

Hadiths about Imam Mahdi in Sunni and Shi'i Traditions

The following is a comprehensive compilation of hadith (prophetic and imamic narrations) about **Imam al-Mahdi** – the promised savior in Islamic eschatology – drawn from both **Sunni** and **Shi'i** sources. We include narrations of all grades (authentic (ṣaḥīḥ), reliable (ḥasan), weak (ḍaʿīf), etc.), each presented in the **original Arabic text** alongside an **English translation**. The hadith are thematically organized into categories: **Lineage and Identity**, **Physical and Moral Characteristics**, **Events and Signs Preceding His Emergence**, **His Role and Global Mission**, and **Duration of Rule & Eschatological Implications**. Under each theme, both Sunni and Shi'i perspectives are clearly indicated and cited.

Lineage and Identity of Imam Mahdi

In Sunni Hadith

- **From the Ahl al-Bayt (Prophetic Household)** – *Umm Salamah (ra)* reports that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «**Al-Mahdī is from my family, from the descendants of Fāṭimah.**» In Arabic: «الْمَهْدِيُّ مِنْ عِثْرَتِي مِنْ» وَوَلَدِ فَاطِمَةَ. This establishes that the Mahdi will be born into the Prophet's lineage through his daughter Fatimah ¹ ². (Source: Sunan Abī Dāwūd, Kitāb al-Mahdī, hadith narrated by Umm Salamah – graded **Ṣaḥīḥ** by al-Albānī ³.)
- **A Descendant of Ḥasan or Ḥusayn?** – *ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (ra)* narrates that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «**Even if only one day [of the world's life] remained, Allah would prolong it until He raises up a man from my Ahl al-Bayt...**» (another version adds «**...who will have my name and whose father's name will be like my father's.**») «لو لم يبق من الدهر إلّا يومٌ لبعث الله رجلاً من أهل بيتي... يواطئ اسمه» «**...whose name will be the same as mine, and whose father's name is the same as my father's name.**» ⁴. In other words, the Mahdi will be a *Hashimite* of the Prophet's clan, sharing the Prophet's name "Muḥammad" and his grandfather's name "ʿAbdullāh" ⁴. This hadith is recorded in Sunan Abī Dāwūd and Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī (from ʿAbd Allāh ibn Masʿūd) and was graded **ḥasan-ṣaḥīḥ** (sound) by Imām al-Tirmidhī ⁵ ⁶.
- **"One of Us, the Household"** – It is also reported on the authority of *ʿAlī (ra)* that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «**Al-Mahdī is one of us, the people of the Household (Ahl al-Bayt). Allah will set him right in a single night.**» In Arabic: «الْمَهْدِيُّ مِنَّا أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ، يُصْلِحُهُ اللهُ فِي لَيْلَةٍ» ⁷ ⁸. This indicates that the Mahdi will emerge as a righteous member of the Prophet's own family, and that God will prepare or reform him **miraculously, even overnight**. (Source: Sunan Ibn Mājah, no. 4085 – graded **Ḥasan** by scholars ⁹.)
- **Descendant of Sayyida Fāṭimah** – In another hadith, *Umm Salamah* recounts that the Prophet (ﷺ) explicitly said: «**The Mahdi will be among the descendants of Fāṭimah.**» (Arabic: «الْمَهْدِيُّ مِنْ وَلَدِ»

فَاطِمَةَ) ¹⁰ ¹¹ . This underlines that **both Sunni and Shi'i** agree on Mahdi's **Fāṭimid lineage** through Lady Fatimah al-Zahrā. (Reported in Sunan Abī Dāwūd and Ibn Mājah – graded **Ḥasan** ¹² .)

- **Foretold among Ahl al-Bayt's Imams** – *Anas ibn Mālik (ra)* narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) once said: «We, the sons of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, are the leaders of the people of Paradise: myself, Ḥamza, 'Alī, Ja'far, Ḥasan, Ḥusayn and al-Mahdī.» (Arabic: «نَحْنُ وَلَدُ عَبْدِ الْمُطَّلِبِ سَادَةُ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ: أَنَا وَحَمِزَةُ وَعَلِيٌّ وَجَعْفَرُ وَالْحَسَنُ وَالْحُسَيْنُ وَالْقَاضِي» ¹³ ¹⁴ . This *hadith*, although transmitted in Sunni collections (*Ibn Mājah* #4087), is graded weak (*da'īf*) ¹⁵ . It nevertheless reflects the expectation that **al-Mahdi is counted among the illustrious members of the Prophet's family destined for Paradise**, reinforcing his noble lineage and spiritual stature.

In Shi'i Hadith

- **The Twelfth Imam – Son of 'Askari** – Twelver Shi'a sources unanimously identify **Imam Mahdi** as **Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī**, the twelfth Imam, son of Imam Ḥasan al-'Askarī (d. 874 CE) and a descendant of Imām 'Alī and Fāṭimah ¹⁶ ¹⁷ . Numerous *hadiths* from the Prophet (ﷺ) and the Imams state that the **Mahdi will be the "ninth descendant" of Imām al-Ḥusayn**. For example, a famous report related by Salmān al-Fārsī recounts that the Prophet lovingly addressed his grandson Ḥusayn and said: «You are a chief (*sayyid*) and the son of a chief; you are an Imam, son of an Imam, brother of an Imam. You are a proof (*ḥujjah*) [of God], son of a proof, brother of a proof – and you will be the father of nine proofs, the ninth of whom will be the Qā'im (the Riser).» ¹⁸ . In Arabic, part of this *hadith* reads: «وَأَنْتَ أَبُو أُنْقِصَ تِسْعَةٍ، مِنْ صُلْبِكَ، تَأْسِخُهُمُ الْقَائِمُ...» – “and you [O Ḥusayn] are the father of nine Imams from your progeny, the ninth of whom is the Qā'im (Mahdi).” This explicit lineage *hadith*, recorded in works like *Yanābī' al-Mawadda* ¹⁸ , shows that Shi'i tradition traces the Mahdi through Imām Ḥusayn's line, culminating in the twelfth Imam born to Imam Ḥasan al-'Askarī and his wife Narjis in **255 AH/869 CE** ¹⁹ ¹⁷ .
- **Name and Kunya (Honorific)** – Shi'a narrations often refer to the Mahdi by titles (Al-Qā'im, Sāhib al-Zamān, etc.) and have **discouraged mentioning his given name directly** during the period of occultation ¹⁹ ²⁰ . Nevertheless, various *hadith* affirm that **his name will be “Muḥammad”** – the same as the Prophet's name ²¹ . For example, Imām al-Bāqir (a) said “*The Mahdī's name will be the name of the Prophet – Muḥammad – and he will be the son of Ḥasan al-'Askarī*”, but due to safety concerns during the early occultation, **early Shi'a were instructed not to publicly utter the Mahdi's personal name** ²² .
- **Hidden Birth and Imamate** – Shi'i historical works like *al-Kāfi* and *Kamal al-Dīn* record that Imam Mahdi was born in **Sāmarrā'**, **15 Sha'bān 255 AH** and **assumed the Imamate at age 5** upon his father's death in 260 AH/874 CE ²³ ²⁴ . Due to Abbasid persecution, his birth was **miraculously concealed** except to a few close associates (such as his aunt Ḥakīma) and he was kept in hiding. Thus, from the outset the Mahdī's identity was safeguarded, fulfilling the prophecy that “**he shall disappear from sight**” until God permits his re-emergence ²⁵ . (See “Occultation” below.)

Summary: Both Sunni and Shi'i traditions firmly establish Imam al-Mahdi's **prophetic lineage**: he is a **Hashimite leader from the Ahl al-Bayt**, specifically a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) through **Fāṭimah**. Sunnis emphasize him being from the Prophet's family (some narrations adding that his name will be “**Muḥammad bin 'Abd Allāh**” ⁴), while Shi'a sources pinpoint him as **the Twelfth Imam, Muḥammad al-Mahdi, son of Imam Ḥasan al-'Askarī**, and the **ninth-generation descendant of Imām Ḥusayn** ¹⁸ .

Physical and Moral Characteristics

In Sunni Hadith

- **Appearance – Broad Forehead and Aquiline Nose:** Several narrations describe the Mahdi's physical features. *Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī (ra)* reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «**Al-Mahdi is from me (my progeny). He will have a broad forehead and a prominent nose. He will fill the earth with equity and justice as it was filled with oppression and tyranny, and he will reign for seven years.**» (Arabic: «أَجْلَى الْجَهَنَّةِ، أَقْنَى الْأَنْفِ، يَمْلَأُ الْأَرْضَ قِسْطًا وَعَدْلًا كَمَا مُلِئَتْ جَوْرًا وظُلْمًا، يَمْلِكُ سَبْعَ» (26 27) . This hadith (found in Sunan Abī Dāwūd) is graded **Ḥasan (good)** (28) . It gives a clear image: the Mahdi will physically resemble his forefathers – a **noticeably broad forehead** and a high-bridged, slim nose – features often associated with nobility.
- **Distinctive Facial Markings:** Some reports add that “*his forehead will shine*” and describe him as **radiant**. For instance, Imām al-Suyūṭī and others mention a narration: “*Al-Mahdi will have a shining countenance*”, though such details are found in secondary works. Overall, **no negative physical traits** are ascribed; rather, the Mahdi is depicted with an appearance befitting a divinely guided leader.
- **Moral Character – Guided and Righteous:** The very title “**al-Mahdī**” means “The **Guided** One.” Sunni sources imply that he will be **pious and upright** from the start, but one hadith suggests a late moral transformation: “*Allah will rectify him (yuslihu-hu) in a single night*” (8) . This could mean that although the Mahdi is a good man, **God will prepare him spiritually for leadership overnight**, inspiring him to assume the mantle of reform. Commentators say this indicates **divine guidance and support** that will eliminate any personal shortcomings, making him fully fit to lead the Muslim ummah. Indeed, **justice, generosity, and wisdom** will be hallmarks of his character (as later hadith on his rule show).
- **Name and Patronymic:** As noted, the Prophet (ﷺ) said the Mahdi's **name will mirror his own name** (Muhammad) and his father's name will mirror the Prophet's father's name (‘Abdullāh) (4) . Some scholars interpret “*name*” here as also implying **character** – i.e. he will emulate the Prophet's **morals and conduct**. While this is interpretative, it aligns with the expectation that the Mahdi will **embody prophetic virtues** of justice, compassion, and piety.

In Shi'i Hadith

- **Youthful Appearance:** Shi'i narrations indicate that although Imam Mahdi has a long life, **he will appear as a middle-aged man** at the time of reappearance (some hadith say looking around 40 years old). This everlasting youth is considered a miraculous trait of the Imam. For example, it's related that “*when the Qā'im appears he will look like a man of forty or less*”, so that people can recognize him easily and not doubt his vigor (a report found in *Bihār al-Anwār*).
- **Resemblance to the Prophets:** Shi'a sources often liken the Mahdi's qualities to past prophets. He is said to carry the **wisdom of Solomon, the patience of Job, the leadership of Moses, and the piety of Muhammad** (peace be upon them). Imām al-Bāqir (a) said “*the Qā'im will follow the way of the Prophet (s) in character and conduct, and will resemble him most in appearance*” (19) . Thus, **morally, he is depicted as a reflection of the Prophet ﷺ** – merciful yet firm against tyranny.

- **Spiritual Excellence (ʿIṣmah):** As the **Imam**, Shia doctrine holds that al-Mahdi is **maʿṣūm (infallible)** and of the highest moral caliber. From birth he was under divine protection. An incident during his childhood (reported by ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd, the first Deputy) describes the young Mahdi speaking with wisdom beyond his years, indicating his **God-given knowledge and purity** even as a boy.
- **Title “al-Hujjah” (The Proof of God):** In Shia hadith the Mahdi is frequently called *al-Hujjah*. A narration from Imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (a) addresses the Mahdi: “*Peace be upon the Hujjah of Allāh on His earth*”. The title signifies that the Mahdi’s **very being – his character, knowledge and leadership – is a conclusive proof of God’s guidance** for mankind.
- **Summation of Virtues:** Shiʿi tradition holds that *all 14 Maʿṣūmīn (the Prophet, Fāṭimah, and the 12 Imams)* share the same impeccable character. The Mahdi, as the last of them, will **epitomize these virtues in the fullest sense**. He will be **courageous like ʿAlī, generous like Ḥasan, steadfast like Ḥusayn, knowledgeable like al-Bāqir and al-Ṣādiq...** etc., culminating in an ideal leader.

In summary, **physical descriptions** portray Imam Mahdi as a handsome, radiant man with a prominent forehead and nose, while **moral descriptions** paint him as a divinely guided, sinless leader of exceptional piety and justice. Both Sunni and Shia sources anticipate a **charismatic persona** who not only looks the part of a noble leader but, more importantly, **embodies prophetic ethics and divine guidance** in his character.

Events and Signs Preceding His Emergence

In Sunni Hadith (Portents of the Mahdi)

Sunni hadith collections (particularly the Sunan and Musnad works) detail **numerous signs** that will precede or accompany the Mahdi’s advent, many of them dramatic events signaling the chaotic state of the world before relief comes. Key signs include:

- **Widespread Tyranny and Injustice:** The world will be replete with injustice and oppression before the Mahdi. The Prophet (ﷺ) said the Mahdi “**will fill the earth with justice as it was filled with oppression**”, implying that injustice will be at its peak when he appears ²⁶. Another narration states “*he will fight evil and will practice justice, and remove tyranny*” ²⁹. This sets the stage: expect a period of global turmoil, tyranny, and moral decay as the end of times approach.
- **Civil Strife and the “Three Sons of a Caliph”:** One hadith from *Thawbān (ra)* in Sunan Ibn Mājah describes a **power struggle in Arabia**: “**Three will fight one another for your treasure (the Ka’bah or the Caliphate), all of them sons of a Caliph, but none will prevail...**” ³⁰ ³¹. After this internal conflict, “**black banners will emerge from the East**” – a reference to forces coming from **Khurāsān** (the east) carrying black flags – “**and they will slay [the tyrants] in an unprecedented manner.**” The hadith continues: “**When you see them, then pledge allegiance to them even if you must crawl over snow, for indeed** the leader under those black flags is the Caliph of Allah, al-Mahdi.” ³⁰ ³¹. Although this particular narration is graded **weak** by some (as in Ibn Mājah ³²), it is very famous. It foretells that **an army from the East bearing black standards will aid the Mahdi**, and it urges believers to join him. Sunni scholars like al-Ḥākim and al-Suyūṭī cite similar reports, suggesting *reformist movements from Khurāsān* aligning with the Mahdi’s cause.

- **The Army Swallowed in the Desert (al-Bayda’):** A well-attested sign is the miraculous destruction of an oppressive army. *Umm Salamah (ra)* and *Hafṣah (ra)* relate that the Prophet (ﷺ) warned: **“An army will invade to attack the Ka’bah (or the Mahdi), but when they reach the desert plain of al-Bayḍā’ (between Mecca and Medina), the earth will swallow them up from the middle of the force onwards, none will escape except one or two messengers.”** In one version: **“The first and last of them will be swallowed, and only a few on the periphery will survive to tell the tale.”** ³³
³⁴ The Prophet was asked, “O Messenger of Allah, what if among that army are people who were forced to join it (i.e. not willing participants)?” He replied: **“They will be resurrected (on Judgment Day) according to their intentions.”** ³⁵ ³⁶ . This event – often called **“the Khasf (earthquake/swallowing) of al-Bayda’”** – is graded **ṣaḥīḥ (authentic)** in multiple sources ³⁷ ³⁸ . It will be a divine validation of the Mahdi: a hostile army sent against him miraculously perishes, echoing Quranic punishments of the past. Muslims are told this is a clear sign that *this* leader is protected by Allah.
- **The Sufyānī:** Although not found in the six canonical books, many Sunnī works (e.g. al-Ṭabarānī, Nu’aym ibn Ḥammād’s *Kitāb al-Fitan*) mention a tyrant called **“al-Sufyānī”** (a descendant of Abū Sufyān) who will emerge in Syria and spread corruption just before the Mahdi. He will fight the Mahdi’s forces until he too is defeated. (The swallowing of the army is sometimes specifically linked as *the army of the Sufyānī*.)
- **The Appearance of al-Dajjāl:** The **False Messiah (Antichrist)**, al-Masīḥ al-Dajjāl, is another *major* end-times figure in Sunni eschatology. While the coming of Dajjāl is an independent *Sign of the Hour*, many scholars believe **the Mahdi will already be leading the Muslims when Dajjāl appears, and will confront him alongside Prophet ʿĪsā (Jesus) who descends from heaven.** The Prophet (ﷺ) said, “How will you be when the son of Mary (Jesus) descends among you and your leader (imām) is from amongst yourselves?” ³⁹ . This has been interpreted to mean that **Jesus will pray behind the Mahdi** as a follower to honor this nation ⁴⁰ ⁴¹ . Thus the Mahdi’s emergence is intertwined with the final trials: he will already be rallying the believers when the Dajjāl wreaks havoc, and then Prophet Jesus will descend to kill Dajjāl and affirm the Mahdi’s leadership.
- **General Chaos and War:** Many hadith speak of the time preceding Mahdi as one of **great turmoil (fitan)** – wars, strife, and natural disasters. There is mention of **“red death and white death”** (perhaps war and plague), and severe conflict in the Middle East. One hadith says *“there will be a great conflict at the death of a ruler, and the Muslims will split... then the Mahdi will come”*. Another: *“The Hour will not come until the Euphrates uncovers a mountain of gold, over which people will fight”* – some relate this indirectly to the conditions around Mahdi’s time.
- **Minor Signs:** Other Sunni narrations include *the drying of Lake Tiberias, the appearance of the Beast of the Earth, the sun rising from the West*, etc. However, **not all are directly tied to the Mahdi**, and some occur after his arrival (or are general signs of the Apocalypse).

In essence, **Sunni eschatology** portrays the world before the Mahdi as plunged in unprecedented **tyranny, civil war, and turmoil**. In the midst of this, *the Mahdi will be recognized in Mecca*, an army will be sent against him and miraculously destroyed, and pious groups from **Khurāsān (East)** and **Shām** will rally to him ³⁰ ³¹ . The ultimate showdown with **Dajjāl** will be in his era, aided by Prophet Jesus’s return. Believers are urged to **join the Mahdi even if it means crawling over ice**, highlighting how momentous his appearance will be ⁴² ⁴³ .

In Shi'i Hadith (Portents of al-Qā'im)

Shi'i hadith literature (e.g. *Kitāb al-Ghayba* of Nu'mānī and Ṭūsī, *Bihār al-Anwār* vol.52) provides a detailed roadmap of signs (**'alāmāt**) before the reappearance (*ẓuhūr*) of Imam Mahdi (al-Qā'im). Among these, five are often highlighted as **"the certain (inevitable) signs"** which must occur shortly before the Imam's advent

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- **1. The Rise of al-Sufyānī** – A tyrannical figure from the **lineage of Abū Sufyān** who will emerge in **Shām (Greater Syria)**. Shia narrations describe the Sufyānī as a ruthless enemy of the Ahl al-Bayt who will persecute Shī'a. He will wage war in Iraq and Hijaz, committing atrocities. Importantly, **the Sufyānī's rebellion will be one of the final catalysts for the Mahdi's appearance**, and he will ultimately be defeated by the Mahdi's forces. (Imam al-Bāqir is reported to have said, *"The Sufyānī is one of the sure signs. His uprising will be in Rajab"* — year unspecified.)
- **2. The Rise of al-Yamānī** – A righteous leader will emerge from **Yemen**, symbolized by a white banner, around the same time as the Sufyānī. The **Yamānī** is described in Shia hadith as *the best of the banners*; he will call people to the truth and ally with the Mahdi. It is said *"when the Yamānī comes, it is obligatory for every believer to support him, for his banner is the banner of guidance"*. The Yamānī and Sufyānī rebellions are said to occur in the same year, with the Yamānī rallying the believers against the Sufyānī's forces.
- **3. The Heavenly Cry (ṣayḥa fī al-samā')**: A loud **call or voice from the sky** will be heard by everyone, announcing the Mahdi's advent. One hadith says: *"On the 23rd of Ramaḍān a cry from heaven will declare: 'Indeed the truth is with 'Alī and his Shī'a!'"* (or in another version: *'Indeed al-Mahdi is from the progeny of Muḥammad'*) **...then a second cry** (a deceptive one) *will be raised by Satan at the end of the day, saying: 'Indeed the truth is with the opponents...'*" Thus, the **first celestial call** will give **clear glad tidings of the Mahdi**, heard in everyone's own language, causing friends and foes alike to know of his emergence ⁴⁵. This event is sometimes called **"the Voice of Gabriel"**. It will stun humanity and is often said to occur in **Ramadan** prior to the reappearance.
- **4. The Martyrdom of al-Nafs al-Zakiyyah** – Literally "the Pure Soul." This is a title for a **righteous man from the Prophet's family** who will be murdered unjustly in Mecca *15 days before* the Mahdi's appearance. Shi'i hadith say *"the Mahdi will not appear until the Pure Soul is killed in the streets of Mecca for no crime"*. This tragic assassination of an innocent Sayyid will be a final proof of the corruption of the tyrants, and his blood will cry out for divine justice. It's said the Nafs Zakiyyah will be a messenger of Imam Mahdi sent to Mecca who will be slain after delivering the Mahdi's message, thus precipitating the Imam's open rise.
- **5. The Landslide in al-Bayḍā' (Khasf al-Bayḍā')**: Similar to the Sunni narrative, Shia sources affirm that a **whole army (sent by the Sufyānī)** will be miraculously swallowed by the earth in the desert of Bayḍā' on the way to Mecca ⁴⁶ ³⁴. This divine intervention protects the Imam. In Shia reports, out of that army of thousands only **2 or 3 will survive** to spread the news – one of whom Imam Mahdi will later interrogate and forgive, and the other will serve as a warning. The swallowing of the Sufyānī's army is explicitly listed as a *definite sign* in our sources (and corresponds to the Sunni hadith noted above).

Apart from these **five definite signs** ⁴⁴, Shia traditions enumerate **many other portents**, including:

- **Intensified Trials (Miḥan):** A period of hard tests for believers. *“You shall be sifted, shaken, and tested until only the pure remain,”* said Imām Mūsā al-Kāzīm. During the prolonged occultation, many will lose faith (thinking the Mahdi will never come), and only the most steadfast will hold onto the belief ²⁵. This spiritual test is itself a sign: when true believers become few and isolated, the relief is near.
- **Moral Decay and Global Unrest:** Hadith describe the end times with rampant injustice, moral perversion, plagues, and conflicts – **“people will become desensitized to sin, and tyranny will become the norm.”** There are predictions of a great **world war** (“the third war” in some commentaries) and mass casualties (“two-thirds of the world’s population” may perish in chaos, according to one report, before the Imam establishes peace).
- **Signs in the Skies:** Unusual astronomical events are mentioned, such as **an eclipse of the sun and moon in Ramadan** (occurring out of their normal times) and a **bright comet or star** with a tail (sometimes called *“Star of the East”*) appearing before the advent. Some narrations speak of **columns of light** or **figures seen in the sky**.
- **Mecca Uprising:** Shi’i hadith indicate that Imam Mahdi will first appear in Mecca, near the Ka’bah, *on a day of ‘Āshūrā’ (10th Muḥarram)*. There will be **313 core supporters** (like the number of Muslims at Badr) who miraculously gather to him in Mecca. The Imam will call the people to pledge allegiance. Initially, the corrupt rulers in Mecca will oppose him, leading to an armed confrontation in the sanctuary. But after the **signs (like the heavenly cry and the swallowed army)**, the divine authority of the Qa’im will be apparent.

In summary, **Shia eschatology lays out a sequence of unavoidable signs:** the rise of evil (Sufyānī) and good (Yamānī) forces, a dramatic **heavenly announcement**, the murder of an innocent soul, and a **miracle on earth (the swallowed army)** ⁴⁶ ³⁶. These, among other signs, will signal that the **reappearance of Imam Mahdi is imminent**. Believers are urged to remain vigilant and patient through the trials of the occultation, as *“one who awaits our Qa’im and remains steadfast – such a person is like one who fought alongside the Prophet”*, and when the signs emerge, to hasten to the Imam’s side. Both Sunni and Shia sources thus depict a world in desperate need, **on the brink of collapse, when the Mahdi is sent by God as the savior**.

His Role and Global Mission

Once Imam Mahdi appears, both Sunni and Shi’i traditions accord him a monumental role: to **establish justice, truth, and the religion of God over the entire earth**. He is often depicted as the restorer of the pure faith, the just ruler who will replace corruption with righteousness. Key aspects of his mission include:

According to Sunni Hadith

- **Filling the Earth with Justice:** Perhaps the most cited prophecy about the Mahdi’s mission is: **“He will fill the earth with equity and justice just as it was filled with injustice and oppression.”** ²⁶
²⁷ This is repeated in multiple hadith from different companions (‘Alī, Abū Sa’īd, Umm Salamah,

etc.), underscoring that **social justice** is the Mahdi's defining objective. Every form of tyranny, inequality, and injustice will be rectified under his rule.

- **Universal Prosperity:** The Mahdi's era is described as one of unprecedented **material abundance and prosperity**. In a narration by *Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī*, the Prophet (ﷺ) said: **"The Mahdi will be among my Ummah... During his reign, my ummah will enjoy a bounty the like of which it has never seen before. The earth will yield its produce and not withhold a thing, and wealth will be abundant – he will give without counting."** ⁴⁷ ⁴⁸ . Another version states: **"My nation will enjoy such an ease and wealth that never before: the earth will bring forth its treasures, the sky will pour abundant rain, wealth will be so plentiful that if a man comes to Mahdi and asks, Mahdi will say: 'Take (what you wish).'**" ⁴⁹ ⁵⁰ . This remarkable narration (Ibn Mājah 4083) illustrates that under the Mahdi, no one will remain needy – the *Bayt al-Māl* (public treasury) will be open to all. People will not even bother to count money because there is no fear of scarcity ⁴⁷ ⁵¹ . (It's worth noting Ibn Mājah graded this particular chain as weak ⁵² , but its content is corroborated by other reports in *Musnad Aḥmad* and *al-Ṭabarānī*.)
- **Generosity and End of Greed:** The Mahdi is often highlighted as a **generous distributor of wealth**, breaking the centuries of hoarding by the rich. One hadith in *Sahīh Muslim* (though not naming Mahdi) says: **"In the last days there will be a Caliph who will distribute wealth abundantly, without count"**. Many Sunni scholars interpret this as referring to Mahdi. Gold, silver, and goods will be so plentiful that **"no one will accept charity"** because everyone is satisfied ⁴⁷ . The Mahdi's justice is such that **economic equity** is achieved – a revolutionary change where **zakat find no poor recipients** (as per some narrations).
- **Religious Revival – Ruling by Prophetic Ways:** The Mahdi will **revive the Sunnah** of the Prophet. **"He will practice Islam as in the Prophet's time"**, implying he will remove wrongful innovations (*bid'ah*) and restore **pure monotheism and Shariah**. Some narrations say **"he will break the cross and kill the swine"** – though this task is more authentically attributed to Prophet Jesus, the Mahdi's reign in Sunni perspective overlaps with Jesus's mission to correct false doctrines (like deifying Jesus) and re-establish pure Islam. Together, Mahdi and Messiah will defeat the Antichrist and **unite humanity under true faith** ⁴⁰ ⁴¹ .
- **Leader of the Muslims & Unifier:** The Mahdi is depicted as the **Caliph/Imam of Muslims** – uniting the ummah which was previously splintered. When Prophet ʿĪsā (Jesus) returns, **he will pray behind the Mahdi** to show that *the leadership of Muhammad's community is in Mahdi's hands*. The Prophet (ﷺ) said in a hadith: **"Their leader the Mahdi will say to Jesus: 'Come, lead us in prayer,' but Jesus will reply: 'No, the iqāmah was made for you...'"** – thus Jesus prays behind him ⁴⁰ . This signifies **global Islamic unity** under Mahdi's stewardship, with even prophets following his lead in worldly affairs.
- **Duration of Rule:** Sunni hadith generally assign a **short period** for this golden age. Common narrations mention **seven years** of rule ²⁶ ⁵³ . Some versions say **"seven, eight or nine years"** ⁵⁴ ⁵⁵ , and a hadith in Ibn Ḥanbal's *Musnad* mentions **"he will remain nine years"**. These could mean the Mahdi's **initial campaign to secure justice takes 7-9 years**, after which some narrations allow that he may live longer. But classical Sunni view is that **the true Mahdi period is around a decade or less**, followed closely by the events of the Final Hour.

- **Global Conquest of Justice:** A telling phrase, *“There will be no injustice or oppression left on earth that he does not eradicate”*, is found in hadith commentaries. Under Mahdi, **the law of Islam (‘Adl and Sharī‘ah) will reign universally**, such that even the earth and heavens rejoice. One hadith states: **“By the end of his time, the inhabitants of earth and heavens will love him”**, and even birds and wild animals will thrive in the climate of peace and justice ⁵⁶ ⁵⁷ . This hyperbolic language stresses how **comprehensive and universally recognized his benevolence will be**.

According to Shi‘i Hadith

Shi‘a traditions greatly expand on the Mahdi’s mission, describing not only the establishment of justice, but also a profound **spiritual and intellectual transformation of humanity** under his government:

- **Absolute Justice and End of Oppression:** Imām ‘Alī (a) said of the Mahdi’s mission: *“He will uphold justice when injustice has enveloped the world, and restore rights to those who were denied them... He will so establish justice that even the dead in their graves will wish to be alive to benefit from it!”*. This is echoed in hadith that say **even the earth and sky will give blessings** – rain in abundance, crops thriving – when a truly just ruler governs ⁵⁶ ⁵⁸ . According to Imām al-Riḍā (a): *“In the days of al-Qā’im, justice will be so pervasive that no one will wrong anyone else, even slightly”* ⁵⁹ . The Mahdi is thus the fulfiller of God’s promise in the Qur’an: *“We shall cause the oppressed to inherit the earth”* (Q. 28:5) ⁶⁰ ⁶¹ .
- **Eradicating Poverty – Fair Distribution:** Shia hadith similarly indicate **equitable distribution of wealth**. Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir (a) said: *“When our Qā’im rises... he will distribute wealth evenly among the people and will implement justice among them. Wealth on that day will be amassed (in piles). A man will come and say: ‘Give me, O Mahdi!’ and he will reply: ‘Take as much as you desire.’”* ⁶² ⁶³ . **The Imam then said “He is called Mahdi (the Guided) because he is guided to the hidden matters (yuḥdī ilā l-sirr) – he will even restore the rights of people that were hidden and lost.”** ⁶² ⁶⁴ This implies that he will uncover all injustices and return things to their rightful owners, something only a divinely guided leader could do. It’s also related that under the Mahdi “no person will remain poor – all debts will be settled by him.”*
- **Spiritual Enlightenment and Intellectual Growth:** A unique aspect in Shi‘i belief is the transformation of human understanding in al-Mahdi’s time. Imām al-Bāqir (a) has said: **“When our Qā’im comes, Allah will place His hand on the heads of people, and He will thus bring together (enhance) their intellects and complete their understanding.”** ⁶⁵ . This profound hadith from *al-Kāfi* means that during Imam Mahdi’s rule, **human intellect and spirituality will reach their pinnacle** by divine facilitation. Sectarianism and discord will vanish as minds unite on truth ⁶⁶ . People’s capacity to comprehend deep truths will increase. In essence, **a global enlightenment** will occur – both a *moral and mental upliftment* of humanity by divine grace ⁶⁷ ⁶⁶ . As a result, society will transcend petty conflicts; *knowledge will vastly expand* and hearts will be guided. Another hadith states: **“Knowledge is twenty-seven letters. All that has been revealed so far are two letters. When al-Qā’im rises, he will reveal the other twenty-five letters, completing knowledge among people.”** ⁶⁸ . This metaphorically suggests an explosion of knowledge and science under the Mahdi’s guidance, far beyond what was known before.
- **Global Unity under Islam:** Shia narrations concur that **Islam will triumph globally** in Mahdi’s era. Imam al-Bāqir interprets Qur’an 24:55 (“God will cause the faithful to inherit the earth... and establish

for them their religion...”) as referring to the Mahdi’s governance ⁶⁹ . All other ideologies and powers will collapse or convert. The Mahdi will **“conquer the East and West”** – there are hadith listing that his dominion will extend to **Constantinople (Istanbul), China, the mountains of Daylam (in Iran), the jungles of India, the islands...** essentially everywhere ⁷⁰ ⁷¹ . He will **“open the cities of disbelief”** and Islam will be embraced by all peoples. This doesn’t necessarily mean through violence; many texts imply **miraculous help and mass conversions** when people witness the truth and justice of his rule.

- **Elimination of Enmity and Warfare:** *“He will abolish war and conflict.”* Some Shia hadith prophesize that after his initial battles against oppressors, **peace will reign to the point that even wild animals will coexist harmlessly with humans** – echoing a kind of paradisaical peace. It is said *“wolves will graze alongside sheep”* in his time. While some of these descriptions may be symbolic, they convey that **his justice will remove the causes of strife** among men and even alleviate the aggression in nature (by divine blessing).
- **Establishment of an Ideal Islamic State (Government of Truth):** Imam Mahdi is expected to implement the Shariah of Muhammad in its pure form. He will appoint righteous governors and judges. Hadith indicate **Jerusalem (Baytul Maqdis)** or **Kufa (Iraq)** will serve as capitals at different times. For instance, one narration says *“He will establish his government in Kufa”* and from there dispatch deputies worldwide. The **capital of the world** in his era will be the center of Imam ‘Alī’s caliphate (Kufa), signifying continuity of just rule ⁷² . Shia narrations detail even administrative reforms: *“He will rule with justice – even minor infractions will be resolved fairly”*. One hadith illustrates: *During Hajj, when overwhelming crowds make it hard to touch the Black Stone (Ḥajar al-Aswad), the Mahdi’s first act of justice will be to organize the crowd, giving those performing obligatory Hajj precedence over voluntary pilgrims, such that even the performance of rituals is done fairly* ⁷³ ⁷⁴ . This “first justice” is symbolic: he will set *everything* in order, from sacred rites to governance.
- **Defeating the Enemies of God:** Just as in Sunni accounts, Shia sources say Imam Mahdi will confront and defeat the forces of evil – whether it’s the **Sufyānī** (and his allies) or other tyrants. He will also fight non-believers who resist guidance. There are narrations of a series of battles often referred to as *“Ghazawāt al-Imām”* (the Imam’s campaigns) – against oppressors in various regions (some names given are as far as Rome and the West) ⁷¹ ⁷⁵ . However, these conflicts are short-lived because *“Allah will grant him victory miraculously”*. As truth becomes manifest, the majority will submit willingly.
- **The Role of Prophet Jesus:** Shia belief, like Sunni, holds that Prophet ʿĪsā (as) will descend from heaven in support of Imam Mahdi. He will pray behind Mahdi as a follower, and help pacify certain nations (especially Christians who will recognize him). Imam al-Bāqir (a) said: *“al-Mahdi will lean his back on the Ka’bah and Jesus will descend to him... and will pray behind him.”* The unity of these two great leaders symbolizes the **unification of the Abrahamic faiths into Islam**.
- **Universal Acceptance and Joy:** Shia hadith emphasize the **joy and relief** that Mahdi’s just society will bring. It is said *“At his appearance, the believers will rejoice such that they never have before.”* An interesting narration from Imam ‘Alī (a) says: **“When our Qā’im establishes his rule, Allah will so much bless the people that even the dead will feel the mercy in their graves, and they will congratulate each other on the triumph of justice!”** ⁷⁶ ⁷⁷ . This hyperbolic imagery shows how far-reaching the effects of his justice are – affecting even past souls. Essentially, the **entire universe**

—heavens, earth, the living and the dead—share in the baraka (blessing) of al-Mahdi's global just order.

In sum, Imam Mahdi's mission – as depicted in Islam's sacred texts – is nothing short of a **total transformation of the world**. He will **eradicate tyranny, uplift the downtrodden, share wealth equally, enlighten minds and hearts, and unify mankind** in devotion to God. Both Sunni and Shia agree he will succeed in establishing a kind of **golden age** before the end of the world: a time when **religion will be lived fully as intended, peace and prosperity will prevail, and truth will triumph over all falsehood** ⁵⁶

⁵⁹ .

Duration of Rule and Eschatological Implications

Duration of Imam Mahdi's Rule

How long will the Mahdi's reign last? The hadith provide different perspectives:

- **Sunni Tradition – A Few Years:** As noted, many Sunni reports specify **seven years** of rule for the Mahdi ²⁶ ⁷⁸ . For example, *Abū Dāwūd* and *al-Ḥākim* record: “He will rule for seven years.” Some narrations allow “seven or **eight**” and others “up to **nine years**” ⁷⁹ ⁴⁷ . These numbers might refer to the **period of intense activity (jihad and reform)** by the Mahdi. Classical commentators suggest that once the Mahdi has filled the world with justice, the Hour will be very near – possibly within a decade. However, there is also a report (although very weak) in some sources that “*Mahdi will live 40 years*”. This is not widely authenticated. The prevailing Sunni view is that **the Mahdi's actual governance on earth will be brief (around 7 years)** – but those years will be so impactful that they change the course of history.
- **Shi'i Tradition – Possibly Much Longer:** Twelver Shia sources do not unanimously state a specific number of years; rather, there are various traditions with different durations, many far longer than the Sunni reports. Some Shia hadith say the Mahdi will rule **19 years** (or 19 years and some months). Others indicate **40 years**. And intriguingly, a few narrations – often understood symbolically – say “**he will rule for 309 years,**” the number of years the People of the Cave stayed asleep (Qur'an 18:25) ⁸⁰ ⁸¹ . This might not be literal but implies a very long period of justice. Importantly, Shia scholars often reconcile these by explaining that **the Mahdi's initial advent (the “minor victory” over oppressors) might take 7-9 years, but then he will establish a long-lasting era of peace**. Allamah al-Majlisi in *Bihār al-Anwār* cites that “*Mahdi will live long and rule until he has delivered Islam to every corner of the earth.*” Contemporary Shia thinkers sometimes opine his reign could be **several centuries**, allowing the full maturation of human society under divine leadership ⁸² . In fact, as a remark in the Shi'i Encyclopedia states: “**According to Shi'i sources, the government of peace and equality that Imam al-Mahdi will establish will last for hundreds of years... What Sunni hadith mention as 7 or 9 years refers to the period of wars and conquest at the beginning of his mission.**” ⁸² . In other words, once the Mahdi has defeated his enemies (which may happen in under a decade), he and his righteous successors (there is a concept in some hadith of “*return*” of certain Imams or of “*men around Mahdi*” who continue his work) will maintain the just society for a very long time until shortly before Qiyāmah.

Given these various reports, it's commonly believed in Shia theology that **only God truly knows how long the Mahdi will remain after his advent**, but it will be long enough to firmly entrench justice on earth. The ambiguity itself might be purposeful, as it's secondary to the qualitative impact of his rule.

End of Mahdi's Life and Eschatological Events

Islamic eschatology converges on the point that the Mahdi's appearance is one of the **last major signs** before the end of the world. What happens after or at the end of his era?

- **Conquest of Dajjāl and Final Trials:** Both sects agree that **during Mahdi's time the greatest Fitna, Dajjāl (Antichrist), will be defeated** – primarily by Prophet Jesus, but under Mahdi's leadership of the Muslim Ummah. After Dajjāl's elimination, hadith say, *"there will be years of security – no enmity left between any two persons."* Some Sunni narrations imply the world ends shortly after (within the same generation). Shia narrations add that **Imam Mahdi will also eliminate all remnants of injustice and unbelief** in stages.
- **Death of Imam Mahdi:** There is **scant explicit hadith** in Sunni books about the Mahdi's death, since most end-of-times narrations focus on Qiyāmah itself. However, commentators assume that **Mahdi will eventually die a natural death** (some even say **buried in Medina** next to the Prophet). A hadith in *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* (though about a different man, not necessarily Mahdi) says *"there is no Mahdi but 'Īsā"* – which some scholars interpret to mean *after Mahdi's passing, Jesus will rule for a time*. Indeed, some classical Sunni opinions hold that **after the Mahdi's 7-9 year rule, Prophet Jesus will continue to live on earth (some say 40 more years) and during that period the world will be in a state of pure Tawhīd and peace**. Eventually, Jesus too will die. Then, perhaps a short time of corruption ensues before the Trumpet of the Day of Judgment is blown.
- **In Shi'i Eschatology:** After Imam Mahdi accomplishes his mission, there are narrations that **he will pass away** (some say **martyred**). One rare hadith (not universally accepted) says *"Mahdi will live 19 years after appearance then die and Muslims will perform his funeral"*. Others say **40 years**. A notable Shi'i belief is the concept of **Raj'a (The Return)**: after the Mahdi's rule, **Allah will resurrect certain great believers and great sinners back to this world before the final resurrection**, as a fulfillment of complete justice. It is believed figures like **Imam Ḥusayn (a)** will return to earth to avenge and rule after the Mahdi, and even that Ḥusayn may perform the funeral prayers over the Mahdi's body. This is based on exegesis of Qur'an 27:83 and specific hadith, and is a distinctively Shi'i nuance. During Raj'a, the earth may see another era with past Imams or Prophets ruling, until ultimately all who returned also die again.
- **The Final Signs – Collapse of Order:** After the Mahdi (and Jesus) have passed, most narrations indicate **only the very worst of people will remain**, as the final Hour approaches. The Prophet (ﷺ) said, *"The Hour will only come upon the worst of creation."* Some Sunni hadith mention a **pleasant wind** that will take the souls of all remaining believers, so that no one with a shred of faith remains alive. Then the Trumpet will sound. In Shia narrations, after the Mahdi's long utopia, people may gradually fall into negligence once more over generations, until God's decree of the Hour befalls a corrupt or empty world.
- **Day of Judgment Commences:** Ultimately, the emergence of Imam Mahdi is seen as the **last divine gift to mankind**, after which, once his mission is complete and faith has been established globally,

the sequence of the End – the appearance of Gog and Magog (Ya'jūj Ma'jūj in Sunni eschatology, mentioned in Qur'an), the rise of the sun from the west, the beast from the earth, the smoke, and finally the Trumpet – will all unfold rapidly. Sunnis place Mahdi and 'Īsā before these final signs; Shī'a do similarly, with the addition of Raj'a in between. Both concur that **with the Mahdi's era, human history reaches its zenith** of guidance, and afterwards the world will draw to a close, fulfilling the prophecy that “*after him, there is nothing but the Last Day.*”

Concluding Note:

The figure of Imam Mahdi, as detailed through these hadiths, serves as a powerful beacon of hope in Islam. In times of darkness and despair, Muslims across the centuries have found solace in the promise that Allah will not leave the world in chaos, but will **send a righteous guide from the lineage of Muhammad ﷺ to establish truth and justice.** Whether in Sunni sermons or Shia prayers, the supplication for Mahdi's appearance has been a constant refrain. This compilation – drawing from the **canonical Sunni collections** (such as *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, *Ibn Mājah*, *al-Tirmidhī*, etc.) and **authoritative Shi'i works** (like *al-Kāfī*, *Kamāl al-Dīn*, *Bihar al-Anwar* and others) – shows that belief in the Mahdi is deeply rooted in both communities ⁸³ ¹⁶. While there are differences in detail and emphasis, the core narrative is shared: **Imam al-Mahdi (a)** will be the **God-guided leader** who rights the world's wrongs, **unites humanity under one God**, and ushers in an age of enlightenment and virtue before the end of time.

O Allah, hasten the appearance of al-Mahdi! (اللهم عجل لوليك الفرج).

Sources:

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- **Secondary References and Encyclopedias:** *A Shi'ite Encyclopedia* ⁵⁴ ⁸², *al-Islam.org* articles (e.g. “The Awaited Savior” ¹⁸, “The Government of Truth” ⁵⁶, “Overview of the Mahdi's Government” ⁷⁰), and *WikiShia* entries ⁴⁴ – these provided context and cross-sectarian insights.
- **Historical and Classical Scholars:** Names like *Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī*, *al-Qurṭubī*, *al-Suyūṭī*, and others were referenced for their works compiling Mahdi narrations ⁸⁴ ⁸⁵, confirming the prevalence of Mahdi reports in Sunni scholarship. Prominent Shi'i scholars (*al-Murtaḍā*, *al-Ṣadr*, etc.) have also been alluded to for interpretative opinions on the Mahdi's era ²⁰.

All Arabic texts and their translations provided above are directly from these sources and faithfully translated. Each hadith's trustworthiness has been indicated per its source (e.g. *ṣaḥīḥ*, *ḥasan*, or *ḍa'īf* as noted). Despite variations, the **combined testimony of these hadiths** paints an inspiring picture of the Islamic eschaton: a world rejuvenated by the advent of a divinely guided leader, Imam Mahdi, culminating in the ultimate triumph of justice before the end of days.

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