

Imam Mahdi The Awaited Savior of mankind - Is it in the Holy Qur'an?

Letter to a fantastic young Muslim scholar in the United States

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From: Zahir Ebrahim, Project Humanbeingsfirst.org

Dated December 9, 2015 at 10:03 PM

Dear Dr. Sayed Ammar Nakshawani,

as-salamu 'alaykum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh; I have had the immense pleasure of listening to your speeches on youtube in recent weeks. This letter inquires into the intellectual question of Mahdi in the Holy Qur'an. You took on this topic in a most holistic manner in your lecture titled: *The Mahdi - World Religions - Ramadan 2015 - Sayed Ammar Nakshawani*, link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldpj8Jjuec>

I have been interested in this topic for many years and have compiled my own research in this area but which has led me to a different conclusion on this topic: that this matter is manifestly **Indeterminate** in the Holy Qur'an. Before I delve into this inquiry, I would like to introduce this topic and also introduce myself in order to holistically define the context for this inquiry and hope that you will most generously engage me and benefit me in this inquiry.

This is a topic that spiritually interests every Muslim, and as you rightly pointed out in your lecture, all mankind. It is of particular interest to me from at least two axes: theology, and social engineering. The latter term simply means mass behavior control by any means to better control human beings, an exercise which has been on-going from time immemorial. The notion of Mahdi as it appears in World's religions is not divorced from some aspect of social

engineering. Therefore, its examination directly in the Scriptures, specifically the Holy Qur'an which Muslims believe is the word of God, untampered by the hand or the mind of man, is most crucial. Meaning, its intellectual examination directly in the Scripture and not in its exegesis, hadith literature, and history. It is not just an academic interest, but rather of utmost existential import as well. While no Muslim scholarship entertains the idea of 'tahreef' in the Holy Qur'an for its pristine textual content, it is a sad tragedy of the religion of Islam that 'tahreef' has indeed transpired in the meaning and interpretation of the pristine text of the Holy Qur'an. Just the state of Muslims and the myriad sects and interpretations or schools of thought Muslims have become divided into, is self-evident evidence of the veracity of that statement. Therefore, we would like to separate from the mind of man, and the pen of man, and use the Word of God, so to speak, to understand the Mind of God. At least to the first order. That is only sensible, no?

I am not a scholar for your information, thanks God, and only a student, a most ordinary one at that. But also a peculiar student. I say thanks God for not being a scholar because the scholar as you know carries a mighty burden. Mightier the scholar, heavier the load. That burden is most aptly described in Surah An-Nahl verse 16:25 of the Holy Qur'an. I am a peculiar student I say because I am a student not of "ilm" per se, as in "talib-e-ilm" which is what is often understood from the word "student", but a student of reality as in "talib-e-reality", meaning, seeking to uncover reality, "haqeeqat", the way it actually is, and not by way of socialization by birth or culture or civilization, or by perception management, or by whim and fancy of the uncontrollable immanent spaces in the philosopher's mind. Meaning, unlike Plato the philosopher seeking his immanent Forms or Shapes in his mighty imagination to understand and explain creation, a student such as myself seeks to discover and uncover what is, the way it actually is. This is the principal foundation for uncovering truth, and haq, which are themselves prerequisites for establishing justice. All obvious of course to those with any ma'rifat of reality. What is not often obvious though is that the self always stands in its way. That self is both cognitive, as well as subconscious and instinctual. I do not speak here of the soul which is of course part of the self in virtually every theology. I am mostly concerned with the intellect, and the empirical, and what is discoverable, and to what extent, using the mind which is itself under influence of forces that it neither easily perceives nor controls. That is why mankind has been given "aql" - to reflect, and is called upon to come to the Holy Qur'an with a "cleansed heart", i.e., without prejudices and agendas, preconceptions and presuppositions, and specifically without socialization and confirmation biases --- for each shall only find in the Scripture what one is looking for. We often don't use the "aql" and the "cleansed heart" sufficiently, and in fact, we use it rarely, but continue to labor under the delusion of great

thought and great spiritual enlightenment. We sometimes confuse memory and oratory, knighthood and academic or theological degrees, and at times the length of beard and style of imama and gown, with reflection and understanding. The mark of piety stamped upon one's forehead is directly equated with “those who know” or understand. The humble ones don't do it for themselves, but followers seeing these signs in their scholars often bow before their authority. The truth of these words leave no room for doubt, for the matter is self-evident. And Qur'anic verses 2:166-167 further proclaim and reaffirm that empirical truth.

<p>Let them bear, on the Day of Judgment, their own burdens in full, and also (something) of the burdens of those without knowledge, whom they misled. Alas, how grievous the burdens they will bear! (Surah An-Nahl 16:25)</p>	<p>لِيَحْمِلُوا أَوْزَارَهُمْ كَامِلَةً يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَمِنْ أَوْزَارِ الَّذِينَ يَضِلُّونَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ أَلَا سَاءَ مَا يَزُرُونَ</p>
<p>“(On the day) when those who were followed disown those who followed (them), and they behold the doom, and all their aims collapse with them.</p>	<p>إِذ تَبَرَّأَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا مِنَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا وَرَأَوْا الْعَذَابَ وَتَقَطَّعَتْ بِهِمُ الْأَسْبَابُ</p>
<p>And those who were but followers will say: If a return were possible for us, we would disown them even as they have disowned us. Thus will Allah show them their own deeds as anguish for them, and they will not emerge from the Fire.” (Surah Al-Baqara, 2:166-2:167)</p>	<p>وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا لَوْ أَنَّنَا لَنَا كَرَّةٌ فَنَتَّبَرَأَ مِنْهُمُ كَمَا تَبَرَّأُوا مِنَّا كَذَلِكَ يُرِيهِمُ اللَّهُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ حَسَرَاتٍ عَلَيْهِمْ وَمَا هُمْ بِخَارِجِينَ مِنَ النَّارِ</p>

Caption Verses of the Holy Qur'an referenced in this letter

A rigorous intellectual journey of discovery of reality therefore, requires separating the observed from the observer, obviously, in order to lend both objectivity and rationality to

uncovering the underlying reality, “haqeeqat”, in every domain, or, uncovering what is empirical in the words of scientists, such that the reality can be uncovered and understood by anyone who treads that path and adopts that approach. If there is only one underlying reality beneath everything, every conception, every existence, every phenomenon, meaning one base “haqeeqat”, then all seekers can eventually reach it objectively such that all can then agree upon that “haqeeqat”! That is the principal foundation of unity --- for there isn't another; no?

Meaning, common ground or consensus or unity on “haqeeqat” can only be reached, not via unfalsifiable axioms of faith, but on pursuing falsifiable axioms, leaving subjective faith based axioms at home or in one's heart or for one's prayers or as one's motivation as the prime-mover for the journey of the mind. This is obviously the fundamental method of science which relies on axioms that are all falsifiable. I have employed that scientific approach, both as a trained engineer, and as an amateur social scientist with deep interest in sociology and psychology, to parsing social science. And specifically, to the study of religion to better uncover spiritual reality to the extent that it is cognitively and intellectually uncoverable using the head, albeit with ma'rifat and deep understanding, and only to the extent that one has the “zarf” and the “taufiq”. Some of this understanding is transcendental of course, and many a savant stand at the perch of “irfan” that is denied to ordinary mortals. I do not speak to that latter model of the Saints and the Sufis, nor to perennial philosophers and their immanent thesis, but to the model where one applies reason and logical analysis to data to deduce lessons and deeper understanding. What data? Today, in this inquiry letter, that data is what is stated in the verses of the Holy Qur'an on the question of Mahdi: What does the Holy Qur'an say if anything at all? The question, once again, is NOT: what does the pen of man says what it says. In other words, when studying Shakespeare for example, to understand the playwright's sense of divine tragedies and human weaknesses using his own words rather than using Cliff Notes and “darsi” commentaries of what others say it says.

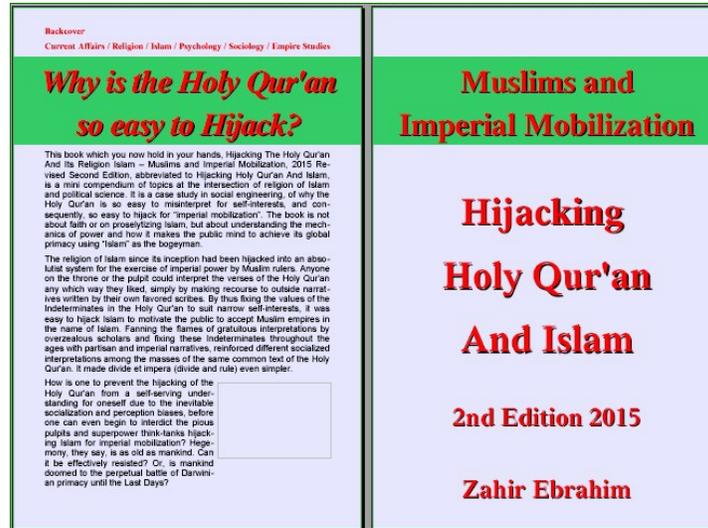
I apologize for the length of the preceding passages but I found it minimally necessary to set the ambiance correctly under which I would like to solicit your erudite analysis on my student-ish discoveries on the question of Mahdi in the Holy Qur'an which could be of direct benefit to me rather than just waste your time by you rehearsing formulaic prescriptions and pat formulations that you have already conceived as part of your belief system. I am not interested in your faith or your belief system or your understanding of Shia Islam. I am interested in intellectual rigor applied to a Scripture on a specific question as posed by your interlocutor. That means, what does the Holy Qur'an say about the imammate of Imam Mahdi, and not what other books written by historians, scholars, exegesis writers, and hadith compilers,

allamas and ayatollahs, etc., say about it. It is a constrained formulation, and its purpose is to come to grips with what precisely does the Holy Qur'an itself convey on the topic, and more importantly, what it does not say, or employs "mutashabihaat" to which interpretation and "tawil" have been imputed by the fertile imagination of man and penned by the hand of man. This is only the compartmentalized part of a larger study of understanding the Scripture which of course cannot be separated from the sociological context of the historical times in which it was revealed, compiled, and its interpretation handed down to posterity. The sociological and historical dimensions are foundationally rooted in epistemology and its discussion and analysis and conclusions are not a topic for today. As are the supposed teachings and "tawil" of the Imams of the Ahlul-Bayt in the Shia understanding of the religion of Islam, all of which are subject to the same epistemological considerations as well as being sourced from texts outside of the Holy Qur'an.

To get a further handle on the verses of the Holy Qur'an for intellectual study and reflection, without making recourse to the mind and pen of man for assistance, I have introduced two classifications to assist my study, **Determinate** and **Indeterminate**. These abstractions are defined on [pg. 120](#) in Chapter I Part-II of my book **Hijacking Holy Qur'an and Islam**, which, at best, despite its depth, only superficially examines the question apparent in the title based on my own limited acumen, and, not unsurprisingly, comes away with a completely different conclusion than what you concluded in your lecture on the topic of Mahdi. I spent a whole hour listening to your learned discourse, and several hours on each of your other most articulate lectures. Since I found myself in apparent agreement with many conclusions you relate based on my own humble study if not with its every detail, I humbly invite you to spend at least one hour reviewing what I concluded differently from you. I invite you to offer your sharp insights on what I have tentatively arrived at which does not rely on what the pen of man has stated, but what the Holy Qur'an itself has stated and not stated. The matter is discussed in depth on [pgs. 212 - 273](#), and specifically in the subsection **Fixing Qur'anic Beatitudes** [starting pg. 243](#).

Here is a link to the PDF of my book ---

<https://sites.google.com/site/humanbeingsfirst/download-pdf/book-hijacking-quran-islam-2nd-edition-2015-zahirebrahim.pdf>



Most people don't read others' writings and thoughts to help or benefit their authors; they mostly read and reflect only for themselves. This humble invitation is for you to read to assist me in my reaching a better understanding at uncovering what the Holy Qur'an itself has said on the topic in its own verses in contrast to what learned scholars, the man of cloth from antiquity to modernity, have imposed meaning on to those verses from outside sources --- which include all the “wasael-e-shia” and “wasael-e-sunni” added together. Regardless of their worthiness, the question before us is only this: **What does the Holy Qur'an itself say, and does not say, on the topic of Divine Rule of which the question of Mahdi is an integral eschatological component, just like valih-e-faqih is the contemporary component.** Both topics are addressed in these cited pages based on what I have uncovered and understood. As a student of reality, I endeavor my best to go where my research and reflection takes me and I have no gratuitous preconceptions and predispositions (apart from the aspects of the self noted above which requires a perpetual struggle, “jihad-un-nafs”, unto itself to separate the observer from the observed).

In précis of my discovery, it appears to me that imam Mahdi abstraction is an interpreted viewpoint and falls in the classification of **Indeterminates** of the Holy Qur'an. Please do read the cited pages to comprehend the complete depth of that analysis. It is neither superficial nor shallow. But is of course limited by the fact that I am only a humble student of reality, harboring only a limited natural acumen. I invite you, the one with far greater ma'rifat and natural acumen who sits on the 'takt-e-salooni' to give public lectures, to offer some Qur'anic evidence-based counter-analysis if you are not convinced by the logic of the matter in my own humble reflections, so that, I may, InshaAllah, benefit from your ma'rifat, and for which only God shall

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give you your rewards. For me, the journey alone is the reward!

The intellectual rationale for trying to understand what the Holy Qur'an says and does not say by using the verses of the Holy Qur'an to interpret each other, is on [pgs. 51](#) onwards of my book, specifically pg. 115 under the subheading *Adopting a Systematic Systems Approach*. The rationale is spread out in all of Chapter I Part-II however by way of examples, which automatically beg this approach to anyone with any degree of intelligence. The rationale of permitting the Holy Qur'an to be its own "tafsir" and "ta'wil", to decipher and explain its own verses, is similar to what Allama Tabatabai and Ayatollah Murtada Mutahhari have related on how to study the Holy Qur'an (see footnote [5] on pg. 124, and [Endnote \[38\]](#) on pg. 346). However, why I arrived at this same method of study quite independently from sheer commonsense, and of course with a modicum of intellectual energy, is in the preceding referenced pages.

So, did I get it wrong? Show me. But if I got it right and you cannot refute it to your own good conscience and intellectual integrity, then you might consider accepting what comes directly out of the Holy Qur'an – that Eschatological matters of which the construct of Imam Mahdi is the core component, is entirely **Indeterminate** in that Holy Book which its own Author proclaims, is "without doubt", "completed", "perfected", and therefore, without room for any further addition and subtraction of meaning, words, and semantic constructs. It is what it is, a Divine Guidance to mankind on how to live, and why to live – the goals for humanity and the methods by which to attain them. See my essay [Waiting for Allah](#) in Chapter 6 of my book which points out how this Eschatological construct of Imam Mahdi is logically counter to the lofty Qur'anic goals of self-empowerment, for both "muttaqi" man and woman to endeavor to fashion himself and herself into the "ashraf-ul-maklooaat" - the purpose of mankind's creation explained in the Holy Qur'an. Which is perhaps why such dystopic Eschatology in every religion has only benefited the tyrants and the taghoots since time immemorial, putting mankind farther and farther away from the goals of achieving social justice and *Solonic activism* in its every generation. Why bother challenging tyrants and unjust social norms and usurpative ruling systems in the first place if all such efforts are destined to fail until the divine rule of Imam Mahdi?

The spirit of Islam as a religion to transform man and society irrespective of their civilization is patently reduced to an absurdity by such semantic constructs by way of *reductio ad absurdum*. My essay [Waiting for Allah](#) goes into depth of what happens if this premise is taken to be true and compares it with empirical data.

In conclusion, either I have misperceived grossly to shockingly argue against the grain of popular wisdom of the popes and laity alike, that the semantics attributed to this eschatology is entirely manmade and drawn from pages outside of the Holy Qur'an composed by the mind of man. Or, I have got it right. Use the criterion of al-Furqaan, the Holy Qur'an itself, to adjudicate, just as it is meant to adjudicate upon all matters that pertain to Divine Guidance by its own Noble Declaration. That is the challenge sir. And common understanding, common ground, unity, on comprehending reality, "haqeeqat", can only be reached as per all the preamble earlier, when we understand the singular underlying reality that the Good Book has indeed made some matters "mutashabihaat" and some patently **Indeterminate**. There is a reason for it. Had God wanted to clearly instruct mankind on matters of Eschatology, ordain Imam Mahdi to be a part of the Musalman's faith, He would have made the construct of Imam Mahdi **Determinate** and among His "ayat-e-mukahmaats", the foundational verses of the Holy Qur'an, just as He has done other matters of faith such as the Day of Judgment, etceteras.

I look forward to benefiting from your profound ma'rifat and sharp acumen in this domain which is amply on display in your excellent lectures on Islam, MashaAllah.

I would also love to read your Ph.D. Thesis noted in your short bio: *Examining the Caliphate of Muawiya b Abi Sufyan*, if you send me a link to its PDF. A quick search did not uncover it on the web. There is the idea that Machiavelli must have studied Muawiya before writing the Prince. Do you think that is plausible?

If you wish to know more about your humble interlocutor before replying, try Google, and see my website <http://humanbeingsfirst.org> . A short bio is in my book as well.

Thank you, May God reward you generously for your efforts and give more power and ma'rifat to you to uncover and promulgate truth. To do so one has to of course uncover it first and not presuppose it, and I pray that this realization becomes ingrained in your intellectual journey just as tenaciously as your faith appears to have become ingrained in your life's journey. God bless you.

Sincerely,

Zahir Ebrahim

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California

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