

Editorial

As promised in the editorial of the previous issue, now in the beginning of summer, we present to our dear readers the new issue of the *Message of Thaqaalayn*. Again in this issue we address different aspects of Islamic thought including the Doctrines, Spirituality, Law and History.

Publication of this issue has coincided great occasions in Islamic calendar. This summer comprises of the blessed months of Rajab and Sha‘ban and the holy month of Ramaḍan. The late Shaykh Abbas Qummi in his *Mafaātih al-Jinan* quotes the Prophet Mohammad (S) as saying: “Verily Rajab is the great month of God. No other month resembles it in its honour and merit. Fighting against infidels is forbidden. Beware, verily Rajab is God’s month and Sa‘ban is my month and [the month of] Ramaḍan is my nations month. Beware whoever fasts a day in Rajab greatest divine pleasure will become decisive for him and divine wrath will go away from him and one of the gates of hell will be closed to him”. He also quotes Imam Kazim, Musa b. Ja‘far (AS) as saying: “Whoever fasts one day of Rajab fire [of hell] will go away from him equal to distance of one year journey and whoever fasts three days [in Rajab] heaven becomes necessary for

him”. Asking forgiveness from God is highly recommended in the month of Rajab. Imam Sadiq (AS) reports that the Prophet Mohammad (S) said: “Rajab is the month of asking forgiveness [from God] for my nation, so ask for forgiveness in abundance. Verily, He is the Most-forgiving, the Most-merciful. Rajab is called “Rajab”, because mercy on my nation is poured down a thorough pouring. Therefore, say in abundance: ‘*Astaghfirullahā wa as’aluhū al-tawbā*’ (I ask forgiveness from God and ask Him [to enable me for] repentance).

Sha‘ban is the month which is attributed to the Prophet Mohammad (S). The Prophet Mohammad used to fast the whole month of Sha‘ban and connect its fasting to the fasting in the month of Ramaḍan. Imam Sadiq (AS) reports that after the arrival of the month of Sha‘ban Imam Sajjad (AS) used to gather his companions and say “O my companions, do you know what this month is? This is the month of Sha‘ban and the Prophet (S) used to say: ‘Sha‘ban is my month’. Therefore, fast [in] this month out of your love for your Prophet and seeking proximity to your Lord! By the One who has my life in His Hand, I heard my father, Husayn (AS), saying: ‘I heard the Commander of the Faithful saying: whoever fasts [in the month of] Sha‘ban out of love for the Apostle of God and seeking proximity to God, God will love him and will make him close to His honour on the Day of Judgement and make heaven necessary for him’.”

According to hadiths, Ramaḍān is one of the Names of God. Therefore, with respect to the month, we are recommended to say “the month of Ramaḍān” and not just “Ramḍān”. In any case, this summer will also include the holy and blessed month of Ramaḍān, in which we are invited to the “divine feast”. Although officially Islamic calendar in its lunar version starts with Muharram, it can be said that in Islam there is also a spiritual calendar that starts with Shawwal and in particular the Feast of Breaking Fast (*‘Id al-Fitr*). The last three months of the spiritual year are Rajab, Sha‘ban and the month of Ramaḍān. From the beginning of year, that is, the day of ‘Id al-Fitr, the wayfarer (the faithful who is moving towards God) starts preparing himself for witnessing and entering into the “divine feast” in the next month of Ramaḍān and in particular the Night/s of Qadr. Every day and indeed every moment of this yearlong journey is significant. However there are highlights and golden opportunities distributed all over the year like the times of daily prayers, the time before dawn for night prayer (*salat al-layl*), nights and days of Friday and night and day of ‘Arafah. Certainly the last three months of this journey i.e. Rajab, Sha‘ban and the month of Ramaḍān stand out and form a spiritual season. Although we must try to take advantage of every moment of life, in this season we must be extra alert, insha Allah.

The month of Ramaḍān is a great gift from God to us and a unique opportunity to get closer to Him. One of the specialities of this

month is what we can learn from the well-known sermon of the Prophet Mohammad (S) on the last Friday of Sha‘ban, known as “*Khutbah Sha‘baniyyah*.” Although we are only rewarded for those good acts that we have voluntarily done or for the good intentions that we have had, but were not able to actualise, the Prophet Mohammad (S) tells us that the month of Ramaḍan is so fertile and blessed that the situation would be different. According to what the Prophet Mohammad (S) said, “Your sleep in this month is considered as worship and when you breathe in this month it is considered as glorification (*tasbeeh*) of God.” It is only in the month of Ramaḍan that sleep is considered an act of worship, for which you will be rewarded and you will also be rewarded because of the air going into your lungs like the angels or the people who glorify God. In this month, we must be very careful not to miss this opportunity by negligence or, God-forbids, by committing sins. The month of Ramaḍan itself works day and night to purify us and then when we make more efforts e.g. by doing good deeds we will earn more and more.

This issue includes six papers. The first paper is entitled: “The Prophet’s Spiritual State at the Time of His Mission.” Continuing his discussion in the previous paper: “Life of the Prophet Mohammad before Starting the Mission” (*The Massage of Thaqalayn*, Vol 10, No. 1), in this paper Hujjatu’l-Islam Dr. Sayyed Ahmad Rahnamaei studies some major aspects of the life of the Prophet Mohammad at the beginning of his mission, especially the way he received revelation from God. Hujjatu’l-Islam Dr Rahnamaei is an assistant professor in

the Dept. of Education at the Imam Khomeini Education & Research Institute, Qum. This paper is a revised version of part of his M.A. dissertation submitted to the faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, McGill University, Montreal, Canada, in 1995. The author has revised this paper especially for this issue of the *Message of Thaqalayn*. God-willing, other aspects of the Life of the Prophet Mohammad (S) will be studied by him in the next issue of the *Message of Thaqalayn*.

The second paper is entitled: "Different Methodological Approaches to Spirituality." Continuing the discussion on spirituality in the previous issue ("The Significance of Self-control and Self-purification" in *The Message of Thaqalayn*, Vol 10, No. 1), in this paper Hujjatu'l-Islam Dr. Mohammad Ali Shomali studies different approaches adopted by Muslim scholars in studying spirituality in general and morality (*akhlaq*) in particular i.e. the Philosophical Approach, the Mystical Approach and the Scriptural or Text-Based Approach. Comparing these three approaches, he argues that an adequate approach must take into account advantages of each of the three and be a synthetic one. Hujjatu'l-Islam Dr. Shomali is an associate professor and the head of the Dept. of Religions at the Imam Khomeini Education & Research Institute, Qum. He is also the Dean of Postgraduate Studies for the International Students at the Jami'at al-Zahra, the Islamic University for Women in Qum. God-willing, other theoretical and practical aspects of Islamic spirituality

will be studied by the same author and others in the forthcoming issues.

The third paper is entitled: “An Outline of Governance from a Qur’anic Perspective”. Continuing the discussion in the previous issue on Islamic Law (“An Outline of Islamic Law from a Qur’anic Perspective” in *The Message of Thaqalayn*, Vol 10, No. 1), in this paper Dr Karim Aghili presents a brief summary and paraphrase of some of the salient points regarding governance from a Qur’anic point of view, based on *Law and Politics in the Qur’an* by Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Misbah Yazdi. This paper is an attempt to clarify that Islam aims at establishing an ideal society by having a just government. The paper continues with a brief discussion about governance during the period of occultation of the twelfth Imam, the theory of the mandate of the jurist (*wilayat-e faqih*) and the essential qualifications for administrators of the law. In addition to his studies in Iran, Dr Karim Aghili has completed his PhD. on Comparative Philosophy of Education at the University of Sheffield and is currently based in Manchester.

The fourth paper is entitled: “Ijtihād: *Taswib* or *Takhti’ah*”. In this paper Hujjat’ul-Islam Dr Mohammad Namazi studies a controversial problem in Islamic law, on which different schools of Islam may disagree. *Takhti’ah* is a type of fallibilism which holds that there is only one true judgement about the divine ruling in each particular case and the role of the jurists is to discover it. Although a qualified

jurist who has done his best to discover the divine ruling and those who follow him will be rewarded by God, there is no guarantee that his view is actually in compliance with the reality. Therefore, when there are opposing views among the jurists about the same issue there can be only one true view. Taswib is a type of infallibilism which holds that there can be more than one true views among the jurists. Every qualified jurist who does his best in understanding the divine ruling can be true. The Shi'a scholars believe in takhti'ah. Referring first to the definition and types of ijti'hād, he examines briefly the arguments for each of the two positions according to both Shi'a and Sunni scholars and ends with preferring takhti'ah over taswib. Hujjatu'l-Islam Dr Namazi is an assistant professor in the Dept. of Philosophy at the Imam Khomeini Education & Research Institute, Qum.

The fifth paper is entitled: "Intellectual, Political and Social Status of the Shi'ites on the Verge of Occultation". In this paper, Hujjat'l-Islam Mas'ud Pur Sayyid Aqaei studies a very important part of the history of Islam, that is, the period of the lives of Imam Hadi (AS) and Imam Askari (AS). These two Imams made great efforts such as developing a network of agents (*wukalā*) to prepare the Shi'a community for the era of the occultation of Imam Mahdi (AS), in which for the first time in their history they were faced with their inability to meet their Imam and ask him directly for guidance. Hujjat'l-Islam Mas'ud Pur Sayyid Aqaei is a lecturer at the Islamic Seminary of Qum. The paper is

originally written in Farsi and is translated into English by Mr Mohammad Reza Farajian.

The sixth and final paper is entitled: “Reason, Faith and Authority: A Shi‘ite Perspective”. In this paper Hujjat’ul-Islam Dr Mohamad Ali Shomali studies two important concepts in Islamic thought i.e. reason, faith and authority and their relation and interaction from a Shi‘ite perspective. This paper was presented in the second Catholic-Shi‘a Dialogue in UK in July 2005 and published in *Catholic-Shi‘a Engagement: Reason & Faith in Theory and Practice* (2006).

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all who have contributed to this volume and pray for their success. I want to especially thank Mrs. Fatima Khimji from Canada for editing and proofreading all the papers of this publication and making valuable comments. I would also like to thank the Ahlul Bayt World Assembly and the Islamic Centre of England for their support and encouragement. And last, but not the least, I thank God the Almighty for His guidance and favour upon us in the past and present.

Mohammad Ali Shomali

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