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Part 4

Responsibility 4: Ma'rifat of the Imam Part 4

Another responsibility of the true believers is to be familiar with the signs of the reappearance of Imam al-Zaman (ajtf).

Just as was previously mentioned, it is important for us to recognize the signs of his return, as this is actually considered as a part of knowing the Imam. There are numerous signs which will herald his advent and they are divided into two categories:

1. Signs which are absolute and will definitely happen.
2. Signs which may or may not take place.

According to the narrations, it is obligatory to know and understand both types of signs. However, it is much more important to know the first type those that will definitely occur before his return.

According to the Islamic narrations, the signs that must occur before the Imam will return are five with a small discrepancy in some of them (due to there being various traditions in this regards). The differences in the signs will become obvious when we look at them directly from the traditions.

In brief, these signs are:

1. The arrival of Sufyani.
2. The arrival and uprising of Yamani.
3. A loud noise from the sky.
4. The killing of a pure soul (Nafs-e-Zakiyyah).
5. The sinking of Bayda`.

It has also been mentioned in the traditions that the image of a hand will be seen on the moon and this is also considered as one of the definite signs.

Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) has said:

لِلْقَائِمِ ۚ خَمْسُ عَلَامَاتٍ: ظُهُورُ السُّفْيَانِيِّ وَالْيَمَانِيِّ وَالصَّيْحَةُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَقَتْلُ النَّفْسِ الزَّكِيَّةِ وَالْخَسْفُ بِالْبَيْدَاءِ

“There are five (definite) signs for the return of al-Qaim (ajtf) the appearance of al-Sufyani (the appearance of) al-Yamani, a loud cry from the sky, the killing of a pure soul [an-Nafs al-Zakiyyah]; and the caving in (of the earth) at Bayda`.”¹

It has been mentioned in the traditions that al-Sufyani is a reddish white coloured man with a black eye and that he will make his advent during the month of Rajab. We are told that he will take over a few countries of the world and that the advent of al-Mahdi (ajtf) will be in the same year.

After many victories, al-Sufyani will turn his attention towards ‘Iraq and it is at this time that Imam al-Mahdi (ajtf) will make his advent from Makkah. At this point, a large contingent of forces will be sent to attack the Imam (by al-Sufyani), however when this army will reach the place known as Bayda` a location between Makkah and Madinah they will be swallowed into the Earth.

In addition, before the advent of the Imam (ajtf), many uprisings will take place such as the revolts of al-Hasani and al-Yamani and according to some traditions, the uprising of al-Yamani is also one of the definite signs.

The hearing of two cries one from the sky and the other from within the Earth is also one of the definite signs. During the first call, Jibra`il will call the name of Imam al-Qa`im (ajtf) and his father and will proclaim that the truth is with ‘Ali ibn. Abi Talib (as) and his Shi’a (followers). Everyone will hear this call in their own language and even the women who are in their house behind locked doors will hear the call.

As well, before the advent of the Imam, a noble person will be killed during the Hajj rites in Makkah. In the traditions, this person has been referred to as the Pure Soul or an-Nafs al-Zakiyyah. Detailed information about this individual has been mentioned in the books concerning the occultation of Imam al-Zaman (ajtf).

The importance of knowing the signs which will take place before the advent of our Imam, especially the definite signs that must occur, can best be understood when we review the history of Islam.

We see that some other signs may have already taken place and thus, a number of people falsely claimed to be the Mahdi (ajtf) Without doubt, these people have fallen out of the fold of Islam and it is they who are misguided and are left alone in utter spiritual darkness.

The reason for them falling into this state is that they were not acquainted with the signs related to the advent and uprising of the Imam such that they could follow them. In addition, they lacked awareness of the specific signs which will herald in the advent of the Imam.

If they had knowledge of these signs, then they would not have been led astray and would have stayed firm on the Imamate and Wilayat of the Imam (as). They would not have been fooled nor would they have mistaken anyone else for the real Mahdi (ajtf).

Possessing a ma'rifah of the signs of the advent, especially the definite signs which must take place, helps us in differentiating between truth and falsehood, and by recognizing Imam al-Zaman (ajtf), we would actually look forward to and prepare the groundwork for his uprising. We would also not falter in our obedience to him or our delay in adhering to him.

It has been narrated by Zurarah that Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) has said:

يُنَادِي مُنَادٍ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ أَنَّ فُلَانًا هُوَ الْأَمِيرُ وَيُنَادِي مُنَادٍ أَنَّ عَلِيًّا وَشِيعَتَهُ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ. قُلْتُ: فَمَنْ يُقَاتِلُ الْمَهْدِيَّ بَعْدَ هَذَا؟ فَقَالَ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ يُنَادِي أَنَّ فُلَانًا وَشِيعَتَهُ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ يَعْنِي رَجُلًا مِنْ بَنِي أُمَيَّةَ. قُلْتُ: فَمَنْ يَعْرِفُ الصَّادِقَ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِ؟ قَالَ: يَعْرِفُهُ الَّذِينَ كَانُوا يَرُؤُونَ حَدِيثًا وَيَقُولُونَ إِنَّهُ يَكُونُ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَكُونَ وَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْمُحَقُّونَ الصَّادِقُونَ

“A caller will announce from the sky: ‘Certainly so and so is the leader.’ Then a caller will announce: ‘Certainly ‘Ali (as) and his followers are the victorious ones.’” I said to the Imam: “So then who will fight against the Mahdi (ajtf) after this (call)?” The Imam replied: “Unquestionably, Satan will also call out: ‘Certainly, so and so and his followers will be the successful ones’ meaning a man from the tribe of Bani Umayyah.”

I said to the Imam: ‘So then how will a person be able to recognize the truthful one from the imposter?’ The Imam replied: ‘Those who narrate traditions will recognize (the difference) and they will say that it (the call from the sky) will come before (the advent), and they will understand this and will know that they (the ones who make the first call) are speaking the truth.’”²

¹. al-Ghaybah of Nu'mani, sec. 252 on the signs of the return, no. 9

². al-Ghaybah of Nu'mani, pg. 246, no. 28

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