

## 2.11 Imām al-Mahdī عَجَّلَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى فَرَجَهُ الشَّرِيف

### OBJECTIVES

#### WE WILL:

- Outline some of the reasons why the 12th Imām عَجَّلَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى فَرَجَهُ الشَّرِيف is in a concealed state.
- Develop strategies to incorporate the remembrance of the Imām عَجَّلَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى فَرَجَهُ الشَّرِيف of our time, and gain closeness to him.
- Come up with some ideas of how to engage in active *intidhār* (awaiting) the rightly guided final Imām عَجَّلَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى فَرَجَهُ الشَّرِيف.

### Activity 2.11a: Pre-Reading Vocabulary

In small groups, answer one of the assigned questions. Be ready to share with the class what you think!

1. The word '*ghaybah*'—'occultation'—means 'in a hidden or a concealed state.' This refers to the 12th Imām عَجَّلَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى فَرَجَهُ الشَّرِيف, Imām al-Mahdī عَجَّلَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى فَرَجَهُ الشَّرِيف, who is concealed from us. Related words in Arabic are '*ghā'ib*' which means 'absent;' and '*ghayb*' which means 'unseen or hidden.' **What is the difference between someone being 'absent' and someone who is 'unseen'?**
2. *Intidhār* means 'waiting' which in this lesson refers to 'waiting for the rightly guided Imām عَجَّلَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى فَرَجَهُ الشَّرِيف'—'*Intidhār al-Mahdī*.' People who wait for the Imām عَجَّلَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى فَرَجَهُ الشَّرِيف are known as '*muntadhirīn*.' **What do you think 'waiting for the Imām عَجَّلَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى فَرَجَهُ الشَّرِيف' actually means? How do you act, or what do you do when you are really waiting for someone, or for something to happen?**
3. *Hujjah* refers to 'a Divine representative of Allah ﷻ.' This can also mean 'proof' where we say that each of the Imāms عَجَّلَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى فَرَجَهُ الشَّرِيف are the '*hujjatullāh*'—'proof of Allah ﷻ.' **How do you think the two definitions of *hujjah* are related?**





**STOP AND REFLECT:** How does Imām al-Mahdī عليه السلام affect our daily lives? Think about the last time you remembered the Imām عليه السلام. What made you think about him? Has it been a long time?

## OUR NEED FOR A ḤUJJAH

At all times, this Earth needs to have a *ḥujjah*—a Divinely-appointed representative. Allah ﷻ created this Earth for us to reach perfection, which as we learned in previous lessons, can only be done through Divine guides and revelation that were sent by Him.

## WHY IS THE 12TH IMĀM عليه السلام IN OCCULTATION?

The complete wisdom behind the decision of Allah ﷻ for the *ghaybah* of our 12th Imām عليه السلام is unknown to us. ‘Abdullāh ibn Faḍl Ḥāshimī once asked Imām Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣādiq عليه السلام about the reason behind the occlusion of the final Imām عليه السلام, to which he replied:

*O son of Faḍl! The subject of the ghaybah is among the Divine secrets, and a concealed matter whose knowledge is only with Allah ﷻ. Since we regard Allah ﷻ to be All-Wise, we must also affirm that His actions are based on that perfect wisdom, even when the detailed understandings are not accessible to us.<sup>1</sup>*

Although we do not know all of the reasons for Allah’s actions, there are certain reasons for the *ghaybah* that the previous Imāms عليهم السلام did explain. One reason is that Allah ﷻ wished for Imām al-Mahdī عليه السلام to never be forced to have to give allegiance to any tyrant during his lifetime. Another reason is because if the Imām عليه السلام was not in occultation, then his life would be in constant danger.<sup>2</sup>



**STOP AND REFLECT:** Why were the other Imāms عليهم السلام not in occultation even though their lives were also in danger?

People wanted to take away the rights of the Divine guides because they sought power for themselves. All of the Imāms عليهم السلام faced great dangers from the enemies who wanted to kill them, and/or make them give allegiance to them. But the Imāms عليهم السلام wanted to lead and guide the people because this was a responsibility that was given to them by Allah ﷻ; and due to the fact that they were free from any sins (*ma‘ṣūm*) they did everything perfectly, exactly the way that Allah ﷻ wanted.



**INTIDHĀR:** waiting

**GHAYBAH:** occultation, in a hidden or a concealed state

**ḤUJJAH:** proof, refers to a Divine representative of Allah ﷻ

**MA‘ṢŪM:** free from any sins

<sup>1</sup> Shaykh Ṣadūq, *Kamāl ad-Dīn wa Tamām an-Ni‘mah*, Chapter on the Wisdoms of the Occultation.

<sup>2</sup> *Kamāl ad-Dīn wa Tamām an-Ni‘mah*, Chapter on the Wisdoms of the Occultation.

During the time of Imām ‘Alī ؑ, people tried to take the leadership away from the Imām ؑ because they knew that he would be fair to everyone, and would not favor anyone unjustly. Even though this upset our Imām ؑ, he made it clear that he did not care about power, money, fame, or glory. He explained this in a famous sermon called *Shaqshaqiyyah*:

*...I put a curtain up against the caliphate and kept myself detached from it. Then I began to think whether I should attack or endure calmly the blinding darkness of tribulations... I found that endurance thereon was wiser. So I adopted patience—although there was pricking in the eye and suffocation in the throat...<sup>3</sup>*

He is like the  
sun behind  
the clouds



**STOP AND REFLECT:** How does Imām al-Mahdī ؑ guide us while he is in occultation?

Although Imām al-Mahdī ؑ is concealed from humanity, he is still an active guide on Earth. An example that is used in the traditions (*ḥadīth*) about our Imām ؑ in occultation is that ‘he is like the sun behind the clouds.’ Although he is concealed from us, we still benefit from his light and guidance.

We must also understand that the Imām ؑ is hidden from us, but we are not hidden from him. He has knowledge about the state of his believers.



**STOP AND REFLECT:** What do we do when we are waiting for guests to come to our house? How does this apply to how we should wait for the Imām ؑ?

One of the best actions for us to do during this time is to truly await the Imām ؑ and the victory that will come with his return, as Imām al-Jawād ؑ said:

“The best of the actions that our Shī‘ahs can do  
is anticipate the deliverance (*faraj*).”<sup>4</sup>

This *ḥadīth* refers to the return of the 12th Imām ؑ, and the word ‘actions’ is important because we need to be ‘actively waiting’ for the Imām ؑ.

What does it mean to actively wait for something or someone? When we talk about waiting for a guest to arrive, it means that we prepare for their arrival. We may get dressed up in our nicest clothes, make sure that our house is clean and everything is neat and tidy, and prepare some delicious food. If we know that a guest is coming to our house and everything is a mess, then we cannot say that we were really waiting for them to come.

<sup>3</sup> *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 3, Vol. 1, P. 48.

<sup>4</sup> ‘Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, Vol. 51, P. 156.

If we want to actively wait for the Imām عجل الله فرجه—do true *intidhār*—and be one of his sincere followers, then we need to fulfill our responsibilities toward him.

In *Du‘ā’ an-Nudbah*, we say:

“May my soul be sacrificed for you; although you are hidden from us, you have never abandoned us.  
May my soul be sacrificed for you; although you are away (concealed), you are never away from us.”

## STAYING CONNECTED TO THE IMĀM عجل الله فرجه

We should try to remember Imām al-Mahdī عجل الله فرجه every day of our life. While some of the ways in which we can do this are prescribed, like the specific supplications, prayers, and different actions (*a‘māl*) we can do on his behalf, we should also speak to the Imām عجل الله فرجه whenever we want to, and in any language we desire. We can send our salutations (*salāms*) to him, or speak to him silently inside our hearts. Sometimes, we hear people saying: “*Ya ‘Alī Madad*”—“O ‘Alī help”—calling for help from Imām ‘Alī عليه السلام; or “*Ya Mahdī Adriknī*”—“O Mahdī assist me”—calling for aide from Imām al-Mahdī عجل الله فرجه, in which they can feel the presence of these great personalities in their lives, and they never forget about them.

Thus, we can speak to the Imām عجل الله فرجه of our time in our own words, ask for his return, and tell him how we wish we could be better human beings. We can ask him to pray to Allah ﷻ for us for whatever we may be having trouble with, so that we can be one of his true followers. We should know that even though we cannot really see Imām al-Mahdī عجل الله فرجه, he is still constantly helping the universe, and is capable of guiding us within a split second, or by the slightest attention.

We can also write a “*arīḍah*” which is ‘a letter to the Imām عجل الله فرجه’ and put it in flowing water, bury it, or take it to the gravesite of one of the other Imāms عليهم السلام. Although we can still speak to him without doing this, sometimes symbolic actions like this have effects that we are unaware of. Writing down our thoughts, desires, and feelings also has a lot of benefits to it, rather than just verbalizing them.

Some different actions (*a‘māl*) that we can do for our living Imām عجل الله فرجه include:

- Prayer (*Ṣalāh*) of Imām al-Mahdī عجل الله فرجه
- *Du‘ā’ al-Ḥujjah*
- *Du‘ā’ al-Faraj*
- *Du‘ā’ an-Nudbah*
- *Du‘ā’ al-‘Ahd*
- Do good deeds, take out *ṣadaqah*, perform *ziyārah* on his behalf, or basically perform any good action and gift the rewards of that to the Imām عجل الله فرجه
- Avoid forbidden acts

Most importantly, we should strive to follow the examples of the Imām عجل الله فرجه, and act in such a way that we would if he were with us here right now.



# Activity 2.11b: Explain it!

**DIRECTIONS:** Sarah and her older brother Jawaad are on their way back from Sunday School. Sarah has a lot of questions after her Islamic Studies class. Help Jawaad answer Sarah’s questions.

**SARAH:** Jawaad, my Islamic Studies class today was really confusing, but I want to understand Imām al-Mahdī ﷺ better. I understand that our Imām is in a concealed state, but why does it have to be this way? Would it not be better for all of us if he was present among us?

**JAWAAD:** I used to have a lot of the same questions Sarah, and sometimes I still ask questions about the Imāms ﷺ. But in regards to this, I best understand this concealed state in the following way:

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**SARAH:** Hmm, okay Jawaad, I think I understand this now, but what should we be doing while he is in occultation? I know my teacher said that we should be waiting for the Imām ﷺ, but how will that help?

**JAWAAD:**

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**SARAH:** I wish I could be closer to the Imām ﷺ right now.

**JAWAAD:** Sarah, do not be sad, there are still ways to be close to the Imām ﷺ even right now.

**SARAH:** How though? He is so far away from us, we do not even know where he is.

**JAWAAD:**

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# Activity 2.11c: Waiting for my Imām عجل الله تعالى فرجه الشريف

Look again at the section on “Our Responsibilities towards our Imām عجل الله تعالى فرجه الشريف.” What are some actions that you plan to do in order to show that you are truly waiting for the Imām عجل الله تعالى فرجه الشريف? When do you plan to do them?

ACTION	WHEN OR HOW I PLAN TO DO THIS ACTION

