima is a part of me." He also declared that her anger was equated with the anger of Allah. The Prophet (s) taught her the *dhikr* (litany) that later became known as the *Tasbih of Lady Fatima* (a).

During the days leading up to the anniversary of Fatima's (a) martyrdom—known as the *Fatimiyya Days*—Shia Muslims observe mourning ceremonies to honor her memory.

#### **4) Imam al-Hasan**

Al-Hasan ibn 'Alī ibn Abi Ṭalib (b. 3/625 - d. 50/670), known as Imam al-Hasan al-Mujtaba, was the second Imam of Shia Islam (40-50/661-670) and the fifth caliph of the Muslim community for seven months. He is also regarded by some Sunnis as the last of the Rightly Guided Caliphs.

Al-Hasan (a) was the first child of Imam Ali (a) and Lady Fatima (a), and the first grandson of the Prophet Muhammad (s). It is reported that the Prophet (s) personally chose the name "al-Hasan" for him and greatly loved him. Al-Hasan's first seven years were spent during the lifetime of the Prophet (s), and he was present at significant events such as the Allegiance of Ridwan and the Mubahala with the Christian delegation from Najran.

Both Shia and Sunni sources contain numerous reports highlighting al-Hasan's virtues. He was among the People of the Cloak, about whom the Verse of Purity (Qur'an 33:33) was revealed. Other verses, such as 76:8, 42:23, and 3:61, were also revealed in reference to him, his parents, and his brother. Al-Hasan (a) was known for his extreme generosity, giving all his wealth to charity twice, earning him the title "The Generous One of the Family of the Prophet (s)." He also performed Hajj barefoot twenty-five times.

During the revolt at the end of Uthman's caliphate, Imam Ali (a) assigned al-Hasan (a) the task of protecting the caliph's house. During Imam Ali's (a) caliphate, al-Hasan (a) moved with his father to Kufa, where he served as one of the commanders in the battles of Jamal and Siffin.

On the 21st of Ramadan, 40 AH (January 28, 661), after the martyrdom of Imam Ali (a), al-Hasan (a) became the Imam and successor of his father. Over forty thousand men pledged allegiance to him on that same day. However, Mu'awiya rejected his caliphate and launched a military campaign against him. Imam al-Hasan (a) sent an army under the command of 'Ubayd Allah ibn 'Abbas to confront Mu'awiya's forces. The Imam (a) himself headed to Sabat with a group of soldiers, but Mu'awiya spread rumors among the Imam's (a) troops to prepare the ground for a peace treaty. At the same time, one of the Kharijites attempted to assassinate Imam al-Hasan (a), resulting in the Imam's (a) injury. He was taken to Madain for treatment.

Simultaneously, a group of Kufan leaders sent a letter to Mu'awiya, promising to either kill al-Hasan (a) or surrender him to Mu'awiya. Mu'awiya forwarded this

letter to Imam al-Hasan (a) and proposed a peace treaty. With limited options, Imam al-Hasan (a) accepted the peace treaty and abdicated the caliphate, with the condition that Mu'awiya would rule according to the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet (s), would not appoint a successor, and would not persecute anyone, including the Shia. Mu'awiya later violated all of these conditions. This led to discontent among some of Imam al-Hasan's (a) companions, with some even calling him "the Humiliator of the Believers."

Imam al-Hasan (a) returned to Medina after the peace treaty in 41 AH (661) and remained there until his death. In Medina, he was recognized as both a religious and scholarly authority and held high social status.

When Mu'awiya decided to appoint his son Yazid as his successor and demanded that people pledge allegiance to him, he sent one hundred thousand dirhams to Ja'da bint al-Ash'ath, Imam al-Hasan's wife, to poison him. She complied, and Imam al-Hasan (a) was martyred forty days after being poisoned. It is reported that Imam al-Hasan (a) requested to be buried next to the grave of the Prophet (s), but Marwan ibn al-Hakam and a group of Umayyads prevented this. As a result, he was buried in the al-Baqi' cemetery.

## 5) Imam al-Husayn

Al-Husayn ibn 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (b. Sha'ban 3, 4/January 8, 626 – d. Muharram 10, 61/October 10, 680), also known as Abu 'Abd Allah and Sayyid al-Shuhada (Master of the Martyrs), was the third Shi'a Imam. He was martyred in the Battle of Karbala after ten years of Imamate. Al-Husayn (a) was the second son of Imam Ali (a) and Lady Fatima (a), and the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad (s).

At the time of his birth, the Prophet (s) foretold the story of his martyrdom and named him al-Husayn. The Prophet (s) described him and his older brother, Imam al-Hasan (a), as the "Masters of the Youth of Paradise." The Prophet (s) loved al-Hasan and al-Husayn deeply and instructed his followers to love them as well. Al-Husayn (a) was among the *Ashab al-Kisa'*, one of the participants of the Mubahala, and one of the members of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (a), about whom the Purification Verse (Qur'an 33:33) was revealed. A large number of hadiths directly narrated by the Prophet Muhammad (s) further emphasize the distinctive status of al-Husayn (a).

There are few detailed reports about al-Husayn's life during the three decades following the demise of the Prophet (s). During the caliphate of Imam Ali (a), al-Husayn (a) fought alongside his father in the battles of Siffin, Jamal, and Nahrawan. After the martyrdom of Imam Ali (a), al-Husayn (a) supported and followed Imam al-Hasan (a). He stood by the peace treaty between Imam al-Hasan (a) and Mu'awiya even after Imam al-Hasan's martyrdom and until the death of Mu'awiya. In response to numerous letters from Kufa inviting him to lead an uprising against Mu'awiya, he urged patience until Mu'awiya's death.

Imam al-Husayn's (a) imamate coincided with the autocratic rule of Mu'awiya, who superficially respected the Imam (a) but simultaneously sought to weaken and overpower the Shia. Imam al-Husayn (a) rebuked Mu'awiya on several occasions, including writing a letter condemning him for the murder of Hujr ibn Adi. When Mu'awiya declared Yazid as his successor, Imam al-Husayn (a) refused to pledge allegiance to him, calling Yazid unfit for leadership. His sermon in Mina can also be seen as a political stand against the Umayyads.

After Mu'awiya's death, Imam al-Husayn (a) refused to pledge allegiance to Yazid and considered his rise to the caliphate illegitimate. When al-Walid ibn 'Utba, the governor of Medina, was sent to order Imam al-Husayn (a) to either pledge allegiance to Yazid or face death, Imam al-Husayn (a) left Medina for Mecca on Rajab 28, 60 AH (May 4, 680). During the four months he spent in Mecca, he received numerous letters urging him to assume leadership of the Ummah. As

Imam al-Husayn (a) and his companions approached Kufa, the army of 'Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad intercepted their caravan on Yazid's orders.

Fearful of Yazid's retaliation, the people of Kufa withdrew their support, leading to the Battle of Karbala on the Day of 'Ashura. Imam al-Husayn (a), along with around seventy-two of his companions, was martyred. The remaining companions were taken captive and transported to Kufa and Syria

## 6) Imam al-Sajjad

Ali b. al-Ḥusayn b. 'Ali b. 'Abi Ṭalib (b. 38/659 – d. 95/713), known as Imam al-Sajjad and Zayn al-'Abidīn, was the fourth Imam of the Shi'a. His period of Imamate lasted for 34 years. Imam al-Sajjad (a) was present at the Battle of Karbala but did not participate due to illness, and therefore was not martyred. He was taken captive to Kufa and Damascus along with other survivors of Karbala. His speech before the Umayyad caliphs raised awareness among people about the true status of the Ahl al-Bayt (a). After his release, he returned to Medina, where he spent the remainder of his life.

During his Imamate, the events of Harra, the Tawwabun movement, and the uprising of al-Mukhtar occurred. However, there are no reliable reports regarding his views on these events.

Al-Sahifa al-Sajjadiyya, a collection of his supplications, provides insight into the social realities of his time and emphasizes the true path of life through religious teachings, the Qur'an, and the purification of souls, establishing a connection with God. Another significant work attributed to him is *Risalat al-Huquq* (Treatise on Rights), a brief treatise outlining the duties and responsibilities of human beings.

Imam al-Sajjad (a) was poisoned and martyred by order of Caliph al-Walid b. 'Abd al-Malik. He was buried in the al-Baqi' cemetery, next to his uncle, Imam al-Hasan al-Mujtaba (a).

## **7) Imam al-Baqir**

Muḥammad b. ‘Ali b. al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Ali b. Abi Ṭalib (b. 57/677 – d. 114/733), known as Imam al-Baqir (a) and Bāqir al-'Ulūm, was the fifth Imam of the Shi'a, with a period of Imamate lasting nineteen years. Imam al-Baqir (a) spearheaded a great intellectual movement that culminated during the time of his son, Imam al-Sadiq (a). His contributions to religious thought, including his narrations on the conduct of the Prophet (s), Qur'anic sciences, ethics, and morality, far exceed those of the descendants of Imam al-Hasan (a) and Imam al-Husayn (a). As such, during his Imamate, significant strides were made toward the development of Shi'i thought in various fields, including ethics, jurisprudence, theology, and exegesis.

According to historical sources, Imam al-Baqir (a) was present at the Battle of Karbala as a child.

Imam al-Baqir (a) was the son of Imam al-Sajjad (a), the fourth Imam of the Shi'a faith. His mother, Umm 'Abd Allah, was the daughter of Imam al-Hasan al-Mujtaba (a). Because of this lineage, he is often referred to as Hashimite among the Hashimites, 'Alavi among the 'Alavis, and Fatimi among the Fatimids.

## 8) Imam al-Sadiq

Ja'far b. Muhammad b. 'Ali b. al-Husayn (b. 83/702 – d. 148/765), known as Imam al-Sadiq (a), was the sixth Imam of the Imamiyya. His Imamate lasted thirty-four lunar years (114/733 - 148/765), spanning the reigns of the last five Umayyad caliphs (from Hisham b. 'Abd al-Malik onwards) and the first two Abbasid caliphs, al-Saffah and al-Mansur al-Dawaniqi. Due to the weakening of Umayyad power during his time, Imam al-Sadiq (a) was able to engage in a relatively wide range of scholarly activities. His companions, students, and those who narrated hadiths from him are said to have numbered around four thousand. Most of the hadiths of the Ahl al-Bayt (a) found in Twelver Shiite hadith collections are attributed to Imam al-Sadiq (a), which is why the Imamiyya school of thought is also referred to as the Ja'fari school.

Imam al-Sadiq (a) held a respected status even in the eyes of prominent Sunni scholars. Among them, Abu Hanifa and Malik b. Anas were among those who quoted hadiths from him.

Despite the weakness of the Umayyads and requests from the Shi'a to take up arms, Imam al-Sadiq (a) refrained from rising against the caliphate. He rejected both Abu Muslim al-Khurasani and Abu Salama, who sought to install him as the caliph. He also did not participate in the revolt of his uncle, Zayd b. 'Ali, and discouraged the Shi'a from getting involved in any uprisings. However, it is also noted that he did not maintain good relations with the caliphs of his time.

To facilitate communication with his followers, Imam al-Sadiq (a) established a network of *wikala* (deputyship), which continued to expand and function throughout the period of the Minor Occultation. During his Imamate, the Ghulat (extremist sects) became active, and the Imam (a) strongly opposed them, declaring them to be infidels or polytheists.

Imam al-Sadiq (a) was summoned several times to Baghdad, traveling to Iraq, where he also visited Karbala, Najaf, and Kufa. He showed his companions the previously unknown grave of Imam Ali (a). Some Shiite scholars believe that Imam al-Sadiq (a) was poisoned by al-Mansur al-Dawaniqi and thus martyred.

## 9) Imam al-Kazim

Musa b. Ja'far (b. 128/745 – d. 183/799), known as Imam al-Kazim and Bāb al-Hawa'ij, was the seventh Imam of the Shi'a. He was born in Abwa', a village between Mecca and Medina. After the martyrdom of his father, Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a), Imam al-Kazim (a) became the Imam of the Shi'a. His 35-year period of Imamate coincided with the caliphates of al-Mansur, al-Hadi, al-Mahdi, and Harun al-Rashid. Imam al-Kazim (a) was repeatedly imprisoned by both al-Mahdi and Harun, and he was ultimately martyred in 183/799 in the prison of al-Sindi b. Shahik. After his martyrdom, his son, 'Ali b. Musa (a), succeeded him as the next Imam.

Imam al-Kazim's (a) life coincided with the peak of the Abbasid caliphate. He practiced *taqiyya* (precautionary dissimulation) regarding the government and advised the Shi'a to do the same in order to safeguard their lives.

There are reports in historical and hadith sources of debates and dialogues between Musa b. Ja'far (a) and scholars from other faiths, particularly Jewish and Christian scholars. These dialogues have been collected in *Musnad al-Imam al-Kazim*, some of which were transmitted by the People of Consensus. Imam al-Kazim's (a) life also coincided with the emergence of divisions within Shiism. At the beginning of his Imamate, sects like Isma'iliyya, Fatahiyya, and Nawusiyya were formed, and after his martyrdom, the Waqifiyya sect emerged.

Both Shiite and Sunni sources have praised his devotion to worship, patience, and generosity, calling him "al-Kazim" and "al-'Abd al-Salih" (the righteous servant). Prominent Sunni scholars also honored him as a religious scholar and visited his grave, alongside the Shi'a. Imam al-Kazim's (a) resting place, along with the mausoleum of his grandson, Imam al-Jawad (a), is located near Baghdad and is known as the Shrine of Kazimayn. It is frequently visited by Muslims, particularly by the Shi'a.

## **10) Imam al-Rida**

Ali b. Musa (b. 148/765 – d. 203/818) is the eighth Imam of Twelver Shia. His teknonym was Abu l-Hasan, and his most famous title was al-Rida. He served as Imam for twenty years. Imam al-Rida (a) was born in Medina and was martyred in Tus.

Al-Ma'mun al-'Abbasi forcibly brought Imam al-Rida (a) to Khorasan and, despite the Imam's will, made him the heir apparent. The debate sessions between Imam al-Rida (a) and figures from various religions and schools of thought, organized by al-Ma'mun, are well-known in history.

Imam al-Rida (a) was martyred by al-Ma'mun in Tus. His holy shrine is located in Mashhad, which attracts millions of Muslims from around the world every year.

His lineage is as follows: 'Ali b. Musa b. Ja'far b. Muhammad b. 'Ali b. Husayn b. 'Ali b. Abi Talib. His teknonym was Abu l-Hasan, and his most famous title was al-Rida. Imam al-Jawad (a) reported in a hadith that Allah granted his father the title "al-Rida". Other titles include al-Sabir, al-Radi, and al-Wafi. He is also known as "the most knowledgeable among the progeny of the Prophet (s)". Imam al-Kazim (a) is reported to have addressed his children, saying: "Your brother, Ali b. Musa, is the most knowledgeable among the progeny of the Prophet (s)."

## **11) Imam al-Jawad**

Muhammad b. 'Ali b. Musa, known as Imam al-Jawad (a), was the ninth Imam of Twelver Shia. His teknonym was Abu Ja'far, and he is referred to in hadith sources as Abu Ja'far al-Thani (the second Abu Ja'far). He was born on Rajab 10, 195/April 8, 811, in Medina and served as Imam for 17 years. He was martyred at the age of 25 and was buried in Kadhimiya, beside the grave of his grandfather, Musa b. Ja'far (a). He was the youngest Imam at the time of his martyrdom.

As Imam al-Jawad (a) was only eight years old at the time of his succession, some Shi'a followed 'Abd Allah b. Musa, while others followed the Waqifids. However, most Shi'a accepted Imam al-Jawad's (a) Imamate due to his unparalleled scientific knowledge, despite his young age.

Notably, Imam al-Jawad (a) engaged in significant scientific debates during his childhood with religious scholars from various Islamic sects, discussing theological issues such as the position of the caliphs, as well as jurisprudential matters like Hajj rituals. These debates are among the well-known intellectual exchanges of the Imams (a).

Imam al-Jawad (a), the ninth Imam of Twelver Shia, was also known as Jawad al-'A'imma. His father, Imam al-Rida (a), was the eighth Imam. His mother, Sabika, hailed from the family of Mariya al-Qibtiyya, the wife of the Prophet (s). In some sources, her name is mentioned as Khayzuran, Nawbiyya, or Rayhana.

Imam al-Jawad's (a) most famous title was al-Jawad, although he was also referred to by several other titles, including al-Taqi, al-Murtada, al-Qani', al-Radi, al-Mukhtar, al-Mutawakkil, and al-Muntajab.

## **12) Imam al-Hadi**

Abu l-Hasan 'Ali b. Muḥammad al-Hadi (b. 212/828 - d. 254/868) was the son of Imam al-Jawad (a) and the tenth of the twelve Shia Imams. He is also known by the titles al-Naqi and al-Hadi. His imamate lasted for thirty-four years, from 220/835 to 254/868.

A significant portion of Imam al-Hadi's (a) imamate took place in Samarra, where he was under direct surveillance by the rulers of his time. His leadership coincided with the reign of several Abbasid caliphs, including al-Mutawakkil al-'Abbasi.

Numerous hadiths are attributed to Imam al-Hadi (a) on various subjects, including ideological issues, Qur'anic interpretation, fiqh, and ethics, notably in the work *Al-Ziyarah al-Jami'a al-Kabira*. Among his students and companions were 'Abd al-'Azim al-Hasani, 'Uthman b. Sa'id, Ayyub b. Nuh, al-Hasan b. Rashid, and al-Hasan al-Utrush.

His shrine is located in Samarra. The dome and some of the minarets of his shrine were destroyed in terrorist attacks in 2006, and in 2008, additional minarets were also destroyed in a bombing.

### **13) Imam al-Askari**

Abu Muhammad al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī (b. 232/846 - d. 260/874) was the 11th Imam of Twelver Shi'a and the father of Imam al-Mahdi (a). He is commonly referred to as Imam al-Askari due to being forced to reside in Samarra, which was also known as "Askar" (a military camp or town). His other titles include Ibn al-Rida, al-Zaki, al-Rafiq, and al-Samit.

Due to severe restrictions on Imam al-Askari's (a) life, he appointed delegates to communicate with the Shi'a. One of his most notable delegates was Uthman b. Sa'id, who later became the first special deputy of Imam al-Mahdi (a) after Imam al-Askari's (a) martyrdom and the beginning of the latter's occultation.

Imam al-Askari (a) was martyred on the 8th of Rabi I, 260/874. He was buried in the same house where his father had been laid to rest.

Numerous hadiths have been narrated from Imam al-Askari (a) on various topics, including the exegesis of the Qur'an, ethics, jurisprudence, theology, supplications, and Ziyarahs.

#### **14) Imam al-Mahdi**

Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-'Askari (born in 255/869), also known as Imam al-Mahdi (a), is the twelfth Imam in Twelver Shi'ism. He is regarded as the promised savior, who will one day rise to fill the earth with peace and justice. Imam al-Mahdi (a) has been in occultation since the early years of his life, and Shi'as consider him the Imam of the present age. Among his well-known titles are *Imam al-Mahdi* (the Imam of the Time) and *Wali l-'Asr* (the Guardian of the Age).

Imam al-Mahdi (a) assumed the position of Imam after the martyrdom of his father, Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari (a), in 260/874, at the age of five. From that time until 329/941, he maintained contact with his followers through his Four Deputies. Following this period, his Major Occultation began, during which the direct guidance and leadership of the Shi'a community has rested with religious scholars.

Numerous hadiths have been transmitted from the Imams (a) concerning Imam al-Mahdi (a), his life, his Occultation, and his future government. Several collections of such hadiths have been compiled. In addition to these collections, many scholarly works have been published about Imam al-Mahdi (a).

Every year, on the 15th of Sha'ban, Shi'as celebrate the birth of Imam al-Mahdi (a), marking one of the most significant Shi'i festivals.