

## **Why an Infallible Imam? Is His Infallibility Voluntary?**

### **What Is the Necessity of the Existence of an Infallible Imam in Our Lives? Why Do We Need an Infallible Imam?**

We have talked a lot about the term "infallible expert." In this lesson, we are going to answer the question: Why should the Imam be infallible? What does infallibility mean, and how can someone achieve infallibility?

To find the answer to these questions, it may be helpful to first define the words "Imam" and "infallible." Lexically, the word "Imam" is a noun that means "anything that a human being pays attention to." It is synonymous with the words such as guardian, leader, and guide. Some of the meanings of the word "infallible" in the dictionary includes protected, innocent, pious, pure, virtuous, chaste, and sinless. So, the word "infallible Imam" literally means a sinless guide or leader who does not make mistakes.

In the article "Defining Infallibility; Reasons for Infallibility of Angels" we discussed the essence of infallibility and how it applies to angels. We stated that infallibility, or avoiding sin, is a condition in which an individual does not commit any sins. We said that angels are made of pure intellect and they lack other levels of existence. Therefore, they do not have the capability to commit sin. That is because sin is the result of the confrontation between the intellect and estimation in which the estimative faculty influences the intellectual faculty. Angels do not have estimation.

Therefore, it is generally impossible for the intellective faculty to be influenced by the estimative faculty in angels.

But is the infallibility of the Imam also the same? Does the infallible Imam not have the estimative faculty? In this lesson, we will answer the questions we raised to get to the answer to this question.

### **Is the Infallibility of the Imam Voluntary?**

We know that the Imam is a perfect manifestation of God's names and attributes. But how do these names and attributes become manifest in the Imam? Is this manifestation involuntary and according to God's will, or is it acquired by the Imams themselves?

It must be noted that all of us humans are the perfect manifestation of God's attributes and names. As we stated before, God breathed His Spirit into us and we can manifest all His attributes. Our journey to the earth is all about actualizing these divine potentials and unique human qualities. The only difference between us and the infallible Imam is that the Imam has actualized these names and attributes.

The Imam voluntarily and by controlling the inputs of his mind and his behavior has actualized the God-given attributes and manifested them in himself. As a result, he is our practical role model for achieving the status of being similar to God. In fact, if the Imam did not have free will in his infallibility, he would not be a suitable role model for us. It is the life path and life story of the Household of Prophet Muhammad (PBUTH) that guides us towards the status of infallibility. If this quality existed involuntarily in the Imams from the beginning of creation, their being a role

model would come into question and they would no longer be a suitable criterion for our journey towards the purpose of our creation.

The difference between the Imams and angels lies in this point. An infallible Imam has free choice in his infallibility. This means that he has the ability to commit sins but he does not. Even one step further, he can make a mistake but does not make any mistakes. In fact, the infallible Imam is the perfect example of how to achieve human balance. He is someone who always maintains human balance by controlling the inputs to his soul. As a result, he is our role model on the path of knowing our true self to achieve human balance. Reaching human balance means reaching a complete understanding of the essence of our existence and believing in ourselves as a human being, and as a result, gaining a complete understanding of the effects of various actions on our human soul. But why do we need an infallible role model in our path towards becoming like God?

### **Why Is It Essential for the Imam to Be Infallible?**

Imagine you have a serious illness that requires a series of treatments and care that must be carried out under the supervision of a skilled doctor. After an extensive search, you choose a doctor and entrust yourself to his care. You receive the treatments, medications, and initial instructions, and follow them exactly until your next appointment. However, upon returning to the doctor, you discover that they have changed their treatment approach altogether and shamefully admit that all of the care you received so far has been misguided. You begin the treatment again with less trust, but the same thing happens again and again. Will you continue to see this doctor?

A doctor must be relatively infallible in his field. He also needs to stay up-to-date on the latest medical information to avoid making mistakes. Otherwise, he will not be a good choice for treating and curing patients. This issue is true for all professions and specialties. When seeking out experts in any field, we expect them to have the most up-to-date knowledge and make no mistakes. We cannot accept mistakes that are due to ignorance or lack of expertise on the part of the professional. Even unintentional mistakes are unacceptable because they can cause irreparable harm.

In short, every expertise is linked to a low level of infallibility. We essentially call someone an expert if he has behaved infallibly in his profession and avoided errors and mistake as much as possible. The infallible Imam is the expert guide for our lives - someone who is supposed to guide us throughout our lives with their direct and indirect guidance. Therefore, the Imam must have complete, comprehensive, and specialized knowledge about his field of expertise that encompasses our entire lives. This expertise includes knowing the origin of human life, the ultimate goal and the structure of the system of the hereafter, the structure of the human soul, the structure of the body, the relationship between the soul and body, the natural realm (the world), and the relationship between the soul and the nature. As we stated, this information is so specialized that human knowledge does not encompass any of it and is only available to the Imam.

If the specialist doctor you go to for your lung health is a smoker himself, or if your diabetes specialist is overweight due to excessive sugar consumption or even suffers from diabetes, although you may doubt his intellect, it does not matter much to you because such actions do not undermine his expertise. If the doctor you have chosen for your heart surgery has problems with his wife, or if his children are

in prison due to trafficking, it does not concern you greatly because what you have gone to him for is his expertise in heart surgery, not his emotional relationships and child-rearing. But if your psychoanalyst or psychiatrist has multiple family problems himself, you will no longer accept his knowledge because his knowledge has not been a solution to his own problems.

The infallible Imam is the leader of our human dimension which is the commander of other dimensions of our existence and steers all aspects of our lives. This means that the *Imamate* (authority, leadership) of the Imams is to guide us in all our problems, issues, choices, relationships, thoughts, and actions in all aspects of our existence. Therefore, the Imam cannot and must not make any mistake in any dimensions of his existence. In other words, only the one who is expert and infallible in all of these dimensions deserves the leadership of the human part of our existence. He must also be free from any kind of error in his deeds. Even the smallest mistake by an infallible Imam can endanger our eternal life. This error may deprive us of happiness and love. The example we gave generally shows the necessity of the infallibility of the Imam.

In this article, we examined the necessity for the Infallible Imam to have free choice in his infallibility, the reason that the Imam needs to be infallible, and the reason that he must be an expert. We stated that the infallible Imam is our role model in following the path of becoming like God. He must freely choose this path, so that we make sure that his lifestyle is practical and we can accept his *imamate*. The infallible Imam is the expert in being human. This is because his lifestyle guides all aspects of our lives and his infallibility assures us that his path will undoubtedly lead us to our goal.

The infallibility of the Imams is one of the mathematical structures of the universe. What do you think about this divine plan for human life? Please tell us to what extent you seek guidance from the life story of the infallible Imams in your life's challenges.