

## **Editorial**

By the Grace of God, we present to our dear readers the new issue of the *Message of Thaqalayn*. Similar to the previous three issues, in this issue we once again address different aspects of Islamic thought, such as the Doctrines, Spirituality, Qur'anic Studies and History.

Publication of this issue has coincided with the first three months of the Islamic Lunar Calendar i.e. Muharram, Safar and Rabi' al-Awwal. This year Muharram has largely overlapped with January and therefore both Muslims and Christians have entered into their new year almost at the same time. The new year always brings new hope and new energy. Let us hope and pray that the year 1431/2010 will be a blessed year for all mankind and in particular for those who believe in God and His plan for humanity.

For those who know the Ahl al-Bayt (A), especially for their followers, the arrival of Muharram and Safar every year refreshes sad memories of tragic events of Ashura in Karbala. In the tenth of Muharram 61 A.H., Imam Husayn (A), the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad (S), and 72 of his companions including his sons, brothers and nephews were brutally killed and Imam Ali b. Husayn (A) who was severely ill at that time and the ladies and children were taken as captive. All over the world, the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt (A) commemorate the martyrdom of Imam

Husayn (A) and his companions from the beginning of Muharram by taking part in activities to strengthen the connection to the Ahl al-Bayt (A) and further their knowledge of Islam. The mourning for Imam Husayn (A) reaches its peak on the Day of Ashura and more or less continues till the Day of Arba‘in which is the 20<sup>th</sup> of Safar and marks the 40th day after martyrdom of Imam Husayn (A) and his companions.

According to a well-known hadith from Imam Hasan ‘Askari (A), visiting Imam Husayn (A) on the Day of Arba‘in is one of the signs of a true follower of the Ahl al-Bayt (A). Every year millions of people visit the shrine of Imam Husayn (A) on the Day of Arba‘in and those who cannot be there physically recite the ziyarah text from every corner of the world. Why is the fortieth day so important? Why is the ziyarah of Ashura not introduced as a sign even though it is recited on the day in which the beloved Imam was actually martyred?

My humble view is that ziyarah of Arba‘in shows the completion of an inner journey of the one who mourns for Imam Husayn (A). There may be many people who embark on this journey e.g. for a day or two, but to actually complete this journey and to achieve intellectual and emotional unity with Imam Husayn (A) and his cause one needs to continue this journey for forty days. In Islamic literature, there are many instances in which the number forty marks a turning point. In other words, “forty” in many cases represents the stage in which the increase in quality turns into transformation in quality. For example, the Prophet Musa (A), in order to be able to receive the Tablets, had initially an

appointment of thirty nights with God and then it was completed in forty nights. The Qur'an says:

And We made an appointment with Moses for thirty nights, and completed them with ten [more]; thus the tryst of his Lord was completed in forty nights. And Moses said to Aaron, his brother, 'Be my successor among my people, and set things right and do not follow the way of the agents of corruption.' (7:142)

Thus, Moses (A) needed these forty days to be ready for receiving the Tablets.

Similarly, when Moses (A) told his people to enter the Holy Land they did not listen and said, 'O Moses, there are a tyrannical people in it. We will not enter it until they leave it. But once they leave it, we will go in.' (5:22) They also said, 'O Moses, we will never enter it so long as they remain in it. Go ahead, you and your Lord, and fight! We will be sitting right here.' (5:24) As a result, they had to suffer for forty years, so that they could again qualify themselves for entering the Holy Land:

He said, 'My Lord! I have no power over [anyone] except myself and my brother, so part us from the transgressing lot.' He said, 'It shall be forbidden them for forty years: they shall wander about in the earth. So do not grieve for the transgressing lot.' (5:25 & 26)

Referring to the gradual development of man, the Qur'an considers the age of forty as the peak of man's strength and development:

We have enjoined man to be kind to his parents. His mother has carried him in travail, and bore him in travail, and his gestation and weaning take thirty months. When he reaches the age of full strength and attains forty years, he says, 'My Lord! Inspire me to give thanks for Your blessing with which You have blessed me and my parents, and that I may do righteous deeds which may please You, and invest my descendants with righteousness. Indeed I have turned to you in penitence, and I am one of the muslims.' (46:15)

The Prophet Muhammad (S) was appointed as a prophet at the age of forty.

Islamic hadiths indicate the significance of memorizing forty hadiths that people can benefit from to the extent that such person is promised to be resurrected as a learned scholar. For example, the Prophet Muhammad (S) is quoted as saying:

مَنْ حَفِظَ مِنْ أُمَّتِي أَرْبَعِينَ حَدِيثًا مِمَّا يَحْتَاجُونَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ أَمْرِ  
دِينِهِمْ بَعَثَهُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَقِيهًا عَالِمًا

The person from my nation who memorizes forty hadiths pertaining to those issues of religion which he is in need of, will be resurrected by Allah on the

Day of Judgement as a person with deep insight into the faith and as a scholar. (*Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 2, p. 153)

Again according to hadiths, it is highly recommended to pray first for forty brothers and sisters in faith and then to pray for oneself. For example, Imam Sadiq (A) is quoted as saying:

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع قَالَ مَنْ قَدَّمَ أَرْبَعِينَ رَجُلًا مِنْ إِخْوَانِهِ فَدَعَا لَهُمْ ثُمَّ دَعَا لِنَفْسِهِ اسْتُجِيبَ لَهُ فِيهِمْ وَ فِي نَفْسِهِ

Whoever prays first for forty brothers and then prays for himself his prayers for them and for himself will be answered. (*Al-Khisāl*, vol. 2, p. 538)

There are also hadiths which indicate the impact that testimony of forty believers can have at the funeral of a believer: For example, Imam Sadiq (A) is quoted as saying:

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع قَالَ إِذَا مَاتَ الْمُؤْمِنُ فَحَضَرَ جِنَازَتَهُ أَرْبَعُونَ رَجُلًا مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فَقَالُوا اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّا لَا نَعْلَمُ مِنْهُ إِلَّا خَيْرًا وَ أَنْتَ أَعْلَمُ بِهِ مِنَّا قَالَ اللَّهُ تَبَارَكَ وَ تَعَالَى إِنِّي قَدْ أَجَزْتُ شَهَادَتَكُمْ وَ غَفَرْتُ لَهُ مَا عَلِمْتُ مِنْ مِمَّا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

When a believer dies and forty believers attend his funeral and say, ‘ O Allah, verily we know nothing of him except good and you know of him more than we do’ Allah, the Blessed and the High, will say ‘verily I have accepted your testimony and

forgiven for him what I knew and you did not.

(Ibid.)

There are other instances which show the significance of number forty. I think what said so far is enough to support the above-mentioned idea that number forty signifies completion. In our case, the ziyarah on the Day of Arba'in shows the completion of mourning for Imam Husayn (A) and durability of the outcomes of sharing with Imam Husayn (A) in his suffering.

The 28th of Safar is the anniversary of the demise of the Prophet Muhammad (S) and martyrdom of his grandson, Imam Hasan (A). The end of Safar marks the martyrdom of Imam Riḍa (A). These are all significant occasions to commemorate and great opportunities to study more about their lives and teachings.

The most important occasion in the month of Rabi' al-Awwal is the birth anniversary of the Prophet Muhammad (S) and Imam Sadiq (A). According to the majority of Shi'a scholars and some Sunni scholars, the Prophet was born on the 17th of Rabi' al-Awwal, while the majority of Sunni scholars and some Shi'a scholars believe that he was born on the 12th. Many Muslims especially in Iran and some other countries celebrate the birth anniversary of the Prophet Muhaamad (S) as the week of unity from the 12th till the 17th Rabi' al-Awwal. We pray wholeheartedly to Allah (SWT) to make all Muslims, and indeed all believers, united. In the previous issue we had two papers on unity and in this issue we have one more paper on unity.

Similar to the previous three issues, this issue also includes six papers. The first of the six papers is entitled: "A Glance at the Process of Self-development." Continuing the discussion on spirituality in the last three issues, in this paper Dr. Mohammad Ali Shomali gives a brief breakdown of the spiritual journey. The very first step is wakefulness. It is only when one becomes awake and spiritually alert that one decides to embark on the journey and not to lose any opportunity to obtain some provision for this journey. 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 Jami'at al-Zahra, the Islamic University for Women in Qum. God-willing, this series of papers will continue in the forthcoming issues.

The second paper is entitled: "Thematic Approach to Qur'an Exegesis." In this paper Dr Mahmood Namazi starts by studying the significance of the Qur'an and the requirements for interpreting the Qur'an, and then refers to the history of Qur'anic exegesis and different attitudes among the exegetes. The paper then examines the merits of the thematic approach to Qur'an exegesis. Hujjatu'l-Islam Dr Namazi is an assistant professor in the Dept. of Philosophy at the Imam Khomeini Education & Research Institute, Qum.

The third paper is entitled: "Shi'ite Social Theology." In this paper, Dr Mahmood Taghizadeh Davari starts by defining 'social theology.' He defines it as a branch of theology, which studies

human social life as well as its features, implications and consequences such as government, business, education, judgment, marriage/divorce, war and peace. The paper goes on elaborating on five subfields of social theology i.e. social hadith, social exegesis, social jurisprudence, social Kalam, and social ethics. They all fall under the category of theology, since each of them deals with religious texts (the Qur'an and hadiths), and tries to articulate and justify religious teachings, doctrines and precepts. This paper is originally published in Farsi in the journal of *Shi'eh Shneāsi* (Shi'ite Studies), vol. 6, no. 22, summer 2008 and is translated into English for *the Message of Thaqalayn* by Mr Rahim Rasti Tabar. Hujjatu'l-Islam Dr Taghizade Davari is an assistant professor and the Dean of Social Studies at the University of Qum.

The fourth paper is entitled: "Preparing the Shi'a for the Age of Occultation." In this paper, Dr Mohammad Reza Jabbari refers to some of the hadiths from the Prophet Muhammad (S) and Imams (A) from Imam Ali (A) to Imam Hasan 'Askari (A) about Imam Mahdi (A) and his occultation and tries to illustrate how the Prophet (S) and Imams (A) gradually prepared the Shi'a community for the Age of Occultation. This paper was originally written in Farsi and published in *Darsnāmeḥ Tāriḫ-e 'Asr-e Gheybat* by Mas'ud Pur Sayyid Aqā'i, Mohammad Reza Jabbari, Hasan 'Ashuri and Sayyid Mundhir al-Hakim (Qum: 2008, the International Centre for Islamic Studies, 2nd ed.). This paper has been translated into English for the *Message of Thaqalayn* by Mr Mohammad Reza Farajian from the International Institute for

Islamic Studies, Qum. Hujat'l-Islam Dr Mohammad Reza Jabbari is an assistant professor in the Dept. of History at the Imam Khomeini Education & Research Institute, Qum.

The fifth paper is entitled: "Imam Ali (A) the Herald of Unity." In the first part of this paper which is published here, Mr Sayyid Kazem MirJalili studies the significance of unity in Islam and then focuses on Imam Ali's (A) attitude towards unity. This paper was originally written in Farsi and translated into English for the *Message of Thaqalayn* by Mrs. Seyyedeh Zahra MirFendereski. Mr Mirjalili is a lecturer at the University of Yazd.

The sixth and final paper is entitled, "Shaykh Mufid's Account of Imamate in *Al-Irshād*." In this paper, Dr Ghulam Hossain Adeel starts with a brief account of the life and works of Shaykh Mufid (d. 413/1022) and then focuses on his *Al-Irshād*. The paper ends with a brief study of his account of Imamate in *Al-Irshād*. Hujjat'l-Islam Ghulam Hossain Adeel has obtained his doctorate from the University of Birmingham and is currently based in Manchester.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all who have contributed to this volume and pray for their success. I would also like to thank the Ahlul Bayt (A) 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 and to help us all achieve a unified worldwide community.

We welcome your feedback on this journal. If you have any comments or suggestions, please send them to [info.thaqaalayn@gmail.com](mailto:info.thaqaalayn@gmail.com).

Mohammad Ali Shomali

January 2010