

Spiritual Life Basics (SLB-003)

Part 1:

The Necessity of the Spiritual Life

Lesson 3: The Times in Which We Live

August 22nd Update

- While this is an example of speculation, at least considering such possibilities becomes increasingly important as Ahmadinejad's apocalyptic fellow-believers gain more and more power within Iran.
- (Note the sudden absence of student protests that were so prevalent until recently.)
- Ahmadinejad's faithful membership within the [Hojjatieh Society](#) guides his thinking and his choices for leadership positions within Iran, as the Hojjatieh seek to "pave the way for the return of the Mahdi."

Hojjatieh

- Westerners would find Hojjatieh beliefs and practices so disturbing as to be hardly believable.
- Yet these are indeed the beliefs and practices of the increasingly more powerful Iranian president and his mentor, [Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Mesbah-Yazdi](#), often referred to as “The Crocodile,” for his beneath-the-surface exercise of political power, and as “The Sorcerer,” for his cultic religious practices, the likes of which most Americans would dismiss as insane and, therefor, impossible to be true among a nation’s powerful elite.

Hojjatieh

- Yet, through Ahmadinejad and Ayatollah Yazdi, unthinkable belief structure is increasingly guiding the direction of Iranian policy, strategy and actions.
- The world can scarcely afford to underestimate the mindset of the Iranian president as he accrues more and more power within Iran, including solid allegiance from the Bassij and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, which in many ways should be increasingly considered in parallel to Hitler's SS.

Hojjatieh

- “When I saw this report in the Jerusalem Post, my first thought was - here we go with the 12th Imam preparations. The only odd thing is the eastern border operations. I suspect a defensive posture to anyone from Pakistan, Turkey, and especially coalition forces in Afghanistan - while they rally the current "exercises", already in progress, toward Iraq. If we hear of "exercises" in Syria and Lebanon, it's a done deal.”
- (Unidentified blogger)

Hojjatieh

- What is the Hojjatieh Society?
- Founded in 1953 as a specifically anti-Bahá'í organization by a charismatic Shiite Muslim cleric, the Hojjatieh Society has today re-emerged in Iran as an influential if secretive faction that has been linked in news articles and web blogs with the current Iranian administration.

Hojjatieh

- During the 1979 Iranian revolution, the Society played an important role in stirring animosity against Bahá'ís.
- However, in part because of differences in theology—among other things the Hojjatieh believe a truly Islamic state cannot be established until the return of the 12th Imam—the Society fell into disfavor and was banned by the regime in 1984.

Hojjatieh

- Outside observers have connected the Society's re-emergence with the return of hardliners to positions of power in the government, including the president who has frequently stated his expectation that the 12th Imam will return soon.

Hojjatieh

- WASHINGTON, July 11, 2006 (RFE/RL) -- Given the opaque nature of Iranian government, the public might never know just how pervasive the Hojjatieh Society's activities really are.
- But Former Vice President Abtahi was quoted by the hard-line daily "Kayhan" on July 5 as saying that several Hojjatieh Society members were arrested recently. It is difficult to test the veracity of the claim by Abtahi, who served as vice president for legal and parliamentary affairs under ex-President Hojatoleslam Mohammad Khatami. But it renews fears that the secretive Hojjatieh could wield considerable power in the Iranian establishment.

Hojjatieh

- The Hojjatieh group was formed by a Mashhad-based cleric in the early 1950s to counter the activities of Bahai missionaries, who claimed that the long-awaited Twelfth Imam of Shi'ite Islam had already returned and been superseded by the Bahai faith. That cleric, Sheikh Mahmud Halabi, recruited volunteers who could debate the Bahais and who formed the original Hojjatieh Society (formally known as the Anjoman-i Khayriyeh-yi Hojjatieh Mahdavih). But reference sources say the society expanded its reach and its membership in the 1960s and 1970s.

Hojjatieh

- Hojjatieh members initially opposed the ideas of Islamic government and rule of the supreme jurisconsult (Vilayat-i Faqih) espoused by the father of Iran's revolution, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Instead, they favored collective leadership of the religious community and opposed religious involvement in political affairs.

Hojjatieh

- But founder Halabi feared a communist takeover after the 1978-79 Islamic revolution. So he urged his followers to abandon their ideas about collective religious leadership and secular government in Iran's watershed referendum in December 1979.
- By 1983, Supreme Leader Khomeini was attacking the Hojjatieh Society and demanding that they "get rid of factionalism and join the wave that is carrying the nation forward" or be "broken." The Hojjatieh Society announced its official dissolution the same day.

Hojjatieh

- That move reportedly paid off in the form of administrative appointments in the postrevolutionary government for members, whose religious credentials have been described as "impeccable" by author Baqer Moin in his 1999 book, "Khomeini: Life Of The Ayatollah."

Hojjatieh

- Reformist commentators quickly pick up on the same theme. A member of the left-wing Mujahedin of the Islamic Revolution Organization, Hashem Hedayati, says Khatami issued his warning because extremists are entering the government, "Etemad" reports on August 21. Hedayati adds that the phenomenon represents a strategic shift by the Hojjatieh Society, which previously avoided involvement in political affairs.

Hojjatieh

- Warnings Of Extremism
- Fast-forward more than two decades to a speech just weeks after President Mahmud Ahmadinejad's August 2005 inauguration. Outgoing President Khatami is warning of the emergence of an extremist movement that is raising fears of corruption and claiming that universities' curricula are insufficiently Islamic. Khatami adds that such groups aid foreigners who do not want to see Islamic states succeed, according to Fars News Agency on August 19.

Hojjatieh

- Less than a month later, a former interior minister and parliamentarian who is a prominent member of the pro-reform Militant Clerics Association (Majma-yi Ruhaniyun-i Mobarez), also warns of a Hojjatieh revival. Hojatoleslam Ali-Akbar Mohtashami-Pur says the society opposed involvement with politics before the revolution but subsequently changed tack and displayed a more violent tendency, "Etemad" reports on September 18.

Hojjatieh

- Mohtashami-Pur compares the Hojjatieh Society with Osama bin Laden's terrorist group, Al-Qaeda, and accuses it of "speaking through various podiums, brandishing a truncheon on a heretic witch-hunt, [and] accusing [Iranian] youth" of wrongdoing.

Hojjatieh

- Warnings Of 'Pseudo-Clerics'
- Late last year, former Vice President Abtahi noted that many grassroots religious groups had backed Ahmadinejad's presidential run. What stood out most, he said, was that these groups praised the Twelfth Imam, rather than speaking in political terms, the "Financial Times" reported on November 9. Abtahi speculated that Ahmadinejad has "more important goals than politics," warning that the new head of state "speaks with the confidence of someone who has received God's word."

Hojjatieh

- Ahmadinejad's references to the Twelfth Imam in a September speech at the United Nations brought his affinity for millennialist views to the world's attention. Ahmadinejad's later observation that he was surrounded by an aura during the speech, and that the spellbound audience in the General Assembly sat unblinking, also drew attention to his unorthodox views.

Hojjatieh

- More concretely, there are suggestions that Ahmadinejad has earmarked millions of dollars in government funds for the Jamkaran Mosque on the outskirts of Qom, where some Shi'a believe the Hidden Imam will reappear. Finally, there has been a burgeoning of Iranian websites that focus on the Hidden Imam.

Hojjatieh

- A reformist legislator, Imad Afruq, cautions to the reformist "Etemad-i Melli" daily on February 20 that many "pseudo-clerics" who promote mysticism are distorting Islam and misleading the faithful. Under these conditions, the lawmaker claimed, the Hojjatieh Society will find it easy to operate.
- At the same time, a Supreme Court judge, Hojatoleslam Mohammad Sadeq Al-i Ishaq, is quoted by "Etemad" on February 20 as warning of the persistent danger of reactionaries.

Hojjatieh

- He says Ayatollah Khomeini regretted ever making use of the reactionary clerics, and accuses the Hojjatieh Society of hiding its true intentions so it can gain places in the government. The judge argues that society still exists and that clerics should take the danger seriously.

Hojjatieh

- A Member As Supreme Leader?
- There have been accusations that Ahmadinejad's religious mentor, Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Mesbah-Yazdi, is a member of the Hojjatieh Society, a claim that he rejected, according to "Hemayat" newspaper on April 30. The hard-line cleric prompted controversy when he claimed last year that the Twelfth Imam prayed for Ahmadinejad's election, according to "Mardom Salari" on July 21, 2005.

Hojjatieh

- Now, Mesbah-Yazdi's name has surfaced in connection with the upcoming election of the Assembly of Experts, which supervises the Iranian supreme leader's performance and selects a successor. Mesbah-Yazdi has been mentioned by some as a possible successor to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. In an effort to preempt Mesbah-Yazdi's selection, opponents have criticized him on a variety of pretexts -- including his perceived lack of activism against the monarchy before Iran's Islamic revolution.

Hojjatieh

- The outcome of this fall's Assembly of Experts election should help gauge the support that Ahmadinejad and his allies have for placing Mesbah-Yazdi atop Iran's theocratic system -- if that is indeed their objective. Given the lack of transparency in the Iranian political process, however, it will be extremely difficult to get an accurate reading of the Hojjatieh Society's influence.

Hojjatieh

- Iran president paves the way for arabs' imam return Nov 17, 2005
- His call for the destruction of Israel may have grabbed headlines abroad, but it is President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's devotion to a mystical religious figure that is arousing greater interest inside Iran.



Same Bearded Arab-parast, Different President

Hojjatieh

- In a keynote speech on Wednesday to senior clerics, Ahmadinejad spoke of his strong belief in the second coming of Shi'ite Muslims' "hidden" 12th Imam.
- According to Shi'ite Muslim teaching, Abul-Qassem Mohammad, the 12th leader whom Shi'ites consider descended from the Prophet Mohammed, disappeared in 941 but will return at the end of time to lead an era of Islamic justice.

Hojjatieh

- "Our revolution's main mission is to pave the way for the reappearance of the 12th Imam, the Mahdi," Ahmadinejad said in the speech to Friday Prayers leaders from across the country.

"Therefore, Iran should become a powerful, developed and model Islamic society."

"Today, we should define our economic, cultural and political policies based on the policy of Imam Mahdi's return. We should avoid copying the West's policies and systems," he added, newspapers and local news agencies reported.

Hojjatieh

- Ahmadinejad refers to the return of the 12th Imam, also known as the Mahdi, in almost all his major speeches since he took office in August.

A September address to the U.N. General Assembly contained long passages on the Mahdi which confused Western diplomats and irked those from Sunni Muslim countries who believe in a different line of succession from Mohammed.

Hojjatieh

- Presidential aides have denied a popular rumor that he ordered his cabinet to write a letter to the 12th Imam and throw it down a well near the holy city of Qom where thousands of pilgrims come each week to pray and drop messages to the Imam.

But what really has tongues wagging is the possibility that Ahmadinejad's belief in the 12th Imam's return may be linked to the supposed growing influence of a secretive society devoted to the Mahdi which was banned in the early 1980s.

News of the Weird

- Terror Charges Dropped On Cell Phone Buyers
- This is already being invoked by opponents of profiling as an object lesson in the hazards of assuming that Muslims engaging in suspicious activity are up to no good.
- But you'll notice that there is still a great deal unexplained in the case; and anyway if Ali Houssaiky and Osama Sabhi Abulhassan are loyal Americans, surely they would prefer to be inconvenienced rather than to see the country suffer another jihad terror attack.

News of the Weird

- (AP) MARIETTA, Ohio Prosecutors dropped terrorism charges Tuesday against two Michigan men who were arrested after buying large numbers of cell phones, saying they couldn't prove a terrorism link.
- The dismissal, in a one-page court document, came the day after Washington County Prosecutor James Schneider said he didn't have enough evidence to present the felony charges to a grand jury.

News of the Weird

- Ali Houssaiky and Osama Sabhi Abulhassan, both of Dearborn, Mich., left prison after paying a reduced bond on the remaining misdemeanor counts of falsification.
- "We know it was just a matter of time. We were just hoping it wouldn't be forever," Abulhassan said.
- "Everybody knew we were innocent. We knew we were innocent."
- The remaining counts stem from allegations that the two men initially gave deputies different names than appeared on their IDs.

News of the Weird

- The men also initially said they were buying phones for a relative's construction business, then changed the story when deputies asked for contact information, Schneider said.
- Schneider said his office and federal authorities don't believe "the defendants pose an imminent threat at this time."

News of the Weird

- But he said the investigation remains open and he could still present evidence to a grand jury to pursue terrorism-related charges....
- In Ohio, Houssaiky and Abulhassan were stopped by sheriff's deputies for a traffic violation Aug. 8, then arrested after the deputies found 12 cell phones, \$11,000 cash, airplane passenger lists and information on airport security checkpoints in their car, authorities said.

London Air Plot Not al-Qaida Encore

- Homeland security officials doubt the terror plot to blow up U.S.-bound planes over the Atlantic was Osama bin Laden's encore to 9-11.
- The White House has described the foiled plot as "a second September 11."
- But officials say bin Laden is preparing a larger strike on U.S. soil targeting major U.S. cities. They cite the terror kingpin's message in January in which he warned Americans that sleeper cells were preparing a major new attack "on your own ground."

London Air Plot Not al-Qaida Encore

- "Operations are under preparation, and you will see them on your own ground once they are finished, Allah willing," bin Laden said in Arabic.
- Some translations have him saying "in the heart of your land" or "in your houses."
- The London plot, which may have rivaled 9-11 casualties, still did not involve ground targets.

London Air Plot Not al-Qaida Encore

- "While impressive in scale, the damage on the ground would have been limited if anything," a U.S. official said. "It's not the spectacular attack he (bin Laden) is looking for to do maximum damage to our economy."
- Terror experts agree.

London Air Plot Not al-Qaida Encore

- "There may have been money or a blessing from al-Qaida, but I doubt that this was an operation run by al-Qaida central, by bin Laden himself," says Michael Scheuer, former head of the CIA's bin Laden unit. "It simply wasn't a big enough operation for what they intend, and it didn't occur inside the United States."
- Experts say the London plot appears too ad hoc. Planning began only a year ago on the heels of the London subway bombings.

London Air Plot Not al-Qaida Encore

- Bin Laden's major attacks in the past have involved several years of planning. They've also been led by the A-team of al-Qaida's Martyrdom Brigade, who coordinated with seasoned lieutenants in the network to finance and refine the mission as it developed. The London bomber cells, in contrast, appear to have been composed of fresh recruits who were less disciplined, which may explain why they were caught.

London Air Plot Not al-Qaida Encore

- "They're second-stringers," the official said. "He's holding his top operatives in reserve for a bigger operation."
- The FBI says there's no evidence al-Qaida has sleeper cells in the U.S.
- Of course, that's what the bureau said before 9-11. Former senior DHS official Clark Kent Ervin says the bureau knows of at least 1,000 al-Qaida sympathizers in the U.S. today – a figure he calls "low." And the CIA has presented the FBI director with a list of possible sleeper cell candidates, but he has rejected going after them, arguing they had not yet committed a crime.

London Air Plot Not al-Qaida Encore

- Scheuer says bin Laden is lining up his ducks for a massive attack possibly using radiological weapons. The first step, he says, was getting a green light from Saudi clerics to kill possibly millions of Americans with such weapons. Then he offered the U.S. a truce and even recently invited President Bush to convert to Islam – all in keeping with jihadi military doctrine. And he has directly warned the America people on at least two occasions.

London Air Plot Not al-Qaida Encore

- As absurd as such moves sound, they are necessary to satisfy any theological concerns among Muslim clerics, Scheuer says. It's more about "preparing Muslims" for the doomsday attacks than Americans.
- Experts agree a plausible nightmare scenario involves al-Qaida shipping dirty nukes in uninspected cargo containers bound for ports in New York, New Jersey, Miami, Los Angeles, Houston and near Washington, and then detonating them once they are in position. The technology used could be as simple as GPS transmitters and cell phones. The radiological fallout from the blasts could render the cities uninhabitable for years, crippling the economy.

Attacks Since 1998

The Spiritual Life Response

- All things are from God. There is no room in our lives for complaining. There is no circumstance, no problem, no situation, no person with which we can rightly complain. All complaints are complaints to God himself. As far as rightly understanding all events is concerned, **GOD IS THE CAUSE of ALL EVENTS.** If He permits evil to occur, He will use it for His purposes. All things may be received with thanksgiving. Be thankful and rejoice in all things. God is sovereign. He performs. Receive **ALL** as from His hands.

The Spiritual Life Response

- Philippians 4:6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. (What are we worried about? Ask God. Talk to Him.)
- Romans 12:19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. (Let the Lord do.)
- Psalms 23:1 A Psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. (We lack nothing. It is not what we have, but, what our understanding shows us of Him.)

The Spiritual Life Response

- 1 Thessalonians 5:18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.
- Proverbs 21:1 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will. (Why worry about who is in Congress, the White House, or the the President of Iran?)
- Daniel 2:21 And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: (God is in charge!)