

## Foreword by the Publisher

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

All praise belongs to Allah, the one who created us and then sent to us His Messengers, specifically His final Prophet, and made apparent for us the divinely appointed guardianship of His intimate friends, the A'imma of true guidance, for the perfection of the faith.

He then guided us towards the best of ethical traits and the keys for the acceptance of our actions and permitted us to seek the reward of our actions so that we may enter into the haven of peace that we may reside in the permanent gardens, where He will allow us to witness the Angel who will say to us, **ﷻ**Salam [Peace] this is the word from your Lord, the Merciful. **ﷻ**

May the prayers and salutations be upon the final Messenger of Allah, Muhammad al-Mustafa and upon his pure and immaculate family members – those who came to explain to us the responsibilities which we must fulfill (towards Allah) through their righteous words, and who came to lead the servants toward the oceans of light using the flame which is like a **ﷻ**Glowing lamp lit from the oil of the blessed olive tree. **ﷻ**

Since the dawn of civilization, humanity has had to grapple with the forces of good versus evil. Societies sometimes live in periods of relative calmness and security, but just when everyone starts to get comfortable, oppression raises its ugly head, bringing peace to a standstill.

This has been the situation since the coming of the first human being on Earth, namely Prophet Adam, and will persist until as we continue to 'progress' in terms of science and technology, we see that humanity is 'digressing' in terms of morality, culture and its interaction with other nations.

Asides from the countless 'natural disasters' which have displaced and killed millions of people over the ages, the current century has seen wars on the increase, and it is the innocent men, women and children who are caught in this cross fire.

How can it be that humanity has evolved to such a level that they can penetrate the furthest points of the solar system, but we cannot live in harmony with our neighbors? Why is it that we can feed our

insatiable appetite for the latest technological gadgets, but we cannot manage to nourish the hungry children dying of malnutrition?

How is it possible that we can spend billions of dollars on the design and production of the latest weapons of mass destruction, but we cannot afford to provide education and basic health care services to the most vulnerable of our society? Is there any hope for the underprivileged and deprived people of the world? Yes there is a beacon of hope.

The belief in an awaited reformer and savior of humanity is an embodiment and a symbol of an aspiration cherished by mankind, in spite of its divergent religious doctrines. The Mahdi (ajtf) as he is referred to in the Islamic beliefs is the crystallization of an inspiration through which all people, regardless of their religious affiliations, are waiting for.

They all look forward to a day when the Heavenly mission will materialize when the tiring march of humanity across history will culminate and the world will be able to live in peace and tranquility.

Religion, when it endorses this common consciousness and stresses that in the long run, this world will be filled with justice and equity after having been filled with injustice and oppression, gives it a factual value and converts it into a definite belief.

This belief is not merely a source of consolation rather it is a source of *virtue* and *strength*. It is a source of *virtue* because the belief in the Mahdi (ajtf) means the total elimination of injustice and oppression prevailing in the world and it is a source of inexhaustible *strength* because it provides hope which enables humanity to resist frustration, however hopeless and dismal the circumstances may be.

The belief in the appointed day of his advent proves that it is possible for the forces of justice to face and prevail over a world previously filled with injustice and oppression and reconstruct the world order.

After all, prevalence of injustice howsoever dominant and extensive it may have become is an abnormal state and must be eliminated. The prospect of its elimination after having reached its climax infuses a great hope in every persecuted individual and every oppressed nation, that it is possible to change the state of affairs of this world.

The concept of a Mahdi (ajtf) is more widespread than just within the Muslim community however its detailed features, as determined and explained by Islam, are more in line with mankind's aspirations and dreams.

The Islamic concept of the Mahdi (ajtf) is in greater conformity with the feelings and sentiments of the oppressed and the persecuted of all times, more so than in any other religion or tradition. It is Islam which has given a concrete shape to an abstract idea!

It is no longer necessary to look forward to an unknown savior, who *may* come into the world at a distant future, rather as the savior *is* already here we simply have to look forward to the day when the

circumstances are appropriate for him to reappear and begin his great mission.

The Mahdi (ajtf) is no longer an idea. He is no longer a prophecy. We do not need to wait for his birth. He *already* exists. We only have to *wait* for the inauguration of his role. He is a specific entity living among us in his real human form and he shares our hopes and our joys; and grieves at our sorrows and times of distress.

He witnesses all the acts of oppression and persecution which are perpetrated on the face of the earth, and somehow or another, he is affected by them. He too is anxiously waiting the moment when he will be able to extend his helping hand to *everyone* upon whom any wrong has been done, and that he will be able to eradicate injustice and oppression completely.

Although this *Awaited Savior* is living among us, waiting for the appointed moment of his advent, however, he has been ordained not to proclaim himself, nor disclose his identity.

The concept of the Mahdi (ajtf) as espoused by Islam shortens the gap between the oppressed and the expected savior. It connects the bridge between them, howsoever long the period of waiting may be.

The traditions (*ahadith*) urge the believers in the Mahdi (ajtf) to keep on waiting for him and to continue looking forward to solace. The idea is to establish a close spiritual and intuitive link between the believers on the one hand and with the Mahdi(ajtf) and all that he stands for, on the other hand.

It is not possible to establish such a link without believing that the Mahdi (ajtf) has already been born and that he is a living and contemporary personality. The late Professor Henry Corbin, philosopher and researcher on Islam, and a student of the late 'Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husain Taba`taba'i has stated:

*“To my mind, the Shi’ite is the only sect which has preserved and perpetuated the link of Divine guidance between man and God through its belief in the Imamate. According to the Jews, the prophethood, a real link between man and God, came to an end with Moses. They do not believe in the Prophethood of Jesus and Muhammad. The Christians too, do not go beyond Jesus. The Sunnite sect has also stopped at the Prophet Muhammad and believes that the link between man and God has been severed with the end of the Prophethood.”*

Thus, it is only the Twelve Shi’a, who believes that the link between man and God still exists through the Mahdi, and this belief will continue to exist forever!

However, being in a state of *Intiḡar* or ‘active expectation’ for the awaited savior of humanity, the Shi’a differ greatly from other religious traditions and the various schools of thought within the Islamic world, Since it is them who have been ordered to and are actively working to lay the foundations which will herald the glorious advent of Imam al-Mahdi (ajtf).

The word, *Intiḡar* comes from the ‘Arabic root word “نظر” which literally means “to see” something.

However, when it is put into the fourth of the ten (most common) ‘Arabic verbal forms, it becomes “إنتظار” which literally means “to wait or to anticipate (something)”.

From the Islamic texts and the writings of the scholars, we understand that Intiḩar is an active state which a true believer must be in 24 hours a day. What is the proof of this?

One of the great Mara’ja (sources of emulation) of this current era and the foremost authority on issues of the 12th Imam, Ayatullah al-’Uzma al-Hajj ash-Shaykh Lutfullah Safi Gulpaygani (may Allah keep him under His projection) explains that term of actively waiting for the Mahdi (ajtf) in his work, “Intiḩar: The Force Behind Resistance and Opposition [to Tyranny].”

In this work he states:

*“Intiḩar is a state (which a person finds himself in) which is comprised of true faith and firm belief in the sources (of legislation) in the faith of Islam (The Qur`an and Sunnah of the Prophet and A`immah) and in the mastership and guardianship (Wilayah) of Imam al-Zaman (ajtf). It (Intiḩar) is a spirit of zeal and keen desire for the advent, governance and living along side with the Ahlul Bayt (as).*

*It is the detestation of the current state which we are in times of imperfection, corruption, perversity and degeneration of our surroundings. This state of affairs (being separated from the Imam and the corruption around us) burns deep within the heart of a person and creates turbulence within the heart and affects one’s entire presence including one’s individual actions and struggles to better the entire society...”*

The late Henry Corbin stated the following in regards to the anticipation of the Imam:

*“In the meantime it is the duty of all the Muslims, especially the Shi’a, to strive steadfastly for the creation of the proper atmosphere and the right climate for the establishment of a world order based on justice, virtue and piety.*

*They should not only mould their individual lives according to the teachings and high ideals of Islam, but they should also bend their efforts to set up the Islamic order on the collective and communal level.*

*They should devote themselves to the service of the faith and be prepared to receive the Awaited Savior. That is what was meant by the Imams when they exhorted the Muslims to keep on waiting for the Mahdi (ajtf).”*

The founder and leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the late Ayatullah al-’Udhma al-Hajj Sayyid Ruhullah Khumayni (may his spirit be sanctified) stated the following in regards to awaiting the final Imam (ajtf):

*“What has value is that a person stands up in opposition to oppression. He stands up and puts an end to the face of despotism and does not permit inhuman acts of injustice to take place this is what has value*

and worth!

*We have a responsibility! It is not correct to believe that since we are awaiting the advent of Imam al-Zaman (ajtf), we just sit at home, take the prayer beads (tasbih) in our hands and merely repeats the prayer, 'may his return be a speedy one.' Rather, the swift return of the Imam must be made such by our own actions! We ourselves must lay the groundwork for the return of the awaited Imam!"*

Therefore, we see that we have a very important role in preparing ourselves and the society for the return of the Mahdi (ajtf).

He is alive and visits different places and takes an interest in world events. He often attends the assemblies of the faithful, but does not disclose his true identity. He will reappear on the appointed day, and will fight against the forces of evil, lead a global revolution and set up a new world order based on justice, righteousness and virtue.

Allah in the Noble Qur`an has clearly promised that a day will come when truth will prevail and the righteous will come to power:

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا  
اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَى لَهُمْ... ۞

***“Allah has promised those of you who believe and do good deeds that He will surely make them successors on the Earth as He made those who were before them and that He will surely establish their religion which He has chosen for them...” (Suratul Noor, 24: 55)***

It is clear from this and other verses that ultimately, the righteous will take the world administration in their hands and Islam will be victorious over all the other religions. However, as we are instructed, those awaiting the glorious advent and the eradication of all forms of evil need to actively engage in laying the groundwork for the return of Imam al-Mahdi (May Allah hasten his reappearance).

The book that you have in your hands details over 80 responsibilities, divided into 99 chapters which provide us with practical steps that need to be performed and implemented in order to put in place the foundations for the advent of the Imam of our time.

Some of the responsibilities mentioned in this work perhaps are things which we already perform on a regular basis, without being aware that they are our duties towards the Imam. By simply ‘shifting’ our intention and enacting them with the thought in mind that they are being done to heard the return of the Awaited Savior, we can do our part to ensure that his advent is hastened and that we have done whatever is in our power to assist him.

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