



Critique of *Walīd ibn Ṣālīḥ Bāṣmad*'s Claim Regarding the Apparent Conflict in Shia Narratives about the Birth of Imam Mahdi (AS)

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Abstract

Shia hadith sources contain numerous narrations indicating the announcement of Imam Mahdi's (AS) birth. However, other narrations seemingly contradict these, suggesting the concealment of his birth. In an Arabic academic dissertation titled "Narrations Regarding the Mahdi in the Authentic Hadith Books of the Twelver Shia: A Critical Study," *Walīd ibn Ṣālīḥ Bāṣmad* uses these and similar narrations to argue that Shia narratives on the Mahdi are weak, contradictory, and irreconcilable, thus casting doubt on the Shia concept of the Mahdi

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itself". The present study, using a descriptive-analytical method, aims to address the objections raised in the aforementioned dissertation regarding Imam Mahdi's (AS) birth. It first categorizes and reports the claim under two headings: Narrations indicating the announcement of the birth and narrations indicating its concealment. Then, by examining the chain of transmission (*Isnād*) and text (*Matn*) of each narration, it concludes that while credible narrations exist in both categories, based on both narrator-centered and context-centered approaches to evaluating authenticity, their apparent conflict can be resolved. The concealment of the birth refers to general concealment, while the announcement refers to disclosure to select individuals. This duality in concealment or announcement was necessitated by the oppressive circumstances of Imam Ḥasan al-‘Askarī (AS) time and was essential for protecting God's proof. Therefore, these seemingly contradictory narrations are theologically reconcilable, and there is no need to prioritize one over the other.

Keywords: Mahdism, Announcement of Imam Mahdi's (AS) Birth, Concealment of Imam Mahdi's (AS) Birth, *Walīd ibn Ṣāliḥ Bāṣmad*, Resolving the Conflict of Narrations.

Introduction

Hope for the appearance of a savior in the end times is a belief shared by all divine religions. By their very nature, all people desire a day when, under divine grace and the guidance of a global leader, humanity will be liberated from oppression. As promised by the prophets, justice will prevail throughout the world, and humanity will

achieve the dignified life it deserves. This belief gives meaning to human life and makes it easier to bear hardships.

In the Twelver Shia faith, the identity of the Mahdi (AS), the awaited savior at the end of time, is definitively established as the Twelfth Imam, Imam Mahdi (AS). Therefore, belief in the Imamate of the twelve Imams as successors to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and subsequently, belief in the occultation (*Ghaybah*) and eventual reappearance of the Twelfth Imam, referred to as Mahdavisim, is among the five fundamental tenets of Shia Islam. Consequently, a significant portion of the efforts of opponents of Shia Islam, reflected in some publications and academic research, is dedicated to undermining the concept of Imamate, particularly its Mahdavisim aspect. Among these studies is a doctoral dissertation titled "The Narrations Concerning the Mahdi in the Authentic Hadith Books of the Twelver Shia; A Critical Study" by *Walīd ibn Šāliḥ Bāšmad*, defended in 2014 at *Umm al-Qurā* University in Mecca. The author attempts to demonstrate contradictions among Shia narrations concerning Mahdavisim; by presenting seemingly contradictory Shia narrations in the following chapters and sections, he seeks to cast doubt on the very principle of Mahdavisim:

Chapter One: "Narrations Related to the Circumstances of the Mahdi among the Shia;" in 8 sections titled: "His birth and his mother's circumstances, his names, titles, and *Kunya* (honorific), the prohibition of explicitly mentioning his name, his lineage, his attributes and signs, his status, his miracles, narrations related to the interpretation of verses concerning the rising of the *Qā'im*." (cf.

Bāšmad, 2014: 92-327)

Chapter Two: "Narrations related to the occultation; in 7 sections titled: "Proof of the Occultation and its Durations, The Reason for the Occultation and How People Benefit from Him During His Occultation, The Circumstances of the Representatives Who Were During the Lesser Occultation, Those Who Claimed to Have Seen Him, Those Who Claimed Mahdism, The Prohibition of Specifying the Time of His Appearance, Awaiting Deliverance in His Appearance." (cf. Bāšmad, 2014: 328-428)

Chapter Three: "Narrations related to his appearance; in 9 sections titled: "The Signs of His Appearance, His Appearance, The Day of His Appearance, His Conduct, Character, and the Characteristics of His Time, What He Inherits, What He Rules By, The Cities He Opens or Passes Through, The Companions of the Mahdi, His Enemies." (cf. Bāšmad, 2014: 429-621)

Of the above, this article specifically examines and critiques the claim of contradiction in the narrations concerning "His Birth and His Mother's Circumstances" (cf. Bāšmad, 2014: 92-119) and focuses on the following questions:

1. On what basis is the claim of contradiction in the narrations concerning the birth of Imam Mahdi (AS) made?
2. What is the solution to resolving the contradiction between these narrations?

To this end, this article will first categorize and report the narrations upon which the claim of contradiction is based. Then, by

question and using the rules of resolving contradictions, it will address the contradiction.

According to the research conducted, no study has yet been found that examines the contradiction between the narrations of the concealment and announcement of the birth of Imam Mahdi (AS).

1. Background

In criticizing the views of *Walīd ibn Šālih Bāšmad*, only two articles have been published to date by the authors of this article, which pertain to other chapters of his treatise. These articles are: "Critique of *Walīd ibn Šālih Bāšmad*'s Claim Regarding the Contradiction of Shia Narrations Concerning the Manner of Governance of Imam Mahdi (AS)" (Zarnooshe Farahani et al., 2023 AD/1403 SH (a): 29-56) and "Critique of *Walīd ibn Šālih Bāšmad*'s Claim Regarding the Contradiction of Shia Narrations Concerning the Expectation of the Reappearance." (Zarnooshe Farahani and Hormozi, 2023 AD/1403 SH (b), in press) Regarding the narrations concerning the birth of Imam Mahdi (AS), although some previous research, with the approach of proving his birth, has studied some of the relevant narrations, none of them have sought to resolve the contradiction between the narrations indicating the announcement of Imam Mahdi's (AS) birth and the narrations indicating the concealment of his birth, with the aim of responding to Wahhabi doubts in this regard.

2. Research Method

The research method used in this article is descriptive and analytical. This means that the narrations cited by *Bāšmad* are first categorized

and reported fewer than two general categories: "Narrations indicating the announcement of Imam Mahdi's (AS) birth and narrations indicating the concealment of his birth. Then, based on a narrator-centric and context-centric validation approach, the chains of transmission of the narrations are examined, and based on their textual validity; a final interpretive reconciliation will resolve the contradiction between the two sets of narrations."

Regarding *Bāṣmad*'s method of work and the manner of its reporting by the authors of this article, it is useful to note a few points: "Firstly, instead of making the effort to find the oldest source of each hadith, which is a necessity of a scientific hadith research, *Bāṣmad*, in most cases, has referred to the book "*Biḥār al-Anwār*," which dates back to the eleventh century." Therefore, finding the ancient and reliable source of each hadith has been considered by the authors of this article.

Secondly, *Bāṣmad*, in presenting textual and contextual criticisms of the narrations, largely relies on two books: "Scientific Examination of Hadiths on the Mahdi" by *Abulfadl Burqa'ī* and "The Legislation of *Biḥār al-Anwār*" by *Muḥammad 'Āṣif Muḥsinī*. He does not himself refer to Shi'a sources of *Rijāl* (men of hadith) and hadith. Therefore, familiarity with these two books and the authors' approach to the narrations is considered in this article. Thirdly, although *Bāṣmad* has presented textual criticisms in the footnotes of some narrations based on the aforementioned two books, since these criticisms are limited to some narrations and the article's length is restricted, this article only examines and critiques his *Isnād* (chain of narration) and *Rijāl* criticisms of the narrations.

3. The Claim of Contradiction in Narrations Regarding the Birth of Imam Mahdi (AS)

The author of the treatise "Narrations Concerning the Mahdi in the Authentic Hadith Books among the Twelver Shi'a; A Critical Study," reports 61 narrations, which he claims relate to the birth of Imam Mahdi (AS), under twelve categories. Regarding his categorization and the narrations mentioned therein, two points must be noted: "Firstly, some categories have no connection to the birth itself and are considered deviations from the topic, such as the narrations in the first and second categories titled "That the Mahdi was born to a black mother" and "Details of the event of his birth." (cf. Bāšmad, 2014: 94-103) Therefore, the narrations in these two categories (which are nine narrations) are excluded from the discussion. Secondly, instead of categorizing the narrations into numerous and sometimes similar categories (such as the fifth and sixth and the tenth and eleventh categories), it would have been better for the author to categorize all the narrations under two general headings: "Narrations indicating the announcement of the birth, and narrations indicating the concealment of the birth."

Based on this, and for ease of reporting *Bāšmad's* claim, the remaining 52 narrations he cites are reported under these two general headings: "34 narrations under the first heading, narrations indicating the announcement of Imam Mahdi's (AS) birth, and 18 narrations under the second heading, narrations indicating the concealment of Imam Mahdi's (AS) birth."

3-1. Narrations Indicating the Announcement of Imam Mahdi's (AS) Birth

Among the narrations mentioned by *Bāṣmad*, the general theme of 34 narrations is the announcement of Imam Mahdi's (AS) birth; after mentioning each narration and its source, the author points out flaws in its chain of transmission (*Isnād*) and text (*Matn*). Regarding the space constraints, only 9 of these narrations are reported in the table below. The first column of the table lists the narration numbers as they appear in *Bāṣmad*'s book to facilitate access to the text for readers. The second column provides the oldest source found in Shia hadith books, along with a selected portion of the narration's text. The third column details the reason *Bāṣmad* gives for weakening the narration and the sources he used for this assessment.

Table 1: Narrations Indicating Narrations and Announcements of Imam Mahdi's (AS) Birth

Narration Number in Bāṣmad's Book	Oldest Source and Selected Portion of Narration	Reason for Weakening the Narration from the Perspective of <i>Walīd ibn Ṣāliḥ Bāṣmad</i> and His Sources
Narration 10	<i>Bi Surri man Ra'ā fa Hanna'tahū bi Wilādati Ibnih al-Qā'im (AS)</i> (Ibn Bābawayh, 1974 AD/1395 AH: 2, 434).	The obscurity of <i>Ḥasan ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alawī</i> (Burqa'ī (a), n.d.: 71). Weakening of the <i>Sanad</i> by <i>Muḥsinī</i> (Muḥsinī, 2005 AD/1426 AH: 2, 208). However, <i>Muḥsinī</i> does not specify the weakness of the <i>Sanad</i> .
Narration 12	<i>Kunnā Kharajnā lil Tahni'a bi Mūlid al-Mahdī (AS)</i> (Baḥrānī, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 7, 672).	Weakening of the <i>Isnād</i> by <i>Muḥsinī</i> (Muḥsinī, 2005 AD/1426 AH: 2, 406). However, <i>Muḥsinī</i> does not specify the weakness of the <i>Sanad</i> .

Narration Number in Bāšmad's Book	Oldest Source and Selected Portion of Narration	Reason for Weakening the Narration from the Perspective of <i>Walid ibn Šāliḥ Bāšmad</i> and His Sources
Narration 13	<i>Li Tahni'ati Abī Muḥammad (AS) bi Mūlid al-Mahdī (AS)</i> (Ḥurr 'Āmilī, 2004 AD/1425 AH: 5, 199).	The unreliability of <i>Jawharī</i> and the weakness of <i>Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdān</i> (Bāšmad, 2014: 105).
Narration 14	<i>Lammā Wulida al-Sayyid (AS) Ra'at lahā Nūran</i> (Ibn Bābawayh, 1974 AD/1395 AH: 2, 431).	The unknown status of <i>Mājilūyah</i> , <i>Khayzarānī</i> , and the unnamed maidservant (Burqa'ī (a), n.d.: 68). Weakening of the <i>Sanad</i> by <i>Muḥsinī</i> (Muḥsinī, 2005 AD/1426 AH: 2, 208). However, <i>Muḥsinī</i> does not specify the weakness of the <i>Sanad</i> .
Narration 15	<i>Wulida al-Sayyid (AS) Makhtawnan</i> (Ibn Bābawayh, 1974 AD/1395 AH: 2, 433).	The weakness of <i>Ḥasan ibn Ali ibn Zakarīya</i> and the unknown status of <i>Muhammad ibn Khalīlān</i> , his father, grandfather, and <i>Ghīyāth ibn Asad</i> (Burqa'ī (a), n.d.: 70). Weakening of the <i>Sanad</i> by <i>Muḥsinī</i> (Muḥsinī, 2005 AD/1426 AH: 2, 208). However, <i>Muḥsinī</i> does not specify the weakness of the <i>Sanad</i> .
Narration 16	<i>Dakhaltu 'alayhi Ba'da Mawlidihī bi Laylatin</i> (Ibn Bābawayh, 1974 AD/1395 AH: 2, 430).	The obscurity of <i>Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad</i> and the unknown status of <i>Nasīm</i> the servant (Burqa'ī (a), n.d.: 68).

Narration Number in Bāṣmad's Book	Oldest Source and Selected Portion of Narration	Reason for Weakening the Narration from the Perspective of <i>Walīd ibn Ṣāliḥ Bāṣmad</i> and His Sources
		Weakening of the Sanad by <i>Muḥsinī</i> (Muḥsinī, 2005 AD/1426 AH: 2, 208). However, <i>Muḥsinī</i> does not specify the weakness of the Sanad.
Narration 18	<i>Ba'da Arba'īna Yawman min Wilādati Narjis faidhā Mawlānā Ṣāhib al-Zamān (AS) Yamshī fil Dār falam Ara Lughata Afṣaḥa min Lughatihī</i> (Quṭb al-Dīn Rāwandī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 1, 466).	The hadith is <i>Mursal</i> (Burqa'ī(a), n.d.: 164). Weakening of the <i>Sanad</i> by <i>Muḥsinī</i> (Muḥsinī, 2005 AD/1426 AH: 2, 208). However, <i>Muḥsinī</i> does not specify the weakness of the <i>Sanad</i> .
Narration 19	<i>Qad Dakhaltu 'Alayhi Ba'da Mawlidihī bi Laylatin fa 'Aṣastu</i> (Ibn Bābawayh, 1974 AD/1395 AH: 2, 430).	Weakening of the chain of narration by <i>Muḥsinī</i> (Muḥsinī, 2005 AD/1426 AH: 2, 383). However, <i>Muḥsinī</i> does not specify the weakness of the <i>Sanad</i> .
Narration 21	<i>Innahū lammā Saqaṭa Ṣāhibu al-Zamān (AS) min Baṭni Ummihī Jāthīyan 'alā Rukbatayhi</i> (Ibn Bābawayh, 1974 AD/1395 AH: 2, 430).	<i>Husayn ibn Ali Nīshābūrī</i> , whose existence is denied by experts in <i>Rijāl</i> , and the obscurity of <i>Nasīm</i> and <i>Mārīyah</i> (Burqa'ī(a), n.d.: 67). Weakening of the <i>Sanad</i> by <i>Muḥsinī</i> (Muḥsinī, 2004 AD/1426 AH: 2, 208). However, <i>Muḥsinī</i> does not specify the weakness of the <i>Sanad</i> .

3-2. Narrations Indicating the Concealment of the Birth of Imam Mahdi (AS)

Among the narrations mentioned by *Bāšmad*, the general theme of 18 narrations is the concealment of the birth of Imam Mahdi (AS). In the following, based on the method of reporting narrations of the announcement of birth, we report 5 narrations indicating concealment of the birth.

Table No. 2: Narrations Indicating the Concealment of the Birth of Imam Mahdi (AS)

Narrative Number in Bāšmad's Book	Oldest Source of the Narration and Selected Part of the Narration	Reason for Weakening the Narration from the Perspective of Walīd ibn Šāliḥ Bāšmad and the Source He Used
Narration 44	<i>Fa inna Allāha `Azza wa Jalla Yukhfi Wilādatahū</i> (Khazāz Rāzī, 1980 AD/1401 AH: 225).	Weakening of the <i>Sanad</i> by <i>Muḥsinī</i> (Muḥsinī, 2005 AD/426 AH: 1, 234 and 2, 144, 145, 213, 229). However, <i>Muḥsinī</i> does not specify the weakness of the <i>Sanad</i> . Weakness of the narrators (Burqa'ī, n.d.: 151).
Narration 45	<i>Tukhfā Wilādatuhū `alā al-Nāsi Ḥattā Yaqūlū lam Yūlad</i> (Ibn Bābawayh, 1974 AD/1395 AH: 1, 323).	The narrators are of unknown status (Burqa'ī(a), n.d.: 151). The chain of narration is weakened by <i>Muḥsinī</i> (Muḥsinī, 2005 AD/1426 AH: 2, 213). However, <i>Muḥsinī</i> does not specify the weakness in the chain.

Narration 47	<i>Man Ghuyyibat `an al-nāsi Wilādatuhū</i> (Ibn Abī Zaynab, 1976 AD/1397 AH: 167).	The narrators are of unknown status (Burqa'ī(a), n.d.: 151). The chain of narration is weakened by <i>Muḥsinī</i> (Muḥsinī, 2005 AD/1426 AH: 2, 214). However, <i>Muḥsinī</i> does not specify the weakness in the chain.
Narration 49	<i>Lā Yu`rafu Wilādatuhū</i> (Ibn Abī Zaynab, 1976 AD/1397 AH: 169).	The narrators are of unknown status (Burqa'ī(a), n.d.: 151). The chain of narration is weakened by <i>Muḥsinī</i> (Muḥsinī, 2005 AD/1426 AH: 2, 214). However, <i>Muḥsinī</i> does not specify the weakness in the chain.
Narration 50	<i>Ṣāhibu Hādhā Amri Ta`mā Wilādatuhū</i> (Ibn Bābawayh, 1974 AD/1395 AH: 2, 479).	The narrators are liars and forgers (Burqa'ī(a), n.d.: 230-236). The chain of narration is weakened by <i>Muḥsinī</i> (Muḥsinī, 2005 AD/1426 AH: 2, 221). However, <i>Muḥsinī</i> does not specify the weakness in the chain.

4. Critique of the Contradiction Claim in the Narratives Concerning the Expectation of the Reappearance (Faraj)

Given that most of the *Rijālī* weaknesses that *Walīd ibn Ṣāliḥ Bāṣmad* introduces to the aforementioned narratives are drawn from the book

14 "Scientific Examination of the Hadiths of the Mahdi" by *Sayyid Abulfaḍl*

Burqa'ī and the book "*Mashra'at Biḥār al-Anwār*" by Muḥammad 'Āṣif Muḥsinī, we will first introduce *Burqa'ī* and *Muḥsinī* and the aforementioned books. Then, using earlier *Rijālī* books, we will re-examine the *Rijālī* status of the weakened narrators to determine the accuracy or inaccuracy of the weakening performed and the rulings issued on the narratives based on the weakening of the narrators.

4-1. Sayyid Abulfaḍl *Burqa'ī* and His Position Regarding Shi'a Beliefs

Sayyid Abulfaḍl *Burqa'ī* (1287-1372 AH) has numerous writings in the fields of Quranic exegesis, creed, theology, jurisprudence, *Rijāl*, etc., some of which have been published in Iran and others, due to their strong alignment with Wahhabism beliefs, have been published in Saudi Arabia. Research shows that *Burqa'ī*'s life has two distinct parts that differ greatly in terms of thought.

In part of his scholarly life, he was staunchly Shia, defending Shia beliefs and opposing Wahhabism. However, in another part, he was influenced by Wahhabism, to the extent that he is sometimes seen defending Wahhabi views and opposing Shia beliefs. After deviating from Imami beliefs, *Burqa'ī* developed a pessimistic view of Shia and did not hesitate to insult the Shia community (Mohammadifam, 2017 AD/1397 SH: 168-169).

Among *Burqa'ī*'s works from the first period of his scholarly life, published in Iran, are the books "*Fawā'id fī al-Fiqh*," (Benefits in Jurisprudence) "*Fawā'id fī al-Uṣūl*," (Benefits in Principles) "*Tarājīm al-Nisā'*," (Biographies of Women) and "*Gulshan al-Quds*." However,

among his other books, aligned with Wahhabism and published in Saudi Arabia, are textbooks such as "Lessons from Wilayah," "Radiance from the Quran," "Superstitions and Excesses in Visiting Graves," and "The Contradiction of *Mafātīḥ al-Jinān* with the Quran."

An examination of *Burqa'ī*'s works reveals his lack of belief in common Shia beliefs, such as the belief in twelve infallible Imams as successors to the Prophet (PBUH) (*Burqa'ī* (b), n.d.: 283), the impeccability of the Imams, and recourse to the Imams (*Burqa'ī* (b), n.d.: 412-415).

Given the above, even if we are not certain of *Burqa'ī*'s conversion from Twelver Shia Islam to Wahhabism, it is not permissible to accept his opinions on Shia beliefs uncritically as the views of Shia and to attack Shia foundations. This is what *Walīd ibn Ṣāliḥ* does, claiming, based on *Burqa'ī*'s statements, a contradiction in Shia narrations.

4-1-1. The book "Scientific Examination of Hadiths on the Mahdi"

In this book, *Burqa'ī* examines the hadiths found in volumes 51 to 53 of "*Biḥār al-Anwār*," which relate to the subject of the Mahdi. Regarding his methodology in this book, he writes: "There are narrations in these three volumes that are neither in accordance with reason nor with the Quran; and it is surprising that those who claim knowledge and reason have collected these narrations? If someone has even a little thought, he will realize the falsehood and superstitions of the fabricators, but we are

16 obliged, to show the truth and enlighten the readers, to present some of its

fabrications. It can be said: "Not a single authentic hadith has come among them in terms of its chain of transmission. In this book, we present the introduction of the narrators of the news of the Mahdi according to the sayings of the Shia scholars of *Rijāl*. And if we said 'unknown in status,' the Shia scholars of *Rijāl* themselves have described him as unknown in status or unknown. An unknown person is one who's Islam, faith, justice, and fairness are not known. If we say "Neglected," Shia Imamiyyah scholars of *Rijāl* have not even mentioned him, leaving him neglected. If we say "Weak," Shia *Rijāl* scholars such as *Shaykh Ṭūsī*, *Māmaqānī*, *Allama Ḥillī*, *Najāshī*, and others have considered him weak; a weak narrator is one whose beliefs were corrupt, or who was immoral, a liar, a forger, or an enemy." (Burqa'ī (a), n.d.: 62-63)

This book, regarding the numerous flaws that have been highlighted in several studies (Mahdinejad, 2021 AD/1400 SH; Ṭabasī, 2017 AD/1396 SH; Mahdinejad and Feqhizadeh, 2019 AD/1398 SH), was not accepted by the Shia community. However, it remains one of the most important sources used by Wahhabism to refute Shia beliefs, and *Walīd ibn Ṣāliḥ Bāṣmad* has made the most use of this book in his *Rijāl* and *Fiqh al-Hadith* studies, believing he has presented evidence from Shia works against Shia beliefs!!!

4-2. Muḥammad 'Āṣif Muḥsinī

Shaykh Muḥammad 'Āṣif Muḥsinī Qandahari, an Afghan (1314-1398 SH), is one of the most renowned Shia scholars in contemporary Afghanistan. He lived in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Iran and was a fighter against the communist regime in the 1980s. *Muḥsinī* studied *Rijāl*

under Ayatollah Khomeini (d. 1413 AH) and specialized in it. In his famous book, *"Buḥūthun fī 'Ilm al-Rijāl,"* he presented his important views on *Rijāl* (Fahdāwī and Ḥubbullāh, 2016 AD/1437 AH: 1, 27).

Muḥsinī also examined the authenticity of the narrations in *"Biḥār al-Anwār"* and *"Jāmi' Aḥādīth al-Shi'a"* as part of his scholarly work. The results of this are seen in his books *"Mashra'a Biḥār al-Anwār"* and *"al-Aḥādīth al-Mu'tabara fī Jāmi' Aḥādīth al-Shi'a."* These two books contain technical examinations of the authenticity of the narrations in *"Biḥār al-Anwār"* and *"Jāmi' Aḥādīth al-Shi'a,"* but in the midst of these discussions of the chains of transmission, he also examined the extra-textual evaluation of the narrations in some cases. A careful study of them reveals that the purpose of writing these works, especially *"Mashra'a Biḥār al-Anwār,"* was to provide guidance for better use of *"Biḥār al-Anwār,"* and the author did not intend to remove numerous narrations from a large Shia collection of narrations (Hosseini Hanif, 2018 AD/1397 SH: 132).

4-2-1. The book "Mashra'a Biḥār al-Anwār"

It is a two-volume work. In the introduction, *Muḥsinī* explains his approach to the hadiths in *"Biḥār al-Anwār,"* attributing his rejection of some hadiths to a lack of information about the narrators or the absence of relevant biographical information in the standard biographical works (*Rijāl*). He emphasizes that he judged the hadiths solely based on their chains of transmission (*Isnād*), assigning a relative judgment, acknowledging that a hadith might have a valid chain in the Four Books (*Kutub al-Arba'ah*). Using this method, he deemed many of the hadiths in

18 *"Biḥār al-Anwār"* to have unsound chains of transmission. *Muḥsinī* cites

the use of concepts shared with authentic hadiths and reliance on corroborating evidence that ensures the hadith's validity as benefits of even non-authentic hadiths. Conversely, he identifies the disregard for the chain of transmission, fabrication, exaggeration, and the ignorance of narrators as corrupting factors. He clarifies that, besides the soundness of the chain of transmission, other methods exist to ascertain the truthfulness of a report. For instance, if a hadith is narrated through three independent chains of transmission, as in some of *Šadūq's* hadiths, relying on it is not unreasonable, as it is unlikely that narrators in three separate chains would fabricate the same false report (Muḥsinī, 2005 AD/1426 AH: 7-14).

However, *Fahdāwī* and *Ḥubbullāh*, in their book "*al-Mu'tabar fī Biḥār al-Anwār Wifqan li Naẓariyyāt Āyatullāh al-Shaykh Muḥammad 'Āṣif Muḥsinī*" (The Authentic in *Biḥār al-Anwār* According to the Theories of Ayatollah *Shaykh Muḥammad 'Āṣif Muḥsinī*), aimed to compile the authentic hadiths of "*Biḥār al-Anwār*" according to Ayatollah *Muḥsinī's* views in "*Mashra'a Biḥār al-Anwār*," presenting 2873 hadiths (cf. *Fahdāwī* and *Ḥubbullāh*, 2016 AD/1437 AH: 1, 2, and 3). This effectively dismissed the remaining hadiths of "*Biḥār al-Anwār*" as lacking in authenticity. Consequently, Ayatollah *Muḥsinī*, in response to an inquiry about "*al-Mu'tabar fī Biḥār al-Anwār...*," highlighted seven points, some of which are as follows:

- 1) The narration of a text through three unreliable chains of transmission can establish confidence in its authenticity from the Imam (AS); it is unlikely that the narrators in all three chains would have fabricated a lie;
- 2) If a text is narrated with variations across ten chains of transmission,

even if the narrators are unknown or weak, the common element among these narrations is considered reliable and authoritative; "*al-Khabar al-Muwaththaq*" (a report corroborated by evidence) is superior to "*Khabar al-Thiqa*" (a report from a trustworthy narrator); because the certainty in the former is based on the content itself, while in the latter it is based on the narrator's trustworthiness;

3) Denying texts cited with invalid chains of transmission is incorrect, because denial is a claim that requires evidence; a hadith text, assuming the chain of transmission is invalid and lacks internal and external corroboration, is not authoritative; it is not to be refuted (Hosseini Hanif, 2017 AD/1397 SH: 133-135).

Despite this, *Bāṣmad*, either intentionally or without bothering to study *Muḥsinī*'s viewpoint, refers to *Muḥsinī*'s book to demonstrate the invalidity of most hadiths related to the Mahdi.

4-3. Examination of the *Rijāl* Status of Narrators Weakened by *Bāṣmad* in Early *Rijāl* Books

As observed in the report of *Bāṣmad*'s claim, he specifies the weakness of the chain of transmission in weakening some narrations, but weakens others without mentioning the point of weakness. In this section, based on the opinions of early Shia *Rijāl*ists, we will first examine the trustworthiness or weakness of 28 narrators specifically weakened by *Bāṣmad* to clarify the validity of his *Rijāl* claims about them. Following this, the chains of transmission of other narrations weakened by *Bāṣmad*, whose points of weakness he did not specify, will also be examined to determine the correctness or incorrectness of

20 his weakening of those narrations.

4-3-1. Ḥasan ibn Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alawī

No mention of this narrator was found in the books of early Rijālists. Therefore, he is considered insignificant from a *Rijāl* perspective.

4-3-2. ‘Īsā ibn Mahdī Jawharī

No mention of this narrator was found in the books of early Rijālists. Therefore, he is considered insignificant from a *Rijāl* perspective.

4-3-3. Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdān Khaṣībī

Najāshī and Taqī al-Dīn Ḥillī consider him "Corrupt in his religious beliefs." (Najāshī, 1986 AD/1365 SH: 67; Taqī al-Dīn Ḥillī, 1962 AD/1342 SH: 444) Ibn *Ghaḍā’irī* and Ḥillī also called him a "Liar" and "Corrupt in his religious beliefs." (Ibn Ghaḍā’irī, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 54; Ḥillī, 1981 AD/1402 AH: 217) Ṭūsī, while mentioning him in his books, does not offer any criticism or assessment regarding *Husayn ibn Ḥamdān* (Ṭūsī, 2006 AD/1427 AH: 423; Ṭūsī, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 146). Therefore, he is considered weak from the perspective of Shia *Rijāl* scholar.

4-3-4. Mājilūya

The only *Rijāl* book that mentions him is *Rijāl Ṭūsī*, which does not offer any criticism or assessment regarding him (Ṭūsī, 2006 AD/1427 AH: 437). Therefore, he is considered unknown from a *Rijāl* perspective.

4-3-5. Khayzarānī

He is not mentioned in early books. However, *Shūshtarī* mentions him in his book, but does not offer any criticism or assessment (Shūshtarī, 1989 AD/1410 AH: 11, 430). As a result, he is considered unknown from a *Rijāl* perspective.

4-3-6. Jārīyah

No mention of this narrator is found in the books of *Rijāl*. Therefore, he/she is considered unreliable (*Muhmal*).

4-3-7. Ḥusayn ibn Ali ibn Zakarīya

Ibn *Ghaḍā'irī* in his book describes him as weak (*Da'f*), separate, and a liar (*Kadhdhāb*) (Ibn Ghaḍā'irī, 1960 AD/1380 AH: 53; Ḥillī, 1981 AD/1402 AH: 217; Taqī al-Dīn Ḥillī, 1921 AD/1342 AH: 444). Consequently, from the perspective of early Shia scholars, he is considered weak.

4-3-8. Muhammad ibn Khalīlān, His Father, and His Grandfather

No mention of this narrator, his father, and his grandfather, who are mentioned in the narration, is found in early Shia books. Therefore, all three are considered unreliable (*Muhmal*).

4-3-9. Ghīyāth ibn Asad

No mention of this narrator was found in Shia *Rijāl* books. Therefore, he is unreliable (*Muhmal*).

4-3-10. Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad

No mention of this narrator was found in early books; therefore he is unreliable (*Muhmal*).

4-3-11. Nasīm Khādīm

Since no mention of this narrator was found in early books, therefore he is unreliable (*Muhmal*).

4-3-12. Ādam ibn Muḥammad Balkhī

22 Ṭūsī uses the word "*Tafwīd*" to describe him (Ṭūsī, 2006 AD/1427

AH: 407; Ḥillī, 1981 AD/1402 AH: 207; Taqī al-Dīn Ḥillī, 1921 AD/1342 AH: 414). Therefore, he is weak.

4-3-13. Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī

No mention of this narrator was found in Shia *Rijāl* books. Therefore, he is unreliable (*Muhmal*).

4-3-14. Hanẓala ibn Zakarīyā

Najāshī only states regarding him "*lam Yakun bi Dhālik*" (he was not like that) (Najāshī, 1945 AD/1365 AH: 147). And Ṭūsī only mentions his permission from *Tal‘akbarī* without any criticism or commendation (Ṭūsī, 2006 AD/1427 AH: 423). Therefore, he is considered weak from a *Rijāl* perspective.

4-3-15. Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī Nishābūrī

No information about this narrator was found in early books. Therefore, he is unreliable (*Muhmal*).

4-3-16. Mārīyah

No information about this narrator was found in *Rijāl* books. Therefore, she is unreliable (*Muhmal*).

4-3-17. Abū Hārūn

No information about this narrator was found. Therefore, he is unreliable (*Muhmal*).

4-3-18. Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Bilāl

Ṭūsī in his *Rijāl* book considers him trustworthy (*Thiqah*) (Ṭūsī, 2006

AD/1427 AH: 401). However, in his book *al-Ghaybah*, he considers him among the blameworthy (*Madhmūmin*) (Ṭūsī, 1990 AD/1411 AH: 400). Ḥillī also mentions in his book the failure to return property belonging to the Imam that was in Ibn Bilal's possession and curses him (Ḥillī, 1981 AD/1402 AH: 274).

Although Ṭūsī considers him trustworthy in *Rijāl*, considering his opinion in *al-Ghaybah*, the narrations of Ibn Bilal should be examined carefully.

4-3-19. Shalmaghānī

Ṭūsī, in his book *Rijāl*, identifies him as a *Ghālī* (extremist) (Ṭūsī, 2006 AD/1427 AH: 448). He also mentions in *Fihrist* that *Shalmaghānī* initially followed the correct path but later deviated before returning (Ṭūsī, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 413). *Najāshī* attributes his change of religious affiliation to envy (Najāshī, 1986 AD/1365 SH: 378). Ḥillī also condemns and curses him (Ḥillī, 1981 AD/1402 AH: 274). Therefore, he is considered a weak and extremist narrator.

4-3-20. Ismā‘īl ibn Ribāḥ

Ṭūsī mentions him in his *Rijāl* but does not offer any criticism or assessment (Ṭūsī, 2006 AD/1427 AH: 167). Therefore, he is considered unknown.

4-3-21. Ali ibn al-Ḥusayn and Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥasan

Due to multiple possibilities, I could not identify the correct individual.

4-3-22. Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥasan

Due to multiple possibilities, I could not identify the correct individual.

4-3-23. Tha‘laba ibn Mihrān

No information about this narrator was found in the *Rijāl* books. Therefore, he is considered *Muhmal*.

4-3-24. Yazīd ibn Hāzim

No mention of this narrator was found in the *Rijāl* books. Therefore, he is considered *Muhmal*.

4-3-25. ‘Abbās ibn ‘Āmir

Ṭūsī mentions him in both his books but does not offer any criticism or assessment (Ṭūsī, 2006 AD/1427 AH: 341; Ṭūsī, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 337). However, Najāshī, quoting Shaykh Ṣadūq, considers him trustworthy (Najāshī, 1986 AD/1365 SH: 281). Therefore, from a *Rijāl* perspective, he is considered trustworthy.

4-3-26. Aḥmad ibn Ḥasan ibn Ishāq

No information about this narrator was found in early sources. Therefore, he is considered *Muhmal*.

In summary of the *Rijāl* status of the 28 narrators weakened by Bāšmad, it should be said that according to early Shia *Rijāl* scholars, 2 of them are trustworthy, 1 is an extremist, 3 are unknown, 15 are *Muhmal*, 2 could not be identified due to multiple possibilities, and 5 are weak. A summary of each is shown in the table below. Therefore, Bāšmad's claim that all of them are weak is not acceptable.

Table No. 3: The Opinion of Early *Rijāl* Scholars Regarding the 28 Narrators Weakened by *Bāšmad*

Row	Narrator's Name	Opinion of Early Scholars
1	Ḥasan ibn Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alawī	Muhmal
2	‘Īsā ibn Mahdī Jawharī	Muhmal
3	Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdān Khaṣībī	Weak
4	Mājilūya	Unknown
5	Khayzarānī	Trustworthy
6	Muḥammad ibn Ja‘far Asadī	Unknown
7	Jārīyah	Muhmal
8	Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī ibn Zakarīyā	Weak
9,10,11	Muḥammad ibn Khalīlān, his father and grandfather	Muhmal
12	Ibrahim ibn Muḥammad	Muhmal
13	Nasīm Khādīm	Muhmal
14	Ādam ibn Muḥammad Balkhī	Weak
15	Aḥmad ibn Ali	Muhmal
16	Ḥanzalah ibn Zakarīyā	Weak
17	Ḥusayn ibn Ali Nīshābūrī	Muhmal
18	Mārīyah	Muhmal
19	Abū Hārūn	Muhmal
20	Muḥammad ibn Ali ibn Bilāl	Weak
21	Shalmaghānī	Weak and Exaggerating
22	Ismā‘īl ibn Ribāḥ	Unknown
23, 24	Ali ibn al-Ḥusayn and Aḥmad ibn al-	Multiple instances exist, and

Row	Narrator's Name	Opinion of Early Scholars
	Ḥasan	identification is impossible.
25	Tha‘laba ibn Mihrān	Muhmal
26	Yazīd ibn Ḥāzim	Muhmal
27	‘Abbās ibn ‘Āmir	Trustworthy
28	Aḥmad ibn Ḥasan ibn Ishāq	Muhmal

As previously stated, in addition to the narrations weakened by *Bāšmad* due to the presence of the above 28 narrators in their chains of transmission, other narrations were also weakened by *Bāšmad* without specifying the reason for their weakness. Therefore, for a more thorough examination, we reviewed all the narrators of the hadiths that were weakened without specific mention and concluded that of this group of narrators, 38 were unreliable, 6 were unknown, 1 was exaggerating, 1 was praised, and 9 were weak. However, we could not find specific instances for three narrators, but the remaining narrators of these hadiths were categorized as trustworthy. Therefore, *Bāšmad*'s weakening lack a scientific basis.

4-4. Examining the Validity of 52 Narrations Weakened by *Bāšmad* and Resolving the Conflicts Among Them

After examining the chains of transmission of the 52 narrations in this discussion, we must now state the ruling on each narration to address the alleged conflict among them. In stating the ruling on the narrations, we encounter two approaches to validation: the narrator-centric approach and the context-centric approach. In the narrator-centric approach, the status of the narrators determines the ruling on

the narration, and the slightest flaw in any part of the chain of transmission renders the narration invalid. However, in the context-centric approach, only the isolated narrations of a weak narrator are rejected, meaning that if a narration by a weak narrator has corroboration, it is considered valid (for further study on approaches to validating hadiths, cf. Husseini Shirazi, 2018 AD/1398 SH: 86-87).

Therefore, in the following two separate tables, the judgment of each narration is first stated based on the narrator-centered validation approach and then based on the context-centered validation approach, to determine how many authentic and inauthentic hadiths remain on both sides of the conflict based on each of these two approaches, and how the conflict is resolved.

In the table below, the first column indicates the number of narrations in the *Bāṣmad* book, the second column indicates the judgment of each narration based on the narrator-centered validation approach, and the third column indicates the reason for that judgment.

Table No. 4: Judgment of each narration based on the narrator-centered validation approach

Narration No	Commandment of Narration	Reason for Commandment
10	Weak	Failure to identify a criterion for Muhammad ibn Ḥasan Karkhī and the unreliability of ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās al-'Alawī.
11	Weak	Unreliability of ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās al-'Alawī and Ḥusayn ibn Ḥasan al-'Alawī.

Narration No	Commandment of Narration	Reason for Commandment
12	Weak	Unreliability of 'Īsā ibn Maḥdī and weakness of Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdān (Ibn Ghaḍā'irī, 1960 AD/1380 AH: 54).
13	Weak	Unreliability of 'Īsā ibn Maḥdī and weakness of Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdān (Ibn Ghaḍā'irī, 1960 AD/1380 AH: 54).
14	Weak	Unknown status of Muḥammad ibn 'Alī Mājīlūyah, unreliability of Abū 'Alī Khayzarānī and Jārīyah.
15	Weak	Unreliability of Muḥammad ibn Ibrahim, Muḥammad ibn Khalīlān, Ghīyāth ibn Asad, and weakness of Ḥasan ibn Zakarīyā (Ibn Ghaḍā'irī, 1960 AD/1380 AH: 54).
16	Weak	Unreliability of 'Aylān Kalānī and Nasīm Khādim.
17	Weak	Unreliability of Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Nīshābūrī, Ibrahim ibn Muhammad ibn 'Abdullāh, and Nasīm Khādim.
18	Weak	The narration being Mursal (disconnected) and the unreliability of Ḥakīmīh.
19	Weak	Unreliability of Ibrahim ibn Muhammad, Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Nīshābūrī, and Nasīm Khādim, and unknown status of Mājīlūyah.
20	Weak	Weakness of Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdān (Ibn Ghaḍā'irī, 1960 AD/1380 AH: 54). Unreliability of 'Aylān Kalānī and Nasīm Khādim.

Narration No	Commandment of Narration	Reason for Commandment
21	Weak	Weakness and generality of Sayyārī (Ibn Ghaḍā'irī, 1960 AD/1380 AH: 40; Najāshī, 1945 AD/1365 AH: 80). Unknown status of Mājīlūyah. Unreliability of Nīshābūrī, Ibrahim ibn Muhammad, Nasīm, and Mārīyah.
22	Weak	Weakness and generality of Sayyārī (Ibn Ghaḍā'irī, 1960 AD/1380 AH: 40; Najāshī, 1945 AD/1365 AH: 80). Unreliability of Nīshābūrī, 'Aylān Kalānī, Ibrahim ibn Muhammad, Nasīm, and Mārīyah.
23	Weak	The narration is Mursal (disconnected). [Source: Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdān (Ibn Ghaḍā'irī, 1960 AD/1380 AH: 54)].
24	Weak	The narrators' 'Aylān Kalānī, Mūsā ibn Muhammad Rāzī, and Aḥmad ibn Ja'far are unreliable.
25	Weak	The narrators Ibn Faraj, Abū Hārūn are unreliable, and the criterion for Muhammad ibn Ḥasan Karkhī is not established.
26	Weak	The narrators Kandī and Balālī are unreliable.
27	Authentic	Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Bilāl held heretical beliefs.
28	Weak	The criterion for Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Kūfī is not established.
29	Weak	Shalmaghānī is weak (Najāshī, 1945 AD/1365 AH: 387; extremist [Ghālī] (Ṭūsī, 2006 AD/1427 AH: 448). Ḥamza ibn Naṣr is

Narration No	Commandment of Narration	Reason for Commandment
		unreliable. Ibrahim ibn Idrīs is unknown.
30	Weak	Mājīlūyah is unknown. The criterion for Ishāq ibn Rīyāh is not established.
31	Weak	Shalmaghānī is weak (Najāshī, 1945 AD/1365 AH: 387; extremist [Ghālī] (Ṭūsī, 2006 AD/1427 AH: 448). Ḥamza ibn Naṣr is unreliable.
32	Weak	Shalmaghānī is weak (Najāshī, 1945 AD/1365 AH: 387; extremist [Ghālī] (Ṭūsī, 2006 AD/1427 AH: 448). Ḥamza ibn Naṣr is unreliable.
33	Weak	Mursal (disconnected) and without a narrator.
34	Weak	Mūsā ibn Ja'far is unknown. However, he is included among the generally accepted authorities.
35	Good	Ibrahim ibn Hāshim is praised (Najāshī, 1945 AD/1365 AH: 4; Ṭūsī, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 66).
36	Good	Ibrahim ibn Hāshim is praised (Najāshī, 1945 AD/1365 AH: 4; Ṭūsī, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 66).
37	Weak	Aḥmad ibn Ali Rāzī is unreliable. Ja'far ibn Mas'ūd is unknown. Aḥmad ibn Ali ibn Kulthūm is an extremist (Ghālī) (Ṭūsī, 2006 AD/1427 AH: 407; Kashshī, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 2, 813).
38	Weak	Ishāq ibn Muḥammad is weak (Ibn Ghaḍā'irī, 1960 AD/1380 AH: 41; Najāshī, 1945

Narration No	Commandment of Narration	Reason for Commandment
		AD/1365 AH: 73; Ṭūsī, 2006 AD/1427 AH: 384).
39	Weak	The narration is Mursal.
40	Weak	The narration is Mursal.
41	Weak	Muhammad ibn Ali known as Kirmānī, Aḥmad ibn ʿĪsā, and Aḥmad ibn Ṭāhir are unreliable.
42	Weak	Yazīd ibn Abi Ḥāzim is unreliable.
43	Weak	Aḥmad ibn Ishāq Muthqala is unreliable
44	Weak	Sudayr ibn Ḥakīm and Abū Saʿīd ʿAqīṣā are unknown.
45	Weak	Ali ibn Muhammad, Muhammad ibn Aḥmad, Mūsā ibn ʿImrān, and Ḥamza ibn Ḥamrān are unknown. However, these individuals are included among the generally accepted authorities
46	Weak	Aḥmad ibn Hārūn is unknown, and Mūsā ibn Hilāl is unreliable.
47	Weak	The narration is Mursal.
48	Weak	Ali ibn ʿAbbās ibn Amir and Mūsā ibn Hilāl Kindī are unreliable
49	Weak	Yahyā ibn Yaʿlī is unreliable.
50	Authentic	
51	Weak	Jabraʿīl ibn Aḥmad is unknown. However, he is included among the generally accepted authorities.

Narration No	Commandment of Narration	Reason for Commandment
52	Weak	The narration is Mursal.
53	Authentic	
54	Weak	The narration is Mursal.
55	Weak	Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn ‘Abdullāh and Aḥmad ibn Ḥasan ibn Ishāq are unreliable
56	Weak	Aḥmad ibn Ali Rāzī is unreliable. Ḥanzala ibn Zakarīyā is weak (Najāshī, 1945 AD/1365 AH: 146).
57	Weak	Ishāq ibn Muḥammad ibn Ayyūb is unreliable.
58	Weak	Ali ibn Aḥmad, Ali ibn Ḥasan, Mūsā ibn Hilāl, and ‘Ubayd Allah ibn Mūsā are unreliable. Al-Qalāsī is weak (Ibn Ghaḍā’irī, 1960 AD/1380 AH: 96).
59	Weak	Ali ibn Aḥmad and ‘Ubayd Allah ibn Mūsā are unreliable.
60	Weak	Muhammad ibn Sanān is weak and extremist (Ṭūsī, 2006 AD/1427 AH: 364; Ibn Ghaḍā’irī, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 92; Ṭūsī, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 406). The condemnation of Abū Jārūd (Kashshī, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 2, 495; Ibn Ghaḍā’irī, 1986 AD/1365 SH, 61).
61	Weak	The negligence of Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Aṣām and Ismā‘īl ibn Ali Qazwīnī.

According to the later *Rijāl* scholars (i.e., from the Hillah school onwards), who emphasize narrator-based authentication, out of the 52 existing narrations in this discussion, forty-seven are weak, two are

Ṣaḥīḥ (Correct), two are *Ḥasan* (Good), and one is *Muwaththaq* (trustworthy); meaning only five narrations are considered authentic (including *Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥasan*, and *Muwaththaq*). Three of these authentic narrations indicate the concealment of Imam Mahdi's birth, while two indicate its announcement. Therefore, based on the narrator-based authentication approach, there is a conflict among these narrations, and it must be determined whether this conflict can be resolved.

To provide another opportunity to authenticate the other hadiths in these collections, we decided to re-examine the 52 existing narrations, this time based on a context-based authentication approach. According to this approach, all hadiths indicating both the announcement and concealment of Imam Mahdi's birth are considered authentic. A report of this authentication method is presented in the two tables below.

Table No. 5: Ruling on Narrations Indicating the Announcement of Imam Mahdi's Birth Based on the Context-Based Authentication Approach

Row	Narration Nos	Content	Narration Commandment	Reason of Commandment
1	10, 11, 12, 13, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42	Good tidings of Imam Mahdi's birth, time, and place	Ṣaḥīḥ	1- Hadith 27 in this collection is authentic, and hadiths 35 and 36 are among the <i>Ḥasan</i> hadiths. Given the authenticity of these three hadiths, the

Row	Narration Nos	Content	Narration Commandment	Reason of Commandment
				authenticity of other similar hadiths is also proven. 2- This collection contains twenty-one narrations that, due to their various chains of transmission, are not classified as individual isolated narrations. 3- The presence of narrators like <i>Muhammad ibn Ḥasan ibn Walīd</i> and <i>Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā</i> in the chains of transmission of these narrations indicates the soundness of their content.
2	14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 43	Miracles related to Imam Mahdi's birth	Ṣaḥīḥ	1- Thirteen hadiths in this collection, due to their various chains of transmission, are not classified as individual

Row	Narration Nos	Content	Narration Commandment	Reason of Commandment
				isolated narrations and are therefore considered authentic. 2- The presence of narrators like <i>Muhammad ibn Yahyā al-'Aṭṭār</i> and <i>Aḥmad ibn Muhammad ibn Yahyā al-'Aṭṭār</i> indicates the soundness of this content.

Table 6: Commandment of the Hadith Concerning the Concealment of Imam Mahdi's Birth Based on a Contextual Evidence-Based Approach

Row	Hadith Numbers	Subject	Commandment	Reason for Commandment
1	44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57,	Concealment of Imam Mahdi's Birth	Ṣaḥīḥ	1-Given the authenticity of Hadiths 50 and 53 in this collection, the remaining Hadiths are considered authentic. 2- The existence of eighteen Hadiths with different

	58, 59, 60, 61			chains of narration does not fall into the category of isolated individual narrations and are therefore considered reliable. 3- The presence of individuals such as <i>Muhammad ibn ‘Abdullāh ibn Ja’far Ḥimyarī</i>, <i>Ayyūb ibn Nūh</i>, <i>Muhammad ibn Himām</i>, and <i>Muhammad ibn Yahyā al-‘Aṭṭār</i> indicates the authenticity of these Hadiths.
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4-5. Examining the Implications of Hadiths Indicating the "Announcement of Imam Mahdi's Birth" and Resolving the Conflict with Hadiths Indicating the "Concealment of Imam Mahdi's Birth"

Considering that, according to the contextual evidence-based approach, all Hadiths indicating the announcement and concealment of Imam Mahdi's birth are considered authentic, and based on the narrator-centric approach, there are authentic Hadiths in both categories, and we now want to examine their conflicting implications. The question is, ‘Given the authenticity of the Hadiths indicating the announcement and concealment of Imam Mahdi's birth, how is their apparent conflict resolved?’

In the Hadiths indicating the announcement of Imam Mahdi's birth, **37**

individuals such as *Hakimah Khātūn*, daughter of Imam *Jawād* (AS), or those to whom Imam *Hasan al-‘Askarī* (AS) showed his son and introduced him as his successor, are mentioned as being aware of the birth of Imam Mahdi (AS). For example, it is narrated from *Aḥmad ibn Ishāq Ash‘arī*, one of the close companions and representatives of Imam *Hasan al-‘Askarī* (AS), that Imam *Hasan al-‘Askarī* (AS), in response to his inquiry about his successor, showed him Imam Mahdi (AS), who was a three-year-old child, and said, "If you were not esteemed by God and His representatives, I would not have shown you my son."

I said to him, "O! Son of the Messenger of Allah, who will be the Imam and Caliph after you?" He, peace be upon him, quickly rose, entered the house, then came out carrying a boy on his shoulder, whose face was like the moon on the night of the full moon, one of the three-year-olds. He said, "O! *Aḥmad ibn Ishāq*, were it not for your virtue with Allah, the Almighty and Glorious, and with His proofs, I would not have shown you this son of mine. Indeed, he is the namesake of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah's prayers be upon him and his family, and his kunya (honorific title), who will fill the earth with justice and fairness as it has been filled with tyranny and oppression." (Ibn Bābawayh, 1974 AD/1395 AH: 2, 384)

Based on this, one can understand the dual policy of Imam *Hasan al-‘Askarī* (AS) in concealing or revealing the birth of Imam Mahdi (AS): "Public concealment and private revelation." From this, the

mother, the concealment of his birth, and the concealment of his existence from the general public, with news of it reaching only a few close relatives and companions, becomes clear. With this description, it is natural that others, including the Sunnis, who were distanced from the Ahl al-Bayt (AS), would not have known about his birth and therefore denies it. However, given the abundant narrations, there is no room for denying the birth.

The policy of concealing and revealing the birth of Imam Mahdi (AS), in addition to indicating that society was not ready for his Imamate, is also presented as a means of testing people: "Indeed, Allah, may He be blessed and exalted, loves to test the Shi'a." (Ibn Bābawayh, 1974 AD/1395 AH: 2, 342)

The policy of concealing or revealing the birth of Imam Mahdi (AS) is similar to the birth of Prophet Moses. Because Pharaoh killed all the male children of the Israelites to prevent his birth, by the will and desire of God, Prophet Moses was born in secret, so that only his family knew of his birth.

Therefore, the oppressive conditions prevailing at the time of the birth of Imam Mahdi (AS) led his noble father to conceal his birth from the common people and reveal it only to a few select individuals, to protect the life of the divinely appointed proof.

Thus, the narrations indicating the concealment and revelation of the birth of Imam Mahdi (AS) are reconcilable, and *Bāšmad's* claim of their contradiction is rejected.

Conclusion

1. Based on a narrator-centric approach to verification, among the 52 existing narrations in the discussion, forty-seven are weak, two are *Ṣaḥīḥ* (Correct), two are *Ḥasan* (good), and one is *Muwaththaq* (authentic). This means only five narrations are considered reliable (including *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ḥasan*, and *Muwaththaq*), with three supporting the concealment of Imam Mahdi's birth and two supporting its announcement. Therefore, based on the narrator-centric approach, reliable narrations exist in both categories, leaving a conflict that requires resolution.
2. Based on a context-centric approach to verification, all narrations indicating both the concealment and announcement of Imam Mahdi's birth are considered reliable. Therefore, the conflict remains and requires resolution.
3. The narrations indicating the concealment of Imam Mahdi's birth do not conflict with those indicating its announcement. Rather, the concealment refers to public concealment, while the announcement refers to disclosure to select individuals. This concealment and announcement, considering the circumstances of Imam *Ḥasan al-'Askarī*'s time, are understandable and necessary for the protection of God's proof. Therefore, these seemingly contradictory sets of narrations are reconcilable, and there is no need to prioritize one over the other.

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