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SPIRITUAL MEDICINE IN SHIʿI THOUGHT: A DOCTRINAL STUDY

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Abstract: This study explores the concept of "spiritual medicine" in Shiʿi thought, understood as a doctrinal system grounded in seeking intercession (*tawassul*) through the Imams and invoking blessings from their relics—such as the use of *ṭurba ḥusaynīyya* (soil from the grave of Husayn), *ḥirz* (amulets), talismans, and supplications attributed to them. This healing model integrates spiritual elements (prayer, Qur'anic verses) with material symbols (coded texts or sacred objects), and affirms the role of the Imams as intermediaries between God and believers, possessing the power to perform miraculous healings. The research draws on foundational Shiʿi texts such as *al-Kāfī*, *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*, and others, which recount instances of incurable illnesses cured through the touch or prayer of an Imam—including cases of blindness and paralysis—thus reinforcing the Shiʿi doctrines of the Imams' infallibility (ʿ*iṣma*) and their connection to the unseen. Special attention is given to the sacred use of *ṭurba ḥusaynīyya*, which is prescribed under strict conditions: it must be used in small quantities, accompanied by specific invocations. The study also addresses the controversies surrounding certain practices—such as the use of talismans containing unintelligible phrases—often criticized by opponents of Shiʿism for their perceived association with sorcery or superstition. However, Shiʿi jurisprudence strictly prohibits magic, while permitting *ruqyah* (healing incantations) grounded in the Qur'an and authenticated supplications. The paper concludes that spiritual medicine in Shiʿi Islam is not merely a healing technique, but a marker of sectarian identity. It departs from other Islamic traditions by rejecting the sharp distinction between prophetic miracles (*muʿjizāt*) and saintly *karāmāt*, attributing miracles to the Imams to affirm their divine designation. Despite criticism, these practices remain a vital component of Shiʿi heritage, linking collective historical memory—particularly of Karbala—to contemporary religious expression.
Keywords: Spiritual medicine, Shiʿism, intercession of the Imams, healing, blessings, talismans, *jinn* assistance, *ḥirz*, Qur'anic supplications, Shiʿi theology.

Introduction

There is no doubt that the pursuit of healing and recovery from illness is an innate human instinct, deeply rooted in the nature of the human soul. By disposition, humans feel a compelling need to seek remedies for ailments that afflict them, and no civilization or religious community is without some form of healing practice. These healing systems can be broadly categorized into two types: physical or material medicine, which relies on empirically tested substances and treatments; and spiritual medicine, which is linked to the unseen and metaphysical realm.

Religions and doctrinal sects have developed spiritual healing practices to satisfy the soul's inclination

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toward metaphysical cures. Religious scholars from various traditions have documented, interpreted, and systematized these forms of spiritual healing. While such practices differ from one religion to another depending on their sources, they also diverge in their internal applications and rituals. However, one notices a recurring imbalance in the way followers of various faiths approach spiritual healing. This imbalance has produced social consequences that merit analytical attention. This study aims to explore such phenomena and examine their doctrinal and practical dimensions in some depth.

Research Questions

This study centers on examining the practice of spiritual healing in Shiʿi Islam—specifically within the Twelver Imāmī tradition. It traces the origins, sources, and doctrinal underpinnings of these healing practices. The study seeks to answer the following key questions:

1. What are the primary features of spiritual healing in Twelver Shiʿism, and what are its historical and doctrinal roots?
2. What are the theological and narrational foundations that support belief in healing through supplications, miracles, and the use of *ṭurba ḥusaynīyya* (soil from Husayn's grave) within Shiʿi thought?
3. How has the concept of spiritual healing evolved in Shiʿi heritage over time, and what influence has it had on contemporary religious and social practices?
4. What is the connection between healing and intercession through the Ahl al-Bayt in Shiʿi theology, and how is this connection justified through doctrinal and narrational sources?

Research Objectives

This study aims to:

- Highlight and analyze the core spiritual healing practices among Twelver Shiʿis.
- Uncover the doctrinal, theological, and narrational roots of these practices.

The importance of this research lies in the absence of an independent study that systematically addresses Shiʿi spiritual healing and its foundations. This work seeks to fill that scholarly gap.

Methodology

In order to achieve its goals, the study employs the following methodological approaches:

1. Descriptive Method: To approach spiritual healing as a human phenomenon that can be understood, contextualized, and described in terms of its characteristics and directions within Shiʿism.
2. Inductive Method: To trace and document the spiritual healing practices and rituals present in Shiʿi tradition through textual and historical evidence.

Previous Studies

A number of Arabic and Western studies have addressed the topic of spiritual medicine in Shiʿism, exploring it from diverse angles and methodological approaches. The following are among the most significant contributions:

A. Arabic Studies

Several Arabic works have examined the subject of spiritual medicine within Shiʿi thought, offering important historical and doctrinal insights.

One of the earliest and most influential works is *Ṭibb al-Aʾimma* (The Medicine of the Imams), attributed to Ibn Sābūr al-Zayyāt, a prominent Shiʿi scholar and traditionist of the third/ninth century (Ibn Sābūr al-Zayyāt 1965). The book compiles a collection of prophetic and Imamic traditions concerning healing, dietary guidance, and therapeutic uses of herbs and other remedies. Drawing from the religious knowledge and scientific practices of the Islamic Middle Ages, the text reflects the close integration of medicine, theology, and spiritual discipline that characterized classical Islamic scholarship. The Imams are portrayed as both spiritual and medical authorities, offering not only physical cures but also guidance for holistic well-being. The work embodies a balanced view of healing, presenting health as a matter of body, mind, and soul, and is widely recognized as a foundational text in Islamic medical literature.

Another notable contribution is *The Ahl al-Bayt Encyclopedia of Spiritual Medicine* by Muḥsin ʿAqīl (ʿAqīl 2005a). This encyclopedic volume collects an extensive array of prayers, supplications, talismans (*ḥirz*), and spiritual protections attributed to the Ahl al-Bayt. The author discusses the Qurʾanic and legal bases for these practices, emphasizing their significance within Shiʿi spiritual life. The text is framed within a theological context that affirms divine omnipotence and supports the use of sacred texts and rituals as means of healing. The encyclopedia aims to preserve and legitimize these practices as part of Shiʿi religious heritage.

Muḥammad Kāẓim al-Qazwīnī's *The Medicine of Imam al-Ṣādiq* (al-Qazwīnī 2005) presents a focused study on the health-related teachings of Imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq. Drawing on a range of narrations, the book explores the Imam's guidance on herbal remedies, nutrition, preventative medicine, and the spiritual dimensions of healing. It reflects the fusion of material and spiritual care, including references to *ṭurba ḥusaynīyya* (sacred soil from Karbala) and supplications used for physical and emotional recovery. The work also highlights the Imam's contributions to the broader discourse on natural medicine in Shiʿi thought.

Another study examines the jurisprudential perspectives of contemporary Shiʿi authorities on spiritual medicine. This work analyzes the legal status of practices such as Qurʾanic incantations, supplications, and spiritual healing rituals, with a focus on distinguishing permissible forms of healing from impermissible acts like sorcery or superstition. The study provides insight into the theological boundaries and legal discourse surrounding spiritual medicine in modern Shiʿi jurisprudence (Anonymous n.d.).

In *Divine Healing in Spiritual Medicine,* Muḥsin ʿAqīl (ʿAqīl 2011) explores the relationship between spirituality and healing. The book proposes that physical and psychological well-being can be achieved through strengthening one's spiritual connection with God, supported by practices such as supplication, *dhikr* (remembrance), Qurʾanic recitation, and meditation. The author seeks to bridge modern medicine and religious healing, emphasizing a holistic view of health that encompasses both body and soul.

More recently, Hudā al-Ḥārithī and Fawz Kurdī (al-Ḥārithī and Kurdī 2025) co-authored a critical doctrinal study titled *Spiritual Medicine in Shiʿism: A Doctrinal and Critical Study*, published in *Islamic Research Journal*. This study evaluates the theological and jurisprudential foundations of Shiʿi spiritual medicine, questioning the legitimacy of certain practices and the use of supplications and Qurʾanic verses as therapeutic tools. The authors stress the importance of verifying the authenticity of such practices and measuring their consistency with Shiʿi doctrine and Islamic legal norms.

B. Western Studies

A number of Western academic studies have explored the phenomenon of spiritual healing within contemporary Shiʿi Islam, particularly in South Asia and the Middle East. One of the earliest and most detailed works is Vernon James Schubel's *Religious Performance in Contemporary Islam* (1993), which documents devotional rituals in India and Pakistan. Schubel shows how supplications, such as *Duʿāʾ al-Tawassul*, are employed as therapeutic interventions for chronic and incurable illnesses, integrating religious performance with communal healing (Schubel 1993). Mary Elaine Hegland's ethnographic study "Shi'a Women's Rituals in Northwest Pakistan" (2003) similarly emphasizes the role of women in using Shiʿi prayers, religious gatherings, and shrine visits as responses to psychological suffering and physical hardship (Hegland 2003). Kamran Scot Aghaie's *The Martyrs of Karbala* (2004) highlights the symbolic association between participation in ʿĀshūrāʾ rituals and collective healing. Rituals such as self-flagellation are framed not only as acts of mourning but also as mechanisms for spiritual purification and divine assistance (Aghaie 2004).

Lara Deeb's *An Enchanted Modern* (2006) offers an anthropological perspective on public piety among Shiʿi women in Lebanon, demonstrating how pilgrimage to shrines—particularly that of Sayyida Zaynab in Syria—functions as a form of spiritual and bodily healing. Deeb underscores the integration of religious practice into daily life, where seeking baraka (blessing) is tied to both spiritual resilience and health (Deeb 2006). Ingvild Flaskerud's *Standard-Bearers of Hussein* (2010) focuses on female ritual performers in Iran, analyzing the psychological and spiritual healing achieved through rituals such as *Duʿāʾ Kumayl* and the use of sacred objects like *ṭurbat Ḥusayn* (Flaskerud 2010). Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi's seminal work *The Spirituality of Shiʿi Islam* (2011) explores the gnostic and mystical dimensions of Shiʿism. In Chapter Five, he examines the theological logic of supplication and shrine visitation as pathways to healing, presenting the Imams as intermediaries whose spiritual authority bridges the human-divine divide (Amir-Moezzi 2011).

Karen G. Ruffle's *Gender, Sainthood, and Everyday Practice in South Asian Shiʿism* (2011) investigates the role of saints and shrines—such as the tomb of Shah ʿAbd al-Laṭīf in Pakistan—in Shiʿi spiritual medicine, where practices such as the use of amulets and invocations are central to therapeutic care (Ruffle 2011). Lastly, Laleh Khalili's article "The Uses of the Afterlife" (2016) analyzes the concept of spiritual healing within the Shiʿi imaginary in Lebanon. Drawing on fieldwork, Khalili illustrates how shrine visitation, such as that to the tomb of Imam ʿAlī in al-Nabatiyya, along with consultations with spiritual authorities, are perceived as legitimate alternatives to conventional medical treatment (Khalili 2016).

To summarize, these Western and Arab studies have primarily focused on documenting the ritualistic and theological dimensions of spiritual healing practices, or on analyzing their social and gendered dynamics from anthropological perspectives. However, most of them have neglected the dynamic interaction between spiritual medicine and modern social transformations, such as technological shifts and secularization. Moreover, they have yet to offer critical assessments of the scientific validity or ethical boundaries of such practices. While there is no single comprehensive study exclusively dedicated to "spiritual healing among Shiʿis," the aforementioned sources offer a valuable foundation for further inquiry into the phenomenon across legal, theological, and traditional medical frameworks.

Spiritual Healing through Supplications Attributed to the Shiʿi Imams[1]

1. Supplicatory Traditions for Healing and Prevention

Shiʿi sources contain a wide array of supplications (*duʿāʾs*) and protective invocations (*taʿawwudhāt*) attributed to their Imams, either by word or by deed, concerning both the prevention and treatment of illnesses. These supplications fall into two primary categories based on their claimed origin:

1. Those said to be of quasi-revelatory nature or treated as such within Shiʿi theology.
2. Those reported by the Imams as having proven effectiveness through experience and subsequently adopted as normative practices among their followers.

Below is a detailed overview of select examples:

a. Supplications and Amulets for Preventative Protection

Among the most notable is an amulet attributed to ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, said to offer protection against sorcery, possession, poison, oppressive rulers, demonic forces, and all forms of harm. The text of the *ḥirz* is extensive and filled with coded invocations and scriptural references. It includes phrases such as: "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Ay Kanūsh, Ay Kanūsh, Arshsh, ʿAṭnī Ṭnī Ṭḥ, Yā Miṭṭarūn... Depart, by the power of God, O accursed one, by the majesty of the Lord of all worlds..."(*Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār*, 91:193; *Ṭabrisī, Makārim al-Akhlāq*, 415). This amulet is believed to protect the wearer from thieves, wild animals, serpents, and other harmful creatures.

b. Specific Qur'anic Sūrahs Assigned Healing Power

The Shiʿi tradition also includes prescriptions for reading certain chapters of the Qur'an for the prevention or alleviation of specific illnesses:

- **Sūrat al-Naḥl (Q. 16)**: Abū Jaʿfar al-Bāqir is reported to have said, "Whoever recites Sūrat al-Naḥl once a month will be spared financial hardship and seventy kinds of affliction, the least of which are madness, leprosy, and vitiligo" (*al-Ṣadūq, Thawāb al-Aʿmāl*, 107; *Ṭabrisī, Makārim al-Akhlāq*, 364).
- **Sūrat al-Wāqiʿah (Q. 56)**: According to a report from Abū ʿAbd Allāh, "Whoever recites Sūrat al-Wāqiʿah every Friday will be beloved by God and by all people. He will never experience hardship, poverty, or affliction in this world." This chapter is also said to reference the Commander of the Faithful and his descendants (ibid., 117, 364).

In both cases, the regular recitation of these chapters is associated with maintaining well-being and averting illness.

2. Supplications for Healing After Illness Has Set In

In addition to preventative invocations, several narrations involve specific supplications said to heal existing ailments:

- One report states:

> "I complained to Abū ʿAbd Allāh (al-Ṣādiq) of a pain, and he told me, 'Say: In the name of God, then place your hand on the afflicted area and repeat: I seek refuge in the might of God, in the majesty of God, in the greatness of God, in the collective power of God, in the Messenger of God, and in the names of God, from the evil I fear for myself...'—seven times." The narrator affirms that upon doing so, the pain was lifted (*al-Kulaynī, al-Kāfī*, 2:566; *Ṭabrisī, Makārim al-Akhlāq*, 390).

[1] The terms "Shiʿi" and "Shiʿism" in this study refer specifically to the Imāmī (Twelver) Shiʿi tradition.

- Another narration reports a conversation between Dāwūd ibn Kathīr al-Raqqī and Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar, in which the former complains of persistent headaches that interrupt his night prayers. The Imam instructs him:

  > "Whenever you feel that pain, place your hand on it and say: I seek refuge in God, and I place myself under His protection from all that afflicts me... In the name of God the Great, through His perfect words... O God, by their right upon You, grant me relief from this pain." The narrator states that the pain ceased thereafter (*Majlisī*, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 92:104).

- A final example involves a pilgrim from Khurāsān who approaches ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn and requests prayer for a pain in his spleen. The Imam replies:

  > "God has already relieved you of it, praise be to Him. But if it returns, write these verses from Sūrat al-Isrāʾ (Q. 17:110–111) in saffron ink mixed with Zamzam water and drink it." He also instructs him to write the verses on deer parchment and wear it on his left arm for seven days (*al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Sajjādiyyah*, 98; *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 92:104).

In this transmitted text, healing is sought through talismans whose meanings are unintelligible and whose intended significance is unknown.

The following lines are attributed to ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib:

Five hā's inscribed, and lines that cross and bind,
A cross encircled, four dots cast aligned.

And secret signs—when counted, seven stand,
No fault you'll find, inscribed by sacred hand.

Then comes a wāw, a hāʾ that trails behind,
A ṣād, a mīm within the center signed.

These are great names—majestic, deep, and grand,
So guard them well; beware the slipping hand.

By them the pain and ailment flee away,
What doctors could not cure, they hold at bay.

And whoso wears them, freed from wrath and fear,
Shall see all grief and burden disappear.

The shape of the talisman as transmitted in these traditions appears as follows: *hāʾ hāʾ hāʾ hāʾ hāʾ // .+. ʾaʾ ʾaʾ ʾaʾ ʾaʾ ʾaʾ ʾaʾ ʾaʾ wa-hāʾ ṣād mīm —*

This type of material in Shiʿi healing narratives reflects a therapeutic culture that combines spiritual elements (such as supplication and Qur'anic recitation) with material symbols (such as talismans and coded signs). While debates persist regarding the legitimacy of some of these practices—particularly those marked

by obscurity or esoteric form—they remain part of the Shiʿi religious heritage, believed by many adherents to possess protective and curative power, grounded in the spiritual authority of the Imams and the experiential tradition of their followers.

Healing through the Miracles of the Shiʿi Imams

The Meaning of "Miracle" in Shiʿi Thought

In Shiʿi tradition, the word *muʿjiza* is linguistically derived from the root *ʿajz* (inability), signifying that which renders others incapable. It is thus the opposite of power. The term came to denote an act that no one else can replicate, even those normally capable of great deeds (Ibn Ḥamza al-Ṭūsī, 5; al-Rāwandī, 3:974; al-Majlisī, 89:123).

Doctrinally, a miracle in Shiʿi theology is defined as an act that defies the laws of nature and confirms the legitimacy of a claimant to a divine office, such as prophethood or imamate (al-Khūʾī, 33; al-Ḥillī, 161; al-Ṭūsī, 50; al-Rāwandī, 3:974; al-Majlisī, 89:123).

Shiʿi scholars maintain that God supports the Imams with miracles as a means of authenticating their divine appointment. This view is established in their conditions for validating miracles, and is affirmed by numerous textual sources. For example, Qutb al-Dīn al-Rāwandī (d. 573/1177) states: "There is consensus among the true sect regarding the authenticity of the reports of the Prophet's and the Imams' miracles, and their consensus is authoritative, for among them is one who is infallible" (al-Rāwandī, 3:1039).

> Similarly, the Shiʿi historian Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī al-Āmulī (d. 310/922) writes: "Just as miracles served to affirm the claims of prophets, they are equally necessary to affirm the claim of the Imam. Did not God grant miracles even to those of lesser rank than the Imams—such as Maryam the Virgin and the Companions of the Cave—as the Qur'an records?" (al-Ṭabarī, 25–26; al-Ḥillī, 168; al-Baghdādī, 72; al-Mufīd, 68–69; al-Shīrāzī, 380).

In contrast, Sunni theology confines miracles to prophets alone. According to this view, a miracle must accompany a claim to prophethood and serve to confirm it. These acts are deemed extraordinary, beyond the capacity of ordinary humans. Only a true prophet can perform a *muʿjiza* (McDermott 1978, 85; Gramlich 1987, 52–53). Moreover, while a *muʿjiza* is meant to be public and demonstrative, a *karāma* (charismatic wonder) is typically concealed (Gramlich 1987, 43). The Sunni tradition thus emphasizes that a miracle is meant to convince others of a prophet's truth, whereas a *karāma* serves to elevate the spiritual status of the person upon whom it appears (Gramlich 1987, 43). As such, the public nature of miracles contrasts with the discreetness of *karāmāt*.

Shiʿi scholars such as al-Mufīd argue that the occurrence of miracles through the Imams is logically possible and supported by a large body of transmitted reports. This view was widely accepted among Twelver Shiʿis, with the notable exception of the Nawbakhtī family. Ismāʿīl b. ʿAlī Abū Sahl al-Nawbakhtī and his grandson al-Ḥasan b. Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī, though upholding the infallibility of the Imams, rejected the attribution of miracles to them (Kraemer 2004, 1044).

Interestingly, a later Nawbakhtī work—*al-Yāqūt fī ʿIlm al-Kalām* by Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm b. Nawbakht—reasserts the possibility of miracles occurring at the hands of Imams. The author cites examples such as Āṣif b. Barkhiyā (the vizier of Solomon) and Maryam bint ʿImrān. However, this work emerged in a later period

and does not necessarily reflect the earlier Nawbakhtī position as described by al-Mufīd (al-Ḥillī, 186; Ṭihrānī, 2:444–45, 25:271–72; Madelung 1970, 15).

Opposition to miracles at the hands of Imams also came from the Muʿtazilites—except for a few thinkers such as Ibn al-Ikhshīd and Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (Schmidtke 1991, 195; al-Mufīd, 40–41; Gramlich 1987, 98; Schmidtke 1991, 160). Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 436/1044) is a key Muʿtazilī voice in this discussion (Gimaret 1999, 322–24).

Shiʿi scholars also cite examples of miracles occurring through non-prophets, such as the divine communication to the mother of Moses (Q 28:7) and the provision of sustenance to Mary after she shook the dry palm tree (Q 19:25; Wensinck & Johnstone 1991, 631). Though Sunnis might interpret such events as *karāmāt* or *irhāṣāt* (pre-prophetic signs), Shiʿis present them as genuine miracles (al-Ḥillī, 276; Gramlich 1987, 109).

Al-Ḥillī argues that miracles confirm the Imams' claim to leadership, just as they confirmed prophetic truth. He cites Āṣif b. Barkhiyā as a non-prophet who performed miracles, emphasizing that the essence of miracle lies not in who performs it, but in what it affirms. For him, the prophet is not defined by the miracle alone, but by the prophetic claim that accompanies it (*Kashf al-Murād*, 276–77; Gramlich 1987, 109–10).

The Shiʿi position is clear: while affirming that the Prophet Muḥammad is the Seal of the Prophets, they also hold that miracles are not exclusive to prophets. Instead, miracles serve to verify any truthful claim—whether of prophethood or imamate (Bar-Asher 1999, 140–41). Thus, Shiʿism extends the concept of miracle to include the Imams without undermining the unique status of the Prophet.

Notably, Shiʿi literature does not commonly use the term *karāma* for these extraordinary acts. Instead, they insist on using *muʿjiza* to describe the Imams' miraculous deeds, thereby rejecting the Sunni distinction between miracle and charismatic wonder (Amir-Moezzi 1994, 91). Moreover, Shiʿi texts often stress the resemblance between prophets and Imams, especially in the performance of miracles.

Sunnis maintain that the Imams' wonders are *karāmāt*, but Shiʿis argue they are *muʿjizāt*, publicly performed to affirm the Imams' legitimacy before skeptics. Hence, the Imams' miracles are open and manifest, unlike the hidden and personal *karāmāt* of the Sunni tradition.

This broad consensus in Shiʿi thought affirms that God works miracles through the Imams to establish their authority and verify their divine appointment.

Models of Healing through Miracles in Shiʿi Thought

Shiʿi scholars have authored numerous works documenting miracles that, according to their belief, were performed by the Imams through divine power. Among the most prominent of these works are *al-Kāfī* by Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī, *Iʿlām al-Warā bi-Aʿlām al-Hudā* by Quṭb al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥusayn Saʿīd ibn Hibat Allāh al-Rāwandī, and *al-Arbaʿīn fī Imāmat al-Aʾimma al-Ṭāhirīn* by al-Shīrāzī (al-Shīrāzī 380). Other notable titles include *Nawādir al-Muʿjizāt fī Manāqib al-Aʾimma al-Hudā* by Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī al-Shīʿī, *Madīnat al-Maʿājiz* by Hāshim al-Baḥrānī, and *al-Maʿājiz wa al-Karāmāt* by Fāḍil al-Ṣaffār.

What follows is a selection of reports from these sources that illustrate the Shiʿi belief in miraculous healing performed by the Imams:

One account narrates that a youth approached ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib and said:

"I have a brother who is obsessed with hunting. One day while out hunting, he encountered ten wild oxen and killed one. Immediately, half his body became paralyzed, and he could no longer

speak except through gestures. We have heard that your master (i.e., you) can heal him. We are descendants of the people of ʿĀd and still worship idols and cast lots for divination. If your master can heal him, we—ninety thousand of us—will embrace Islam at his hands."

ʿAlī replied: "When your brother comes to me, I will heal him."

Soon thereafter, an elderly woman arrived in a camel-litter. ʿAlī said:"Go tonight to al-Baqīʿ, and you will witness wonders from ʿAlī."

Accordingly, they followed him. When they reached the site, they found two small fires. ʿAlī entered the smaller one, overturned it onto the larger one, and then approached the litter and said: "Rise by the permission of God, young man. You are well."

The young man immediately stood up—his arms and legs restored—and threw himself at ʿAlī's feet in gratitude. He embraced Islam, as did the people with him, while the crowd stood speechless (al-Ṭabarī, 255).

Another report comes from Ibrāhīm ibn al-Aswad al-Taymī, who said: "I saw ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn, peace be upon him, brought a blind child. He wiped the boy's eyes, and his vision was restored. Another paralyzed child was brought to him, and upon being touched, the child stood and walked" (al-Dāraqutnī, 2:820).

A related account is reported by Abū Jaʿfar, who said:

"Ḥabbābah al-Wālibiyya entered upon ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn while crying. He asked, 'Why are you weeping?' She replied, 'May I be your ransom, son of the Messenger of God—people in Kūfa say that if you were a true Imam, chosen by God, you would pray to remove this defect from my face.'"

He said to her:

"Come near me."

She approached, and he passed his hand over her face three times, murmured some words, and then instructed her:

"Go to the women, greet them, and look in the mirror. Tell me what you see."

She did as he asked, and when she looked into the mirror, it was as if God had never created anything on her face. The blemish had disappeared completely (al-Ṭabarī, 261–62; Ibn Taymiyyah, 4:376; *Majmūʿ al-Fatāwā*, 35:230).

Such narrations are abundant in Shiʿi literature and form a core component of its doctrinal system. These miracle accounts are designed not only to affirm the Imams' divinely endowed status and infallibility, but also to position them as spiritual intercessors between God and humanity. The miracles are framed as proof of their legitimacy and access to divine knowledge, reinforcing the belief in their role as protectors against harm and agents of healing.

Furthermore, these stories highlight the narrative function of miracle tales in constructing Shiʿi identity. Through these acts, the Imams are depicted not only as heirs of prophetic light but also as vessels of sacred continuity between heaven and earth. Although these accounts are disputed by other Islamic traditions—often due to the lack of external corroboration—they remain foundational in Shiʿi religious discourse. Within this

framework, miracles are not merely supernatural interventions but markers of the Imams' enduring spiritual authority, reinforcing the community's trust in their sanctified legacy.

Healing through the Soil of al-Ḥusayn in Twelver Shiʿism

Among the distinct healing practices found within Twelver Shiʿi belief is the use of *al-turbah al-Ḥusaynīyah*—sacred soil collected from the grave of al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī in Karbala. This soil, believed to hold miraculous properties, is taken from the vicinity surrounding the Imam's grave, although Shiʿi scholars disagree on the exact geographic boundaries. Some specify a radius of seventy cubits, while others allow for a broader perimeter. The prevailing belief is that the closer the soil is to the grave itself, the more potent its effect (al-Kulaynī, 4:888; al-Sabzawārī, 9:304).

Doctrinal Basis for Healing with al-Turbah

The theological foundation for this practice lies in numerous traditions attributed to the Imams. Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar is reported to have said after being poisoned:

"Do not take anything from my grave for the sake of blessing, for all soil from our graves is forbidden—except for the soil of my grandfather al-Ḥusayn. God, Exalted be He, has made it a cure for our Shiʿa and our followers" (al-Majlisī, 98:118).

Similarly, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq is cited as saying: "In the clay of al-Ḥusayn's grave is a cure for every disease; it is the greatest remedy" (al-Nūrī, 10:329–30).

Conditions for Effectiveness

Shiʿi scholars maintain that healing through the *turbah* is effective only under certain conditions. First, the one seeking healing must be a Shiʿi believer, as the soil's efficacy is seen as contingent upon faith and *wilāyah* (allegiance) to the Imams. Second, the use of the *turbah* must be limited in quantity—preferably no more than the size of a chickpea—and it should be used with reverence, often through ingestion, mixing with water, or applying it to the body (al-Ṭūsī, 511; al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, 10:401).

The proper procedure includes invoking specific supplications when using the soil, as emphasized in various narrations. For instance, one tradition recorded in *Biḥār al-Anwār* states: "Whoever takes from the soil of al-Ḥusayn's grave without reciting the prescribed supplication will not benefit from it" (al-Majlisī, 98:135). The supplication includes phrases such as: "O God, I ask You by the angel who grasped it, by the Prophet who preserved it, and by the Imam buried therein, make this a healing from every ailment and a protection from every fear."

Ritual Practices

Additional rituals involve kissing the soil, placing it on the forehead and eyes, and passing it over parts of the body. Numerous traditions describe these acts. For example, in *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*, Ibn Qūlawayh narrates from Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq: "Place the soil on your eyes, kiss it, and rub it over your body while saying: O God, by this soil and by the one buried within it… make it a cure from every disease and a safeguard against every affliction" (Ibn Qūlawayh, 475–476).

Spiritual and Symbolic Dimensions

The healing power attributed to *turbah al-Ḥusayn* extends beyond physical treatment; it symbolizes spiritual purification, divine intercession, and a connection to martyrdom. Shiʿi believers are instructed to invoke the memory of Karbala and the tragedy of al-Ḥusayn when seeking healing. Crying or even feigned

weeping (*tabākī*) is encouraged, as the act itself is spiritually meritorious and emotionally cathartic (Ayoub 1978, 22–25).

This sacramental use of soil demonstrates a material engagement with sacred history. It reflects the Shiʿi understanding of the body–soul relationship, where physical remedies are inseparable from spiritual allegiance. According to al-Bāqir: "The clay of al-Ḥusayn's grave is healing for every illness and a protection from every fear" (al-Majlisī, 98:131–132). Other narrations confirm the soil's effectiveness even when taken from a considerable distance—"from as far as a mile," said one narration from Abū al-Ṣabāḥ al-Kinānī (Ibn Qūlawayh, 275; al-Majlisī, 98:124).

Furthermore, Shiʿi tradition permits ingestion only for healing, not for mere blessing, and always with prescribed formulas. The detailed process, as outlined in both *Biḥār al-Anwār* and *Miṣbāḥ al-Mutahajjid*, includes reading Sūrat al-Qadr, invoking the Imams, and citing angelic presence associated with the grave (al-Ṭūsī 511; Ibn Ṭāwūs 136).

To sum up, the practice of healing through *turbah al-Ḥusayn* illustrates the interplay between ritual materiality and doctrinal belief in Shiʿism. It unites bodily affliction with memory, pain with faith, and soil with sanctity. While often contested by other Islamic traditions due to the lack of corroboration outside Shiʿi hadith corpora, the practice remains central to Shiʿi religious life, reinforcing the belief in the continuing spiritual efficacy of the Imams, particularly al-Ḥusayn, as a cosmic mediator and intercessor.

Title: Rituals of Healing and Faith: Al-Bāqir's Prescription and the Shi'i Practice of Therapeutic Soil

One of the most vivid and instructive episodes in Shi'i narrative tradition involves Imam Muhammad al-Bāqir (d. 114/732), whose doctrinal and spiritual influence remains foundational to early Imāmī thought (Lalani, 2000). In a well-known ḥadīth recorded in *Biḥār al-Anwār*, a visitor suffering from two contradictory ailments—back pain and internal distress—approaches the Imam. Al-Bāqir prescribes for him the sacred soil (*ṭīn*) of Karbalāʾ, the earth surrounding the grave of his grandfather, Imam al-Ḥusayn. The man responds that he has already tried using the soil, but without result. Al-Bāqir is visibly upset by this skepticism and proceeds to demonstrate its efficacy, personally delivering a dose and instructing the man on the proper ritual use of the soil (al-Majlisī, 98:138–139).

This narrative underlines two fundamental aspects of the theology of healing in Twelver Shi'ism: first, the necessity of *yaqīn* (spiritual certitude) in the efficacy of sacred material objects, and second, the importance of ritual form—recitations, bodily purification, and intention—in unlocking that efficacy. As the ḥadīth details, the Imam prescribes a specific devotional sequence: a nighttime purification ritual, donning pure garments, anointing oneself with perfumed oils, performing a series of ritual prayers and invocations, and finally the ceremonial extraction and consumption of the soil, accompanied by formulas of supplication and praise.

The narrative emphasizes that healing is not merely pharmacological but symbolic and ritualistic. The sacred soil's power is believed to be annulled by improper handling, irreverent storage, or the lack of correct incantations. As another report affirms, the therapeutic power of al-Ḥusayn's soil functions only within a radius of four miles from his tomb and is effective only when combined with faith and ritual purity (Ibn Qulawayh, 280; al-Majlisī, 98:126–127).

Al-Majlisī himself notes a critical point: while one report suggests similar curative efficacy for the soil from the graves of other Imams and even the Prophet, the consensus of the Shi'i tradition remains exclusive

to the soil of al-Ḥusayn, due to its unique eschatological and sacrificial significance (al-Majlisī, 98:127). This centralization reinforces Karbalāʾ not only as a geographical site of pilgrimage but as a metaphysical axis of spiritual healing and martyrial theology.

Additional narratives reinforce the superiority of al-Ḥusayn's soil even above the sanctity of the *Kaʿba*. In one striking episode, al-Bāqir advises a man to forgo contributing thread to the *kiswa* (covering of the Kaʿba) and instead purchase honey, saffron, and mix it with the sacred soil for distribution to ill members of the Shi'i community. This inversion of religious priority—elevating Karbalāʾ above the Haram—is a consistent theme in Imāmī discourse (Ibn Qulawayh, 274; al-Majlisī, 98:123).

Furthermore, mixing the soil with sweet substances such as honey or saffron—a practice found in several reports—was often done to improve taste but may also symbolize the merging of divine sweetness with the bitterness of martyrdom. In one narration, a compound made of Karbalāʾ soil and rainwater is described as a curative formula distributed among the Shiʿa for healing difficult ailments (Ibn Qulawayh, 279; al-Majlisī, 98:125).

Another significant report describes Imam al-Bāqir preparing a scented drink made with this soil and sending it to a follower, Muḥammad b. Muslim, who was ill in Medina. Upon drinking it, the man recovers instantly. The Imam explains that the remedy contained a portion of soil from the graves of his forefathers, underscoring the continued use and internal transmission of sacred matter among the Imams themselves (Ibn Qulawayh, 275; al-Majlisī, 98:120–122).

This particular narrative introduces yet another key element: *taqiyya* (precautionary dissimulation), especially in handling sacred matter in public. The Imam warns against careless exposure of the sacred soil, which might allow malicious spirits or unbelieving jinn to defile it and thereby nullify its power. The emphasis on secrecy and reverence reflects not only the precarious status of Shi'i communities in early Islamic history but also the metaphysical fragility attributed to sacred substances (Kohlberg 1975, 395–402).

The efficacy of the soil is consistently tied to an intimate recognition of the *wilāya* (authority) and sanctity of al-Ḥusayn. In the words of Imam al-Ṣādiq: "If a sick believer who knows the right of al-Ḥusayn and his sacred station takes from his grave the size of a fingernail, it will serve as a cure" (Ibn Qulawayh, 277; al-Majlisī, 98:122).

Within Twelver Shīʿī belief, the consumption of the soil from the grave of Imām Ḥusayn holds a unique and sacred place. While this practice is not encouraged in excess, it is permitted in small, symbolic quantities—roughly the size of a chickpea—particularly in the context of seeking healing and divine protection. The ingestion of this soil, known as *turbat al-Ḥusayn*, is tightly bound to specific ritual etiquette, including supplications and Qurʾānic recitation.

One narration recounts that a man once questioned Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq regarding the medicinal potency of the Ḥusaynī soil, saying: "I heard you say that it dissolves every illness." The Imām replied that this was indeed the case, but warned that its efficacy depends on performing the proper invocation: "One must first kiss the soil, place it on the eyes, and consume no more than the size of a chickpea. Then recite: 'O God, I ask You by the angel who took this soil, by the Prophet who preserved it, and by the successor [waṣī] who is buried therein, to send blessings upon Muḥammad and his family, and to make this a cure from every disease, a safeguard from every fear, and a protection from every harm.' Afterward, it should be wrapped securely and recited over with Sūrat al-Qadr." (al-Rāwandī, 186; al-Majlisī, 98:135; al-Mufīd, 147–48).

Imām ʿAlī al-Riḍā (d. 203/818), the eighth Imām of Twelver Shīʿism, is also associated with this ritual. Shiʿī traditions recommend breaking the fast (*iftār*) with the sacred soil, based on his reported statement: "The best thing to break the fast with is the clay from the grave of Ḥusayn" (al-Nūrī, 6:130). Yet, while Shīʿī scholars prohibit the consumption of all forms of clay, an exception is made for *turbat al-Ḥusayn*, believed to be endowed with divine healing. As Imām al-Ṣādiq declared, "All clay is forbidden like swine flesh. Whoever consumes it and dies, I will not perform funeral prayers over him—except for the soil from Ḥusayn's grave, which holds healing from every illness, though if consumed for pleasure, it brings no cure" (Ibn Qūlawayh, 285; al-Majlisī, 98:129).

In another narration, Imām Mūsā al-Kāẓim (d. 183/799) reportedly said: "Eating clay is forbidden like carrion or blood or swine meat—except for the clay from Ḥusayn's grave. It is a cure for every disease and protection from every fear" (Ibn Qūlawayh, 285; al-Majlisī, 98:130; al-Ḥāʾirī, 1:116). The sacred nature of this soil is thus understood as rooted in its association with the sanctified body of Imām Ḥusayn and the martyrdom site of Karbalāʾ.

Yet, moderation remains a guiding principle. One narration warns: "God created Adam from clay, and forbade his descendants from eating it." When asked about Ḥusayn's soil, the reply was: "God has forbidden the consumption of human flesh, but permitted them to consume ours—so long as it is only a small amount, like a chickpea" (Ibn Qūlawayh, 285; al-Majlisī, 98:130; al-ʿĀmilī, 5/3:414). Thus, consuming a small quantity of *turbat al-Ḥusayn* is deemed both spiritually potent and ritually permissible.

Shaykh ʿAbbās al-Qummī, in *Mafātīḥ al-jinān*, adds legal and devotional commentary: "It is not permissible to eat any kind of soil or clay, except for the sacred soil of Ḥusayn (peace be upon him), and only for healing—not for pleasure. The amount should not exceed a chickpea or, at most, a lentil. It is preferable to place it in the mouth followed by a sip of water and the invocation: 'O God, make it a means for abundant provision, beneficial knowledge, and healing from every disease and sickness'" (al-Qummī, *Mafātīḥ al-jinān*, 881).

The practice also extends into other life-cycle rituals, such as *taḥnīk* (ceremonial rubbing of the newborn's mouth). Among the Shīʿa, it is believed that rubbing the baby's gums with Ḥusaynī soil brings health, blessings, and future prosperity. Imām al-Ṣādiq is quoted as saying, "Rub your children's mouths with the soil of Ḥusayn—indeed, it is protection" (al-Majlisī, 98:136; 21:407; al-Ḥāʾirī, 1:116). For a comparative study of the custom of *taḥnīk* in medieval Islam, see Giladi (1988).

The sanctity of this practice, according to Twelver theology, depends not only on material contact with the soil but also on spiritual readiness: sincere faith in the Imāms, pure intention, proper ritual observance, and absolute belief in its healing powers. The soil must be stored in a clean, ritually protected container, and should not be touched by impure individuals or entities. This fusion of physical substance and metaphysical conviction exemplifies the holistic Shīʿī view of healing—one that integrates body, soul, history, and memory.

While this ritual has encountered criticism from non-Shīʿī perspectives and modern scientific outlooks, Shīʿī scholars often defend it on theological grounds, emphasizing its basis in authentic hadith literature and its symbolic value in reinforcing the memory of Karbalāʾ and the ethical commitment to *wilāya*—devotion to the Imāms. The ritual serves not only as a healing act but as a reaffirmation of identity and continuity with sacred history.

In sum, *turbat al-Ḥusayn* represents a unique convergence of the sacred and the material in Twelver Shīʿism. Its use connects the believer to the martyrdom of Ḥusayn, the authority of the Imāms, and the divine presence believed to be manifest in their suffering. This ritual object encapsulates the broader Shīʿī theology of intercession, remembrance, and sanctified matter, forming a cornerstone of devotional life and communal identity.

Healing through Magic and the Shiʿi Legal Perspective on Seeking Cure through Sorcery

The Concept of Magic in Islam

The Arabic term *siḥr* (magic) is linguistically defined as "anything whose cause is subtle and obscure" (Ibn Manẓūr, 4:348, s.v. "siḥr"). Another classical definition describes it as "incantations, charms, and invocations that affect the body, heart, mind, or thoughts of the afflicted" (al-Shinqīṭī, 4:41). Legally and theologically, *siḥr* is understood as a practice reliant on demonic assistance or arcane rituals intended to produce extraordinary effects on the physical or mental state of a person. The Qurʾān makes multiple references to magic, notably in the verse: "And they followed what the devils used to recite during the reign of Solomon. Solomon did not disbelieve, but the devils disbelieved, teaching people magic" (Qurʾān 2:102). This passage emphasizes that the source of magic lies with the devils, and associates its practice with disbelief.

In the Shiʿi hadith corpus, a narration from Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq further reinforces the doctrinal position: "Magic is disbelief (kufr); whoever learns it or practices it has departed from the faith*"* (al-Kulaynī, 6:470). This indicates a strict prohibition and underscores the spiritual danger inherent in engaging with magical practices.

Magic in Shiʿi Thought: Definitions and Divergences

Among Twelver Shiʿi scholars, *siḥr* is generally regarded as a set of deceptions and illusions that have no objective reality. It is seen as a set of verbal formulas, written symbols, incantations, or charms that appear to have effects on the body, mind, or will of an individual without actual direct interaction (al-Majlisī, 60:3; al-Anṣārī, 2:258–59).

There is, however, a debate among scholars regarding whether magic has any real efficacy. The majority opinion holds that magic is purely illusionary. Others allow for a distinction between certain kinds of magic—some of which may have real effects, while others are only delusions (al-Majlisī, 60:28–33; al-Anṣārī, 1:365; al-Jawāhirī, 22:87).

The prominent Shiʿi jurist Shaykh Murtaḍā al-Anṣārī (d. 1281/1865) acknowledged the complexity of reconciling these various definitions and effects of magic, stating: *"It is clear that combining all these definitions of magic poses a serious problem; nevertheless, what matters most is determining its legal ruling, not its conceptual classification"* (al-Anṣārī, 1:265; cf. al-Jawāhirī, 22:84–85).

Shiʿi Legal Rulings on Magic and its Practice

Shiʿi scholars have expended considerable effort in categorizing types of magic and delineating their legal statuses. Al-Anṣārī wrote: "Magic is unquestionably forbidden in general—there is no dispute over this. Indeed, it is a necessary ruling in religion, as will be clarified. The traditions prohibiting it are abundant" (al-Anṣārī, 1:266).

Furthermore, according to juristic consensus, magical practices involving talismans that cause harm, deceive believers, or show disrespect toward sacred objects—such as the Qurʾān or the Names of God—are

categorically prohibited, whether or not they are technically classified as *siḥr* (al-Jawāhirī, 22:78; al-Khwānsārī, 3:23–24).

There is, however, a nuanced allowance for certain forms of magic used for beneficial purposes—for example, the return of a lost person, the preservation of a building, or the conquest of fortresses in warfare. These may be deemed permissible on the basis of legal default (*aṣāla al-ibāḥa*), though some scholars nevertheless extended the prohibition to such uses, particularly those involving talismanic devices, albeit without clear justification (al-Jawāhirī, 22:84–85).

Healing through Magic in Shiʿi Thought

Legal Debate on Seeking Cure through Magic

As demonstrated by the preceding discussion, there is disagreement among Shiʿi jurists regarding the permissibility of healing through *siḥr* (magic) in cases of necessity. Some scholars argue for its permissibility based on the principle of default legality (*aṣālat al-ibāḥa*). According to this position, although magic is generally forbidden, its therapeutic use is allowed when the intent is pure and no harm is caused. In this view, the benefit derived—healing the afflicted—justifies the use of certain magical practices for medicinal purposes (al-Rūḥānī, 1:384; al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, 17:144–45).

Some jurists distinguish between types of magic, stating that non-prohibited forms of magic—particularly those that rely on the properties of substances and natural remedies rather than on occult rituals or demonic invocations—may be used in healing. Only that which involves deception or harm to others is categorically forbidden.

In contrast, another group of jurists holds that seeking treatment through magic is absolutely prohibited, regardless of intent or outcome. This stricter stance is based on the presumption that magic is intrinsically impermissible, and any use of it, even for healing, constitutes a breach of divine law. A gloss on *Minhāj al-Fiqhah* notes: "The stronger position—assuming that harm is not a necessary condition of *siḥr*—is that it is unconditionally forbidden, whether harmful or not, as affirmed by many leading scholars due to the generality of prohibitive evidences" (al-Shinqīṭī, 4:35).

The Ontology of Magic in Shiʿi Theology

While practice and legal usage are contested, Shiʿi scholars unanimously agree on the ontological reality of magic—it is not mere illusion, though its efficacy is strictly subject to divine will. Practicing or learning magic, even for healing purposes, is regarded as impermissible due to its association with *shirk* (idolatry) or reliance on jinn and demonic entities.

A well-known Prophetic tradition cited in Shiʿi sources states: "Whoever goes to a soothsayer or a magician and believes him has disbelieved in what was revealed to Muhammad."(al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, 12:132)

The theological rationale is that all acts of magic are mediated through entities other than God, making them spiritually and doctrinally dangerous. In his *Tafsīr al-Mīzān*, ʿAllāma Ṭabāṭabāʾī clarifies: "Magic is a real phenomenon, but it is carried out by devils who mislead humans through hidden methods" (Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 1:267).

The Qurʾānic narrative of Pharaoh's magicians further reinforces this point: "Then behold! their ropes and their rods—it was made to appear to him by their magic as though they moved" (Qurʾān 20:66). This verse suggests that the effects of magic are fundamentally illusionary, although they manifest as real phenomena—again, only by God's permission.

Additionally, in al-Majlisī's encyclopedic *Biḥār al-Anwār*, magic is described as reliant upon pacts with jinn, thereby constituting a satanic act incompatible with tawḥīd (monotheism). Although its effects are acknowledged, they are framed as morally corrupt and spiritually subversive.

Thus, the Shiʿi tradition both recognizes the reality of magic and categorically warns against its use, especially in therapeutic contexts, unless carefully delineated and free from occult or harmful dimensions.

The Ruling on Seeking Healing through Magic in Shiʿi Jurisprudence

Shiʿi jurisprudence categorically forbids the use of magic (*siḥr*) for any purpose, including therapeutic ones, due to its association with disbelief and reliance on demonic forces. In a legal opinion (*fatwā*) by Grand Ayatollah ʿAlī al-Sīstānī, it is explicitly stated: "It is not permissible to seek treatment through magic or talismans that contain magical symbols, for such acts constitute forms of disbelief." (al-Sīstānī, 3:145)

Similarly, Imām Rūḥ Allāh al-Khumaynī reaffirms the comprehensive prohibition of magic in his legal manual *Taḥrīr al-Wasīla*: "Magic is prohibited in all its forms, whether intended for harm or benefit." (al-Khumaynī, 2:89)

Permissible Alternatives: Qurʾanic Recitation and Prophetic Supplication

The Islamic alternative to magic, according to Shiʿi theology, lies in authorized spiritual remedies, such as recitation of the Qurʾān and authentic supplications from the Prophet and Imams. Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq is reported to have said: "If you fall ill, recite Sūrat al-Ḥamd seven times—for it is healing." (al-Kulaynī, 6:499)

Among the widely endorsed practices are invocations such as Duʿāʾ al-Jawshan al-Kabīr, attributed to Imām ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn (Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn), which is recited for protection from harm and evil. Classical Shiʿi sources such as *al-Balad al-Amīn* and *Miṣbāḥ al-Kafʿamī* preserve and recommend this and other invocations (al-Kafʿamī, 346; *Miṣbāḥ al-Kafʿamī*, 246–47; al-Majlisī, 78:331).

Between Reality and Prohibition: The Appeal and Danger of Magical Healing

Despite these clear prohibitions, some individuals continue to turn to practitioners of magic for healing, believing it produces rapid results. However, Shiʿi authorities consistently warn against this deviation. Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍl Allāh cautions: "Even if healing is achieved through magic, it is an impure healing that distances the individual from God's mercy" (Faḍl Allāh, 112).

Islam, in contrast, encourages seeking natural and lawful remedies. The Prophet Muḥammad is reported to have said: "Seek treatment, for indeed God has not placed a disease without also placing a cure for it." (al-Muttaqī al-Hindī, 10:4, ḥadīth no. 28076)

Modern medicine is thus considered a valid method of healing, so long as it does not conflict with the principles of Islamic law.

It is evident that magic, in both concept and application, is unequivocally condemned in Shiʿi thought. While its existence is acknowledged, its use is regarded as a form of *shirk*—a theological deviation that contradicts pure monotheism (*tawḥīd*). Healing must be pursued through legitimate means, such as Qurʾanic recitation, prescribed supplications, and trustworthy medical treatment, accompanied by reliance on God. Thus, Shiʿi jurists unanimously uphold that magic is a path of darkness, while the light lies in the guidance of the Qurʾān and the teachings of Ahl al-Bayt.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that *spiritual healing* in Shiʿi Islam constitutes a complex set of practices aimed at curing illness through specific prayers, incantations, and talismans attributed to the infallible Imams. Far from being mere traditional remedies or alternative therapies, these practices form part of a religio-doctrinal system in which the Imams are viewed as intermediaries between God and humanity. As such, their role in healing transcends ordinary human capabilities, leading to theological assumptions about their ability to influence the cosmos and determine fate—including physical healing.

Shiʿi reliance on the Imams for healing often manifests in practices such as seeking blessings from shrines, supplication at tombs, and the use of amulets and talismans—many of which contain cryptic phrases, unknown names, and magical symbols. These items may at times involve invoking jinn or supernatural forces, thus blurring the line between permitted prayer and forbidden occultism. The Imams are invoked as channels for healing, and these practices reflect a theological commitment to their exceptional status.

The study also shows that spiritual healing in Shiʿism is not merely therapeutic but reflects a comprehensive doctrinal system rooted in the theology of *wilāyah* and *imāmah*. The Imams are seen not only as spiritual leaders but also as vessels of divine blessing (*barakah*) and miraculous powers. Three main forms of spiritual healing have been identified:

1. Supplications and Charms: Prayers attributed to the Imams, some of which include symbolic language and mysterious inscriptions. An example is the *ḥirz* (amulet) attributed to ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, which blends clear Arabic text with incomprehensible phrases, believed to carry supernatural efficacy.
2. Miracles of the Imams: Numerous narratives describe incurable illnesses being healed by the touch or prayer of an Imam—such as the blind seeing or the paralyzed walking. These accounts reinforce the belief in their infallibility and connection to the unseen world.
3. The Soil of Ḥusayn (Turbah): A small portion of earth from the grave of Imām Ḥusayn in Karbala is believed to possess unique healing powers. Specific guidelines are prescribed for its use—such as limiting the quantity to the size of a chickpea and reciting designated prayers—along with strict prohibitions against defiling it.

This study highlighted how these healing practices are deeply embedded in a theological framework distinct from other Islamic schools, particularly in their lack of distinction between prophetic miracles and saintly wonders. In Shiʿi belief, the supernatural acts of the Imams are not merely *karāmāt* (charismatic wonders) but are perceived as *muʿjizāt* (miracles) affirming their divine authority.

Regarding healing through magic, the study confirms that Shiʿi jurisprudence unanimously prohibits it, regardless of whether it aims to harm or to heal. This prohibition stems from its association with *shirk* (idolatry) and reliance on jinn. While there is scholarly disagreement about the technical definition of *siḥr*—with some permitting the use of talismans that cause no harm—others reject even this distinction.

As a religiously sanctioned alternative, reciting the Qurʾān and authentic supplications, alongside conventional medicine, are encouraged. Shiʿi scholars emphasize that true healing belongs to God alone, and all means of treatment must align with *tawḥīd* (divine unity) and avoid dubious or forbidden methods.

The study concludes that spiritual healing in Shiʿism reflects a dynamic interplay between the physical and the metaphysical. The ingestion of *turbah*, for instance, combines material practice with spiritual conviction in the Imams' intercessory powers. This fusion of belief and ritual reinforces Shiʿi religious identity, linking daily life to the legacy of Karbala and the tragedy of Ḥusayn.

Despite facing criticism from scientific and theological standpoints, Shiʿi scholars defend these practices as expressions of sacred tradition and metaphysical certainty. Belief in the unseen (*ghayb*) and the sanctity of the Imams is central to their justification.

Ultimately, the research shows that spiritual healing in Shiʿi Islam is not an isolated phenomenon, but a cosmological expression that fuses history (Karbala), theology (wilāyah), and praxis (healing). It is a key pillar of Shiʿi collective consciousness, shaping identity, memory, and devotion. Whether through *ḥirz*, *turbah*, or shrine rituals, these practices serve as both personal remedies and communal affirmations of loyalty to the Ahl al-Bayt. In doing so, they sustain theological heritage and embed sacred memory within everyday life—forming a ritual bridge between the sacred and the lived.

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