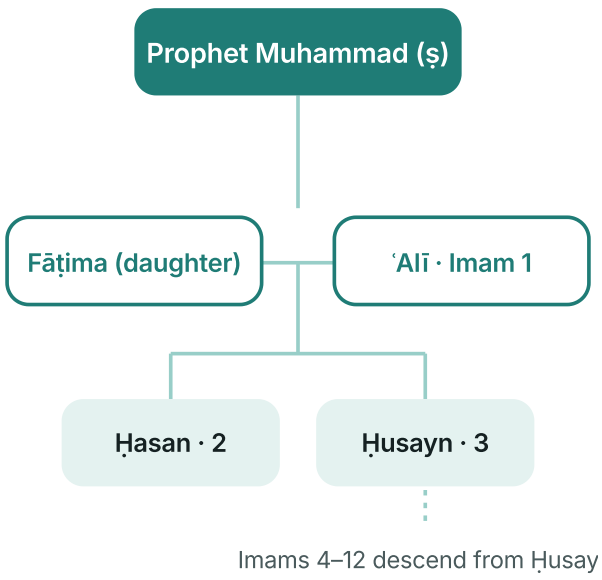
05

The Twelve Imams.

After the Prophet, guidance continued through twelve leaders from his family. They kept the message pure and showed people how to live it.



Leadership after the Prophet

Guides from the Prophet's own family

Shia Muslims believe that God did not leave the community without a guide after the Prophet. He chose twelve leaders, called *Imams*, from the Prophet's household, the *Ahl al-Bayt*.

An Imam is not a new prophet and brings no new scripture. He protects and explains the message, and lives it as a model, just as the Prophet did.

Where this comes from

Three key teachings

The two weighty things

The Prophet said: "I leave among you two precious things, the Book of God and my family. If you hold on to both, you will never go astray." (Ḥadīth al-Thaqalayn)

A purified family

"God only wishes to remove all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you completely" (33:33).

Love for his family

"Say: I ask no reward from you for this, except love for my near kin" (42:23).

The Twelve

The Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt

1 **ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib**
al-Murtaḍā
600–661 · Najaf, Iraq

2 **al-Ḥasan**
al-Mujtabā
625–670 · Medina

3 **al-Ḥusayn**
Sayyid al-Shuhadāʾ
626–680 · Karbala, Iraq

4 **ʿAlī**
Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn
658–713 · Medina

5 **Muḥammad**
al-Bāqir
677–733 · Medina

6 **Jaʿfar**
al-Ṣādiq
702–765 · Medina

7 **Mūsā**
al-Kāẓim
745–799 · Kadhimiya, Iraq

8 **ʿAlī**
al-Riḍā
765–818 · Mashhad, Iran

9 **Muḥammad**
al-Jawād
811–835 · Kadhimiya, Iraq

10 **ʿAlī**
al-Hādī
828–868 · Samarra, Iraq

11 **al-Ḥasan**
al-ʿAskarī
846–874 · Samarra, Iraq

12 **Muḥammad**
al-Mahdī
born 869 · Living, in occultation

The twelfth Imam, **al-Mahdī**, is believed to be alive but hidden by God. Muslims await his return, when he will fill the earth with justice as it had been filled with injustice.

> "I am the city of knowledge, and ʿAlī is its gate."
>
> Prophet Muhammad (ṣ) · reported in Shia and Sunni sources