

## **Some Words on Awaiting Deliverance through the Appearance of THE 12TH IMAM (AS) May Allah (SWT) Hasten His Reappearance**

Dr. Jalali: What are the Muslims supposed to do during the period of occultation? In other words, what are their obligations during this period?

Mr. Hoshyar: Our scholars have identified and written in their books certain things Muslims ought to do during the occultation: to pray for The Twelfth Imam (AS); to do charitable works for him; to perform Hajj and to appoint someone to do that on his behalf; to seek his help and assistance in times of difficulty, and so on. There is no doubt that all these suggestions are praiseworthy and there is no need to enter into any discussion about them.

However, the most important obligation mentioned in the sources and that which needs further elaboration is awaiting deliverance through him (Intidhar al-Faraj). To some extent, this obligation is neglected and no detailed discussion about it has been undertaken. There are many traditions from The Imams, both recommending the awaiting and enumerating its merits and excellences, during the occultation. Let us cite some examples,

Imam al-Sadiq (AS) says,

Any one who dies with the love (and accepting the successorship) of The Ahlul-Bayt while awaiting deliverance through the appearance of The al-Qaim, resembles the one who will be in The al-Qaim's tent.

Imam al-Ridha (AS) reporting from his ancestors and from The Prophet (S) relates the tradition from the latter, who said,

The best deed of my community is to wait for the 'Deliverance'.

Imam Ali (AS) says,

Any one, who awaits our government, resembles the one who, in the way of Allah (SWT), has rolled in his own blood.

In another tradition Imam al-Ridha (AS) praises the one who awaits the deliverance, and says,

How praiseworthy are patience and waiting for deliverance! Have you not heard that Allah (SWT) says in The Qur'an, 'You wait, and We too are waiting.' So be patient because deliverance will come after despair. Those who were before you were even more patient than you.

There are numerous traditions on a similar theme. The Imams (AS) always used to advise their followers to await deliverance. They reminded them that the mere act of waiting for deliverance is a kind of emancipation. The one who waits is like the one who fights against the disbelievers on the battlefield and has rolled in his own blood. As such, there is no doubt that the weightiest obligation for Muslims during the occultation is to anticipate deliverance. Let us now consider the meaning of this awaiting or anticipating deliverance.

How can a person who anticipates deliverance acquire the greatest reward that accrues to the one who does well? Is it sufficient for the one awaiting the deliverance to materialize to say with their tongue that they are awaiting the appearance of The Imam of The Age? Or, perhaps, from time to time, he should cry out and pray: 'O' Allah (SWT), send the deliverance through The Imam of The Age.'

On the other hand, after the daily prayers or in The Holy Shrines he should beseech Allah (SWT) to hasten the deliverance! Alternatively, following the blessing on The Prophet and his family he should add, 'Allahumma 'Ajjil Farajahu Sharif', meaning, 'O' Allah (SWT), hasten the deliverance through this noble (Imam)!' Alternatively, maybe he should read the special Prayer of Nudbah (Lamentation) on Friday mornings with a loud lament and sob.

All these recommendations are in their own place fitting. However, I do not think that by merely saying some things a person can attain the true benefit of awaiting the deliverance, whose excellences are enumerated in several traditions on the subject. Especially the comparison of the one awaiting the deliverance with the one dying on the battlefield fighting against the enemy of Allah (SWT), as related in one of the tradition above, cannot be just an exaggeration, since it is coming from The Imam to whom no false statement can be ascribed.

Imagine a person or persons who escape from every kind of social responsibility, from the moral responsibility of commanding the good and forbidding the evil, from taking a stance against corrupt and sinful behavior, from doing anything to stop injustices, by simply saying: 'O' Allah (SWT), let the deliverance through The Imam of The Age be imminent so that he can prevent this corrupt behavior.' Can your conscience accept that this person's status is comparable to the status of the one who is killed defending his religion? Can he be equal to the one who has sacrificed all his wealth, his family, and his comfort and security in the way of Allah (SWT) and attained the status of a martyr?

To be sure, there is a deeper meaning and significance to the act of awaiting the appearance of The Imam. In order to understand that let me preface the discussion with two general observations:

First, in the light of the traditions dealing with the function of al-Mahdi, it is possible to suggest that the program that The Imam intends to implement is ideal, comprehensive and, of course, difficult. It has as its target the reform of the entire world, the defeat of the forces of tyranny and wickedness in their entirety, the raising of Islam as the official religion of all the inhabitants of this world, the removal of prejudices and wrong attitudes from the minds of the people so that they can all live in peace and harmony under the government of Allah (SWT).

In addition, The Mahdi's revolution aspires to find a global community under one Allah (SWT), one religion, and one ideal system of law, and to bring all other communities under the united flag of Islam. Obviously, such a goal is not easy to accomplish. This program is practicable only when the human mind is prepared to accept those goals and to go beyond the narrow confines of materialistic ideologies to realize the value of God's guidance for humanity. The need for the revolution and the desire to promulgate the divine blueprint for an ideal human society have to come from the people who have actively participated in preparing the way for The Twelfth Imam (AS) to launch his program for the new world order.

Second, in view of several traditions reported from The Imams (AS), it appears that The Imam of The Age and his supporters will overcome the forces of disbelief and godless materialism by undertaking war. It will be with the power of just warfare that the forces of God's enemy and the supporters of disbelief and injustices will be exterminated. There are numerous traditions that speak about the impending use of force to achieve the goal.

For example, Imam al-Baqir (AS) said,

The Mahdi resembles his grandfather Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) in the way in which the latter began his struggle with the sword. He will kill the enemies of Allah (SWT), and those who have oppressed the people and have led them astray. He will gain victory through sword and creating fear (in the enemy). None of his army will face defeat.

A companion of Imam al-Baqir (AS) by the name of Bashir (AR) told the Imam,

'People say that when The Mahdi launches his revolution his tasks will become easy for him and there will be no bloodshed even to the smallest measure of a wound made for the purpose of cupping.' The Imam (AS) said,

By Allah (SWT), that is not the case. If such a thing were possible, it would have taken place for The Prophet (S). On the contrary, his teeth were wounded and his forehead injured on the battlefield. I solemnly declare that the revolution of The Master of The Command will not take place without our endeavors on the battlefield and without our blood being spilt.

The traditions suggest that the victory of the al-Mahdi's revolution will not simply be the result of God's endorsement and endowment of some hidden power to The Imam. It is not expected to succeed without manifest forces like a miracle that brings to fruit on its program of reform and revival; victory does not depend on the ordinary course of events. Besides this divine endorsement of the revolution will rest upon a well-equipped army that is capable of handling the most advanced weaponry in the contemporary arsenals.

With these observations derived from different traditions about the final revolution under al-Mahdi, we can begin to understand the preconditions for the advent of The Imam. This will also help us in grasping the responsibilities Muslims have towards this revolution, and then in judging whether Muslims today are ready to actively support this difficult task, and whether their awaiting for the establishment of the ideal rule under the al-Qaim has any merit.

My own understanding, which is based on the traditions from The Ahlul-Bayt (AS), indicates that the most important duty of The Muslims during this period when The Twelfth Imam (AS) lives a life of invisible existence (Ghaybah) is, first of all, to work diligently at reforming ourselves from within and with all the necessary seriousness. Muslims should adorn themselves with Islamic virtues, perform all the duties that are made obligatory on them, and apply the directives provided by The Qur'an in their daily lives.

Second, they should extract the social teachings of Islam from the teachings of The Qur'an, The Prophet and The Ahlul-Bayt, in order to execute those perfectly in their societies. By implementing the Islamic economic programs, they should resolve their economic problems and fight against poverty, unemployment, and concentration of illicit wealth. By adopting the divinely ordained laws, they should rid themselves of injustices and corruption. In short, they should commit themselves to set in motion the realization of an Islamic political, social, economic, and legal system, and present this to the world as a viable alternative.

More importantly, Muslims should learn modern sciences with extreme seriousness in order to not only benefit themselves but also other societies around the world. They should seek to be the leaders in all fields of human knowledge. Through their own religious and scientific progress they should demonstrate to the entire world that Islamic laws and ethics can serve as the ideal global system that strikes the balance between this and the next world. Moreover, by combining the concerns of a complete legal codex with the spiritual and moral concerns of the Islamic system, Muslims can become the source of emulation for a humane political, social and economic system.

In other words, Muslims have the obligation of excelling in every possible field related to the betterment of human society in order to provide each discipline with the moral and spiritual dimensions that Islam seeks from its followers. It is only then that they can expect to lead and to establish an ideal Islamic system under the leadership of al-Mahdi. Those who are engaged in these endeavors to make the revolution of al-Mahdi possible and successful are the ones who are truly waiting for deliverance through the appearance of The Twelfth Imam (peace be upon him). These hard-working, self-sacrificing individuals are the soldiers of The Twelfth Imam and can be compared with those who are actually on the field of battle fighting the forces of evil and wickedness.

As for those people who expect their problems to be solved by the political, social, and economic system created by those who have no commitment to the faith or to its moral and spiritual components, have so far created systems which give rise to inequalities, immoderation in spending, injustices in distribution of resources, and the many other evils with which humanity is confounded today. The situation is so desperate that it is hard to imagine the level of exploitation, corruption, and conflict that is generated by the new wealth and power, the byproducts of scientific and technological advancements.

The rich countries intend to dominate; the poor countries have shamelessly submitted to the overbearing compromises negotiated by their own rulers, the majority of whom are corrupt and morally bankrupt. In order to remain in power, they have sold out their own people and countries to their powerful masters, who make for them their decisions through a remote control of providing destructive military hardware for use against their own citizens. Now, individual Muslims who sit around and do not even think about some matters that face their fellow Muslims cannot be said to anticipate the appearance of The Twelfth Imam! These people do not have the necessary preparation to institute Islamic world government, even if they repeat a hundred times: Allahumma 'Ajjil Farajahu-Sharif', meaning, 'O Allah (SWT), hasten the deliverance through this noble (Imam).'

This is what I have understood from the traditions that speak about the merits of anticipating the appearance of The Twelfth Imam (peace be upon him). The entire philosophy of Intidhar (awaiting, anticipation) is summed up by Imam al-Sadiq (AS) who said,

Prepare yourselves for the revolution of our al-Qa'im, even if it means to gather an arrow for fighting God's enemies.

Abd al-Hamid Wasiti mentioned to Imam al-Baqir, 'In anticipation of the occurrence (of The al-Qaim's revolution) we have even withdrawn from engaging in trade.' The Imam (AS) said,

O' 'Abd al-Hamid, do you think that the one who has given up his life in the way of Allah (SWT), Allah does not make deliverance guaranteed for him? By Allah (SWT)! Allah will certainly deliver him. May Allah have mercy on the one who keeps our mission alive.

'Abd al-Hamid asked, 'What happens if I die before the deliverance comes?' The Imam replied,

Any of those who say, 'If I meet al-Qa'im I will help him,' then such a person will share the status of the one who will have fought near The Imam (defending him). Indeed, he will share the status of the one who will have been killed (defending him).

According to Abu Basir (AR), one of most prominent companions of The Sixth Imam, one-day Imam al-Sadiq told his companions, 'Should I inform you about a deed without which Allah (SWT) does not accept people's achievements?' Abu Basir told the Imam to do so. The Imam (AS) said,

To bear witness about God's Unity and Muhammad's Prophethood; to acknowledge God's commands and prohibitions; to love us and disassociate from our enemies; to accept the authority of The Imams, and to act with piety and seriousness; to adopt gentleness and to await the deliverance through the appearance of The al-Qa'im.

He, then, went on to say,

We will have the authority, which Allah (SWT) will establish at the proper time. Whoever wishes to be a companion and close associate of our al-Qa'im should await deliverance through him. Moreover, such a person should adopt piety and virtuous life and continue to anticipate our al-Qa'im in that state. If they live like that and if they die before the advent of The al-Qa'im, then they will reap the reward of someone who has actually been with The al-Qa'im.

O' my followers, be serious and work hard while awaiting al-Qaim's emergence. O' you who are blessed with God's mercy, may you taste the sweetness of the final victory.