

HAJAF  
THE PIONEER  
FOR HAWAII'S  
AROUND  
THE WORLD



# NAJAF THE PIONEER FOR HAWZA'S AROUND THE WORLD

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**IN THE NAME OF GOD, THE MOST MERCIFUL,  
THE MOST GRACIOUS**

Praise be to God, the most Merciful, the most Gracious, and peace and blessings upon His most beloved creation, Muhammed, and his progeny, and may the curse of Allah fall on their enemies till the Day of Judgement.

A group of fellow believers outside of Iraq, sent a query to his Eminence Grand Ayatullah Al-Uzema Sheikh Bashir Hussain Al-Najafi (may Allah prolong his life) regarding the Hawza of the holy city of Najaf to which his Eminence answered, clarifying the Hawza's rich history, its spiritual and scientific aspects, and the features that distinguish it from the rest of the Hawzas of the world.

We ask Allah (swt) to prolong his life and ease his affairs.

The following is the exact wording of the question sent to his Eminence:

**IN THE NAME OF GOD, THE MOST MERCIFUL,  
THE MOST GRACIOUS**

His Eminence Grand Ayatullah Al-Uzema Sheikh  
Bashir Al-Najafi

(May Allah prolong his life)

We continue to hear of your particular interest in the Hawza of the holy city of Najaf, and we have also heard that you prefer it over any Hawza elsewhere and invite students to enrich themselves with its knowledge; therefore we wonder, what exactly is it that prompts students to choose this Hawza over any other?

-A Group of believers outside of Iraq.

In the Name of God the Most Merciful, the Most Gracious

**REPLY:**

I have previously received many questions concerning my interest in the Hawza of the holy city of Najaf, and I've attempted to answer- whenever such an opportunity was raised- to acknowledge the glory of its teachings, the greatness of its abilities and the purity of its founders' intentions, from Sheikh Tusi (may Allah bless his soul) to this day. By that, I mean no offense or disregard to the rest of the Hawzas' of the world, who have served and continue to serve the Islamic religion, raising new generations of Jafari Shias worldwide, nor do I wish to underestimate the abilities and roles of prominent Hawzas such as the Hawza of the city of Kadhmiya and the Hawza of Hilla, which had much to give until harsh circumstances forced them to close down.

In addition to the Hawzas mentioned above, the Hawza of Aleppo was also successful in introducing many scholars from the Jafari school of thought such as the scholars of Bani Zahra and some scholars from Jabal Aamil, and praising the Hawza of Najaf does

not mean belittling or offending any other Hawza of the world, as the saying goes (Confirming one thing does not deny everything else.)

As for my firm belief in the stature of Najaf's Hawza and its abilities, it is enough to mention the praise of the masses, even those who have not had the honor of studying there, of its glory. Furthermore, we shouldn't forget the fact that it basks in the bounties of the prince of believers, Imam Ali (as), and that its' students breathe in the air that has touched the dome of the gate of knowledge, something not found in any place of the world. Even the dust of the holy city of Najaf is special, since it has embraced the bodies of not thousands- but millions- of the followers of Ahlul-Bayt (as) and prodigious Shia scholars. Each atom of dust that falls and graces our bodies and faces, is perhaps a part of a scholar's chest or from the sons and daughters of our holy prophet (p.b.u.h). It has been narrated that praying at the shrine of the prince of believers (as) is worth 100 thousand prayers. <sup>1</sup>

One of the Hawza's traits is that its students and maintainers are dedicated solely to spreading the Jafari School of thought, while avoiding political issues in its multiple forms; therefore students are expected to not associate or confuse the Hawza's purpose with others'. The Hawza strives to raise scholars, enrich minds and become a beacon of light for the world for generations to come, until the appearance of the 12<sup>th</sup> awaited Imam (ajf).



Allah (swt) has distinguished this Hawza with many features.

He (swt) has placed it among an Arabic country, and has honored it with a country and language rich in Islamic teachings and bearing divine codes and beliefs.

Allah (swt) has blessed Arabic culture with four characteristics since the very beginnings of history, even before the rise of Islam, and when the Islamic religion came, these traits were further emphasized and promoted, and they are:

#### COURAGE AND BRAVERY

Out of many noble virtues, Arabs especially took pride in bravery, even the ladies of Arabia, used to look down on cowardice and refuse to accept a coward as their companion and protector. It is said that Arab women used to lower their heads in shame if their husbands showed any signs of cowardice, and would distance themselves from them. There are many stories throughout history in which this trait is manifested, such as the story of Hajaj Ibn Yusef Al-Thaqafi's wife and her constant reproach to her husband due to his cowardice, and Amr Ibn Abd-Al Wad Al-Amari's famous saying as he approached the moat separating the armies of Islam and the armies of the unbelievers, "this is a sort of trickery which

Arabs have not done before."<sup>2</sup>

History mentions that when Amr's sister received the news of her brother's death, she said: "Who dared cause his death?" the reply was that it was Ali Ibn Abu Talib (as). Upon hearing this, she refrained from crying and said the following poetic verse:

If Amr's killer was another

My tears would have flown for eternity

But his killer is one who bears no flaws

His honorable father was of the high chiefs<sup>3</sup>

Islam came and encouraged bravery while condemning the escape from the battlefield, Allah swt said:

*"O you who believe! When you meet those who disbelieve marching for war, then turn not your backs to them, and whoever shall turn his back to them on that day—unless he turn aside for the sake of fighting or withdraws to a company—then he, indeed, becomes deserving of Allah's wrath, and his abode is hell; and an evil destination shall it be.*

*"<sup>4</sup>*

Imam Ali Zain Ul-Abideen (as) has said, with pride, to Ibn Murjana': "With death do you threaten me, Oh son of Zaid, while death has become our habit, and martyrdom, our honor."<sup>5</sup> In addition to the famous saying of the Master of the Martyrs (as):

"Death is far greater than bearing shame, and shame

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His saying shows that Arabs used to fight their enemies face to face, and were not used to such ways. The Quran points out the cowardice of the Jews in this verse: "They will not fight against you in a body save in fortified towns or from behind walls; their fighting between..... them is severe, you may think them as one body, and their hearts are disunited; that is because they are a people with no sense." Surah Al-Hashr Verse 14

\*The Core of Literature. <sup>3</sup>

Surah Al-Anfal Verse 15-16 <sup>4</sup>

Al-Bihar Volume 45 Page 118 <sup>5</sup>

is better than entering the hellfire."<sup>6</sup>

We find these in the actions of the infallibles as well, Imam Hussain (as) used to be satisfied with a shield so small that it would cover his chest area only, due to the fact that he (as) never used to turn his back to a warrior. Of course, this does not mean that there are no exceptions, or that there aren't other cultures which also hold such virtues highly, but that these traits were generally recognized and promoted among Arabs.

#### KINDNESS TO NEIGHBORS, AVOIDING KILLING WITH TRICKERY

The famous story of Mudlij Ibn Sweed Al-Tai<sup>7</sup> is one such example mentioned in history. In addition, poets used to criticize those who were not protective and caring to their neighbors, while praising those who held such fine qualities.

Islam came and emphasized these traits to such a degree that although shirk was the first and foremost of what Islam fought, such as in the prophet's saying ("Say: there is no God but Allah."), Allah (swt) says:

*"If one amongst the Pagans ask thee for asylum, grant it to him, so that he may hear the word of Allah. and then escort him to where he can be secure. That is because they are men without knowledge."*<sup>8</sup>

In addition to the well-know story about Imam Zain-ul-Abdeen (as), and how he used to send food to

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The Death of Imam Hussain (Maqatal Al-Hussain), by Abi Mukhanith; <sup>6</sup>  
Maqatal by Abdul-Al Razaq Al-Muqrim Page 234  
Mudlij Ibn Saweed Al-Tai or Haritha or Jariya Ibn Murr/ Exploring Sayings <sup>7</sup>  
(Mustaksee Al-Amthal) Volume 1, Page 87  
Chapter Al-Tawbah Verse 6 <sup>8</sup>

Harmala, the killer of the infant, Abdullah and other similar stories which have filled the pages of history.

## GENEROSITY AND HOSPITALITY

If you look closely across the pages of history we find that Arabs and their poets held a special interest in hospitality to such a degree that they would light fires on the highest hilltops in the darkness of the nights so that guests and travelers may find their way, and this tradition was carried on by the prophets such as Prophet Ibrahim (as) We also find that poets would harshly criticize the cheap and miserly in addition to what Islam had to say, Allah (swt) says in Chapter Al-Ma'un:

*"And withhold the necessities of life."<sup>9</sup>*

*"Nor did he urge the feeding of the poor"<sup>10</sup>*

And in favor of the generous:

*"And in their property was a portion due to him who begs and to him who is denied [good]."<sup>11</sup>*

## PROTECTING DIGNITY & STRIVING TO UPHOLD HONOR

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Surah Al-Ma'un Verse 6 <sup>9</sup>  
Surah Al-Haqqah Verse 33 <sup>10</sup>  
Surah Al-Thareyat Verse 19 <sup>11</sup>

The Arab people hold dignity and honor in their full regard in a way that everything else becomes insignificant besides such an important manner. In fact, perhaps the reason why Arab fathers used to bury their infant girls alive, yet still cry while doing so, was out of fear of the possibility that enemy tribes would one day take them as booty of war and strip them of their honor.

When Islam came, protecting honor and dignity were tied in with faith, and it was emphasized that the strength of one's faith depended on one's protection of his honor, it has been narrated that the prophet (p.b.u.h) has said: "Protecting honor is of faith, and indecency is of insolence."<sup>12</sup>

"May Allah bless my father, Ibrahim, he was protective over his honor, and I am even more so."<sup>13</sup> However, Islam treated honor with wisdom and reason, by urging fathers to rush in marrying their daughters, early enough to have their first menstrual period in their husbands' house.

Such virtuous traits were embodied into Arabic culture, and Allah (swt) has made the people of such fine traits to be the protectors and maintainers of the holy city of Najaf. Again, by that I do not mean anything other than highlighting the bright aspects of Najaf's geographical features and some of its qualities, and this does not mean that such qualities are not found in other cultures and ethnicities.

As for what distinguishes Najaf academically, it has been found that one day in the life of a student

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Bihar Al-Anwar Volume 103 Pg. 250, narrated by Nawadeer Al-Rawandi Pg.36 <sup>12</sup>  
Al-Wasaail Volume 7 Pg.109, Bihar Al-Anwar Volume 103 Pg. 238 <sup>13</sup>

studying in Najaf is more strenuous than the work of an entire week for a student studying elsewhere.

Furthermore, although other Hawzas of the world are distinguishable with their large quantity of students, Najaf's Hawza prides itself with its quality, something highly recognized in Islam.

Those who attend this seminary take pride in it, and those who have not had the chance wish take part of its teachings.

Allah (swt) has blessed us with following the path of the Ahlul-Bayt (as), and the knowledge and blessings of the 12<sup>th</sup> Imams, who like the prophet, continue to shower upon us after their death; their lights shine upon the world and their loving believers near and far. It has been narrated that the prophet (p.b.u.h) has said:

"My lifetime has brought you blessings, my death has also brought you blessings, as for my life, Allah (swt) guided you from disbelief, and saved you from the pits of hellfire; as for my death, your deeds are shown to me, and that which is good is increased by Allah (swt), as for that which is bad, Allah (swt) forgives you."

At that one of the hypocrites asked: "Oh Messenger of God, how can that be when your body has decayed?" At which the prophet (p.b.u.h) replied: "Nay, Allah (swt) has forbidden our flesh to the Earth, no part of it will be fed on."<sup>14</sup>

And in another narration, the prophet (p.b.u.h) has said to his companions:

"My lifetime is a blessing for you and my death is also a blessing." At that, they asked: "Your life is a great blessing, but what of your death?" He (p.b.u.h) replied: "Allah (swt) has forbidden our flesh to the earth, no part of it will be fed on."<sup>15</sup>

It has been found that the following Quranic verse concerning the prophet (p.b.u.h) blessing to his nation: (*" And had they, when they were unjust to themselves, come to you and asked forgiveness of Allah and the messenger had [also] asked forgiveness for them, they would have found Allah Oft-returning [to mercy] Merciful."*)<sup>16</sup> is not limited to his life on Earth but even after his death.

It has also been narrated that the prophet (p.b.u.h) has said:

"Whosoever greets me from my grave, I hear him, and whosoever greets me from afar, I send peace from Allah on him and his family."<sup>17</sup>

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Sunan Ibn Maja, Kitab-Al-Janaiz Chapter 65, Sunan Ibn Maja Kitab-Al-Iqama Chapter 79, Sunan Abi Dawood Kitab Al-Watr Chapter 26, Sunan Al-Nisai Kitab Al-Juma'a Chapter 5, Sunan Al-Drami Kitab Al-Salat Chapter: The Blessings of Friday, Masnad Ahmad Ibn Hanbal Volume 4, Page 8. Al-Hashiya Ibn Sunan Abi Dawood, Ibn Hijr Al-Maki (It is narrated that the lives of the prophets in their graves, is without a doubt, a life in which they worship and pray to God, without food or drink, similar to the lives of the angels. ) Shawkani has said: Narrations greatly emphasize the recommendation of salawat (sending prayer to the prophet), on Fridays, and he (p.b.u.h) is aware of our salawat, even after his death.

Ibn Maja has said: He (p.b.u.h) has said to Abi Darda, Allah (swt) has forbidden our flesh to the Earth. As for Tibrani's narration: "Whenever a believer sends salawat on me, it reaches me" At which they asked: "What of after your death?" He replied: " Yes, even after my death, Allah (swt) has forbidden our flesh to the Earth."

A group of narrators have said that the messenger of Allah is alive, even after death, is pleased with the worship of the believers, and that all the prophets do not decay, and that all the dead possess consciousness and the ability to hear. Ibn Abbas has said: "Any person who passes over the grave of his fellow believer and greets him, or (in another narration) a fellow acquaintance, then that person hears him and returns his greeting."

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Same as the previous source. <sup>15</sup>

Surah Al-Nisa, Verse 64 <sup>16</sup>

Al-Bihar Volume 27 Pg. 302 <sup>17</sup>

Ibn Abi Dunya has narrated: A person who passes over the grave of an acquaintance and greets him, then that person knows him and returns his greeting, but if he passes over the grave of a stranger and greets him, then that person also returns his greeting. It has been narrated that the prophet used to go out to the graves of Baqee to visit the dead, greeting them. It has been narrated that the people who died martyrs are alive even after death, and that their souls are still connected to their bodies. If that is the case, then what of the prophets and messengers? It has been narrated by Al-Munthari, edited by Al-Baihaqi that the prophets are alive even in their graves. In Sahih Muslim, the prophet (p.b.u.h) has said: I passed the prophet Musa (as) on the Night of Isra and I saw him praying in his grave.

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The same thing goes for the 12<sup>th</sup> Imams (as), though we do not hear their reply, they know their visitors, and they reply to those who send upon them blessings.

The prophet (p.b.u.h.) says regarding Ali Ibn Abu Talib (as): I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its gate, whoever means to seek knowledge, let them approach the gate."<sup>18</sup>

And in another narration: "I am the vault of knowledge, and Ali is its key."

Therefore whoever wants to possess the vault let them master the key. And in a third narration: "I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its gate, whosoever wants to obtain knowledge let them seek it through Ali."

The prophet (p.b.u.h.) also has called Imam Ali (as) the "vault of my knowledge" and on other occasions the "essence of my knowledge".<sup>19</sup>

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Al-Bihar Volume 40 Chapter Section 94 from the History of Imam Ali (as),<sup>18</sup>  
Pg. 203, Mustadrak Ala Al-Sahihayn Volume 3 pg. 126, Ibn Atheer Fi Asad  
Al-Ghaba, Volume 4 Pg. 22, Al-Riyadh Al-Nadhra Volume 2 Pg. 93, Kutr Al-  
Aamal Volume 6 Pg. 401, Kutr Al-Haqaiq Pg. 43, Burning Lighting (sawaiq  
muhriqa) Pg. 73

19. Al-Bihar Volume 40 Section 94 from the history of Imam Ali (as)<sup>19</sup>



Since all the blessings mentioned by the prophet in Imam Ali's (as) favor continue after his (as) death, then the shortest, most guaranteed path to obtaining knowledge is through the prince of the believers (as), and what better way than to join the Hawza of the holy city of Najaf. Peace be upon him the day he was born, the day he was martyred, and the day he will be resurrected.

## THE BOUNTIES OF NAJAF

It has been narrated that Imam Hussain (as) has said: Four areas complained to Allah (swt) the days of the great flood, the Holy Ka'abah, which Allah raised high, Gharee, Karbala and Toos.<sup>20</sup>

Imam Ali (as) has said: "The first acts of worship to Allah (swt) occurred on the lands of Kufa, when Allah (swt) ordered the angels to bow down to Adam; they bowed on the lands of Kufa."

Imam Jafar Al-Sadiq (as) has said: "Ghari, it is the spot of the mountain on which Allah talked to Musa, honored Isa, befriended Ibrahim, and took Muhammad as a beloved. Allah made Ghari a sanctuary for the prophets."<sup>21</sup>

It was also said that Ghari was a spot of heaven, Imam Jafar Sadiq (as) said: "Allah (swt) introduced our path to the people of the regions, and the people of Kufa were the only ones who accepted it. Near

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Al-Bihar Volume 97 Section: The bounties of Najaf and the water of the <sup>20</sup>  
Euphrates, Pg. 231

Al-Bihar Volume 97, Section: The bounties of Najaf and the water of the <sup>21</sup>  
Euphrates Pg. 231

Kufa lies a grave that if any person heavy with calamities prays four rakats in it, Allah (swt) answers his prayers and he exits happy and pleased.<sup>22</sup>

Imam Baqir (as) said: "In the lands of Kufa lies such a grave that if a sick person goes to it, Allah (swt) will heal him".<sup>23</sup>

Imam Jafar Sadiq (as) has said: "The right side of Kufa is a piece of Heaven" and "The right of Kufa is a piece of Heaven."<sup>24</sup>

In Mazar Al-Bihar, Imam Mohammed Baqir (as) has said: "If the Mehdi (ajf) enters Kufa, the people will say: Oh son of Rasullah, praying behind you equals to praying behind the prophet (p.b.u.h.) and this mosque does not contain us, at that he will go to Gharee, outlining a mosque of a thousand doors and wide enough for the people; and a river will flow behind Imam Hussain's (a.s) shrine.

## WEARING RINGS MADE FROM NAJAF'S STONES

Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) has said: "I love a believer to wear five rings", then he mentioned the blessings of Durr Al-Najaf (a stone from the land of Ghari, Najaf, and Karbala.)

Then he (as) was asked: "What does this stone hold of blessings?" He replied: Whoever wears a ring made from this stone and glances at it, Allah (swt) will bless him with each glance, a Ziyara (visit to the holy

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Same as the previous source.<sup>22</sup>

Al-Bihar Volume 92/15<sup>23</sup>

Alamah Majlisi (May Allah bless him) has said: "Imam Ali's grave is what<sup>24</sup>  
is meant by 'the right side of Kufa'.

shrines), its thawab is that of the prophets and had it not been for the Mercy of Allah (swt) to the Shia then it would have been unaffordable, but Allah (swt) made it inexpensive so that it may be available both to the rich and the poor."

### BEING NEAR TO THE HOLY SHRINES:

Imam Ridha (as) has said: " Being near to the prince of the believers (as) is far greater than the worship of seven hundred years, and Imam Jafar Sadiq (as) was asked about being near to the grave of the prince of believers (as), and the grave of Imam Hussain (as), and replied: Being near to Ali's (as) grave one night is better than the worship of seven hundred years, while one night near the grave of Hussain (as) is greater than the worship of seventy years."

### STAYING OVERNIGHT AND PRAYING AT THE HOLY SHRINE

In Tuhfa Al-Gharawiya: Imam Jafar Al-Sadiq (as) has said: "Staying overnight at Ali (as) for one night equals the worship of seven hundred years."

Al-Nouri has said in "Dar Al-Salam"<sup>25</sup>: "I have heard from reliable sources that in the book of 'Pleasing News' (لطائف الاخبار) it has been stated that some of the Imams (a.s) visited their grandfather's- the prince of

believers- grave and ordered one of their sons to get them sheets so that they may sleep, which greatly astonished the boy for he knew that they were not used to sleeping at night, and upon inquiring, they replied: 'sleeping at Ali's shrine is worship'."

Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) was asked about praying at the shrine of Imam Ali (as) and replied: "Prayer at Imam Ali's Shrine is worth 200 thousand prayers. "

I invite all those who seek knowledge, virtue and honor, from the Jafari School of thought to join the Hawza of the holy city of Najaf.

Oh, Allah...protect this sacred Hawza from manipulating hands and the wrong-doings of the unjust, protect it and keep it in trustworthy hands until the appearance of the 12<sup>th</sup> Imam (ajf).

Peace be upon the founders, maintainers, caretakers, and students of this holy Hawza and upon its primary guardian Imam Mehdi (ajf) and upon the prince of the believers, Imam Ali (as), whose shrine neighbors the Hawza,(And surely he is the best of neighbors)<sup>26</sup> and Praise be to Allah, lord of the worlds.

Bashir Hussain Al-Najafi

The holy city of Najaf, Iraq

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We have sought your grave for though graves are plentiful in number <sup>26</sup>  
Those that shelter us are but a few

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