

A Divine Perspective on Rights

A Divine Perspective On Rights -



**A Commentary On Imam Sajjad's "The
Treatise Of Rights" - Commented by
Qudratullah Mashayikhi**

**Research and Translation by
Dr. Ali Peiravi, Lisa Zaynab Morgan**

Al-Islam.org

Sub Title:

A commentary on Imam Sajjad's "The Treatise of Rights" by Imam 'Ali Ibn al-Husayn as-Sajjad (as)

Publisher(s):

[Ansariyan Publications – Qum](#) [1]

A Divine Perspective on Rights: A commentary on Imam Sajjad's "The Treatise of Rights" by Imam 'Ali Ibn al-Husayn as-Sajjad (as)

A detailed commentary on the Treatise of Rights as narrated by our fourth Imam, Ali bin Husayn (as). This commentary contains further references from the Qur'an and ahadith confirming and shedding light on what has been narrated by our fourth Imam in The Treatise of Rights.

[Get PDF](#) [2] [Get EPUB](#) [3] [Get MOBI](#) [4]

Translator(s):

[Dr. Ali Peiravi](#) [5]

[Lisa Zaynab Morgan](#) [6]

Topic Tags:

[Du'a \(Supplication\)](#) [7]

[Sahifah Sajjadiyyah](#) [8]

Person Tags:

[Imam Ali Zayn al-Abidin](#) [9]

Dedication

We dedicate this work to both of our parents to whom we are greatly indebted – our fathers: the late Mr. Mohammad Mehdi Peiravi, and Mr. Charles Henry Morgan, and our mothers who are alive and whom we and our children love and are still under their spiritual protection and loving support: Mrs. Talat Sheikh Peiravi and Mrs. Betty June Morgan.

Dr. Ali Peiravi

Ms. Lisa Zaynab Morgan

peiravi@netscape.net [10]

Translators' Foreword

We thank God the Almighty for the opportunity granted to us to undertake the preparation of A Divine Perspective On Rights after the successful completion of The Complete Edition Of The Treatise On Rights by the fourth religious leader in the line of the Prophet of God , Ali ibn al-Husayn known as Imam Sajjad for his extended prostrations to God. A Divine Perspective On Rights that is authored by Mr. Ghodratullah Mashyekhi is a commentary on Imam Sajjad's "The Treatise On Rights."

We translated this commentary into English for the interested readers. Regarding the references to verses of the Holy Qur'an, we have exactly cited for coherency using an available translation of the Qur'an into English by Mr. Abdullah Yusuf Ali (May God Reward Him). The Translation of the Holy Qur'an that we used is the following:

1 The Holy Qur'an

2 Text, Translation, Commentary and Notes Large Size (1 Volume)

3 Abdullah Yusuf Ali (English & Arabic).

We have rewritten parts of the book to make it up-to-date. To include the state of the art knowledge we have added many footnotes, references to and verses from the Bible where appropriate.

We are partly indebted to our son Mehdi Peiravi for his assistance in the typing and layout of the book, our daughter Maryam Peiravi for her assistance in the translation of **The Treatise on Rights** from Arabic, and her sister Talat June Peiravi for her poetic contribution to this book. We are also indebted to the Ansarian Publications for supporting this work and completing the typesetting of the book, their staff and their respectable translators who have spent time to read the initial manuscript and made many useful suggestions to enrich the work.

May God grant them their reward. We warmly welcome any suggestions made by the readers that might help us learn about our mistakes and shortcomings, and help us improve our future works.

Dr. Ali Peiravi

Ms. Lisa Zaynab Morgan

peiravi@netscape.net [10]

Respect Everyone's Rights

You should respect everyone's right
Be they old, young or full of might,
Be they for you an adversary
Or if they ever made you happy.
The greatest right is that of God's.
You should obey him and no other gods.
Our body parts too have certain rights
Such as not viewing forbidden sights.
Our relatives have many rights
Be it our parents, brothers or our wives.
There are also rights for our deeds
Be it charity, supplications or holy feeds.
All people have certain rights
Be they our teachers, or citizens nation-wide.

Talat June and Ali Peiravi

About The Author

Although this book is written by Ghodratullah Mashayekhi and is a commentary on The Treatise on Rights, it is actually considered to be authored by the fourth Imam – Ali ibn al-Husayn – since he is the author of The Treatise On Rights. The commentator has just given more details about what the Immaculate Imam has said. Imam Sajjad is the son of Imam Husayn and Shah Banu.

According to some narrations, he was born on Sha'ban 5, 660 A.D. and became martyred on Muharram 12, 717 A.D. by Walid Ibn-e Abdol Malik. When he was born, his grandfather Imam Ali was controlling the affairs of the government. He experienced three years of the Alavi Caliphate and a short period of Imam Hassan's government, which lasted for only several months.

He witnessed the saga of Karbala that took place in 683 A.D. and survived the day of Ashura. In accordance with the Divine decree, Imam Husayn appointed him as the people's next leader after Imam Husayn's martyrdom at Karbala. Imam Sajjad who was also present there was ill and unable to join the fight against the forces of Yazid. Thus, he was not martyred. During his journey from Karbala, he delivered speeches in the towns of Kufa and Damascus, and he informed the people of his father's holy intentions. In this way, he disgraced Yazid.

Imam Sajjad liked the orphans, the poor, and the handicapped to come to his house and be his guests. He used to give food and clothing to many families who were poor and needy. Imam Sajjad was so earnest in worshipping God that he was called ‘Zayn al-Abidin’, which means ‘the adornment of the worshippers’, while his title ‘al-Sajjad’ means ‘one who prostrates long and often.’ He lived for fifty-seven years, and devoted most of his efforts to reviving the spiritual aspects of the society. Hence, Imam Sajjad's life and statements were entirely devoted to asceticism and religious teachings.

His religious teachings are in the form of invocations and supplications. Having witnessed the unpleasant social situation of that era during which religious values were deviated and changed, Imam Sajjad attempted to establish a divine relationship between the people and God. Consequently, he was able to touch the hearts of the people and the people were deeply influenced by his words and his life style. His famous supplications are well-known as “al-ḥaḥḥah al-Sajjadiyyah.”

About three decades of the Imam's life were devoted to the revival of spiritualism in the society. This book is one of his most outstanding teachings. It is a master document on Islamic human rights, which not only covers human rights, but also includes the rights of God, our body parts, and our deeds. To any intelligent reader who ponders deeply about the contents of this valuable document on rights, it immediately becomes clear that Islam has already established the first document on rights nearly fourteen centuries ago. However, unfortunately in our modern world, there are those who claim to respect human rights, but they do so only superficially

Introduction

In the Name of God, Most Beneficent, Most Merciful

اعْلَمْ رَحِمَكَ اللَّهُ أَنَّ لِلَّهِ عَلَيْكَ حُقُوقًا مُحِيطَةً بِكَ فِي كُلِّ حَرَكَةٍ تَحَرَّكَتَهَا أَوْ سَكَنَةً سَكَنْتَهَا أَوْ مَنَازِلَةً نَزَلْتَهَا أَوْ جَارِحَةً قَلَبْتَهَا أَوْ آلَةً تَصَرَّفْتَ بِهَا بَعْضُهَا أَكْبَرُ مِنْ بَعْضٍ. وَأكْبَرُ حُقُوقِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكَ مَا أُوجِبَهُ لِنَفْسِهِ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى مِنْ حَقِّهِ الَّذِي هُوَ أَصْلُ الْحُقُوقِ وَمِنْهُ تَفَرَّعَ. ثُمَّ أُوجِبَهُ عَلَيْكَ لِنَفْسِكَ مِنْ قَرْنِكَ إِلَى قَدَمِكَ عَلَى إِخْتِلَافِ جَوَارِحِكَ.

Know –God have mercy upon you – that God has rights incumbent upon you and that these encompass you in every motion through which you move, every rest which you take, every way station in which you reside, every limb which you employ, and every instrument which you use. Some of these rights are greater than others. And the greatest of God's rights incumbent upon you is what He has made incumbent upon you for Himself – the Blessed and the Exalted – from His rights: that which is the root of all rights from which others branch out. Then there are those that He has made incumbent upon you in yourself, from your crown to your foot, according to the diversity of your organs.

فَجَعَلَ لِبَصَرِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا وَ لِسَمْعِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا وَ لِلسَّانِكِ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا وَ لِإِدِّكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا وَ لِجَلْدِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا وَ لِطَنِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا وَ لِفَرْجِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا فَهَذِهِ الْجَوَارِحُ السَّبْعُ الَّتِي بِهَا تَكُونُ الْأَفْعَالُ. ثُمَّ جَعَلَ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ لِأَفْعَالِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقُّوًّا فَجَعَلَ لِصَلَاتِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا وَ لِصَوْمِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا وَ لِصِدْقَتِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا وَ لِهُدْيِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا وَ أَفْعَالِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا. ثُمَّ تَخْرُجُ الْحَقُّوُّ مِنْكَ إِلَى غَيْرِكَ مِنْ ذَوِي الْحَقُّوِّ الْوَاجِبَةِ عَلَيْكَ

He established for your sight a right incumbent upon you, and your hearing a right incumbent upon you, and your tongue a right incumbent upon you, and your hand a right incumbent upon you, and your legs a right incumbent upon you, and your stomach a right incumbent upon you, and your private part a right incumbent upon you. These are the seven organs through which deeds take place.

Then the Mighty and the High established for your deeds rights incumbent upon you. Then He established for your ritual prayer a right incumbent upon you, and your fasting a right incumbent upon you, and your charity a right incumbent upon you, and your offering a right incumbent upon you, and your deeds a right incumbent upon you. Then the rights extend out from you to others who have rights incumbent upon you.

وَأَوْجِبَهَا عَلَيْكَ حَقُّوُّ أَئِمَّتِكَ ثُمَّ حَقُّوُّ رَعِيَّتِكَ ثُمَّ حَقُّوُّ رَحِمِكَ. فَهَذِهِ حَقُّوُّ يَنْشَعِبُ مِنْهَا حَقُّوُّ: فَحَقُّوُّ أَئِمَّتِكَ ثَلَاثَةٌ أَوْجِبَهَا عَلَيْكَ حَقُّ سَائِسِكَ بِالسُّلْطَانِ ثُمَّ سَائِسِكَ بِالْعِلْمِ، ثُمَّ حَقُّ سَائِسِكَ بِالْمُلْكِ، وَكُلُّ سَائِسٍ إِمَامٌ. وَحَقُّوُّ رَعِيَّتِكَ ثَلَاثَةٌ أَوْجِبَهَا عَلَيْكَ حَقُّ رَعِيَّتِكَ بِالسُّلْطَانِ، ثُمَّ حَقُّ رَعِيَّتِكَ بِالْعِلْمِ، فَإِنَّ الْجَاهِلَ رَعِيَّةُ الْعَالِمِ، وَحَقُّ رَعِيَّتِكَ بِالْمُلْكِ مِنَ الْأَزْوَاجِ وَمَا مَلَكَتَ مِنَ الْأَيَّامِ

And the most incumbent of them incumbent upon you are the rights toward your leaders, then the rights toward your subjects, and then the rights toward your relations of kin. And from these rights other rights branch out. The rights of your leaders are three-fold: The one most incumbent upon you is the right of him who trains you through authority, then the right of him who trains you through knowledge, then the right of him who trains you through property.

And each trainer is a leader. And the rights of your subjects are three-fold: The one most incumbent upon you is the right of those who are your subjects through authority, then the right of those who are your subjects through knowledge – for the man of ignorance is the subject of the man of knowledge. And then the right of those who are your subjects through property, such as wives and those owned by the right hand.¹

وَحَقُّوُّ رَحِمِكَ كَثِيرَةٌ مُتَّصِلَةٌ بِقَدْرِ اتِّصَالِ الرَّحِمِ فِي الْقَرَابَةِ فَأَوْجِبَهَا عَلَيْكَ حَقُّ أُمِّكَ ثُمَّ حَقُّ أَبِيكَ ثُمَّ حَقُّ وَلَدِكَ ثُمَّ حَقُّ أَحَبِّكَ ثُمَّ الْأَقْرَبُ فَالْأَقْرَبُ وَالْأَوَّلُ فَالْأَوَّلُ. ثُمَّ حَقُّ مَوْلَاكَ الْمُتَّعِمِّ عَلَيْكَ، ثُمَّ حَقُّ مَوْلَاكَ الْجَارِيَةِ نِعْمَتِكَ عَلَيْهِ، ثُمَّ حَقُّ ذِي الْمَعْرُوفِ لَدَيْكَ، ثُمَّ حَقُّ مُؤَدَّتِكَ بِالصَّلَاةِ، ثُمَّ حَقُّ إِمَامِكَ فِي صَلَاتِكَ، ثُمَّ حَقُّ جَلِيسِكَ، ثُمَّ حَقُّ جَارِكَ، ثُمَّ حَقُّ صَاحِبِكَ، ثُمَّ حَقُّ شَرِيكَكَ، ثُمَّ حَقُّ مَالِكَ، ثُمَّ حَقُّ غَرِيمِكَ الَّذِي تَطَالَبُهُ، ثُمَّ حَقُّ غَرِيمِكَ الَّذِي يُطَالِبُكَ، ثُمَّ حَقُّ خَلِيطِكَ، ثُمَّ حَقُّ خَصْمِكَ الْمُدْعِي عَلَيْكَ، ثُمَّ حَقُّ خَصْمِكَ الَّذِي تَدْعِي عَلَيْهِ، ثُمَّ حَقُّ مُسْتَشِيرِكَ، ثُمَّ حَقُّ الْمُشِيرِ عَلَيْكَ، ثُمَّ حَقُّ مُسْتَنْصِحِكَ، ثُمَّ حَقُّ النَّاصِحِ لَكَ، ثُمَّ حَقُّ مَنْ هُوَ أَكْبَرُ مِنْكَ، ثُمَّ حَقُّ مَنْ هُوَ أَصْغَرُ مِنْكَ، ثُمَّ حَقُّ سَائِلِكَ، ثُمَّ حَقُّ مَنْ

سَأَلْتَهُ، ثُمَّ حَقُّ مَنْ جَرَى لَكَ عَلَى يَدَيْهِ مَسَاءَةٌ بِقَوْلٍ أَوْ فِعْلٍ أَوْ مَسَرَّةٍ بِذَلِكَ بِقَوْلٍ أَوْ فِعْلٍ عَنْ تَعَمُّدٍ مِنْهُ أَوْ غَيْرِ تَعَمُّدٍ مِنْهُ، ثُمَّ حَقُّ أَهْلِ مِلَّتِكَ عَامَّةً ثُمَّ حَقُّ أَهْلِ الذِّمَّةِ، ثُمَّ الْحَقُوقُ الْجَارِيَةُ بِقَدْرِ عِلَلِ الْأَحْوَالِ وَتَصَرُّفِ الْأَسْبَابِ. فَطُوبَى لِمَنْ أَعَانَهُ اللَّهُ عَلَى قَضَاءِ مَا أَوْجَبَ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ حَقُوقِهِ وَوَفَّقَهُ وَسَدَّدَهُ.

And the rights of your relations of kin are multi-fold: they hold according to the degree of closeness of the relationship. Then the most incumbent one upon you is the right of your mother, then the right of your father, then the right of your child, then the right of your brother, then the next nearest, and then the next nearest, and the most worthy, and then the next most worthy.

Then there is the right of your master who favors you,² then the right of the slave, the servant whose favors reach you,³ then the right of him who treats you kindly, then the right of your caller to prayer, then the right of your prayer leader, then the right of your sitting companion, then the right of your neighbor, then the right of your companion, then the right of your partner, then the right of your property, then the right of the debtor who must pay you back, then the right of your creditor who demands his debt to be paid back, then the right of your associate, then the right of your adversary who has a claim against you.

Then the right of your adversary against whom you have a claim, then the right of him who seeks your advice, then the right of him whose advice you seek, then the right of him who seeks your counsel, then the right of him whose counsel you seek, then the right of him who is older than you are, then the right of him who is younger than you are, then the right of him who begs from you, then the right of him from whom you beg, then the right of him who wrongs you either verbally or physically, then the right of him who does something to make you happy either verbally or physically whether intentionally or unintentionally, then the right of the people of your creed, then the right of those under the protection of Islam, then the rights which are incumbent upon you according to the vicissitudes of life and the availability of means. Therefore blessed be the one whom God helps fulfill the rights that He has made incumbent upon him and whom He grants success therein and guides him.

¹. Slaves.

². By freeing you from slavery.

³. By the fact that you free him.

The Rights of God

حقوق الله

Right n. 1: The Greatest Right of God

حق الله الأكبر

فَأَمَّا حَقُّ اللَّهِ الْأَكْبَرُ فَإِنَّكَ تَعْبُدُهُ لَا تُشْرِكُ بِهِ شَيْئًا، فَإِذَا فَعَلْتَ ذَلِكَ بِإِخْلَاصٍ جَعَلَ لَكَ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ أَنْ يَكْفِيكَ أَمْرَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَيَحْفَظَ لَكَ مَا تُحِبُّ مِنْهُمَا.

Then the greatest right of God incumbent upon you is that you worship Him without associating anything with Him. When you do that with sincerity, He has made it binding upon Himself to give you sufficiency in the affairs of this world and the next and to keep for you whatever of them¹ that you like.

Aims of the Prophets

Certainly one of the major aims of the Prophets was to invite mankind to worship God, and fight against paganism:

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنْ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ فَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ حَقَّتْ عَلَيْهِ الضَّلَالَةُ فَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكْذِبِينَ

“For We assuredly sent amongst every People an apostle, (with the Command), “Serve God, and eschew Evil”: of the People were some whom God guided, and some on whom error became inevitably (established). So travel through the earth, and see what the end of those who denied (the Truth) was.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Na’i 16:36]

The divine call to the Unity of God and the fight against paganism was the aim of all the Prophets. Thus, they did their best to guide man away from worshipping the moon, the sun, the idols, cows or even other men. The Prophets directed man to worship God.

Man’s Intrinsic Belief in Unity

Worshipping God and being humble to Him is intrinsic in man’s nature. This naturally exists in all men, and has been manifested throughout history. The Noble Prophet of Islam said:

كُلُّ مَوْلُودٍ يُوَلَّدُ عَلَى الْفِطْرَةِ فَأَبَوَاهُ يُنَصِّرَانِهِ وَيَهُودَانِهِ وَيُمَجِّسَانِهِ

“Each baby is born inherently innocent and God-worshipping. It is due to his parents that he becomes a

Psychologists have outlined this intrinsic tendency of mankind towards God–worshipping and have called it “inclination towards excellence.” They say that man has an inclination to find the truth that leads him to study philosophy and science. Thus, man is naturally inclined to seek the truth. This sense starts from childhood and extends throughout our lifetime. The child’s sense of curiosity and the many questions he asks his parents is a sign of this.

The child wants to discover the truth about the various causes of Creation and its underlying secrets. Man is inclined to moral ethics and noble characteristics. He enjoys honesty, and doing good deeds just as he loves the beauties such as lakes, rivers, and the woods. Man does not need any reasoning for these tendencies. Likewise, man is inherently inclined towards the absolute Perfection, Beauty and Knowledge – the One that is the source of all perfections. Regarding man’s God–inclined nature the Holy Qur’an says:

فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

“So set thou thy face steadily and truly to the Faith: (Establish) God’s handiwork according to the pattern on which He has made mankind: no change (let there be) in the work (wrought) by God: that is the standard Religion: but most among mankind understand not.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Rum 30:30]

In the above verse, man’s nature has been referred to as “God’s handiwork” or “pattern on which He has made mankind.” We can notice the following points in the above verse:

- 1 – The coordination between divine regulations and human nature
- 2 – The intrinsic inclination of man to submit to God, which is called Islam and the one who does so is called a Muslim.

Regarding this intrinsic human inclination to God, Imam Ali said:

فَبَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رَسُولَهُ وَوَاتَرَ إِلَيْهِمْ أَنْبِيََاءَهُ لِيَسْتَأْذِنُوهُمْ مِثْقَالَ فِطْرَتِهِ.

“Then God appointed His Apostles among them and sent the Prophets one after another so that they ask the people to honor their natural divine inclinations.”³

In another sermon we read:

وَكَلِمَةُ الْإِخْلَاصِ فَإِنَّهَا الْفِطْرَةُ.

“The statements of Unity and Purity of God are indeed in harmony with man’s intrinsic nature.”⁴

Turning to God at Times of Hardship

Man’s turning to God during times of calamities is a sign of our inclinations to Godliness. Man gets involved with his position and status so much that he forgets about God. He gets fully entangled in his sins and disobedience. Once a calamity befalls upon man, he suddenly remembers God and turns to Him for help. Thus, we realize that this sense of Godliness is intrinsic in humans, but man’s involvement in worldly affairs results in his forgetting God. There is a well-known tradition that states that a man went to see Imam Sadiq and expressed his amazement about the recognition of God.

He said: “I have discussed this issue with many knowledgeable people, but they have not been able to help me.” Imam Sadiq ended his amazement using his intrinsic human Godliness and asked him: “Have you ever been aboard a ship?” The man said: “Yes.” Then Imam Sadiq asked: “Have you ever been on a sinking ship, and reached out for a narrow piece of board to stay afloat?” The man said: “Yes. I have.” Then Imam Sadiq said: “Then while you could not see any dry land or anyone there to save you, were you not really attracted to some power to rescue you?” The man replied in the positive and was finally relieved of his amazement about God’s recognition.”⁵

Now that we have recognized the intrinsic nature of man’s inclination to God, and that the Prophets were appointed to invite man to honor this intrinsic Godliness, we will attend to the first and most important rights as described by Imam Sajjad – that is worshipping God and abandoning paganism. First, we should see what is meant by worshipping and paganism, and what acts are considered worshipping or related to paganism.

The Meaning of Worshipping

Worshipping is defined as expressing one’s insignificance and being humble. This is not proper unless it is done for God who is the possessor of all nobility, blessings, beauties and grandeur. There are two forms of worshipping. One form of worshipping is what we see when one prostrates to God and is absolutely subjected to His will. The second form of worshipping is the voluntary verbal form to which we are invited.⁶ The difference between obedience and worshipping is that obedience is used for God and the people too, while worshipping is exclusively used for God. One can be obedient to his parents, spouse or God, but he can worship only God.

The Meaning of Servant in the Qur’an

There are two meanings for the Arabic word ‘*abd*’ meaning servant as used in the Holy Qur’an. The Almighty God said:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِصَاصُ فِي الْقَتْلِ الْحُرُّ بِالْحُرِّ وَالْعَبْدُ بِالْعَبْدِ وَالْأُنْثَىٰ بِالْأُنْثَىٰ

“O ye who believe! The law of equality is prescribed to you in cases of murder: the free for the free, the slave for the slave, the woman for the woman.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Baqarah 2: 178]

In another verse the Almighty God said:

ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا عَبْدًا مَمْلُوكًا لَا يَقْدِرُ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ

“God sets forth the Parable (of two men: one) a slave under the dominion of another; he has no power of any sort.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Na’i 16:75]

We also note the following verse of the Holy Qur’an that says:

إِن كُلُّ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِلَّا آتِي الرَّحْمَنِ عَبْدًا

“Not one of the beings in the heavens and the earth but must come to (God) Most Gracious as a servant.” [The Holy Qur’an, Maryam 19:93]

Servant has been defined to mean man, whether free or a slave.⁷ The second meaning of servant is a sincere worshipper of God, as we read in the following verses of the Holy Qur’an:

ذُرِّيَّةَ مَنْ حَمَلْنَا مَعَ نُوحٍ إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَبْدًا شَكُورًا

“O ye that are sprung from those whom We carried (in the Ark) with Noah! Verily he was a devotee most grateful.” [The Holy Qur’an, Bani Isra’il 17:3]

سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَىٰ بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِّنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَا

“Glory to (God) Who did take His servant for a Journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the farthest Mosque.”⁸ [The Holy Qur’an, Bani Isra’il 17: 1]

وَ اذْكُرْ عَبْدَنَا أَيُّوبَ إِذْ نَادَىٰ رَبَّهُ أَنِّي مَسَّنِيَ الشَّيْطَانُ بِنُصُوبٍ وَ عَذَابٍ

“Commemorate Our Servant Job. Behold, he cried to his Lord: The Evil One has afflicted me with distress and suffering!” [The Holy Qur’an, Sad 38:41]

In these verses the second meaning is used for servant, and the Prophets Noah , Job , and Muhammad have been introduced to be the best of God's servants. There are two forms of obedience to God. One form is obeying his decrees regarding what is forbidden and what is legitimate as in the following verses:

إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي

"Verily, I am God: There is no god but I: So serve thou Me (only), and establish regular prayer for celebrating My praise." [The Holy Qur'an, Ta-Ha 20: 14]

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

"I have only created Jinn and men that they may serve Me." [The Holy Qur'an, al-Dhariyat 51:56]

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَعْبُدُ اللَّهَ عَلَى حَرْفٍ فَإِنْ أَصَابَهُ خَيْرٌ اطْمَأَنَّ بِهِ وَإِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ فِتْنَةٌ انْقَلَبَ عَلَى وَجْهِهِ خَسِرَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةَ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِينُ

"There are among men some who serve God, as it were, on the verge: if good befalls them, they are, therewith, well content; but if a trial comes to them, they turn on their faces: they lose both this world and the Hereafter: that is loss for all to see!" [The Holy Qur'an, al-Hajj 22: 11]

The other meaning of worshipping or servitude is self-humiliation accompanied by the recognition of God's Majesty, and His absolute Perfection and Purity. Therefore, when we talk about servitude of God in Islam, we mean that man should be freed from the servitude of all except God, especially the kings, the rulers or the chiefs. We must realize that all harm or benefit is in the control of God, and none of the material powers in the world can bring us any harm or gain. God the Almighty said:

قُلْ أَتَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَمْلِكُ لَكُم ضَرًّا وَلَا نَفْعًا وَاللَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

Say: "Will ye worship, besides God, something which hath no power either to harm or benefit you? But God, - He it is that heareth and knoweth all things." [The Holy Qur'an, al-Maida 5:76]

In another verse He said:

إِنَّمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْثَانًا وَتَخْلُقُونَ إِفْكًا إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ لَا يَمْلِكُونَ لَكُم رِزْقًا فَابْتَغُوا عِندَ اللَّهِ الرِّزْقَ وَاعْبُدُوهُ وَاشْكُرُوا لَهُ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

"For ye do worship idols besides God, and ye invent falsehood. The things that ye worship

besides God have no power to give you sustenance: then seek ye sustenance from God, serve Him, and be grateful to Him: to Him will be your return. [The Holy Qur'an, al-'Ankabut 29: 17]

In another verse we read:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

“O people! Adore your Guardian-Lord, who created you and those who came before you, that ye may have the chance to learn righteousness.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2:21]

The Range of Worshipping in Islam

Here we will address the question of the range of worshipping in Islam. Worshipping does not imply just one's action. Rather it applies to an extensive number of actions. It is similar to a deeply rooted tree with its many branches. Various actions are considered to be worshipping. We will briefly discuss them below.

a – Gratitude is worship

Expressing one's gratitude is defined as worshipping in many of the verses of the Holy Qur'an. First let us define gratitude, and then review some of the relevant verses of the Holy Qur'an. Expressing one's gratitude has been defined to be the act that is either verbal or spiritual and mental. It implies respect for and humbleness before the One who has sent us His Blessings for which we must be grateful. Another form of gratitude is the proper application of blessings that we are given. For example, one way of expressing our gratitude for the eyes is looking at the Signs of God and taking heed therefrom:

قُلْ انظُرُوا مَاذَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا تُغْنِي الْآيَاتُ وَالنُّذُرُ عَنْ قَوْمٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

Say: "Behold all that is in the heavens and on earth"; but neither Signs nor Warners profit those who believe not. [The Holy Qur'an, Yunus 10: 101]

Imam Ali said:

الْأَبْرَارُ غَضُّوا أَبْصَارَهُمْ عَمَّا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَوَقَفُوا أَسْمَاعَهُمْ عَلَى الْعِلْمِ النَّافِعِ لَهُمْ.

“The pious ones close their eyes to the forbidden sights, and dedicate their ears to hearing useful knowledge.”⁹

Imam Ali said:

شُكْرُ كُلِّ نِعْمَةٍ الْوَرَعُ عَمَّا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ.

*"Gratitude for each blessing is piety, abstinence and avoiding the divinely forbidden things."*¹⁰

Therefore, we should not use the resources that God has provided for us in order to commit sins.

Usage of Gratitude in Leadership and Management

Scientists today have classified the encouraging effects of gratitude of managers and leaders on their workers. When managers express their gratitude for the way the workers perform their duties, they are encouraged and work harder. On the other hand, if the managers do not care about the way their workers perform their duties and do not thank them, they will be discouraged and might even not do their basic duties. Imam Ali said:

وَلَا يَكُونَنَّ الْمُحْسِنُ وَالْمُسِيءُ عِنْدَكَ بِمَنْزِلَةٍ سَوَاءٍ، فَإِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ تَزْهِيداً لِأَهْلِ الْإِحْسَانِ فِي الْإِحْسَانِ، وَتَنْذِيراً لِأَهْلِ
الْإِسَاءَةِ عَلَى الْإِسَاءَةِ.

*"Do not let the good-doers and the wrongdoers have an equal station before you, since this will make the good-doers abstain from good deeds and accustom the wrongdoers to sinning."*¹¹

Regarding this issue the Holy Qur'an says:

أَفَنَجْعَلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ كَالْمُجْرِمِينَ مَا لَكُمْ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ

"Shall We then treat the People of Faith like the People of Sin? What is the matter with you? How judge ye?" [The Holy Qur'an, al-Qalam 68:35-36]

This implies that faithful people are different from people who commit sins.

Moral Aspects of Gratitude

Gratitude consists of the following:

- Recognition of the blessing and the one who has bestowed it
- Being humble to the one who has done us good, and being pleased with the blessing
- Using the blessings for the purpose intended for it by the donor of the blessing

Imam Sadiq said the following regarding the recognition of blessings:

مَنْ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ نِعْمَةً فَعَرَفَهَا بِقَلْبِهِ فَقَدْ أَدَّى شُكْرَهَا.

*“Whoever recognizes that something he received is a blessing from God has indeed expressed his gratitude.”*¹²

Imam Sadiq said:

وَأَدَّى الشُّكْرَ رُؤْيَاهُ النِّعْمَةِ مِنَ اللَّهِ.

*“The lowest level of gratitude is to recognize that God is the source of the blessings that we receive.”*¹³

Imam Ali said:

النَّاءُ بِأَكْثَرِ مِنَ الْإِسْحَاقِ مَلَقٌ، وَالتَّقْصِيرُ عَنِ الْإِسْحَاقِ عِيٌّ أَوْ حَسَدٌ

*“Praising someone more than he deserves is flattery, and falling short in praising someone as he deserves is (a result of) the inability to express oneself or envy.”*¹⁴

We mentioned that God considers our being thankful for His blessings to be a form of worshipping. The following verses of the Holy Qur'an point this out:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُلُوا مِن طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِلَّهِ إِن كُنتُمْ إِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُونَ

“O ye who believe! Eat of the good things that We have provided for you, and be grateful to God, if it is Him ye worship.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2: 172]

بَلِ اللَّهُ فَاعْبُدْ وَكُن مِّنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ

“Nay, but worship God, and be of those who give thanks.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Zumar 39:66]

Great divine men have been grateful to God because of His blessings. The Almighty God said:

لَتَسْتَؤُوا عَلَى ظُهُورِهِ ثُمَّ تَذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ رَبِّكُمْ إِذَا اسْتَوَيْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ وَتَقُولُوا سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ لَنَا هَذَا وَمَا كُنَّا لَهُ مُقْرِنِينَ

“In order that ye may sit firm and square on their backs, and when so seated, ye may celebrate the (kind) favor of your Lord, and say, "Glory to Him Who has subjected these to our (use), for we could never have accomplished this (by ourselves).” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Zukhruf 43: 13]

Solomon expresses his gratitude for God's blessings as we read in the following verse:

فَتَبَسَّمَ ضَاحِكًا مِّن قَوْلِهَا وَقَالَ رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَىٰ وَالِدَيَّ وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ
وَأُدْخِلْنِي بِرَحْمَتِكَ فِي عِبَادِكَ الصَّالِحِينَ

“So he smiled, amused at her speech; and he said: "O my Lord! So order me that I may be grateful for Thy favors, which thou hast bestowed on me and on my parents, and that I may work the righteousness that will please Thee: And admit me, by Thy Grace, to the ranks of Thy righteous servants." [The Holy Qur'an, al-Naml 27: 19]

b – Earning a Living as a Form of Worshipping

Another deed that is considered to be worshipping God is working in order to earn a living legitimately so that one does not become needy of others. In this regard, the Holy Qur'an says:

فَإِذَا قُضِيَتِ الصَّلَاةُ فَانْتَشِرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَابْتَغُوا مِن فَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

“And when the Prayer is finished, then may ye disperse through the land, and seek of the Bounty of God: and celebrate the Praises of God often (and without stint): that ye may prosper.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Jumu'ah 62: 10]

This verse implies that we can go to work even after the congregational Friday prayers. Even the Prophet went to the bazaar after the prayers. ¹⁵ Imam Baqir quoted on the authority of God's Prophet :

الْعِبَادَةُ سَبْعُونَ جُزْءًا أَفْضَلُهَا طَلَبُ الْحَالِلِ.

“There are seventy parts in worshipping, the most excellent of which is seeking to earn a legitimate income.”¹⁶

Abu Hamzeh quoted the following on the authority of Imam Baqir :

مَنْ طَلَبَ الدُّنْيَا اسْتِعْفَافًا عَنِ النَّاسِ وَسَعْيًا عَلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ وَتَعَطُّفًا عَلَىٰ جَارِهِ لَقِيَ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَوَجْهُهُ مِثْلَ الْقَمَرِ لَيْلَةَ الْبَدْرِ.

“Whoever strives hard in order to earn a living for his family, to be independent of others, to help his neighbors and save his honor will meet God in the Hereafter with his face shining like the full moon.”¹⁷

Passing Away while Working

Mohammad ibn Ya'qoob Kulayni quoted on the authority of Ali ibn Ibrahim, on the authority of his father, on the authority of Muhammad ibn Shazan, on the authority of Ibn Abi Amir, on the authority of Abdullah Ibn Hajjaj, on the authority of Imam Sadiq that Muhammad ibn Munkadir said: "I did not think that Ali ibn Al-Husayn [18](#) might appoint some child better than Muhammad ibn Ali [19](#) as his successor to lead the Muslims until one day I decided to advise him, but he advised me instead."

He was asked about the advice he was given. He explained: "One day I was walking in the alleys around Medina when I ran into Imam Baqir . It was a hot day. The Imam had two slaves with him, and he was working hard. I thought to myself why was one of the noble men of the Quraysh tribe working so hard on such a hot day seeking the benefits of this world. I thought I should advise him.

I went to him and greeted him. The Imam was sweating. I asked him: "How come you who are one of the noble men of the Quraysh tribe are working so hard seeking the benefits of this world on such a hot day? What would happen if your death approaches now? How will you then answer God?

Then Imam Baqir replied: "If the angel of death comes now while I am obeying God and working to earn a living for my family to be needless of others, I have no fear. I should be worried if I was committing a sin when the angel of death arrives to take my life." Then Monkadir said: "O' Grandson of the Prophet ! I wanted to advise you, but you advised me!" [20](#) We see that Imam Baqir considers working to earn a living to be a form of worshipping.

In another tradition Musa ibn Bukayr quoted on the authority of Imam Kazim : "Whoever seeks a legitimate income for himself and his family is like a soldier who is engaging in a holy war." [21](#)

Seek Your Sustenance from God by Hard Work

Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Al-Husayn quoted on the authority of Fuzayl ibn Yasar that he told Imam Sadiq : "O' Grandson of the Prophet! I have quit working." Imam Sadiq said:

لَا تَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ! افْتَحْ بَابَكَ وَأَبْسِطْ رِزْقَكَ وَاسْتَزِقِ اللَّهَ رَبَّكَ

"Do not do that! Open your shop's doors and seek your sustenance from God—your Lord." [22](#)

Hard-working Worshippers are Superior to Idle Ones

Ruh ibn Abd al-Rahim quoted on the authority of Imam Sadiq regarding the following verse:

رِجَالٌ لَا تُلْهِهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَإِقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ يَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا تَتَقَلَّبُ فِيهِ الْقُلُوبُ وَالْأَبْصَارُ

“By men whom neither traffic nor merchandise can divert from the Remembrance of God, nor from regular Prayer, nor from the practice of regular Charity: Their (only) fear is for the Day when hearts and eyes will be transformed (in a world wholly new).” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Nur 24:37]

قَالَ) كَانُوا أَصْحَابَ تِجَارَةٍ فَإِذَا حَضَرَتِ الصَّلَاةُ تَرَكُوا التِّجَارَةَ وَانْطَلَقُوا إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ وَهُمْ أَكْبَرُ أَجْراً مِمَّنْ لَمْ يَنْجِرْ)

“This verse is about people who did business, but stopped doing business whenever it was time to pray. These people will receive a better reward than those who just worship and do not work.”²³

There are many such traditions regarding the worth of and the reward for working, but we will suffice with the few mentioned. Our intent is to show that working and worshipping are not contradictory. Rather if work is done to earn a living, it is a great form of worship itself since worshipping is of no value if one does not work. One must have a reasonable financial condition before he can sincerely attend to his worshipping. The Commander of the Faithful said:

مَنْ وَجَدَ مَاءً وَتُراباً ثُمَّ افْتَقَرَ فَأَبْعَدَهُ اللَّهُ.

“If one has land and water but he is poor, God will deprive him of His Mercy.”²⁴

People were talking to the Prophet about a man who was known for his abstinence, piety and constant fasting and praying. They told the Prophet :

“O Prophet of God! We have never found anyone more pious than him.” The Prophet asked: “How does he then earn a living?” They said: “We run his life.” Then the Prophet said: “Then you are more pious than he is.”²⁵

c – Supplications for Worshipping

Praying or reciting supplications is a part of worshipping God. It is the means of communication between man and the Lord. There are many hardships that we face which we cannot overcome by ourselves. Sometimes we need to rely on something or someone. The best One to rely on is God. Prayers and supplications are the means to approach God. He says:

وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمْ ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِي سَيَدْخُلُونَ جَهَنَّمَ دَاخِرِينَ

And your Lord says: "Call on Me; I will answer your (Prayer): but those who are too arrogant to serve Me will surely find themselves in Hell – in humiliation!" [The Holy Qur’an, al-Mumin 40:60]

We see that God likes us to pray and call on Him. God has promised to answer. This answering is

conditional. Prayer is itself a form of worship as we read in the following verse:

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ

“When My servants ask thee concerning Me, I am indeed close (to them): I listen to the prayer of every suppliant when he calleth on Me: Let them also, with a will, Listen to My call, and believe in Me: That they may walk in the right way.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Baqarah 2: 186]

In the above verse, God has referred to Himself and His servants several times showing the close ties between Him and His servants. Praying is a form of worshipping and expressing one’s humility to God and one’s servitude. All acts of worshipping have educational effects. Praying has some educational effects as well. It has been reported that an Arab went to see the Prophet and asked: “Is God close to us so that we pray to Him, or is He far away from us and we must call Him?” The Prophet was silent, and Gabriel descended and revealed the above verse [Baqarah 2: 186] in response.

Praying Cures Spiritual Ailments

When man gets spiritual problems and develops complexes, he tries to save himself by resorting to praying. He talks to God, and asks Him for help.

Calamities Cause Man to Turn to God

Man inherently forgets God when he is having good times. He forgets that God has given him the blessings that he has. However, whenever he faces calamities and sees himself stuck with many problems, he turns to God. The Almighty God said:

وَإِذَا أَنْعَمْنَا عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ أَعْرَضَ وَنَأَىٰ بِجَانِبِهِ وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ فَذُو دُعَاءٍ عَرِيضٍ

“When We bestow favors on man, he turns away, and gets himself remote on his side (instead of coming to Us); and when evil seizes him, (he comes) full of prolonged prayer!” [The Holy Qur’an, Ha-Mim 41:51]

Traditions on Supplications

There is a tradition from the Prophet Muhammad that says:

الدُّعَاءُ هُوَ الْعِبَادَةُ.

*“Supplication is a form of worship.”*²⁶

In another tradition, Imam Sadiq was asked:

مَا تَقُولُ فِي رَجُلَيْنِ دَخَلَا الْمَسْجِدَ جَمِيعاً كَانَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَكْثَرَ صَلَاةً وَالْآخَرُ دُعَاءً، أَيُّهُمَا أَفْضَلُ؟ قَالَ: «كُلُّ حَسَنٍ».
قَالَ: «قَدْ عَلِمْتُ، وَلَكِنْ أَيُّهُمَا أَفْضَلُ؟» قَالَ: «أَكْثَرُهُمَا دُعَاءً. أَمَا تَسْمَعُ قَوْلَ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى: "ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ"»
«وَقَالَ: «هِيَ الْعِبَادَةُ الْكُبْرَى»

*"If two people enter a mosque, and one says more prayers and the other one says more supplications which one is better than the other?" The Imam replied: "Both of them are good." The man said: "I know. But which of the two is better?" Then Imam Sadiq replied: "The one who says more supplications. Have you not heard the statement of Allah, the Exalted: **‘.Call upon me and I will answer you’? (40:60)**. The Imam said: "It is the greatest worship."²⁷*

d – Looking can be Worshipping

Islam considers any looking that results in taking heed or acquiring knowledge and recognition for man to be a form of worshipping. Imam Ali said:

النَّظَرُ إِلَى الْعَالَمِ عِبَادَةٌ وَالنَّظَرُ إِلَى الْإِمَامِ الْمُقْسِطِ عِبَادَةٌ وَالنَّظَرُ إِلَى الْوَالِدَيْنِ بِرَأْفَةٍ وَرَحْمَةٍ عِبَادَةٌ وَالنَّظَرُ إِلَى الْأَخِ
يَوَدُّهُ فِي اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ عِبَادَةٌ.

"Looking at a scholar or a just leader, and kindly looking at one's parents are considered to be various forms of worshipping God. Also looking at a brother in faith who is loved for the sake of God is a form of worshipping."²⁸

It is clear that any kind of looking that is done for the sake of God is a form of worshipping, and God will reward it. Therefore, when Imam Sajjad says that it is one of God's rights incumbent upon us to worship Him, it implies any of the various forms of worshipping.

Worshipping Under all Circumstances

Our religion tells us that we must worship God under all circumstances. We should know that God is always present. Various states such as happiness or sadness, poverty or affluence, health or illness should not affect our worshipping of God. Some people only remember God when they are in trouble and need Him.

The Almighty God said:

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَعْبُدُ اللَّهَ عَلَى حَرْفٍ فَإِنْ أَصَابَهُ خَيْرٌ اطْمَأَنَّ بِهِ وَإِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ فِتْنَةٌ انْقَلَبَ عَلَى وَجْهِهِ خَسِرَ الدُّنْيَا
وَالْآخِرَةَ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِينُ

“There are among men some who serve God, as it were, on the verge: if good befalls them, they are, therewith, well content; but if a trial comes to them, they turn on their faces: they lose both this world and the Hereafter: that is loss for all to see!” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Hajj 22: 11]

This verse implies that they only say that they worship God, but they do not whole-heartedly believe in God. They have a very weak faith. This implies that they are not in the main stream of faith and Islam, but only on the side. Such people are not firm in their belief and might change if they experience even minor problems. Zurarah quoted on the authority of Imam Baqir : “There are some people who abandoned paganism and worshipped God, but they did not acknowledge the Prophet . Their worshipping sprung from pagan roots since they said: We will acknowledge him as the Prophet of God if God increases our wealth and children.” [29](#)

Take Pleasure in Worshipping

Muhammad ibn Yahya quoted on the authority of Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Isa on the authority of two other people on the authority of Imam Baqir on the authority of God’s Prophet :

أَلَا إِنَّ لِكُلِّ عِبَادَةٍ شِرَّةً ثُمَّ تَصِيرُ إِلَى فِتْرَةٍ، فَمَنْ صَارَتْ شِرَّةُ عِبَادَتِهِ إِلَى سُنَّتِي فَقَدْ اهْتَدَى، وَمَنْ خَالَفَ سُنَّتِي فَقَدْ ضَلَّ وَكَانَ عَمَلُهُ فِي تَبَابٍ. أَمَا إِنِّي أُصَلِّي وَأَنَامُ وَأُصُومُ وَأُفْطِرُ وَأُضْحِكُ وَأُبْكِي. فَمَنْ رَغِبَ عَنِّي مِنْهَا جِي وَسُنَّتِي فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي.

“Indeed there is an eagerness for every worship, which then turns to lassitude. So one whose eagerness in worship leads to my Sunnah, he is guided, and whoever opposes my Sunnah has gone astray and his deeds perish. Indeed, I pray and I sleep, I fast and I break my fast, I laugh and I cry. So whoever dislikes my path and my Sunnah is not of me.”[30](#)

He also said:

وقال: كَفَى بِالْمَوْتِ مَوْعِظَةً وَكَفَى بِالْيَقِينِ غِنًى وَكَفَى بِالْعِبَادَةِ شُغْلًا.

“Death is the best admonition, certitude is the best wealth, and God’s worship is the best occupation.”

Imam Sadiq said:

لِكُلِّ أَحَدٍ شِرَّةٌ وَلِكُلِّ شِرَّةٍ فِتْرَةٌ، فَطُوبَى لِمَنْ كَانَتْ فِتْرَتُهُ إِلَى خَيْرٍ.

“Each person has some eagerness. For each instance of eagerness, there is also some sluggishness. How prosperous are those who are inclined towards the good even in their times of sluggishness.”[31](#)

Hafs ibn Bakhtari quoted Imam Sadiq :

لَا تُكْرِهُوا إِلَى أَنْفُسِكُمُ الْعِبَادَةَ.

*“Do not force yourselves to worship God (when you are tired or unwilling to do so).”*³²

Being Moderate in Worshipping

We are advised to take pleasure in worshipping God. This is meant to help us worship God out of our love for Him so that we can benefit from the good effects of worshipping God. We should avoid sluggishness in our acts of worshipping. If we are tired or bored, our worshipping will lose its spiritual context. We should also be moderate in worshipping God. We are instructed by the Prophet to avoid worshipping God when we are tired. Amr ibn Jamia quoted on the authority of Imam Sadiq on the authority of God’s Prophet:

يَا عَلِيُّ، إِنَّ هَذَا الدِّينَ مَتِينٌ فَأَوْغِلْ فِيهِ بِرَفْقٍ وَلَا تُبَعْضْ إِلَى نَفْسِكَ عِبَادَةَ رَبِّكَ فَإِنَّ الْمُئْتَبَ – يَعْنِي الْمُفْرِطَ – لَا ظَهراً
أَبْقَى وَلَا أَرْضاً قَطَعَ. فَأَعْمَلْ عَمَلٌ مَنْ يَرْجُو أَنْ يَمُوتَ هَرِمًا وَاحْدَرٌ حَذَرٌ مَنْ يَتَخَوَّفُ أَنْ يَمُوتَ غَدًا

*“O Ali! This religion is strong; therefore enter into it with gentleness. Do not make the worship of your Lord hateful for yourself, for the one who has fatigued his mount and is unable to continue his journey – that is, the one who is excessive – has neither a riding animal nor can he travel.. Therefore act as one who hopes to die in old age, but be cautious with the caution of one who is afraid that he will die tomorrow.”*³³

Imam Sadiq said:

مَرَّ بِي أَبِي وَأَنَا بِالطَّوَّافِ وَأَنَا حَدَّثُ وَقَدْ اجْتَهَدْتُ فِي الْعِبَادَةِ فَرَأَنِي وَأَنَا أَتَصَبَّبُ عَرْقًا فَقَالَ لِي: يَا جَعْفَرُ يَا بُنَيَّ! إِنَّ
اللَّهَ إِذَا أَحَبَّ عَبْدًا أَدْخَلَهُ الْجَنَّةَ وَرَضِيَ عَنْهُ بِالْيَسِيرِ

*“Once when I was very young and was circumambulating the Holy House of God my father passed by and looked at me. When he saw that I was making a hard effort and sweating he told me: “O my son Ja’far! Know that when God loves His servant, He will be pleased with even his small amount of worshipping and let him into Heaven.”*³⁴

Therefore, we should be moderate in worshipping God, as we should be in other affairs.

God is considered the cause of everything in the Islamic world–outlook and in monotheistic philosophical schools of thought. Other causes do not rank equal to Him, but God causes all. This is where materialists differ from monotheists. Materialists place a lot of value on material causes, and consider

them independent. However, monotheists consider everything dependent upon God and His will. This is what separates materialists from monotheists. A study of the verses of the Holy Qur'an clearly shows us that there is no power equal to God, and God is the cause of all things.

أَمَّنْ يَهْدِيكُمْ فِي ظُلُمَاتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَمَنْ يُرْسِلُ الرِّيَّاحَ بُشْرًا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهِ أَلَيْهَ مَعَالَى اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ

“Or, Who guides you through the depths of darkness on land and sea, and Who sends the winds as heralds of glad tidings, going before His Mercy? (Can there be another) god besides God? - High is God above what they associate with Him!” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Naml 27:63]

In another verse of the Holy Qur'an we read:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُنَزِّلُ الْغَيْثَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا قَنَطُوا وَيَنْشُرُ رَحْمَتَهُ وَهُوَ الْوَلِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ

“He is the One that sends down rain (even) after (men) have given up all hope, and scatters His Mercy (far and wide). And He is the Protector, Worthy of all Praise.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Shura 42:28]

Regarding those who have not attained certitude and sincerity in their beliefs, the Holy Qur'an says:

وَإِذَا مَسَّ النَّاسَ ضُرٌّ دَعَوْا رَبَّهُمْ مُنِيبِينَ إِلَيْهِ ثُمَّ إِذَا أَذَاقَهُمْ مِنْهُ رَحْمَةً إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ يُشْرِكُونَ

“When trouble touches men, they cry to their Lord, turning back to Him in repentance: but when He gives them a taste of Mercy as from Himself, behold, some of them pay part-worship to other gods besides their Lord.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Rum 30:33]

Moreover, in another verse we read:

فَإِذَا رَكِبُوا فِي الْفُلِكِ دَعَوْا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ فَلَمَّا نَجَّاهُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ إِذَا هُمْ يُشْرِكُونَ

“Now, if they embark on a boat, they call on God, making their devotion sincerely (and exclusively) to Him; but when He has delivered them safely to (dry) land, behold, they give a share (of their worship to others)!” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Ankabut 29:65]

In addition, we read:

قُلِ اللَّهُ يُنَجِّيكُمْ مِنْهَا وَمِنْ كُلِّ كَرْبٍ ثُمَّ أَنْتُمْ تُشْرِكُونَ

Say "It is God that delivereth you from these and all (other) distresses: and yet ye worship false gods!" [The Holy Qur'an, al-An'am 6:64]

Jesus is not the Lord: Trinity is Rejected

Next, we will consider Imam Sajjad's stress on not associating partners to God. There are various forms of ascribing partners to God, as there are various aspects of belief in the Unity of God.

Blasphemy

At the time of the revelation of the Holy Qur'an, the Christians considered Jesus to be the Lord. The Qur'an rejects this and considers this a blasphemy as we read in the following verse:

لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ قُلْ فَمَنْ يَمْلِكُ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئاً إِنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُهْلِكَ الْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَ أُمَّهُ
وَ مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعاً وَ لِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَ الْأَرْضِ وَ مَا بَيْنَهُمَا يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَ اللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

In blasphemy indeed are those that say that God is Christ the son of Mary. Say: "Who then hath the least power against God, if His will were to destroy Christ the son of Mary, his mother, and all – every one that is on the earth? For to God belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and all that is between. He createth what He pleaseth. For God hath power over all things."
[The Holy Qur'an, al-Maida 5: 17]

In another verse we read:

لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ ثَلَاثَةٌ تَلَايَةً وَمَا مِنْ إِلَهٍ إِلَّا إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ وَإِنْ لَمْ يَنْتَهُوا عَمَّا يَقُولُونَ لَيَمَسَّنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْهُمْ
عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

They do blaspheme who say: God is one of three in a Trinity: for there is no god except One God. If they desist not from their word (of blasphemy), verily a grievous penalty will befall the blasphemers among them." [The Holy Qur'an, al-Maida 5:73]

In the first verse above it is clearly stated that God could have destroyed Jesus and everyone else if He wished. All Christians agree that Jesus is the son of Mary . Therefore, Jesus is a man like everyone else. His life and death are controlled by God. Why then do they consider Jesus to be the Lord? In the next verse the fact that Jesus and his mother Mary both needed to eat food in order to stay alive is stressed in order to indicate their being human beings no different from other Prophets.

مَا الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ وَأُمُّهُ صِدِّيقَةٌ كَانَا يَأْكُلَانِ الطَّعَامَ انظُرْ كَيْفَ نُبَيِّنُ لَهُمُ الْآيَاتِ
ثُمَّ انظُرْ أَنَّى يُؤفَكُونَ

“Christ the son of Mary was no more than an apostle; many were the apostles that passed away before him. His mother was a woman of truth. They had both to eat their (daily) food. See how God doth make His signs clear to them; yet see in what ways they are deluded away from the truth!” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Maida 5:75]

The claim that Jesus is the son of God is one of the forms of ascribing partners to God. This claim will foster trinity instead of the reality of the One and Only God. In the following verse, the Holy Qur’an stresses that what they have stressed to worship is only servants of God who worship God themselves.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ عِبَادٌ أَمْثَلُكُمْ فَادْعُوهُمْ فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

“Verily those whom ye call upon besides God are servants like unto you: Call upon them, and let them listen to your prayer, if ye are (indeed) truthful!” [The Holy Qur’an, al-A`raaf 7: 194]

We also read the following verses in the Holy Qur’an:

وَالَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ لَا يَسْتَجِيبُونَ نَصَرَكَمْ وَلَا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَنْصُرُونَ وَإِنْ تَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَى الْهُدَى لَا يَسْمَعُوا وَتَرَاهُمْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَيْكَ وَهُمْ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ

“But those ye call upon besides Him, are unable to help you, and indeed to help themselves. If thou callest them to guidance, they hear not. Thou wilt see them looking at thee, but they see not.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-A`raaf 7: 197–198]

The Qur’an addresses the People of the Book, and stresses the major belief in all religions to be in the Unity of God as we read in the following verse:

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُولُوا اشْهَدُوا بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ

“Say: “O People of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but God; that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, Lords and patrons other than God.” If then they turn back, say ye: “Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to God's Will).” [The Holy Qur’an, Al-i-Imran 3:64]

Therefore, any form of ascribing partners to God is rejected.

Blasphemy in Worshipping

The same is stressed regarding the worshipping of God:

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمُ اللَّهُ وَاحِدٌ فَمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا

Say: "I am but a man like yourselves, (but) the inspiration has come to me, that your God is one God: whoever expects to meet his Lord, let him work righteousness, and, in the worship of his Lord, admit no one as partner." [The Holy Qur'an, al-Kahf 18: 110]

Abi al-Jarood quoted on the authority of Imam Baqir :

سئل رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله عن تفسير قول الله عز وجل: "فَمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ.." فَقَالَ: «مَنْ صَلَّى مُرَاءَاةَ النَّاسِ فَهُوَ مُشْرِكٌ. وَمَنْ زَكَّى مُرَاءَاةَ النَّاسِ فَهُوَ مُشْرِكٌ. وَمَنْ صَامَ مُرَاءَاةَ النَّاسِ فَهُوَ مُشْرِكٌ. وَمَنْ حَجَّ مُرَاءَاةَ النَّاسِ فَهُوَ مُشْرِكٌ. وَمَنْ عَمِلَ عَمَلًا بِمَا أَمَرَهُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ مُرَاءَاةَ النَّاسِ فَهُوَ مُشْرِكٌ. وَلَا يَقْبَلُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ عَمَلَهُ مُرَاءَاةَ النَّاسِ.»

"The Prophet was asked about the interpretation of the words of Allah, the Exalted: *"Whoever expects to meet his Lord..." (18: 110)*. The Prophet said: Whoever says his prayers in order to show off is ascribing partners to God (because he is establishing the people to be the ones for whom he prays). Whoever pays the alms tax to show off is ascribing partners to God. The same holds true for whoever fasts or performs the Hajj or performs a divinely ordained deed just to show off. God does not accept the deeds of the hypocrites."[35](#)

Jarrah Mada'ini quoted on the authority of Imam Baqir :

الرَّجُلُ يَعْمَلُ شَيْئًا مِنَ النَّوَابِ لَا يَطْلُبُ بِهِ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ إِنَّمَا يَطْلُبُ تَزْكِيَةَ النَّاسِ يَشْتَهِي أَنْ تُسْمَعَ بِهِ النَّاسُ فَهَذَا الَّذِي أَشْرَكَ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ. مَا مِنْ عَبْدٍ أَسْرَّ خَيْرًا فَذَهَبَتِ الْآيَامُ أَبَدًا حَتَّى يُظْهَرَ اللَّهُ لَهُ خَيْرًا وَمَا مِنْ عَبْدٍ يُسِرُّ شَرًّا فَذَهَبَتِ الْآيَامُ أَبَدًا حَتَّى يُظْهَرَ اللَّهُ لَهُ شَرًّا.

"If one does a good deed with the intention of showing off, and not to please God, and likes the people to admire him, then he is ascribing partners to God in his acts of worshipping. No one's secret good deeds will be hidden forever. God will make them known one day. No one's secret evil deeds will be hidden forever. God will make them known one day."[36](#)

What is it Like

The act of associating partners to God is described as follows in the Holy Qur'an:

حُنْفَاءَ لِلَّهِ غَيْرَ مُشْرِكِينَ بِهِ وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَكَأَنَّمَا خَرَّ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فَتَخْطَفُهُ الطَّيْرُ أَوْ تَهْوِي بِهِ الرِّيحُ فِي مَكَانٍ سَحِيقٍ

“Being true in faith to God, and never assigning partners to Him: if anyone assigns partners to God, he is as if he had fallen from Heaven and been snatched up by birds, or the wind had swooped (like a bird on its prey) and thrown him into a far-distant place.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Hajj 22:31]

The various instances of similitude used in this verse are understood to mean that the belief in Unity is like the heavens. Once we abandon this belief, we collapse into corruption, lust, selfish desires, etc. Each of these can destroy a part of our well-being and existence. The result will be our collapse into total destruction and disintegration. The wind is the similitude used for Satan.

We know that a free-falling object experiences a feeling of being weightless. This is similar to the anxiety we experience when we are collapsing into corruption. Once we abandon our faith in Unity and turn towards ascribing partners to God, then our soul and body will experience such anxiety.^{[37](#)}

The Umayyad Clan and Blasphemy

Imam Sadiq said:

إِنَّ بَنِي أُمَيَّةَ أَطْلَقُوا لِلنَّاسِ تَعْلِيمَ الْإِيمَانِ وَلَمْ يُطْلَقُوا تَعْلِيمَ الشِّرْكِ لِكَيْ إِذَا حَمَلُوهُمْ عَلَيْهِ لَمْ يَعْرِفُوهُ

“The Umayyad clan let the people learn faith freely, but they did not let them recognize blasphemy. That was done so that when the Umayyads would invite them to acts of blasphemy, the people would not realize what they were doing and follow their call. Then they would not realize that they have been unwillingly pushed towards ascribing partners to God.”^{[38](#)}

The people of the Umayyad clan were very eager to have the people follow them without any hesitation. They did so in order not to let the people recognize that they are being misguided. Should the people realize what is going on, they will no longer follow them. In general, all ungodly rulers try to hinder the people from acquiring true knowledge so that the people would obey them. That is why Islam encourages all the people to study and learn, and the acts of teaching and learning have been introduced to be the best deeds.

Invisible Blasphemy

Mus'adah ibn Sadaqah quoted on the authority of Imam Sadiq when asked about the Prophet's statement:

إِنَّ الشِّرْكََ أَخْفَى مِنْ دَبِيبِ النَّمْلِ عَلَى صَفَاةٍ سَوْدَاءَ فِي لَيْلَةٍ ظُلُمَاءَ

“Blasphemy is more invisible than an ant walking on a black stone in a dark night.”

Imam Sadiq said:

كَانَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ يَسُبُّونَ مَا يَعْبُدُ الْمُشْرِكُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَكَانَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ يَسُبُّونَ مَا يَعْبُدُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ، فَهَيَّاهُ اللَّهُ
الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَنْ سَبِّ آلِهَتِهِمْ لِكَيْلَا يَسُبَّ الْكَفَّارُ إِلَهَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فَيَكُونَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ قَدْ أَشْرَكُوا بِاللَّهِ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ.
فَقَالَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى:

وَلَا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَسُبُّوا اللَّهَ عَدْوًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ كَذَلِكَ زَيْنًا لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ عَمَلُهُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ مَرْجِعُهُمْ
فَيُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

“The believers used to revile the idols of the idolaters, as the idolaters reviled the Worshipped One of the believers. Then God admonished the believers not to do so since this in a way was a form of ascribing partners to God. God the Almighty said:

“Revile not ye those whom they call upon besides God, lest they out of spite revile God in their ignorance. Thus have We made alluring to each people its own doings. In the end will they return to their Lord, and We shall then tell them the truth of all that they did.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-An’am, 6: 108]

Therefore, we should seek refuge in God, and ask God to help us and grant us success in worshipping Him.

[1.](#) The pleasures of this world and the life to come.

[2.](#) Manshoor-i-Javid, v.2, p.58.

[3.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Subhi Salih, Sermon no. 1

[4.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Subhi Salih, Sermon no. 10

[5.](#) Al-Shafi, v. 1, p.40.

[6.](#) Al-Mufradat, article on 'Abd'

[7.](#) Aqrab al-Mawarid.

[8.](#) This refers to the ascension of the Prophet of God via a creature called al-Buraq which carried the Prophet from the al-Haram Mosque in Makkah to al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. The Arabic word 'al-buraq' comes from the word 'barq' which means light. We also know that angels are created from light and therefore this might imply that the ascension was a transportation based on the speed of light, as we see in the modern theory of relativity by Albert Einstein.

- [9.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon the the Pious ones, 193.
- [10.](#) Safinah al-Bihar, v. 1, p.710
- [11.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Subhi Salih, Letter no.53.
- [12.](#) Usul al-Kafi, v.2, p.96, tradition no. 15
- [13.](#) Safinah al-Bihar, v. 1, p. 710
- [14.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Fayz al-Islam, Hikmat no.339
- [15.](#) Tafsir-i-Namuneh, v.24, p. 128
- [16.](#) Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v. 12, p. 11
- [17.](#) Ibid. Tradition no.5.
- [18.](#) Imam al-Sajjad
- [19.](#) Imam al-Baqir
- [20.](#) Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v. 12, p.9, Ch.4, Tradition no. 1
- [21.](#) Ibid. p. 11, Tradition no.4
- [22.](#) Ibid. p.8, Tradition no. 11
- [23.](#) Ibid. Tradition no. 14
- [24.](#) Ibid. Tradition no. 13
- [25.](#) Kar wa Huquq-i-Kargar, p. 119
- [26.](#) Majma'ul Bayan, v.8, p.528
- [27.](#) Ibid. p.529
- [28.](#) Majmu'ah Waram, v.2, p. 175
- [29.](#) Nur al-Thaqalayn, v.3, p.437
- [30.](#) Usul al-Kafi, v.2, p.85
- [31.](#) Ibid. p.86
- [32.](#) Ibid.
- [33.](#) Ibid. p.87
- [34.](#) Ibid. p.86
- [35.](#) Nur al-Thaqalayn, v.3, p.314.
- [36.](#) Ibid. p.319
- [37.](#) Tafsir-i-Namunah, v. 14, p.96.
- [38.](#) Al-Shafi, v. 1, p. 146.

Right n. 2: The Right of Your Self

حق النفس

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ نَفْسِكَ عَلَيْكَ فَإِنَّ تَسْتَوْفِيَهَا فِي طَاعَةِ اللَّهِ فَتُؤَدِّيَ إِلَى لِسَانِكَ حَقَّهُ وَإِلَى سَمْعِكَ حَقَّهُ وَإِلَى بَصَرِكَ حَقَّهُ وَإِلَى يَدِكَ حَقَّهَا وَإِلَى رِجْلِكَ حَقَّهَا وَإِلَى بَطْنِكَ حَقَّهُ وَإِلَى فَرْجِكَ حَقَّهُ وَتَسْتَعِينُ بِاللَّهِ عَلَى ذَلِكَ.

And the right of yourself incumbent upon you is that you employ it in obeying God; then you deliver to your tongue its right, to your hearing its right, to your sight its right, to your hand its right, to your leg its right, to your stomach its right, to your private part its right, and you seek help from God in all that.

Therefore, we must respect the rights of our body parts that God has given us in order to honor ourselves. We should seek God's help in doing so.

The Meaning of One's Self

Some researchers consider the self to imply our souls. We read:

أَخْرِجُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ الْيَوْمَ تُجْزَوْنَ عَذَابَ الْهُونِ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ وَكُنْتُمْ عَنْ آيَاتِهِ تَسْتَكْبِرُونَ

"...Yield up your souls: this day shall ye receive your reward, – a penalty of shame, for that ye used to tell lies against God, and scornfully to reject of His signs!" [The Holy Qur'an, al-An'am 6:93]

Others consider it to mean our inner thoughts, or our hearts as in:

وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ فَاحْذَرُوهُ وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ

"...And know that God Knoweth what is in your hearts, and take heed of Him; and know that God is Oft-forgiving, Most Forbearing." [The Holy Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2:235]

We can also see this meaning in the following verse:

تَعْلَمُ مَا فِي نَفْسِي وَلَا أَعْلَمُ مَا فِي نَفْسِكَ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوبِ

"...Thou knowest what is in my heart, though I know not what is in Thine, for Thou knowest in full all that is hidden." [The Holy Qur'an, al-Maida 5:116]

In other places self is used in its natural context as in the following verse:

وَيُحَذِّرُكُمُ اللَّهُ نَفْسَهُ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ الْمَصِيرُ

"...But God cautions you (to remember) Himself; for the final goal is to God." [The Holy Qur'an, Al-i-Imran 3:28]

In other places, self is used to refer to our physical body, which needs food, water and air to survive. Once these are cut off from the self, it will perish. Sheikh Tabarsi has commented that there are three meanings for the self: the spirit, one's nature, and sometimes used to show that we are placing a stress on something. An example of the use of self to imply spirit is found in the following verse:

يُخَادِعُونَ اللَّهَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَمَا يَخْدَعُونَ إِلَّا أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ

“Fain would they deceive God and those who believe, but they only deceive themselves, and realize (it) not!” [The Holy Qur’an al-Baqarah 2:9]

Self as Viewed by the Qur’an

As Sheikh Tabarsi said the Arabic word ‘*nafs*’ meaning ‘self’ is used to mean the spirit or the soul as we can read in the following verse:

اللَّهُ يَتَوَفَّى الْأَنفُسَ حِينَ مَوْتِهَا وَالَّتِي لَمْ تَمُتْ فِي مَنَامِهَا فَيُمْسِكُ الَّتِي قَضَىٰ عَلَيْهَا الْمَوْتَ وَيُرْسِلُ الْأُخْرَىٰ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ۚ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

“It is God that takes the souls (of men) at death; and those that die not (He takes) during their sleep: those on whom He has passed the decree of death, He keeps back (from returning to life), but the rest He sends (to their bodies) for a term appointed verily in this are Signs for those who reflect.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Zumar 39:42]

Another example where self is used to mean the soul is found in the following verse:

وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا شَفَاعَةٌ وَلَا يُؤْخَذُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ

“Then guard yourselves against a day when one soul shall not avail another nor shall intercession be accepted for her, nor shall compensation be taken from her, nor shall anyone be helped (from outside).” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Baqarah 2:48]

In another place, it is used to imply our soul or heart as in the following verses:

وَاذْكُرْ رَبَّكَ فِي نَفْسِكَ تَضَرُّعًا وَخِيفَةً وَدُونَ الْجَهْرِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْآصَالِ وَلَا تَكُن مِّنَ الْغَافِلِينَ

“And do thou (O reader!) Bring thy Lord to remembrance in thy (very) soul, with humility and in reverence, without loudness in words, in the mornings and evenings; and be not thou of those who are unheedful.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-A’raf 7:205]

قَالُوا إِن يَسْرِقْ فَقَدْ سَرَقَ أَخٌ لَهُ مِن قَبْلُ فَأَسْرَهَا يُوسُفُ فِي نَفْسِهِ وَلَمْ يُبْدِهَا لَهُمْ قَالَ أَنْتُمْ شَرُّ مَّكَانًا وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَصِفُونَ

They said: "If he steals, there was a brother of his who did steal before (him)." But these things did Joseph keep locked in his heart, revealing not the secrets to them. He (simply) said (to himself): "Ye are the worse situated; and God knoweth best the truth of what ye assert!" [The Holy Qur'an, Yusuf 12:77]

رَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِي نُفُوسِكُمْ إِن تَكُونُوا صَالِحِينَ فَإِنَّهُ كَانَ لِلْأَوَّابِينَ غُفُورًا

"Your Lord knoweth best what is in your hearts: If ye do deeds of righteousness, verily He is Most Forgiving to those who turn to Him again and again (in true penitence)." [The Holy Qur'an, Bani Israil 17:25]

Self as Viewed by Scholars

Sadr ul-Muta'alliheen Shirazi quoted al-Sheikh ul-Raees Abu Ali Sina from Shafa: "There are three divisions for the self. At first we have the plant self, that is the first degree of perfection for an organic natural being having the ability to feed and grow. The second division is the animal self, that is the first perfection of an organic natural being which only has the ability to feel and move combined with will. The third is the human self which is the perfection of an organic natural being with the ability to think, understand and draw conclusions. Then the various properties and characteristics of these divisions are presented."¹

In the twenty-second chapter of Risalat Fosoos al-Hikam, Abu Nasr Farabi known as "the second teacher" said the following regarding the self: "Indeed the perfection of the self is in the recognition of God's first right incumbent upon oneself. This will result in a state of self-confidence."

Mr. Elahi Ghomsheyee made the following comments on this: "There are many aspects of the speaking self. It is called the lascivious self because it is highly inclined to animal lustful desires. As lust overtakes it, the self considers obscene acts to be beautiful ones. Thus, it is called the adorning self. As it uses trickery to do his animalistic acts, and is deceitful: it is called the deceitful self. As it returns to his own nature and blames himself whenever he commits a wicked act, it is called the reproachful self.

As whenever it is freed from his eagerness for animalistic lustful desires it benefits from mental pleasures it is called the confident self. Whenever it totally submits to the will and pleasure of his true lover being God and destroys his own will and pleasure, then it is called the pleased self. For a confident self, the only form of pleasure and perfection is derived from the recognition of God's first right, that is to purify the soul from the filthiness of the body."² We shall discuss these aspects of the self as viewed in the Qur'an.

Various Aspects of the Self in the Qur'an

1) The Lascivious Self

The lascivious self is that which orders us to fulfill its lustful desires. This is man's biggest enemy. The greatest religious men have always sought God's help to fight themselves. We read the following in the Holy Qur'an:

وَمَا أُبْرِئُ نَفْسِي إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ إِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ رَبِّي إِنَّ رَبِّي غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

"Nor do I absolve my own self (of blame): the (human) soul is certainly prone to evil, unless my Lord do bestow His Mercy: but surely my Lord is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful." [The Holy Qur'an, Yusuf 12:53]

In another verse of the Holy Qur'an we read:

وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ وَنَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ

فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَىٰ

"And for such as had entertained the fear of standing before their Lord's (tribunal) and had restrained (their) soul from lower desires, their abode will be the Garden" [The Holy Qur'an, al-Nazi`at 79:40-41]

What is meant in this verse is that man should restrain himself and fight his carnal desires. The Commander of the Faithful said:

النَّفْسُ مَجْبُولَةٌ بِسُوءِ الْأَدَبِ وَالْعَبْدُ مَأْمُورٌ بِمُلَازِمَةِ حُسْنِ الْأَدَبِ وَالنَّفْسُ تَجْرِي بِطَبْعِهَا فِي مِيدَانِ الْمُخَالَفَةِ وَالْعَبْدُ يُجَاهِدُهَا بِرَدِّهَا عَنِ سُوءِ الْمُطَالَبَةِ، فَمَتَى أَطْلَقَ عِنَانَهَا فَهُوَ شَرِيكٌ فِي فُسَادِهَا، وَمَنْ أَعَانَ نَفْسَهُ فِي هَوَى نَفْسِهِ فَقَدْ أَشْرَكَ نَفْسَهُ فِي قَتْلِ نَفْسِهِ.

*"The soul is inclined towards evil deeds, and a servant has the responsibility of directing it towards good deeds. The soul tries to resist, but the servant tries to control the bad desires of the soul. Whenever a servant lets his soul free to do as it wishes, he is a partner in the corruption and the crimes committed by the soul. Whoever aids his own soul to fulfill his carnal desires has indeed taken part in killing himself."*³

Imam Sadiq said:

أَقْصِرْ نَفْسَكَ عَمَّا يَضُرُّهَا مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تُفَارِقَكَ وَاسْعَ فِي فَكَاكِهَا كَمَا تَسْعَى فِي طَلَبِ مَعِيشَتِكَ فَإِنَّ نَفْسَكَ رَهِينٌ بِعَمَلِكَ.

“Hinder your soul from bringing you harm and prevent losses before you depart from it. Try to free it from its illegitimate desires as hard as you try to earn a living, since the soul is subject to your deeds.”[4](#)

Fight the Instincts

Imam Ali said:

أَفْضَلُ الْجِهَادِ مَجَاهَدَةُ الْمَرْءِ نَفْسَهُ.

“The most excellent holy war is one’s fighting against his own selfish desires.”[5](#)

The Noble Prophet said:

إِنَّ الشَّدِيدَ لَيْسَ مَنْ غَلَبَ النَّاسَ، وَلَكِنَّ الشَّدِيدَ مَنْ غَلَبَ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ.

“A strong man is not one who overcomes the people. Rather a strong man is one who can overcome his self.”[6](#)

Imam Ali said:

خَالَفَ نَفْسَكَ تَسْتَقِمْ وَخَالَطِ الْعُلَمَاءَ تَعْلَمْ.

“Fight yourself to avoid any deviations and live an upright life. Associate with the people who possess knowledge so that you can learn and get freed from ignorance.”[7](#)

He also said:

مَنْ قَوِيَ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ تَنَاهَى فِي الْقُوَّةِ.

“Whoever overcomes himself has attained the highest ranks of power.”[8](#)

Stronger Than One Who Lifts Rocks

Once when the Prophet was passing by a group of people, he saw a man who was lifting a heavy rock. The people were amazed at his strength and admired him. When they told the Prophet about him, and his might, the Prophet asked:

أَفَلَا أُخْبِرُكُمْ بِمَا هُوَ أَشَدُّ مِنْهُ؟ رَجُلٌ سَبَّهَ رَجُلٌ فَحَلِمَ عَنْهُ فَغَلَبَ نَفْسَهُ وَغَلَبَ شَيْطَانَهُ وَشَيْطَانُ صَاحِبِهِ

“Do you want me to tell you about someone who is stronger than him? Whoever is insulted by others but restrains himself, controls his anger and overcomes the devil within himself and the devil inside the one who insulted him, is stronger than this man who is lifting heavy rocks.”⁹

2) The Reproachful Self

So far, we have discussed the verses and traditions regarding the lascivious self that continuously drives us towards doing evil deeds. The other aspect of our soul that constantly blames us for our bad deeds is called the reproachful self. The Holy Qur'an calls this aspect of our soul as witness in the following verse:

لَا أُقْسِمُ بِيَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ

وَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِالنَّفْسِ اللَّوَّامَةِ

“I do call to witness the Resurrection Day; and I do call to witness the self-reproaching spirit: (Eschew Evil).” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Qiyamah 75: 1-2]

The Imam has been quoted by Ali ibn Ibrahim to have said that what is meant by the “self-reproaching spirit” is man's self which disobeys and then blames itself.

When someone commits a sin, he is blamed by himself and the call of conscience tortures him. The psychologists have called this reproaching force within us as our moral conscience, and the Qur'an has called it the reproachful self. This implies that this reproaching force is our human spirit that is a part of us, and has always existed in mankind.

Treating Loss of Hope

Once when Imam Sajjad was circumambulating the Holy House of God, he noticed that some people had gathered somewhere in the mosque. He asked what had happened, and he was told that a man called Muhammad ibn Shihab al-Zuhri had suffered from a psychological illness and seemed to have lost his mind. He did not speak at all, and his family had brought him to Mecca hoping that he might talk to the people he saw there.

When Imam Sajjad finished performing the circumambulation ceremonies, he went to see that man. The man recognized Imam Sajjad when he saw him. When Imam Sajjad asked what was wrong with him, he said: “I have become this way because I killed an innocent man when I was a governor. Such a murder of an innocent man has devastated a governor, and the blaming of his reproaching self has caused him

psychological ailment; and the shame of committing a sin has shut up his mouth. Now he is like an insane man.”

Imam Sajjad who felt that he had really lost hope in being forgiven by God said: “I am more worried about the sin of your losing hope in God’s Mercy than that of killing an innocent man. Pay the full compensation for his blood money to his family members.” The man said: “I tried, but they did not accept it.” Then Imam Sajjad said: “Watch their house and see when they leave it to attend the prayers. Then drop the bags full of their blood money into their house.”¹⁰ By recognizing the influence of the reproachful self or the moral conscience, Imam Sajjad treated that man’s psychological problem.

3) The Adorning Self

One of the aspects of the human soul is that it attempts to present wicked deeds as nice ones by somehow adorning them and making them look good to us, thereby encouraging us to perform them. There are two cases cited from the Holy Qur’an below.

Joseph and His Brothers

When Jacob’s children took their brother Joseph away from their father and dropped him in a well and left him there, their self-adorned their deeds and fooled them:

وَجَآؤُوا عَلَى قَمِيصِهِ بِدَمٍ كَذِبٍ قَالَ بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ أَنْفُسُكُمْ أَمْرًا فَصَبْرٌ جَمِيلٌ وَاللَّهُ الْمُسْتَعَانُ عَلَى مَا تَصِفُونَ

“They stained his shirt with false blood. He said: “Nay, but your minds have made up a tale (that may pass) with you, (for me) patience is most fitting: Against that which ye assert, it is God (alone) Whose help can be sought”...” [The Holy Qur’an, Yusuf 12: 18]

Their father recognized their evil deed. He warned them that it was their minds that had made up a tale. This implies that when selfish desires overwhelm and we let them overcome our mind and spirit, then even the most horrible crimes such as killing or abandoning one’s brother might be so adorned in our mind that we consider them holy and obligatory deeds. This guides us towards the recognition of a psychological principle.

Once excessive tendencies towards a certain issue are coupled with moral wickedness, they will dull our senses and make things look different than they really are in our mind. Therefore, proper recognition of facts and realities, and correct judgment is impossible without self-purification. In this verse, we see how the adorning self-caused Joseph’s brothers to throw him into a well abandoning him there, and fake a story to fool their father into believing their tale. On another occasion, they returned from Egypt and brought their father the news of their brother’s act of stealing. But their father did not believe them and said:

قَالَ بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ أَنْفُسُكُمْ أَمْراً فَصَبْرٌ جَمِيلٌ عَسَى اللَّهُ أَنْ يَأْتِيَنِي بِهِمْ جَمِيعاً إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ

Jacob said: "Nay, but ye have yourselves contrived a story (good enough) for you. So patience is most fitting (for me). Maybe God will bring them (back) all to me (in the end). For He is indeed full of knowledge and wisdom." [The Holy Qur'an, Yusuf 12:83]

Samiri

We read in the Holy Qur'an that when Moses was about to go to Mount Tur (Mount Tabor) to receive the Ten Commandments, he told the people that it would take him thirty days. However, his trip was extended to forty days by God. Samiri fooled the children of Israel during the last ten days and made them worship the calf. When Moses returned and encountered that situation, at first he blamed his brother Aaron. However, once he realized that Aaron was not at fault, and it was Samiri's fault, he blamed Samiri.

قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكَ يَا سَامِرِيُّ

قَالَ بَصُرْتُ بِمَا لَمْ يَبْصُرُوا بِهِ فَقَبَضْتُ قَبْضَةً مِّنْ أَثَرِ الرَّسُولِ فَنَبَذْتُهَا وَكَذَلِكَ سَوَّلَتْ لِي نَفْسِي

“(Moses) said: "What then is thy case, O' Samiri?" He replied: "I saw what they saw not: so I took a handful (of dust) from the footprint of the Apostle, and threw it (into the calf): thus did my soul suggest to me." [The Holy Qur'an, Ta-Ha 20:95-96]

Samiri was a corrupt selfish man. He was able to use his ingenuity, courage and dexterity to deploy the weakness of the children of Israel to make a great sedition. Thus, they ignored all of the previous teachings of Moses and started to worship a calf. In this situation, Samiri claimed that his evil deeds were rooted in his adorning soul by saying: “Thus did my soul suggest to me.”

Hasan al-Basri: The Samiri of the Nation

There is a tradition in Ihtijaj by Tabarsi that states: “When the Commander of the Faithful conquered Basra, the people gathered around him. Among the people, Hasan al-Basri was writing down what Imam Ali had said. Imam Ali asked him what he was doing. He said: “I am recording your words to be saved for the future.” Then the Commander of the Faithful said:

أَمَّا إِنَّ لِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ سَامِرِيًّا وَهَذَا سَامِرِيُّ هَذِهِ الْأُمَّةِ، إِنَّهُ لَا يَقُولُ: لَا مِسَاسَ، وَلَكِنَّهُ يَقُولُ: لَا قِتَالَ

“O people! Beware that there is a Samiri for each nation. Know that Hasan Bassri is the Samiri for this

nation. The only difference is that Samiri did not let anyone approach him, but this man tells the people that we should not fight, even with the corrupt people.”¹¹

The Imam was referring to Hasan al-Basri's anti-war propaganda regarding the Battle of Jamal.

4) The Confident Self

Confidence is one of the highest ranks for the self. We read in the following verse of the Holy Qur'an:

يَا أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ

ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً

فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي وَادْخُلِي جَنَّاتِي

(To the righteous soul will be said:) "O (thou) soul, in (complete) rest and come back thou to thy Lord, – well pleased (thyself), and well-pleasing unto Him! Satisfaction! Enter thou, then, among My devotees! Yea, enter thou My Heaven!" [The Holy Qur'an, al-Fajr 89:27–30]

How wonderful is God's invitation to the righteous whose faith has helped them attain confidence, complete rest and satisfaction to return to him: an invitation to a return combined with the pleasure of both sides. Then he will be crowned with servitude; will be dressed in the garment of servitude; will attain the position of especial ones, and shall enter Heaven.

This refers to a form of peace and tranquility after turmoil and attaining the utmost degree of certitude, recognition, and witnessing of God. Kashefi interprets this as: "O' the self that is confident by remembering Me when granted blessings, and by patience and perseverance during times of hardship. Thus now that you are pleased with the blessings that I have granted you, return to what I have promised."

The Confident Self at the Time of Death

The peace with which the confident self-departs from this material world and joins eternity is the most beautiful demonstration of the nobility of the confident self. Sudayr Seyrafi quoted the following on the authority of Imam Sadiq regarding this state: "I asked Imam Sadiq : O' grandson of the Prophet! May I be your ransom! Does a believer feel bad about his spirit being taken out of his body at the time of death? Imam Sadiq replied:

لَا وَاللَّهِ! إِنَّهُ إِذَا جَاءَهُ مَلَكُ الْمَوْتِ لِيَقْبِضَ رُوحَهُ جَزَعَ عِنْدَ ذَلِكَ، فَيَقُولُ مَلَكُ الْمَوْتِ: «لَا تَجْزَعُ! فَوَالَّذِي بَعَثَ مُحَمَّدًا

لَأَنَا أَكْبَرُ بِكَ وَأَشْفَقُ عَلَيْكَ مِنَ الْوَالِدِ الرَّحِيمِ لَوْ حَضَرَكَ، إِفْتَحْ عَيْنَيْكَ فَانْظُرْ.» (قال) وَيُمَثِّلُ لَهُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَأَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَفَاطِمَةُ وَالْحَسَنُ وَالْحُسَيْنُ وَالْأَئِمَّةُ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِمْ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَامُ فَيُقَالُ لَهُ: «هَذَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَأَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَفَاطِمَةُ وَالْحَسَنُ وَالْحُسَيْنُ وَالْأَئِمَّةُ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَامُ رُفَقَاؤُكَ.» (قال) فَيَفْتَحُ عَيْنَيْهِ فَيَنْظُرُ فَيُنَادِي رُوحَهُ مُنَادٍ مِنْ قَبْلِ رَبِّ الْعِزَّةِ فَيَقُولُ: «يَا أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ إِلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَأَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ ارْجِعِي إِلَى رَبِّكَ رَاضِيَةً بِالْوِلَايَةِ مَرْضِيَةً بِالثَّوَابِ فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي؛ يَعْنِي مُحَمَّدًا وَأَهْلَ بَيْتِهِ، وَادْخُلِي جَنَّتِي.» فَمَا مِنْ شَيْءٍ أَحَبُّ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ اسْتِثْلَالِ رُوحِهِ وَاللُّحُوقِ بِالْمُنَادِي.

'No. I swear by God! When the angel of death comes he becomes anxious and distressed. However, the angel tells him: "Do not be distressed! I swear by God who appointed the Prophet that I am even kinder to you than a merciful father – if he was present here. Open your eyes and look." Then the Prophet , Imam Ali , the Blessed Fatima , al-Hasan, al-Husayn, and the Imams are represented to him.

*It is said to him: This is the Prophet and Imam Ali, the Blessed Fatima, al-Hasan, al-Husayn and the Imams , your friends.' He opens his eyes and sees, and the caller calls out to his soul from the Glorious Lord, saying: "O Confident self who has attained peace via Muhammad and his household. Return to your Lord pleased with the friendship of Imam Ali and the reward of your Lord. Join My servants Muhammad and his household, and enter My Heaven." Nothing will be more desirable for him than the drawing out of his soul and joining the Caller!'*¹²

Fighting Selfish Desires to Attain Perfection

One must first recognize and abandon all his selfish desires before he can attain human perfection. This has been quoted by Majashe on the authority of the Noble Prophet of Islam who was the first perfect man ever. It is recorded in Ghawali al-La`ali that a man called Majashe went to see the Prophet , asked him the following questions, and got the following replies:

Question: "O' Prophet of God! What is the way of recognition of God?"

Answer: "Recognition of the self."

Question: "What is the way to agree with God?"

Answer: "To disagree with the self."

Question: "What is the way to please God?"

Answer: "To raise the wrath of the self."

Question: "What is the way to approach God?"

Answer: "To abandon the desires of the self."

Question: "What is the way to obey God?"

Answer: "To disobey the wants of the self."

Question: "What is the way to remember God?"

Answer: "To fight the self."

Question: "What is the way to get closer to God?"

Answer: "To stay away from the self."

Question: "What is the way to get accustomed to God?"

Answer: "To fear the self"

Question: "What is the way to attain all this?"

Answer: "Seeking God's help against one's self." [13](#)

If one practices what the Prophet has instructed us to do in this tradition, then he can attain true mysticism. Man can only attain inner peace and illumination if he abandons wicked traits and adorns himself with perfection. He should first abandon all his wickedness, and then he should adorn himself with perfections. Finally, man should polish the beauties of his self, refine them, and make them transparent.

The Jurisprudents' View on the Rights of the Self

Finally, we will discuss the jurisprudents' view on the rights of the self. One of the highly valuable aspects of the human self is his life. Nothing can be equated with it. The Holy Qur'an says the following regarding the value of man's life:

مِنْ أَجْلِ ذَلِكَ كَتَبْنَا عَلَى بَنِي إِسْرَآئِيلَ أَنَّهُ مَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَمَنْ أَحْيَاهَا فَكَأَنَّمَا أَحْيَا النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا

"On that account: We ordained for the Children of Israel that if anyone slew a person – unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land – it would be as if he slew the whole people: and if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people..." [The Holy Qur'an, al-Ma'ida 5:32]

The Holy Qur'an determines a very bad punishment for killing a believer. This is considered to be the worst crime:

وَمَنْ يَقْتُلْ مُؤْمِنًا مُتَعَمِّدًا فَجَزَاؤُهُ جَهَنَّمُ خَالِدًا فِيهَا وَغَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَلَعَنَهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُ عَذَابًا عَظِيمًا

“If a man kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell, to abide therein (for ever): And the wrath and the curse of God are upon him, and a dreadful penalty is prepared for him.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Nisaa 4:93]

The Holy Qur’an also says:

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَمَنْ قُتِلَ مَظْلُومًا فَقَدْ جَعَلْنَا لَوْلِيِّهِ سُلْطَانًا فَلَا يَسْرِفُ فِي الْقَتْلِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ مَنْصُورًا

“Nor take life – which God has made sacred – except for just cause. And if anyone is slain wrongfully, we have given his heir authority (to demand qisas¹⁴ or to forgive): but let him not exceed bounds in the matter of taking life; for he is helped (by the Law).” [The Holy Qur’an, Bani Israil 17:33]

The law of equality that is meant for punishing those who kill others is presented by the Qur’an:

وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقِصَاصِ حَيَاةٌ يَا أُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

“In the Law of Equality there is (saving of) life to you, O ye men of understanding; that ye may restrain yourselves.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Baqarah 2: 179]

We can classify killing into three groups: intentional, pseudo-intentional, and unintentional. The remaining kin of the person killed have the option to kill or accept the financial compensation¹⁵ in case of intentional killing, or forgive altogether.

In a pseudo-intentional killing in which no weapon like a gun, or a knife is used, and there has been no intention to kill, but to deliver a blow to the other, the remaining kin of the murdered person can only receive the financial compensation. In the case of unintentional killing, there is only the possibility of financial compensation.¹⁶

The Qur’an views the Law of Equality as a means of saving lives in the society, while still leaving room for financial compensation or forgiving. According to the jurisprudents’ views, the financial compensation or the blood-money for the life of a free person is either one of the following:

1 One hundred camels that have attained six years of age

2 Two hundred cows

3 One thousand sheep

4 Two hundred silk dresses

5 One thousand 'Mithqal-e-Shar'i'¹⁷ of gold

6 Ten thousand Dirhams. ¹⁸

We should also note that the compensation for the blood money for women is half of that for men.

- ¹. Afsar Arbaeh, v.8, p.53
- ². Hikmat-e-Ilahi Aam wa Khaas, p.31-32.
- ³. Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, v.2, p.270.
- ⁴. Ibid. p.310
- ⁵. Sharh-e-Ghurur wa Durar, Aqa Jamal Khansari, v.2, p.462.
- ⁶. Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, v.2, pg.270.
- ⁷. Sharh-i-Ghurur wa Durar, v.3, p.462
- ⁸. Ibid. v.5, p.254.
- ⁹. Majmu'ah Waram, v.2, p. 10.
- ¹⁰. Majmu'ah Waram, v.2, p.4.
- ¹¹. Nur al-Thaqalayn, v.3, p.392.
- ¹². Nur al-Thaqalayn, v.5, p.577.
- ¹³. Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v.2, p.270.
- ¹⁴. The option to kill or to accept financial compensation in case of intentional killing.
- ¹⁵. 'Qisas' in Arabic.
- ¹⁶. Mukhtasar al-Manafi', Kitab al-Diyat, p.294.
- ¹⁷. Mithqal Shar'i is a unit of weight equal to 3.456 grams.
- ¹⁸. Ibid.

Right n. 3: The Right of the Tongue

حق اللسان

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ اللِّسَانِ فَأِكْرَامُهُ عَنِ الْخَنَى وَتَعْوِيدُهُ عَلَى الْخَيْرِ وَحَمْلُهُ عَلَى الْأَدَبِ وَإِجْمَامُهُ إِلَّا لِمَوْضِعِ الْحَاجَةِ وَالْمَنْفَعَةِ
لِلدِّينِ وَالْدُنْيَا وَإِعْفَاؤُهُ عَنِ الْفُضُولِ أَلْسِنَةِ الْقَلِيلَةِ الْفَائِدَةِ الَّتِي لَا يُؤْمَنُ ضَرَرُهَا مَعَ قَلَّةِ عَائِدَتِهَا. وَيُعَدُّ شَاهِدَ الْعَقْلِ
وَالدَّلِيلَ عَلَيْهِ وَتَزِينُ الْعَاقِلِ بِعَقْلِهِ حُسْنُ سِيرَتِهِ فِي لِسَانِهِ. وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ الْعَلِيِّ الْعَظِيمِ

And the right of the tongue is that you consider it too noble for obscenity, accustom it to good, direct it to politeness,¹ do not use it except in situations of needs and benefits of the religion and this world, and refrain from any meddling in which there is little to be gained; and there is no

security from its harm that accompanies its small benefits. It² is the witness to and the evidence of the existence of the intellect. The demonstration of an intelligent person's intellect is through his reputation of good speech.³ And there is no power but in God the High, the Great.

In the previous chapter, Imam Sajjad instructed us to use all our faculties, i.e. ourselves to obey God, and respect the rights of our body parts which are the means by which we act. In this chapter we will start the discussion of the rights of our body parts by first discussing the rights of the tongue.

Our Tongue is Our Greatest Blessing

Undoubtedly, the tongue and the ability to speak are the greatest blessings that God has bestowed on man in His Creation. This has been explicitly stated in the following verse:

خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ

“He has created man: He has taught him speech (and intelligence).” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Rahman 55:3-4]

Speech has been described as meaning “uncovering” an object in Arabic. Our tongue expresses our inner thoughts and feelings. Our speech uncovers our inner thoughts and expresses what we think. If it was not for our ability to speak, we would be quiet just like animals and there would be no more discussion, explaining and understanding among men.

Different Languages as a Sign of God

The Almighty God stated in the Holy Qur’an:

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافُ أَلْسِنَتِكُمْ وَالْوُأْنِكُمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

“And among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variations in your languages and your colors: verily in that are Signs for those who know.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Rum 30:22]

This clearly expresses that the existence of various colors, races, and languages among mankind is one of the signs of God.

Language as a Means of Getting to Know Others

There are various ways to get to know each person. One of these ways is through speech. Each person introduces his own personality when he talks. Our speaking clearly expresses our inner purity or

wickedness. One can tell whether you are a good man or a corrupt one. Imam Baqir said:

الْمَرْءُ مَخْبُوءٌ تَحْتَ لِسَانِهِ.

“A man is hidden under his tongue.”⁴

The tongue will unveil the curtain and display our real character.

The Nature of Verbal Sins

Imam Ali said the following about the tongue:

جُرْمُهُ صَغِيرٌ وَجُرْمُهُ ثَقِيلٌ

“Its mass is small, but its sin is great.”

This wise saying clearly states how our little tongue can be used to create great sins. Each of the body parts that God has given us has a specific characteristic and purpose. Some have certain limitations, too. For instance, the eye can only see certain colors. The ears can only hear sounds. The hands can only feel through touching. However, the tongue has a wide range of application extending from wickedness and corruption to goodness and prosperity. If used in a good sense it can lead to human prosperity and if used in an evil way, it can be the biggest means by which Satan can misguide us.

The Effect of the Tongue on Social Improvement or Corruption

There are various ways to achieve social improvement or corruption. Speaking is one of the most effective means in this respect. A fluent speaker can direct the human society towards noble characteristics and human values. Likewise, he can lead the society towards moral and spiritual decay and corruption. He can easily agitate the still nation and excite them to move and change their lives, or direct the aroused feelings of a society towards calmness and pacification.

For example, when Imam Ali was martyred the news was spread throughout the Muslim community. When the news of his martyrdom in the prayer niche reached Sham, all the people there were surprised. They were so influenced by the speeches delivered against Imam Ali by the men hired by Mu`awiyah that they asked themselves, “Did Ali pray?” The extent of the influence of the tongue is so much that as you can see the most pious man who lived his whole lifetime to establish the prayer, is presented as being one who does not pray in the minds of the people of Sham.

Busr ibn Artā'ah and the Hamdan Tribe

When Mu`awiyah sent Busr ibn Artā'ah to the Hamdan Tribe to rule, Busr ibn Artā'ah exercised so much oppression and committed so many crimes that no one dared to object. At this time, a brave lady called Sawdah went to Sham (Syria) to defend the sacred religion and the people. When Mu`awiyah was informed of her arrival he was surprised. He said that he had been trying to arrest her with no result. Now she had gone there on her own.

He admitted her to the court. When she entered, she bitterly greeted Mu`awiyah. Mu`awiyah said: "See! You had to come and greet me." She replied: "Do not be proud of your rule. There is a term for everything. It will soon end. Do not be so attached to your position since it will not last."

Mu`awiyah said: "O' Sawdah! Do you remember the days of war when you sang heroic poetry among the soldiers of Ali? What was your goal then? Was it not my destruction? Sing them now." Sawdah said: "Your oppression has made me forget everything. Now I have come to complain against the oppression of Busr ibn Artā'ah. He has oppressed us. He has confiscated the people's property, and has murdered the men." Mu`awiyah said: "Now I will send you to him to treat you as he pleases."

Then Sawdah said: "May God bless the pure body that is buried, with whom justice was buried too." Mu`awiyah said: "Whom are you referring to?" She replied: "I am referring to my Master, Imam Ali . You should know that I had a similar complaint that I expressed to Imam Ali before. He was alone, and wanted to start his prayer. When he noticed me, he asked the reason.

When I told him that I had come to complain against his governor, he touched his beard and his eyes overflowed with tears and he said: "O' God! Be a witness that I did not send my governor to oppress your servants." He then wrote the order to fire the governor and handed it to me. Now you threaten me instead of considering my complaint. This is the difference between Imam Ali and you." Mu`awiyah got upset and wrote a letter to Busr ibn Artā'ah to stop his crimes and acts of oppression.

Thus, we can see that the tongue can be used as an effective tool. It is so effective that it can even be used to change the views of a cruel man such as Mu`awiyah. Then Mu`awiyah said: "It was Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib who made you too proud by saying: If I were the gatekeeper of Heaven I will tell the Bani Hamdan tribe to safely enter Heaven."⁵

The Effect of Eloquent Speech

Now we shall cite another example. There were many letters exchanged between Imam Ali and Mu`awiyah. Among them, there is one that Imam Ali wrote and handed to an eloquent man called al-Tirimma<sup>۶</sup> to deliver to Mu`awiyah. Al-Tirimma^۶ traveled to Sham. After meeting `Amr ibn al-`Aas and Yazeed, he visited Mu`awiyah. He was so eloquent in speech that he was able to influence them all. Mu`awiyah decided to use al-Tirimma^۶'s eloquence for his own purposes.

Thus he said: “O’ Arab! Will you accept what I donate to you?” He replied: “Why not? Why should I not accept your gifts while I wish to take away your life?” Mu`awiyah ordered that he be paid ten thousand Dirhams and said: “If it is not enough please say so. I will order more to be paid to you.” Al-Tirimmaؓ said: “Order them to give me more money. You are not paying out of your own father’s pocket anyway. Order them to give me another ten thousand Dirhams.” Then Mu`awiyah ordered that he be paid another ten thousand Dirhams. Then al-Tirimmaؓ said: “Order them to give another ten thousand Dirhams to make it thirty thousand Dirhams since there is only one God.”

After a while when al-Tirimmaؓ did not receive the additional ten thousand Dirhams he had asked for, he said: “Are you making a fool out of me? It seems like words were just a breeze from over a hill.” Then Mu`awiyah ordered that he be paid the money. `Amr ibn al-`Aas asked al-Tirimmaؓ: “How did you find the benevolence of the Commander of the Faithful.”[6](#)

Al-Tirimmaؓ said: “This is the property of the Muslims. One of God’s servants has obtained it from God’s treasures. What is his role in this?” Then Mu`awiyah said: “This made the world seem dark to me.” Then he called in his secretary and dictated a boastful letter in reply to Imam Ali’s letter. Al-Tirimmaؓ said: “O’ Mu`awiyah! Are you threatening a duck with water? I swear by God that Imam Ali has a big rooster that can store all your soldiers in its gullet.” Mu`awiyah said: “He is right. That is Malik al-Ashtar.”

When al-Tirimmaؓ left, Mu`awiyah said: “If I give you all that I possess, you will not even give me one tenth the services that this Bedouin gives Ali.” `Amr ibn al-`Aas said: “If you had the same position that Ali has relative to the Prophet, we would have been much more loyal to you.” Mu`awiyah said: “May God break your teeth. By God your words were harsher to me than his words.”[7](#)

Imam Sajjad advised us to get used to using our tongue in a good way. When used in this way, it becomes so strong that it can even defeat an enemy like Mu`awiyah, and make life bitter for him.

The Philosophy behind Silence

There is a certain stress placed on silence in some traditions. This stress is such that we can prefer silence to speaking. What is the philosophy behind this silence? When is it recommended?

As said, the tongue reflects what is in the heart. It expresses one’s inner feelings and thoughts. It portrays one’s character and personality. There are also possible harms due to its use. Imam Ali said:

اللِّسَانُ سَبْعُ اِنْ خُلِيَ عَقَرٌ.

“The tongue is a beast that will cause an injury when unleashed.” [8](#)

He also said:

إِعْجَبُوا لِهَذَا الْإِنْسَانِ يَنْظُرُ بِشَحْمٍ وَيَتَكَلَّمُ بِلَحْمٍ وَيَسْمَعُ بِعَظْمٍ وَيَتَنَفَّسُ مِنْ خَرَمٍ

“Be amazed at man who sees using a piece of fat, talks using a piece of meat, hears using a piece of bone, and breathes through a hole.”⁹

The Tongue: Most Instrumental in Entering Heaven or Hell

Sahl al-Sa’edi quoted on the authority of the Noble Prophet that:

مَنْ يَتَكَفَّلُ لِي مَا بَيْنَ لِحْيَتَيْهِ وَرِجْلَيْهِ أَتَكَفَّلُ لَهُ بِالْجَنَّةِ

“Whoever guarantees to safeguard what is between his/her lips and his/her legs, ¹⁰ then I shall guarantee Heaven for him/her.”¹¹

وَقَدْ سُئِلَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ عَنْ أَكْثَرِ مَا يُدْخِلُ النَّاسَ الْجَنَّةَ، فَقَالَ: «يَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَحُسْنَ الْخُلُقِ». وَسُئِلَ عَنْ أَكْثَرِ مَا يُدْخِلُ النَّاسَ النَّارَ، قَالَ: «الْأَجُوفَانِ: الْفَمُ وَالْفَرْجُ»

The Noble Prophet was asked about the means most influential in taking people to Heaven. He replied: “Piety and good temper.” He was asked about the means most influential in taking people to Hell. He replied: “The two hollows: the mouth and the vulva.”¹²

Ma`adh ibn Jabal asked the Noble Prophet : “Shall we be held responsible for what we say?” The Prophet said:

تَكَلَّتْكُمْ أُمَّكَ يَا بَنَ جَبَلٍ! وَهَلْ يَكُفُّ النَّاسَ (فِي جَهَنَّمَ) عَلَى مَنَاخِرِهِمْ إِلَّا حَصَائِدُ أَلْسِنَتِهِمْ؟

“O Ibn Jabal! May your mother be bereft of you! Does anything else throw people down on their faces (in Hell) other than the harvest of their tongues?”¹³

In all these traditions from the Prophet of God , we see that avoiding verbal abuse and preventing our tongue from engaging in sin is the best source of man’s prosperity and an important factor in taking him to Heaven. Anas ibn Malik quoted on the authority of God’s Prophet :

لَا يَسْتَقِيمُ إِيْمَانُ عَبْدٍ حَتَّى يَسْتَقِيمَ قَلْبُهُ، وَلَا يَسْتَقِيمُ قَلْبُهُ حَتَّى يَسْتَقِيمَ لِسَانُهُ، وَلَا يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ رَجُلٌ لَا يَأْمَنُ جَارُهُ بَوَائِقَهُ.

“A servant’s faith is balanced only when his heart is directed to God and his heart is directed to God only

when his tongue is on the straight path. A man whose neighbor is not safe from his harmful conduct will not enter Heaven.”[14](#)

What we see in this tradition is that the balance of faith depends on the balance of the heart, and that the balance of the heart depends on the balance of the tongue. Therefore, if you do not watch your tongue, you cannot have peace anywhere within you.

Silence: The Easiest Form of Worship

ʿAfwan ibn Saleem quoted on the authority of God’s Prophet :

أَلَا أُخْبِرُكُمْ بِأَيْسَرِ الْعِبَادَةِ وَأَهْوَنَهَا عَلَى الْبَدَنِ؟ الصَّمْتُ وَحُسْنُ الْخُلُقِ.

“Do you want me to inform you about the easiest form of worship and the lightest on the body? It is silence and having a good temper.”[15](#)

Al-Barra` ibn `Azib narrated that an Arab came to the Prophet and asked him to teach him something to enable him to go to Heaven. The Prophet said:

أَطْعِمِ الْجَائِعَ وَاسْقِ الظَّمْآنَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَأَنْهَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ، فَإِنْ لَمْ تُطِقْ فَكُفَّ لِسَانَكَ إِلَّا مِنْ خَيْرٍ.

“Feed the hungry. Quench the thirst of the thirsty. Advise the people to do good deeds and admonish them against evil deeds. If you are not able (to do that), then just guard your tongue from whatever is not good.”[16](#)

The Noble Prophet of God said:

لِسَانُ الْمُؤْمِنِ وَرَاءَ قَلْبِهِ، فَإِذَا أَرَادَ أَنْ يَتَكَلَّمَ تَدَبَّرَهُ بِقَلْبِهِ ثُمَّ أَمَضَاهُ بِلِسَانِهِ، وَإِنَّ لِسَانَ الْمُنَافِقِ أَمَامَ قَلْبِهِ فَإِذَا هَمَّ بِشَيْءٍ أَمَضَاهُ بِلِسَانِهِ وَلَمْ يَتَدَبَّرْهُ بِقَلْبِهِ.

“A believer’s tongue is located behind his heart. Whenever he wants to talk, he first presents his words to his heart. If the heart approves of what he wants to say it issues an order to the tongue to utter the words. However, if the heart does not issue a permit, then the lips stay sealed. But a hypocrite’s tongue is in front of his heart. Whenever he intends to say something, he utters it without the approval of his heart.”[17](#)

It has also been narrated that some people were talking together in Mu`awiyah’s palace. Al-Aʿnaf ibn Qays was quietly sitting in a corner. They asked him: “O’ Aba Bahr! Why don’t you talk?” He said: “If I lie, I shall fear God. Moreover, if I tell the truth, I shall fear you. Thus it is best that I do not talk at all.”[18](#)

The importance of silence became clear from the traditions cited. We learned that man could remain secure from the dangerous potential of committing a sin in talking by remaining silent.

An intelligent person first trusts his words to his intellect and conscience to judge before uttering them. If the intellect and conscience do not give him permission to express those words, then he remains silent. The traditions that encourage us to remain silent are meant to free us from the potential bad consequences of bad talk. It is obvious that talking is an important factor in the development of man and the society as stated before.

What Corrupts the Tongue

Researchers in ethics say that there is a cause of corruption for everything. The tongue is not an exception to this. Many things will corrupt it. Nearly twenty causes have been cited for the corruption of the tongue.

1) Talking in Vain

Talking in vain will only waste our time and is one of the causes of corruption of the tongue. The Noble Prophet said:

مِنْ حُسْنِ إِسْلَامِ الْمَرْءِ تَرْكُهُ مَا لَا يُغْنِيهِ.

“One of the signs of the excellence of a Muslim’s submission to God is his leaving what does not concern him.”¹⁹

2) Over talking

The Noble Prophet said:

طُوبَى لِمَنْ أَمْسَكَ الْفُضْلَ مِنْ لِسَانِهِ وَأَطْلَقَ الْفُضْلَ مِنْ مَالِهِ

“Blessed be the one who restrains his tongue from excessive speech and gives his excess wealth in charity to the needy.”²⁰

3) Bad Talk

Examples of bad talk are attending the get-together sessions of some women, meetings of those who drink, and talking with the corrupt, the rich, the rulers and the kings. The Noble Prophet said:

إِنَّ الرَّجُلَ لَيَتَكَلَّمُ بِالْكَلِمَةِ يَضْحَكُ بِهَا جُلَسَاؤُهُ يَهْوِي بِهَا أُنْبَعَدَ مِنَ الثُّرَيَّا.

“One who says something to make the people laugh has deviated from his position as a human being, and has fallen down like one who falls down from a star, even farther than that!”²¹

The Prophet also said:

أَعْظَمُ النَّاسِ خَطَايَا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَكْثَرُهُمْ خَوْضاً بِالْبَاطِلِ

“The greatest in sins on Resurrection Day are those who have delved the most into wrong.”

Then he referred to the Qur'an where those who have gone to Hell say:

وَكُنَّا نَخُوضُ مَعَ الْخَائِضِينَ

“We delved into wrong and were playing around” (74:45) ²²

Salman has been quoted as saying:

أَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ ذُنُوباً يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَكْثَرُهُمْ كَلَاماً فِي مَعْصِيَةِ اللَّهِ

“The most sinful people on the Resurrection Day are those who have spoken the most in disobedience to God.”²³

4) Arguing

Arguing and teasing are factors that will corrupt the tongue. Islam has ordered us not to argue since it is blameworthy. The Noble Prophet said:

لَا تُمَارِ أَخَاكَ وَلَا تُمَارِحْهُ وَلَا تَعِدْهُ مَوْعِداً فَتُخْلِفْهُ.

“Do not argue with, tease, or break the promise you have made to your brethren.”²⁴

The Prophet also said:

لَا يَسْتَكْمِلُ عَبْدٌ حَقِيقَةَ الْإِيمَانِ حَتَّى يَدَعَ الْمِرَاءَ وَالْجِدَالَ وَإِنْ كَانَ حَقًّا.

“A servant cannot attain full faith unless he quits verbal arguments even if he is right.”²⁵

He also said:

مَنْ تَرَكَ الْمِرَاءَ وَهُوَ مُحِقُّ بُنْيَ لَهُ بَيْتٌ فِي أَعْلَى الْجَنَّةِ، وَمَنْ تَرَكَ الْمِرَاءَ وَهُوَ مُبْطِلُ بُنْيَ لَهُ بَيْتٌ فِي رِجْلِ الْجَنَّةِ.

“Whoever knows he is right but quits arguing shall be given a residence in a high heavenly place. Whoever knows that he is wrong and quits arguing shall be given a residence in a low heavenly place.”[26](#)

5) Verbal Abuse

Verbal abuse or expression of animosity to get one's right or property is another factor that corrupts the tongue. Abu Hurayrah quoted on the authority of God's Prophet :

مَنْ جَادَلَ فِي خُصُومَةٍ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ لَمْ يَزَلْ فِي سَخَطِ اللَّهِ حَتَّى يَنْزِعَ.

“Whoever argues in a dispute without true knowledge shall remain subject to God's wrath until he desists.”[27](#)

The Noble Prophet also said:

إِنَّ فِي الْجَنَّةِ لَغُرَفًا يُرَى ظَاهِرُهَا مِنْ بَاطِنِهَا وَبَاطِنُهَا مِنْ ظَاهِرِهَا أَعَدَّهَا اللَّهُ تَعَالَى لِمَنْ أَطْعَمَ الطَّعَامَ وَأَطَابَ الْكَلَامَ

“There are rooms in Heaven, the exterior of which can be seen from their interior and the interior of which is visible from their exterior. God has prepared them for those who feed the hungry ones, and are pleasant in speech.”[28](#)

Thus, the Prophet instructs all Muslims to be polite in speech, and not to use bad or obscene language. Muslims are instructed to attract other people's love and friendship by using good words.

6) Excessive Eloquence

The Blessed Fatima quoted on the authority of her noble father :

شِرَارُ أُمَّتِي الَّذِينَ غَذَوْا بِالنَّعِيمِ يَأْكُلُونَ أَلْوَانَ الطَّعَامِ وَيَلْبَسُونَ أَلْوَانَ النِّبَابِ وَيَتَشَدَّقُونَ فِي الْكَلَامِ

“The most wicked people in my nation are those who are feeding off divine blessings by eating various dishes and wearing colorful clothing, but speak using an excessively eloquent language.”[29](#)

We can realize that we should not overburden ourselves by using excessively eloquent language when talking with others. Rather we should try to use nice words and expressions to express important topics.

7) Swearing

Swearing is considered bad in Islam. It is one of the factors that corrupt the tongue. The Noble Prophet said:

إِيَّاكُمْ وَالْفُحْشَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفُحْشَ وَلَا النَّفْحُشَ

“Beware of swearing since God does not like swearing and those who are used to swearing.”³⁰

In another tradition we read that the Noble Prophet said:

الْجَنَّةُ حَرَامٌ عَلَى كُلِّ فَاخِشٍ أَنْ يَدْخُلَهَا.

“Heaven is forbidden to whoever is used to swearing. He cannot enter it.”³¹

In another tradition we read that the Prophet told Ayesah:

يَا عَائِشَةُ، لَوْ كَانَ الْفُحْشُ رَجُلًا لَكَانَ رَجُلٌ سَوِيٌّ

“O Ayesah! If swearing could appear like a man it would be an evil man.”

Swearing is one of the very bad characteristics. Whoever gets used to swearing should try to treat himself. Swearing is defined to be the expression of vulgar things. One who swears is trying to hurt the other person, and hurting others is certainly forbidden. It may be the result of associating with bad people who use obscene language. This has also been declared to be bad in Islam.

An Arab went to see the Prophet and said: “Please give me some advice.” The Prophet said:

عَلَيْكَ بِتَقْوَى اللَّهِ، وَإِنْ أَمْرٌ عَيْرَكَ بِشَيْءٍ يَعْلَمُهُ مِنْكَ فَلَا تُعَبِّرْهُ بِشَيْءٍ تَعْلَمُهُ فِيهِ يَكُنْ وَبِأَلِّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَأَجْرُهُ لَكَ. وَلَا تَسُبَّنْ شَيْئاً مِنْ خَلْقِ اللَّهِ.

“I advise you to fear God. If someone blames you for what is in you, do not blame him for what you know that may lie in him. Thus, he will suffer from the ill consequences of his deeds and you will prosper from your good deeds. Also never revile any of God’s creatures.”

The man took the Prophet’s advice and never swore at anyone.³²

We learn from this tradition that we should never use our knowledge of other people’s weaknesses to harm their honor. Ayaz ibn Samar told the Prophet of God: “O Prophet of God! A relative of mine who is

lower than me in rank swears at me. Should I swear at him in defense?" The Prophet said:

الْمُتَسَابَانِ شَيْطَانَانِ يَتَعَاوَنَانِ وَيَتَهَاتَرَانِ

*"Whenever two people revile each other they are like two Satans helping each other and making false accusations against each other."*³³

8) Cursing

Cursing is also another factor that corrupts the tongue. Whoever curses others is pushing them away from the circle of God's Mercy. This issue has been referred to in several verses of the Holy Qur'an. God has cursed many and has deprived them of his Mercy. An important case is that of Satan:

وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكَ لَعْنَتِي إِلَى يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

"And My curse shall be on thee till the Day of Judgment." [The Holy Qur'an, Sad 38:78]

Those who conceal the truth are also cursed:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنزَلْنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالْهُدَىٰ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا بَيَّنَّاهُ لِلنَّاسِ فِي الْكِتَابِ أُولَٰئِكَ يَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ
اللَّاعِنُونَ

"Those who conceal the clear (Signs) We have sent down, and the Guidance, after We have made it clear for the people in the Book, – on them shall be God's curse, and the curse of those entitled to curse." [The Holy Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2: 159]

Those who lie were also cursed as in the following verse:

فَمَنْ حَاجَّكَ فِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ فَقُلْ تَعَالَوْا نَدْعُ أَبْنَاءَنَا وَأَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَنِسَاءَنَا وَنِسَاءَكُمْ وَأَنفُسَنَا وَأَنفُسَكُمْ ثُمَّ
نَبْتَهِلْ فَنَجْعَلُ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْكَاذِبِينَ

"If anyone disputes in this matter with thee, now after (full) knowledge hath come to thee, say: 'Come! Let us gather together, – our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves: Then let us earnestly pray, and invoke the curse of God on those who lie!'" [The Holy Qur'an, Al-i-Imran 3:61]

The pagans and the Jews who were awaiting the coming of the Prophet Muhammad refused to believe in him after they recognized him. We read in the following verse that they too are cursed:

وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ كِتَابٌ مِّنْ عِندِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ وَكَانُوا مِن قَبْلُ يَسْتَفْتِحُونَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ مَا عَرَفُوا كَفَرُوا بِهِ فَلَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ

“And when there comes to them a Book from God, confirming what is with them, – although from of old they had prayed for victory against those without Faith, – when there comes to them that which they (should) have recognized, they refuse to believe in it but the curse of God is on those without Faith.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Baqarah 2:89]

The Prophet and Imam Ali cursed several people. The Prophet cursed Abu Sufyan in seven places.^{[34](#)} Imam Ali has been narrated to have quoted on the authority of God’s Prophet :

سَبْعَةٌ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ، وَكُلُّ نَبِيٍّ مُّجَابٍ: الْمُغَيِّرُ لِكِتَابِ اللَّهِ وَالْمُكَذِّبُ بِقَدَرِ اللَّهِ وَ الْمُبَدِّلُ سُنَّةِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ وَالْمُسْتَحِلُّ مِنْ عِزَّتِي مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ وَالْمُتَسَلِّطُ فِي سُلْطَانِهِ لِيُعِزَّ مَنْ أَدَلَّ اللَّهُ وَيُذِلَّ مَنْ أَعَزَّ اللَّهُ وَالْمُسْتَحِلُّ لِحُرْمِ اللَّهِ وَالْمُتَكَبِّرُ عَلَى عِبَادَةِ اللَّهِ.

“There are seven groups of people who were cursed by God and His Prophet :

- 1– Those who change the Divine Book.*
- 2– Those who deny divine decrees*
- 3– Those who change the Prophet’s traditions*
- 4– Those who make permissible the violation of the rights of my progeny that God has forbidden*
- 5– Those who use their power and rule to belittle one whom God has honored, and those who use their power and rule to honor one whom God has debased*
- 6– Those who make lawful what God has forbidden.*
- 7 – Those who are haughty in worshipping God.*

Believers Do Not Curse

The Noble Prophet said:

الْمُؤْمِنُ لَا يَلْعَانُ

“A believer does not curse others.”^{[35](#)}

It is even forbidden to curse animals in Islam. Overall, we can conclude that cursing men, animals and

objects is forbidden, except for some instances of the infidels, the hypocrites and those who have usurped the rights of Imam Ali and his descendants.

9) Lustful Songs

The next factor that corrupts the tongue is listening to lustful songs. Consider the following verses:

ذَلِكَ وَمَنْ يُعْظِمِ اللّٰهُ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لِّهِ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ وَأُحِلَّتْ لَكُمْ الْاَنْعَامُ اِلَّا مَا يُتْلٰى عَلَيْكُمْ فَاجْتَنِبُوا الرِّجْسَ مِنَ الْاَوْثَانِ
وَاجْتَنِبُوا قَوْلَ الزُّورِ

“Such (is the Pilgrimage): whoever honors the sacred rites of God, for him it is good in the Sight of his Lord. Lawful to you (for food in Pilgrimage) are cattle, except those mentioned to you (as exception): but shun the abomination of idols, and shun the word that is false.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Hajj 22:30]

وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَشْهَدُونَ الزُّورَ وَإِذَا مَرُّوا بِاللَّغْوِ مَرُّوا كِرَامًا

“Those who witness no falsehood, and, if they pass by futility, they pass by it with honorable (avoidance).” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Furqan 25:72]

The Arabic expressions that are translated into “shun the word that is false” and “witness no falsehood” in the above verses of the Holy Qur’an have been interpreted by Shuham and Ibn Abi Amir and Abi Basir (in *al-Kafi*) and others as implying lustful music. The following verse is also said to refer to lustful music aimed at corrupting the people.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَشْتَرِي لَهْوَ الْحَدِيثِ لِيُضِلَّ عَن سَبِيلِ اللّٰهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَيَتَّخِذَهَا هُزُوًا اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ

“But there are, among men, those who purchase idle tales, without knowledge (or meaning), to mislead (men) from the Path of God and throw ridicule (on the Path): for such there will be a Humiliating Penalty.” [The Holy Qur’an, Luqman 31:6]

However, there are two groups of traditions regarding poetry. Religious poetry is considered to be good in one group of traditions. Other traditions consider lustful poetry to be bad.

10) Joking Around

Joking around is considered to be bad in Islam. The Noble Prophet said:

لَا تُمَارِ أَخَاكَ وَلَا تُمَارِضْهُ

“Avoid arguing with your brethren and abstain from excessive joking around.”³⁶

The Prophet also said:

إِنِّي لَأَمْزُحُ وَلَا أَقُولُ إِلَّا حَقًّا

“I tell jokes, but only say the truth.”³⁷

The Prophet's Jokes

The Prophet told some nice jokes. As an example, consider the following. One day an old lady went to see the Prophet . The Prophet said: “An old lady does not go to Heaven.” The old lady started to cry. Then the Prophet said: “On that day you will not be old. You will be young. God said the following in the Holy Qur'an:”

إِنَّا أَنْشَأْنَاهُنَّ إِنْشَاءً فَجَعَلْنَاهُنَّ أَبْكَارًا

“We have created (their Companions) of special creation, and made them virgin – pure (and undefiled).” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Waqi`ah 56:35-36]

Imam Ali said:

مَا مَزَحَ امْرُؤٌ مَزْحَةً إِلَّا مَجَّ مِنْ عَقْلِهِ مَجَّةً

“A person does not jest but that something of his intellect is cast out.”³⁸

11) Making Fun of Others

Scholars in ethics have considered making fun of people as one of the factors that corrupt the tongue. God said:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرُ قَوْمٌ مِّنْ قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءٌ مِّنْ نِّسَاءٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُنَّ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوا بِالْأَلْقَابِ بِئْسَ الْإِسْمُ الْفُسُوقُ بَعْدَ الْإِيمَانِ وَمَن لَّمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ

“O ye who believe! Let not some men among you laugh at others: It may be that the (latter) are better than the (former): Nor let some women laugh at others: It may be that the (latter are better than the (former): Nor defame nor be sarcastic to each other, nor call each other by (offensive) nicknames: Ill-seeming is a name connoting wickedness, (to be used of one) after he has believed: And those who do not desist are (indeed) doing wrong.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Hujurat

The first principle referred to in this verse is respecting the Muslims. Muslims should respect each other in social encounters. Materialists have a different world outlook than Muslims. Materialists respect one for his physical beauty, but Muslims respect man's moral values. In the above verse, making fun of others is forbidden. Men are unaware of each other's inner thoughts and feelings. It may be that an ugly man has a very beautiful character. He might be made fun of for his looks, but if others knew him well they would never make fun of him. That is why it is not allowed to make fun of anyone.

The Psychological Motivation behind Making Fun of Others

A form of inferiority complex is considered a psychological root of making fun of other people. That is why respectable people never make fun of anyone. Those who make fun of others also enjoy insulting others. They have a sort of vicious attitude. Beasts attack the people physically, and they attack the people's honor.

Imam Sajjad's Views on Clowns

A clown once pulled off Imam Sajjad's cloak. The Imam did not say anything. The people followed the clown and took back the cloak. They brought it back and put it on Imam Sajjad's shoulder. Imam Sajjad asked: "Who did that?" The people said: "It was a clown who makes the people laugh." Then Imam Sajjad said:

اِنَّ لِلّٰهِ يَوْمًا يَخْسِرُ فِيْهِ الْمُبْطِلُوْنَ

*"Tell him that there is a day for God in which those who indulge in vain and futile acts will not gain anything but loss."*³⁹

It is Forbidden to Make Fun of the Crippled

Some people are crippled for some reason. They lose their physical health. If people make fun of those who are crippled, then they will get hurt. They will get hurt due to being made fun of and due to not being healthy. That is why Imam Ali said the following in his supplications:

اِاللّٰهُمَّ اجْعَلْ نَفْسِيْ اَوَّلَ كَرِيْمَةٍ تَنْتَزِعُهَا مِنْ كَرَائِمِيْ وَاَوَّلَ وَدِيْعَةٍ تُرْجِعُهَا مِنْ وَدَائِعِ نِعَمِكَ عِنْدِيْ

*"O God! Make my soul the first of the my precious possessions that You take from me, and the first trust that you return to me from among Your blessings entrusted to me."*⁴⁰

Imam Husayn said:

وَمَتَّعْنِي بِجَوَارِحِي وَاجْعَلْ سَمْعِي وَبَصَرِي الْوَارِثَيْنِ عَنِّي وَأَنْصُرْنِي عَلَى مَنْ ظَلَمَنِي

“O Lord! Make me benefit from all my body parts. Let my eyes and ears be my inheritors, (i.e. protect me from becoming crippled), and give me victory over everyone who oppresses me.” [41](#)

AL-Jahiz and the Effect of Making Fun of Others

Al-Jahiz was an educated man who lived in the ninth century. Many books and writings have remained from him. He was a very ugly man. He was always supported by the Abbasid Caliphs since he expressed his opposition to Ali . One day he told his students that he was never belittled as much as he was done by a lady once. She had run across him once and asked him to follow her. She had taken him to a sculptor, and said to him: “That is it.” Then she walked away. When he asked the artist what the story was, he was told that the lady had ordered the artist to make a sculpture of Satan. The artist had told her that he could only make the sculpture if he sees Satan. Then the lady had brought him in and shown him to the artist as a model for Satan.

12) Divulging Secrets

Another factor that corrupts the tongue is divulging other people’s secrets. This is considered bad in Islam. The Noble Prophet said:

إِذَا حَدَّثَ الرَّجُلُ الْحَدِيثَ ثُمَّ التَفَتَ فَهِيَ أَمَانَةٌ

“When someone says something and goes away, what he said is left as a trust near the one who hears him.” [42](#)

He also said:

الْحَدِيثُ بَيْنَكُمْ أَمَانَةٌ.

“What others tell you is entrusted to you.” [43](#)

Imam Hasan has been narrated as saying:

إِنَّ مِنَ الْخِيَانَةِ أَنْ تُحَدِّثَ بِسِرِّ أَخِيكَ

“It is an act of treachery to speak of your brethren’s secrets.” [44](#)

13) Fake Promise

One of the factors that corrupt the tongue is making fake promises upon which one does not act. Acting upon what you promise is one of the signs of divine men. We read the following in the Holy Qur'an:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَوْفُوا بِالْعُقُودِ

“O ye who believe! Fulfil (all) obligations.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Ma'ida 5: 1]

The Noble Prophet said:

الْعِدَّةُ دَيْنٌ

“A promise is a debt.” [45](#)

God has mentioned Isma'il to be strictly true to what he promised:

وَإِذْ كُنَّا فِي الْكِتَابِ إِسْمَاعِيلَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صَادِقَ الْوَعْدِ وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَبِيًّا

“Also mention in the Book (the story of) Isma'il: He was (strictly) true to what he promised, and he was an apostle (and) a Prophet.” [The Holy Qur'an, Maryam 19:54]

14) False Swearing or Statements

Lying is a great sin. It will result in the loss of one's honor. Many Qur'anic verses and traditions outline the wickedness of lying. Abu Sa'eed was quoted to have heard the Prophet supplicate to God as follows:

اللَّهُمَّ طَهِّرْ قَلْبِي مِنَ النِّفَاقِ وَفَرْجِي مِنَ الزَّانَا وَلِسَانِي مِنَ الْكَذِبِ.

“O God! Please purify my heart from hypocrisy, purify me from acts of fornication, and purify my tongue from lying.” [46](#)

Imam Baqir said:

إِنَّ الْكَذِبَ هُوَ خَرَابُ الْإِيمَانِ.

“Lying is the ruin of man's faith.” [47](#)

The Commander of the Faithful said:

لَا يَجِدُ عَبْدٌ طَعْمَ الْإِيمَانِ حَتَّى يَتْرُكَ الْكَذِبَ جِدًّا وَهَزْلًا.

“No man shall taste faith unless he abandons lying, be it serious or as a joke.” [48](#)

A man told the Prophet : “O’ Prophet of God! Would a believer commit a sexual sin?” He said: “Maybe sometimes.” The man asked: “Would a believer tell a lie?” The Prophet answered:

إِنَّمَا يَفْتَرِي الْكَذِبَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَاذِبُونَ

Never! God the Exalted said: “It is those who believe not in the Signs of God that forge falsehood...” [49](#) [*The Holy Qur’an, al-Na’i 16: 105*]

It was quoted on the authority of Imam Hasan Askari:

حُطَّتِ الْخَبَائِثُ فِي بَيْتٍ وَجُعِلَ مِفْتَاحُهُ الْكَذِبُ.

“All evil deeds were placed in a room and lying was made its key.” [50](#)

This implies that if one lies he will fall into sin.

[Finding the Roots of Lying](#)

The Noble Prophet said:

لَا يَكْذِبُ الْكَاذِبُ إِلَّا مِنْ مَهَانَةٍ نَفْسِهِ.

“One only tells lies because of his feeling of being lowly.” [51](#)

On the other hand, honesty is rooted in a feeling of self-security and confidence. One day Hajjaj extended his sermon when he was lecturing on the pulpit. A man cried from the crowd: “It is time for prayer. Cut it short. Neither time will stop in respect for you nor will God accept your apology.” Hajjaj became upset about this open statement in public and had the man imprisoned.

When the man’s relatives went to see Hajjaj and told him that the man is insane, Hajjaj said that he had to confess to this fact himself. They went to see the man and told him to confess to being insane to be freed. The man said: “God has created me healthy and intelligent. I am not mad. Why should I falsely confess to being insane?” Then Hajjaj was told about what the man said. Hajjaj respected his honesty

and freed him.[52](#)

15) Gossiping

Gossiping will also corrupt the tongue. Before proceeding, we must clarify what is meant by gossiping. The late Shaheed Thani defined gossiping as ascribing things to someone behind their back that they dislike, and with the intention of belittling him.[53](#) Abu-Dharr was questioned about the meaning of gossiping. He replied: "Saying what might hurt your Muslim brother if he hears it behind his back."[54](#) Gossiping is forbidden in Islam. Sheikh Mortazavi has declared gossiping to be forbidden, and has used the following verse to support his view:[55](#)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا يَغْتَبَ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا أَيُحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَن يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ رَّحِيمٌ

"O ye who believe! Avoid suspicion as much (as possible): for suspicion in some cases is a sin: And spy not on each other behind their backs. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Nay, ye would abhor it. But fear God: For God is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful." [The Holy Qur'an, al-Hujurat 49: 12]

The act of gossiping is bad since both the speaker and the listener are attacking a defenseless person. It is as if one eats the flesh of his dead defenseless brother and the other one attacks one who is not present there to defend himself. Four points are stressed in the Qur'an in this regard:

1 Muslims and brothers in faith are just like our brothers.

2 A Muslim's honor is just like his flesh.

3 Gossiping behind his back to hurt his honor is like eating his flesh.

4 The fact that he is absent and is unable to defend himself is similar to him being dead. It is not right to attack a dead defenseless person.

That is why Imam Ali has said:

الغَيْبَةُ جُهْدُ الْعَاجِزِ.

"Backbiting is the endeavour of the weak."[56](#)

The second verse regarding this issue is:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحِبُّونَ أَن تَشِيعَ الْفَاحِشَةُ فِي الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

“Those who love (to see) scandal published broadcast among the Believers, will have a grievous Penalty in this life and in the Hereafter: God knows, and ye know not.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Noor 24: 19]

Man is a social creature and the society in which he lives is like his house. He should safeguard it just as he safeguards his house and prevent the influence of any corruption into the society. Islam seriously fights whatever corrupts the society. Gossiping is also seriously fought with because it unveils hidden flaws. Islam does not like this and instructs people to cover up each other’s faults. The third verse regarding this issue is:

لَا يُحِبُّ اللَّهُ الْجَهْرَ بِالسُّوءِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ إِلَّا مَنْ ظَلَمَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ سَمِيعًا عَلِيمًا

“God loveth not that evil should be noised abroad in public speech, except where injustice hath been done; for God is He who heareth and knoweth all things.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Nisaa 4: 148]

We must realize that any form of evil in public speech has been forbidden here. Thus gossiping is forbidden. The fourth verse in this regard is as follows:

وَيْلٌ لِّكُلِّ هُمَزَةٍ لُّمَزَةٍ

“Woe to every (kind of) scandal-monger and-backbiter.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Humaza, 104: 1]

Some commentators have said that this verse was revealed about al-Walīd ibn al-Mughīrah who used to gossip behind the Prophet’s back and made fun of him up front.

Gossiping is Forbidden as Expressed by Traditions

There are many traditions that stress the bad effects of gossiping. The Noble Prophet said:

كُلُّ الْمُسْلِمِ عَلَى الْمُسْلِمِ حَرَامٌ: دَمُهُ وَمَالُهُ وَعِرْضُهُ.

“Everything of the Muslim is to be respected by Muslims: his life, his wealth and his honor.”⁵⁷

Fayz Kashani has declared that gossiping is a cause of violation of one’s honor. Jabir and Abu Saeed have both quoted on the authority of God’s Prophet :

إِبَاكُمُ وَالْغَيْبَةَ فَإِنَّ الْغَيْبَةَ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الزِّنَا. فَإِنَّ الرَّجُلَ قَدْ يَزْنِي فَيَتُوبُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ. وَإِنَّ صَاحِبَ الْغَيْبَةِ لَا يُغْفَرُ لَهُ حَتَّى يَغْفَرَ لَهُ صَاحِبُهُ.

“Avoid gossiping since it is worse than committing fornication. Sometimes a man might make a mistake and commit fornication. Once he gets sorry and repents, God will accept his repentance. But if one gossips his sin will not be forgiven unless the one behind whose back he gossips forgives him.”[58](#)

The Important News of the Night of Ascension

Anas quoted on the authority of God’s Prophet :

مَرَرْتُ لَيْلَةَ أُسْرِيَ بِي عَلَى قَوْمٍ يَخْمِشُونَ وُجُوهَهُمْ بِأُظَافِيرِهِمْ، فَقُلْتُ: يَا جِبْرِيلُ، مَنْ هَؤُلَاءِ؟ قَالَ: هَؤُلَاءِ الَّذِينَ يَغْتَابُونَ النَّاسَ وَيَفْعُونَ فِي أَعْرَاضِهِمْ.

“On the night of the Ascension, I ran across a group of people who were scratching their faces with their nails. I asked Gabriel about them. He said: These are the people who have gossiped behind the people’s backs and have caused the loss of people’s honor.”[59](#)

Gossiping and Immediate Reaction

It is natural that for every action there is a reaction. What is the reaction to gossiping? Al-Barra` said: “The Prophet delivered a sermon. All those who were freed were also there and heard his sermon. The Prophet said:

يَا مَعْشَرَ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ بِلِسَانِهِ وَلَمْ يُؤْمِنْ بِقَلْبِهِ! لَا تَغْتَابُوا الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا عَوْرَاتِهِمْ، فَإِنَّهُ مَنْ تَتَّبَعَ عَوْرَةَ أَخِيهِ تَتَّبَعَ اللَّهُ عَوْرَتَهُ، وَمَنْ تَتَّبَعَ اللَّهُ عَوْرَتَهُ يَفْضَحْهُ وَلَوْ فِي بَيْتِهِ.

“O those who have confessed faith but do not really have faith! Do not gossip behind the Muslims’ backs. Do not pursue their hidden secrets. Whoever does so, God will pursue his hidden secrets, and when God does that He will disgrace him although it may be in his own house.”[60](#)

Sheikh Sadooq quoted on the authority of the Prophet :

مَنْ مَشَى فِي غَيْبَةِ أَخِيهِ وَكَشَفَ عَوْرَتَهُ كَانَتْ أَوَّلُ خُطْوَةٍ خَطَاها وَضَعَهَا فِي جَهَنَّمَ وَكَشَفَ اللَّهُ عَوْرَتَهُ عَلَى رُؤُوسِ الْخَلَائِقِ. وَمَنْ اغْتَابَ مُسْلِمًا بَطُلَ صَوْمُهُ وَنُقِضَ وُضُوؤُهُ فَإِنْ مَاتَ وَهُوَ كَذَلِكَ مَاتَ وَهُوَ مُسْتَحِلٌّ لِمَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ.

“One who gossips behind his Muslim brother’s back and intends to divulge his secrets is taking a step towards Hell. God will make his hidden secrets known to the public. Whoever gossips behind a Muslim’s back loses the acceptance of his fasting and ablution. If he dies in this state, he has died as one who has allowed what God has forbidden.”[61](#)

It is obvious that the loss of the reward of the fasting and the prayer is meant here. Imam Sadiq quoted

on the authority of God's Prophet :

الْغَيْبَةُ أَسْرَعُ فِي دِينِ الرَّجُلِ الْمُسْلِمِ مِنَ الْآكَلَةِ فِي جَوْفِهِ.

“Gossiping works faster than a cancerous cell in destroying a Muslim’s faith.”[62](#)

Therefore, we can say that gossiping is like the cancer of the religion. Al-Mufaddal ibn `Umar quoted on the authority of Imam Sadiq :

مَنْ رَوَى عَلَى مُؤْمِنٍ رَوَايَةً يُرِيدُ بِهَا شَيْنَهُ وَهَدَمَ مُرُوتَهُ لِيَسْفُطَ مِنْ أَعْيُنِ النَّاسِ أَخْرَجَهُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى مِنْ وَلَايَتِهِ إِلَى وَلَايَةِ الشَّيْطَانِ فَلَا يَقْبَلُهُ الشَّيْطَانُ.

“One who talks against a believer and intends to harm him, belittle him or harm his honor shall be cast out of divine friendship by God and entrusted to Satan. Even Satan shall not accept him.”[63](#)

Gossiping is Not Limited to Acts of the Tongue

Gossiping is not limited to acts of the tongue. Rather it could be any kind of act that has the same purpose behind it. It is forbidden by the tongue since it shows the flaws of a brother to another brother. Therefore, it is also forbidden in any other form. Imitating the way a crippled person walks is also another form of gossiping since it shows his flaw. It is even worse. A woman went to see Ayes Shah. When she left Ayes Shah pointed at her implying that she is short. God's Prophet said: “You gossiped behind her back.”[64](#)

The Listener is a Partner in Gossiping

God's Prophet said:

الْمُسْتَمِعُ لِلْغَيْبَةِ صِنُّ الْمُسْتَغِيبِ.

“One who listens to gossip is a partner in gossiping.”[65](#)

Therefore, he has a share of the punishment for this sin unless he verbally condemns the act of gossiping, interrupts it, or leaves the meeting. Even if he cannot do so, he should consider it bad in his mind. If he verbally opposes what is said but is internally in agreement with it, then he is a hypocrite. God's Prophet said:

مَنْ أَذَلَّ عِنْدَهُ مُؤْمِنٌ وَهُوَ يَقْدِرُ عَلَى أَنْ يَنْتَصِرَ لَهُ فَلَمْ يَنْصُرْهُ أَذَلَّهُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ عَلَى رُؤُوسِ الْخَلَائِقِ.

“Whoever sees a believer is belittled in front of him and can help him but does not do so, shall be belittled by God in public in the Hereafter.”[66](#)

He also said:

مَنْ رَدَّ عَنْ عَرَضِ أَخِيهِ بِالْغَيْبِ كَانَ حَقًّا عَلَى اللَّهِ أَنْ يَرُدَّ عَنْ عَرَضِهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ.

“On the Resurrection Day God shall protect the honor of whoever protects a brother’s honor in his absence.”[67](#)

He also said:

مَنْ ذَبَّ عَنْ عَرَضِ أَخِيهِ بِالْغَيْبِ كَانَ حَقًّا عَلَى اللَّهِ أَنْ يُعْتَقَهُ مِنَ النَّارِ.

“It is incumbent upon God to protect from the Fire of Hell one who defends a brother’s honor in his absence.”[68](#)

The Motivations for Gossiping

- 1 – Anger, jealousy or grudge
- 2 – Making fun of others
- 3 – Seeking nobility
- 4 – Ascribing wicked deeds to others
- 5 – Peer pressure
- 6 – Knowing that someone will inform someone else of one’s flaws
- 7 – Sympathy
- 8 – Acting amazed at what wicked acts are performed

How to Cure the Bad Habit of Gossiping

One of the ways to treat the bad habit of gossiping is to educate the person about its bad consequences in this world and the Hereafter. It is also important to eliminate the internal motivations for gossiping. It is helpful to remember that one will be subject to God’s wrath. It is also important to realize that it does not help to fool oneself.

In case gossiping is done due to peer pressure, it is best to realize that God’s pleasure is more important

than that of our peers. One should also realize that gossiping with other motivations like sympathy and the like is in itself a violation of divine decrees and is not considered a religiously motivated act.

Gossiping and the Freedom of Speech as Viewed by Islam

How much freedom of speech is there in Islam? What are the limits to the freedom of speech, if any? There is no doubt that Islam allows the freedom of speech as we read:

فَبَشِّرْ عِبَادِ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ أَحْسَنَهُ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَاهُمُ اللَّهُ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمْ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ

“So announce the good news to My Servants, – Those who listen to the Word, and follow the best (meaning) in it: those are the ones whom God has guided, and those are the ones endued with understanding.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Zumar 39: 16–17]

This act of listening to the Word and following the best is only possible where there is freedom of speech. Imam Ali has been quoted as saying:

أَنْظُرْ إِلَى مَا قَالَا وَلَا تَنْظُرْ إِلَى مَنْ قَالَا.

*“Look at what is said, not at who has said it.”*⁶⁹

Imam Ali said:

خُذُوا الْحِكْمَةَ وَلَوْ مِنْ أَهْلِ الضَّلَالِ. خُذُوا الْحِكْمَةَ وَلَوْ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ.

*“Accept words of wisdom even if uttered by those who have gone astray. Accept wisdom even if it is expressed by the infidels.”*⁷⁰

The Way the Immaculate Imams Encountered Opposing Views

A study of the way the Immaculate Imams encountered opposing views shows that they all stressed good treatment of those with opposite views. As an example we can cite people like Sa’d ibn Waqqas, Abu-Musa Al-Ash`ari and many others who did not pledge allegiance to Imam Ali in the beginning of his Caliphate. Imam Ali did not bother any of them. He also tried not to fight with those who broke their covenant and tried to enter a fight with him as much as possible. We can cite people like Tal`ah and Zubayr as examples.

We read the following in Wasa’il al-Sh`ah: “Indeed Ali never ascribed paganism to those who fought with him. He only said that they are those of our brothers who have oppressed us.”⁷¹ Also Imam Sadiq

treated people like Ibn Abi'l-`Awja` well. Therefore, there is no doubt about the freedom to speak. Rather Islam forbids any form of abuse and anarchy.

The Jurisprudents' View on the Value of the Tongue

At last, we shall study the jurisprudents' view on the value of the tongue. The jurisprudents have stated that there is full compensation for cutting off a healthy person's tongue. Al-Mu`aqqiq al-Hilli said:⁷² "There is full compensation for a healthy tongue. If the tongue of a healthy person is partially damaged, there is partial compensation for it based on the amount of his ability left to express the twenty-eight letters of the alphabet.⁷³ There is one-third compensation for a damaged or stuttering tongue."⁷⁴

The grand Ayatollah Khu'i said: "When the tongue is so damaged that it is not useful for the purpose it is supposed to serve, one does not consider how much of it is damaged. Rather the compensation for the tongue depends on the degree of loss of the ability to speak. For example, if one fourth of the tongue is cut, but the person can only utter one fourth of the words then there is half compensation.

If one half of the tongue is cut, but only one fourth of the letters cannot be uttered by the person damaged, then there is only one-fourth compensation required. Thus, the compensation for the tongue does not depend on the geographical location or the language of the person whose tongue has been damaged. Rather it depends on the degree of loss of the ability to utter the letters."⁷⁵

¹. In the other version we read: "... and refrain from any meddling in which there is nothing to be gained, express kindness to people and speak well concerning them." Then the rest follows.

². The tongue.

³. His tongue and good speech are like an ornament for his intellect.

⁴. Muntaha al-Amal, v.2, p.358.

⁵. A'lam al-Nisa, v.2, p.270; Zanan-i-Ghahreman, v. 1, p. 169.

⁶. Referring to Mu'awiyah.

⁷. Maktab-i-Islam Magazine, Year 4, No.2, p.46.

⁸. Nahjul Balaghah, Fayzul Islam, Hikmat no.57.

⁹. Nahjul Balaghah, Fayzul Islam, Hikmat no.7

¹⁰. i.e. his/her tongue and sex organs.

¹¹. Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, v.5, p.192

¹². Ibid. p.193.

¹³. Ibid.

¹⁴. Ibid.

¹⁵. Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda. p.194

¹⁶. Ibid. p.195.

¹⁷. Ibid.

¹⁸. Ibid., v.5, p.198.

¹⁹. Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, v.5, p.200.

²⁰. Ibid. p.204.

²¹. Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, v.5, p.207.

²². Ibid.

²³. Ibid.

- [24.](#) Ibid.
- [25.](#) Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, v.5, p.208.
- [26.](#) Ibid.
- [27.](#) Ibid. p.211.
- [28.](#) Ibid. p.213.
- [29.](#) Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, p.214.
- [30.](#) Ibid. p.215.
- [31.](#) Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, v.5, p.215.
- [32.](#) Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, p.217.
- [33.](#) Ibid. v.5, p.217.
- [34.](#) Safinah al-Bihar, v.2, p.513.
- [35.](#) Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, v.5, p.219
- [36.](#) Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, v.5, p.231.
- [37.](#) Ibid. pg.232.
- [38.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Fayzul Islam, Hikmat no.442.
- [39.](#) Manaqib Ibn Shahrashub, v.4, p. 158.
- [40.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Fayz al-Islam, Sermon No. 206.
- [41.](#) A part of Du'a 'Arafah, Tatamat al-Muntaha, p.256.
- [42.](#) Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, v. 5, p.37.
- [43.](#) Ibid.
- [44.](#) Ibid.
- [45.](#) Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, v. 5, p.237 .
- [46.](#) Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, p.241.
- [47.](#) Usul al-Kafi, v.2, p.329.
- [48.](#) Usul al-Kafi, v.2, p.340.
- [49.](#) Safinah al-Bihar, v.2, p.473.
- [50.](#) Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, v.2, p. 100.
- [51.](#) Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, v.2, p. 100.
- [52.](#) Koodak, Guftar-e-Falsafi, v.2, p.45, quoted from Thamarat al-Awraq, p.233.
- [53.](#) Makasib, p.41.
- [54.](#) Ibid.
- [55.](#) Makasib.
- [56.](#) Sharh Ghurar wa Durar, Khansari, v. 1, p.268.
- [57.](#) Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, v.5, p. 251.
- [58.](#) Ibid.
- [59.](#) Ibid.
- [60.](#) Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, v.5, p.252
- [61.](#) Ibid. p.254.
- [62.](#) Ibid.
- [63.](#) Ibid. p.255.
- [64.](#) 'Ilm-e-Akhlaq-e-Islami, (Farsi translation of Jami'al-Sa'dat) v.2, pp.393-396.
- [65.](#) Ibid.
- [66.](#) Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda
- [67.](#) Ibid.
- [68.](#) Ibid.
- [69.](#) Daramadi bar Huquq-e-Islami, p.271, quoted from Ithbat al-Huda, translated by Jannati, v. 1, p.46.
- [70.](#) Ibid.
- [71.](#) Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v. 11, p.62.

[72.](#) Mukhtasar al-Nafi', p.300.

[73.](#) He was referring to Arabic. Obviously this can be adjusted for other languages accordingly.

[74.](#) Mukhtasar al-Nafi', p. 300.

[75.](#) Mabani Taklimat al-Minhaj, v.2, p.290.

Right n. 4: The Right of Hearing

حق السمع

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ السَّمْعِ فَتَنْزِيهُهُ عَنْ أَنْ تَجْعَلَهُ طَرِيقًا إِلَى قَلْبِكَ إِلَّا لِفُوهَةٍ كَرِيمَةٍ تُحَدِّثُ فِي قَلْبِكَ خَيْرًا أَوْ تَكْسِبُ خُلُقًا كَرِيمًا
فَإِنَّهُ بَابُ الْكَلَامِ إِلَى الْقَلْبِ يُؤَدِّي إِلَيْهِ ضَرْبُ الْمَعَانِي عَلَى مَا فِيهَا مِنْ خَيْرٍ أَوْ شَرٍّ. وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ.

And the right of hearing is to keep it pure by not making it the direct pathway to your heart, except for noble words that establish some good in your heart or grant you a noble trait. Indeed hearing is the gateway through which various concepts reach the heart —whether good or evil. And there is no power but in God. [1](#)

The Almighty God said:

قُلْ هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْشَأَكُمْ وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ

“Say: It is He who has created you (and made you grow), and made for you the faculties of hearing, seeing, feeding and understanding. Little thanks it is ye give.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Mulk 67:23]

The Role of Hearing in Development

When man is born, he is not familiar with the creatures in this world, but he slowly gets acquainted with them. One of the means of acquiring such recognition is the faculty of hearing. We hear things and they are recorded in our minds. Imam Ali said to someone seeking advice:

أَيُّهَا السَّائِلُ! اِسْتَمِعْ ثُمَّ اسْتَفْهَمْ ثُمَّ اسْتَيْقِنْ ثُمَّ اسْتَغْمِلْ

“O questioner! Listen first, and then understand. Then believe and put what you have learned into practice.”[2](#)

Thus, we realize that the key to understanding, believing and putting things into practice is our hearing. Therefore, hearing can be considered our social sense, and in this sense, it can be considered more important than seeing.

What is sound?

Sound is produced from vibration. Human voice is the product of the vibration of our vocal cords. It has been proven that sound will not be transmitted in a vacuum. However, we should not think that air is the only media for the transmission of sound. Sound can be propagated in liquids, gases and solids. It propagates in liquids faster than in gases. Solids propagate sound even faster than liquids do. There are three parts to the ear: the external ear, middle ear and inner ear.

The external ear consists of the pinna³ and the ear canal. The pinna is made of cartilage and is so formed as to act as a receiving antenna in charge of guiding the incoming sound waves towards the ear canal. The ear canal is nearly three centimeters long, and produces wax to prevent the entry of dirt and insects into the ear. The middle ear is separated from the ear canal by the eardrum. The middle ear normally contains air and is connected to the back of the pharynx by the Eustachian tube. There are delicate bones in the middle ear.

When sound waves enter the ear and touch the eardrum, these delicate bones vibrate and transfer these signals to a liquid inside the ear. The hearing cells that are there sense these changes and transmit the information to the brain. In simple terms, that is how we hear. Our hearing ability depends on the position of the source of sound, our physical state, the way we eat, and our age.

Anatomy and Physiology of the Ear

What is the ear?

The ear is the organ of hearing. The parts of the ear include:

External Ear or Outer Ear, consisting of:

- 1) Pinna or auricle – the outside part of the ear.
- 2) External auditory canal or tube – the tube that connects the outer ear to the inside or middle ear.
- 3) Tympanic membrane – also called the eardrum. The tympanic membrane divides the external ear from the middle ear.
- 4) Middle ear (tympanic cavity), consisting of:
 - A) Ossicles – three small bones that are connected and transmit the sound waves to the inner ear. The

bones are called: malleus,⁴ incus,⁵ stapes.⁶

B) Eustachian tube – a canal that links the middle ear with the throat area. The Eustachian tube helps to equalize the pressure between the outer ear and the middle ear. Having the same pressure allows for the proper transfer of sound waves. The Eustachian tube is lined with mucous, just like the inside of the nose and throat.

5) Inner ear, consisting of:

A) Cochlea (contains the nerves for hearing)

B) Vestibule (contains receptors for balance)

C) Semicircular canals (contain receptors for balance)

How do we hear?

Hearing starts with the outer ear. When a sound is made outside the outer ear, the sound waves, or vibrations, travel down the external auditory canal and strike the eardrum (tympanic membrane). The eardrum vibrates. The vibrations are then passed to three tiny bones in the middle ear called the ossicles. The ossicles amplify the sound. They send the sound waves to the inner ear and into the fluid-filled hearing organ (cochlea).

Once the sound waves reach the inner ear, they are converted into electrical impulses that the auditory nerve sends to the brain. The brain then translates these electrical impulses into sound.

The Ear Relative to the Eyes and the Heart

Now let us address the question of why the ear is usually mentioned before the eyes and the heart in the Holy Qur'an. Let us look at a few verses in this regard:

قُلْ مَنْ يَرْزُقُكُمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَمَّنْ يَمْلِكُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ

“Say: Who is that sustains you (in life) from the sky and from the earth? Or who is it that has power over hearing and sight?” [The Holy Qur'an, Yunus 10:31]

إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا

“Surely the hearing and the sight and the heart, all of these, shall be questioned about that.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Israa 17:36]

Also in Naḥl 16:78, Baqarah 2:7, Ha-Mim 41:20 and many other verses hearing and the ears have been mentioned before seeing and the eyes. Scientists have mentioned several reasons for the superiority of the ear over the eye. At first we should realize that the range of frequencies we could detect via our hearing is wide. The ratio of the highest frequencies we can hear to the lowest is nearly one thousand. However, our sight is much more limited.

We can only sense a small fraction of the wavelengths. We cannot see the infrared or the ultraviolet. The eyes are also very vulnerable and might easily be damaged if we look at the sun or an eclipse, or ultraviolet light emitted while welding is in progress. However, the ears are much stronger. In addition, our viewing angle is very limited, while we can hear sounds coming to us from all directions. These seem to be the physical reasons for the superiority of hearing to sight, but it seems that hearing is more powerful than sight in self-reconstruction and spiritual enlightenment.⁷

The Jurisprudents' View on the Value of the Ear

In addition to the rights of the hearing that we discussed, the ear has certain worth expressed in Islamic jurisprudence. Al-Muḥaqqiq al-Hilli said: "The compensation to be paid for both ears is full compensation: Each ear's compensation is one half of the full compensation. The compensation for the earlobe is one-third of the full compensation whether it be torn or punctured."⁸

In addition, in the Farsi editions of the Treatise of the Muslim Jurisprudents we read: "If you cut both ears off, or make them deaf you must pay the full compensation. If you only cut or damage one ear, you must pay half compensation. If one cuts someone else's earlobe he should do his best to please him."⁹

^{1.} In the other version it is followed by: "The right of your hearing is to keep it pure from listening to backbiting and listening to that to which it is unlawful to listen."

^{2.} Usul al-Kafi, v.2, p.456.

^{3.} The largely cartilaginous projecting portion of the external ear.

^{4.} The outermost of a chain of three small bones of the mammalian middle ear.

^{5.} The middle bone of a chain of three small bones in the ear of a mammal.

^{6.} The innermost ossicle of the ear of mammals.

^{7.} Avvalin Daneshgah va Akharin Payambar, v.15, pp.101–106.

^{8.} Mukhtasar al-Manafi', p.300, and Mabani Taklimat al-Minhaj, v.2, p.282.

^{9.} The Treatise of al-Khu'i, p.503.

Right n. 5: The Right of the Sight

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ بَصَرِكَ فَغَضُّهُ عَمَّا لَا يَحِلُّ لَكَ وَتَرْكُ ابْتِدَالِهِ إِلَّا لِمَوْضِعٍ عِبْرَةٍ تَسْتَقْبِلُ بِهَا بَصَرًا أَوْ تَسْتَفِيدُ بِهَا عِلْمًا، فَإِنَّ
الْبَصَرَ بَابُ الْإِعْتِبَارِ.

And the right of your sight is that you lower it before everything which is unlawful to you. And that you abandon using it except in situations in which you can take heed in such a way that you gain insight or acquire knowledge by it. Indeed the sight is the gateway to reflection.

Both vision and the eyes are considered here. For example, consider the following verse:

وَمَا أَمْرُ السَّاعَةِ إِلَّا كَلَمْحِ الْبَصَرِ

“And the Decision of the Hour (of Judgment) is as the twinkling of an eye.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Na’i 16:77]

Also, consider the following verse:

وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

“And He gave you hearing and sight and intelligence and affections: that ye may give thanks (to God).” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Na’i 16:78]

It also covers the concept of insight. For example, consider the following verse:

قُلْ هَذِهِ سَبِيلِي أَدْعُو إِلَى اللَّهِ عَلَى بَصِيرَةٍ أَنَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِي وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

“Say thou: “This is my way: I do invite unto God, – on evidence clear as the seeing with one's eyes, – I and whoever follows me. Glory to God! And never will I join gods with God!” [The Holy Qur’an, Yusuf 12: 108]

The Vision System: A Multidisciplinary One

The vision system is so important in our understanding that it is given special consideration in psychology. It is so important in physics because it is related to light and optics. It is given especial consideration by philosophers because it is important in discovering mysterious things. It is of especial consideration in biology because it is an important part of the human body. Thus, it is not an exaggeration to say that it is the subject of study of several fields of science.

Proper Use of the Eyes

God the Almighty advised us about the importance of the eyes in the Holy Qur'an:

أَلَمْ نَجْعَلْ لَهُ عَيْنَيْنِ

“Have We not made for him a pair of eyes?” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Balad 90:8]

The eyes are man's most important means of communicating with the outside world. The eyes are so amazing that they force us to be humble to our Creator. However, some people do not make proper use of them:

وَلَقَدْ ذَرَأْنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالإِنسِ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لَّا يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ آذَانٌ لَّا يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا أُولَئِكَ كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْغَافِلُونَ

“Many are the Jinns and men we have made for Hell: They have hearts wherewith they understand not, eyes wherewith they see not, and ears wherewith they hear not. They are like cattle, – nay more misguided: for they are heedless (of warning).” [The Holy Qur'an, al-A'raf 7: 179]

There is a tradition from the Prophet of God regarding the above verse [al-Balad 90:8] which reads:

“God told the children of Adam:

يَا بَنَ آدَمَ! إِنَّ نَازِعَكَ لِسَانُكَ فِي مَا حَرَّمْتُ عَلَيْكَ فَقَدْ أَعْنَتُكَ عَلَيْهِ بِطَبَقَتَيْنِ فَأُطْبِقْ. وَإِنَّ نَازِعَكَ بَصْرُكَ إِلَى بَعْضِ مَا حَرَّمْتُ عَلَيْكَ فَقَدْ أَعْنَتُكَ عَلَيْهِ بِطَبَقَتَيْنِ فَأُطْبِقْ.

“O Children of Adam! I have given you two lips. If your tongue tries to make you commit a forbidden act, close your lips. I have given you eyelids. If your eyes try to make you commit a forbidden act, close your eyelids.”¹

The eyes must be closed to what is forbidden by God. We read the following about the unbelievers in the Holy Qur'an:

الَّذِينَ كَانَتْ أَعْيُنُهُمْ فِي غِطَاءٍ عَن ذِكْرِي وَكَانُوا لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ سَمْعًا

“(Unbelievers) whose eyes had been under a veil from remembrance of Me, and who had been unable even to hear.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Kahf 18: 101]

In this verse, we read that the unbelievers did not close their eyes to what is forbidden to look at. Rather

they closed their eyes from what reminds man of God. They did not hear even though they had the hearing faculty. In fact, the unbelievers disabled their most useful faculty to seek the truth and realize the realities. It is interesting to note that God says that their eyes had been under a veil from His remembrance. Thus, they could not see God's signs. They went astray due to not seeing the truth. We cannot see God's remembrance with our eyes. Rather we see His signs that remind us of him.

Looking at One's Creation

One proper use of the eyes is in cases that the Qur'an has pointed out. The Qur'an invites us to look at our own creation in the following verse:

فَلْيَنْظُرِ الْإِنْسَانُ مِمَّ خُلِقَ

خُلِقَ مِنْ مَّاءٍ دَافِقٍ

يَخْرُجُ مِنْ بَيْنِ الصُّلْبِ وَالتَّرَائِبِ

“Now let man but think from what he is created! He is created from a drop emitted proceeding from between the backbone and the ribs.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Tariq 86:5-7]

Thus, the Qur'an directs man to consider how he is created from sperm to realize what we are.

Looking at Food

The second instance that the Qur'an invites man to look to is to consider what he eats. The Qur'an says:

فَلْيَنْظُرِ الْإِنْسَانُ إِلَى طَعَامِهِ

“Then let man look at his food, (and how We provide it)” [The Holy Qur'an, 'Abasa 80:24]

The closest thing to man that exists outside our body but becomes a part of us when eaten is food. If we do not eat, we will die soon. That is why the Qur'an stresses food items, especially those derived from plants and trees. There are various interpretations of this verse. Some consider this looking to be considering whether what we have obtained for eating is from legitimate means or not. Others consider food for the mind, too. Imam Baqir said:

عِلْمُهُ الَّذِي يَأْخُذُهُ، عَمَّنْ يَأْخُذُهُ

“Look and see from whom you get your knowledge.”²

There are many occasions in the Qur'an where we are instructed to look such as:

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ حَقَّتْ عَلَيْهِ الضَّلَالَةُ فَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكْذِبِينَ.

For We assuredly sent amongst every People an apostle, (with the Command), "Serve God, and eschew Evil": of the People were some whom God guided and some on whom error became inevitably (established). So, travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those who denied (the Truth). [The Holy Qur'an, al-Na' 16:36]

We also read:

قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ بَدَأَ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ اللَّهُ يُنشِئُ النَّشْأَةَ الْآخِرَةَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

“Say: Travel through the earth and see how God did originate creation; so will God produce a later creation: for God has power over all things.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Ankabut 29:20]

It is Forbidden to Look at Unfamiliar Women

قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ذَلِكَ أَزْكَى لَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ

وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَىٰ جُيُوبِهِنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَائِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَائِهِنَّ أَوْ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي أَخَوَاتِهِنَّ أَوْ نِسَائِهِنَّ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ أَوْ التَّابِعِينَ غَيْرِ أُولِي الْإِرَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ أَوْ الْطِفْلِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَىٰ عَوْرَاتِ النِّسَاءِ وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِينَ مِنْ زِينَتِهِنَّ وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

“Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty: that will make for greater purity for them: And God is well acquainted with all that they do. And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husband's fathers, their sons, their husband's sons, their brothers or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or the slaves whom their right hands possess, or male servants free of physical needs, or small children who have no sense of the

shame of sex; and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. And O ye Believers! Turn ye all together towards God, that ye may attain Bliss.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Nur 24:30-31]

In these verses, we are advised to look down when we encounter an unfamiliar woman.³ We cannot close our eyes since then we cannot walk or we might fall down on the ground. However, by limiting our view we can reduce the amount that we see. Thus, we restrict our looking at the forbidden. As said before God has admonished men and women against looking at each other. There are many traditions that have expressed the ill effects of such looks.

Muhammad ibn Yaqoob quoted on the authority of Muhammad ibn Yahya on the authority of Ahmad ibn Muhammad on the authority of Ibn Fazzil on the authority of Ali ibn Aqabeh on the authority of his father that he heard Imam Sadiq say:

النَّظْرَةُ سَهْمٌ مِنْ سِهَامِ إِبْلِيسَ مَسْمُومٌ، وَكَمْ مِنْ نَظْرَةٍ أَوْرَثَتْ حَسْرَةً طَوِيلَةً

*“A look is like a poisonous dart from the darts of Satan. How many a look has caused long-lasting regret.”*⁴

The similitude between a look and a dart is because a dart will pierce through when it hits the target. A dirty look will also tear down the veils of modesty and chastity. Some dirty looks might lead to a long-lasting sorrow. There are many people whose life is ruined due to a dirty look. Then they cannot compensate for this all lifelong. They will be sorry but it will be of no use. Ibn Abi Umayr quoted on the authority of Al-Kaheli on the authority of Imam Sadiq :

النَّظْرَةُ بَعْدَ النَّظْرَةِ تَزْرَعُ فِي الْقَلْبِ الشَّهْوَةَ وَكَفَى بِهَا لِصَاحِبِهَا فِتْنَةً

*“One look after another will sow the seeds of desire in the heart, and it is sufficient temptation for the person.”*⁵

Imam Sadiq said:

مَنْ نَظَرَ إِلَى امْرَأَةٍ فَرَفَعَ بَصَرَهُ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ لَمْ يَرْتَدَّ إِلَيْهِ بَصَرُهُ حَتَّى يُزَوِّجَهُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْحُورِ الْعِينِ

*“If one sees a woman but turns away his eyes and looks at the sky, he will be rewarded with a ‘Hoori’*⁶ *in Heaven.”*⁷

However, there are exceptions that are discussed below.

Exceptions

We learned from the verses of the Holy Qur'an and the sayings of Imam Sajjad that it is not permitted to look at divinely forbidden sights. Now we will point out exceptions to this rule in Islam. One such case is looking at a woman with whom you want to marry. There is a chapter in Wasa'il al-Sha'ah on this subject. The first tradition in this chapter is as follows.

Muhammad ibn Ya'qub quoted on the authority of Ali ibn Ibrahim, on the authority of his father, on the authority of Ibn Abi Amir, on the authority of Ayoub ibn Khazar, on the authority of Muhammad ibn Muslim who asked Imam Baqir :

“Can a man who intends to marry a woman look at her?” Imam Baqir said: “Yes, since he wants to buy the most expensive thing.”⁸ This tradition only discusses the permission to look. There are other traditions that clarify things more.

Ali ibn Ibrahim quoted on the authority of his father on the authority of Hisham ibn Salim, Himad ibn Isa and Hafs ibn Bakhtari on the authority of Imam Sadiq :

لَا بَأْسَ بَأَنْ يَنْظُرَ إِلَى وَجْهِهَا وَمَعَاصِمِهَا إِذَا أَرَادَ أَنْ يَتَزَوَّجَهَا.

“When one intends to marry a woman, it is fine for him to look at her face and her wrists.”⁹

In another tradition from Abi Al-Ash'ari on the authority of Hasan ibn al-Sani, Imam Sadiq was asked: “How is it if a man who intends to marry a woman looks at her carefully. He looks at her face and the back of her head.” Imam Sadiq replied: “When he intends to marry her it is fine for him to look at her face and the back of her head.”¹⁰ There are also other traditions in this respect that permit looking without lustful intentions.

The Look of a Male Doctor at a Female Patient

Another exception to this rule applies to a female patient whom no one but a male doctor can treat. This is expressed in Chapter 130 of Wasa'il al-Sha'ah. The first tradition in this chapter reads: “Muhammad ibn Ya'qub quoted on the authority of Muhammad ibn Isa, on the authority of Ali ibn al-Hikam, on the authority of Abi Hamzah al-Thumali that Imam Baqir was asked:

سَأَلْتُهُ عَنِ الْمَرْأَةِ الْمُسْلِمَةِ يُصِيبُهَا الْبَلَاءُ فِي جَسَدِهَا إِمَّا كَسْرٌ وَإِمَّا جُرْحٌ فِي مَكَانٍ لَا يَصْلُحُ النَّظَرُ إِلَيْهِ يَكُونُ الرَّجُلُ أَرْفَقَ بِعِلَاجِهِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ، أَيْصْلَحُ لَهُ النَّظَرُ إِلَيْهَا؟ قَالَ: إِذَا اضْطُرَّتْ إِلَيْهِ فَلْيُعَالَجْهَا إِنْ شَاءَتْ.

“Consider when a Muslim woman is ill, injured or a part of her body is broken in a place that cannot be

looked at. If the male doctor is more expert in treating her than women, can he look at her body?" The Imam said: "If she is compelled to do it, then let him treat her if she wishes."¹¹

Looking at Bedouin Women and Women under the Protection of Islam

Another exception is looking at Bedouin women and those who live under the protection of Islam. There are two traditions on this issue in Chapter 112 of Wasa'il al-Shah. Muhammad ibn Yaqoob quoted on the authority of Ali ibn Ibrahim on the authority of his father on the authority of al-Nawfeli on the authority of al-Sak'ooni on the authority of Imam Sadiq that God's Prophet said:

لَا حُرْمَةَ لِنِسَاءِ أَهْلِ الذِّمَّةِ أَنْ يُنْظَرَ إِلَى شُعُورِهِنَّ وَأَيْدِيهِنَّ.

*"It is not forbidden to look at the hair or the hands of women who live under the protection of Islam."*¹²

Muhammad ibn Yaqoob quoted on the authority of some of the companions, on the authority of Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Isa, on the authority of Ibn Mahboob, on the authority of Ibad ibn Sohayb, on the authority of Imam Sadiq :

لَا بَأْسَ بِالنَّظَرِ إِلَى رُؤُوسِ أَهْلِ تِهَامَةَ وَالْأَعْرَابِ وَأَهْلِ السَّوَادِ وَالْعُلُوجِ لَأَنَّهُمْ إِذَا نُهُوا لَا يَنْتَهُونَ. (قَالَ) وَالْمَجْنُونَةُ وَالْمَغْلُوبَةُ عَلَى عَقْلِهَا لَا بَأْسَ بِالنَّظَرِ إِلَى شَعْرِهَا وَجَسَدِهَا مَا لَمْ يَتَعَمَّدْ ذَلِكَ.

*"There is no harm in looking at the head and the hair of the people of Tihamah, Bedouin women, (women from) the people of the lowlands (of Iraq) and infidels, since such women will not abstain (from displaying themselves) when they are forbidden." (He said); "And there is no harm in looking at the hair and body of the possessed or mentally disturbed women as long as there are no bad intentions."*¹³

An Educational Look

Imam Sajjad said: "Indeed sight is the gateway to learning." Educational looks can help us learn and gain benefits. Haroun wrote to Imam Kazim :

"Please advise me tersely." The Imam replied:

مَا مِنْ شَيْءٍ تَرَاهُ عَيْنُكَ إِلَّا وَفِيهِ مَوْعِظَةٌ.

*"There is nothing on which you look in which there is no advice for you."*¹⁴

Imam Ali said:

مَا أَكْثَرَ الْعِبَرَ وَأَقَلَّ الْمُعْتَبِرَ.

“How many lessons are there to learn, and how few those who learn them!” [15](#)

He also said:

مَنْ اعْتَبَرَ أَبْصَرَ وَمَنْ أَبْصَرَ فَهَمَّ وَمَنْ فَهَمَّ عَلِمَ.

“Whoever looks in order to learn will gain insight. Whoever gains insight will understand. Whoever understands will attain ranks of having knowledge.” [16](#)

There is a tradition that is about the time Imam Ali passed by the Mada'in palace and saw the ruins of the palace of Khosrow about to collapse. One of his companions remembered the poem by Ibn Ya'fur as follows: “Winds started blowing in their ruins as if they all had a meeting place to which they rush.” Then Imam Ali said: “Why did you not recite the following verses of the Holy Qur'an:

كَمْ تَرَكُوا مِنْ جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ وَزُرُوعٍ وَمَقَامٍ كَرِيمٍ وَنَعْمَةٍ كَانُوا فِيهَا فَاكِهِينَ كَذَلِكَ ۝ وَأَوْرَثْنَاهَا قَوْمًا آخَرِينَ فَمَا بِكَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّمَاءُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَا كَانُوا مُنْظَرِينَ

“How many were the gardens and springs they left behind, and corn-fields and noble buildings, and wealth (and conveniences of life), wherein they had taken such delight! Thus (was their end)! And We made other people inherit (those things)! And neither Heaven nor earth shed a tear over them: nor were they given a respite (again).” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Dukhan 44:25-29]

These verses are related to Pharaoh and his tribe. They committed many atrocities but were finally destroyed. Their land and rule fell into the hands of the Israelites, they themselves sank at sea, and nothing could save them. Such events should be looked upon with an educational look, and we should learn from them.

Imam Ali al-Naqi and Al-Mutawakkil

Masoudi has recorded that when the agents of Mutawakkil forced their way into Imam Ali al-Naqi's house to search and did not find anything they let Mutawakkil know that. He was drunk in his palace and ordered them to bring the Imam there. When the Imam was brought in, he respected him, had him sit next to himself and offered him a drink of wine.

The Imam said: “Excuse me. Wine has never entered into my blood and body.” Mutawakkil said: “Then

tell me some poems.” The Imam said: “I am not acquainted with poetry.” Mutawakkil insisted. Then the Imam said some beautiful poems in Arabic as follows:

باتوا على قُلُلِ الأجيالِ تحرسُهُمُ غُلبُ الرجالِ فلم تَنفَعَهُمُ القُلُلُ

وَ اسْتَنْزَلُوا بَعْدَ عِزٍّ عَنْ مَعَالِيهِمْ وَ أَسْكَنُوا حُفْرًا يَا بئسَ مَا نَزَلُوا

ناداهُمْ صَارِخٌ مِنْ بَعْدِ دَفْنِهِمْ أَيْنَ الأَسَاوِرُ وَ التِّيَّجَانُ وَ الحُلُلُ

أَيْنَ الوجوهُ الَّتِي كَانَتْ مُنْعَمَةً مِنْ دُونِهَا تُضْرَبُ الأَسْتَارُ وَ الكِلِلُ

فَأَفْصَحَ القَبْرُ عَنْهُمْ حِينَ سَأَلَهُمْ تِلْكَ الوجوهُ عَلَيْهَا الدُّودُ تَنْتَقِلُ

قَدْ طَالَمَا أَكَلُوا دَهْرًا وَ قَدْ شَرَبُوا فَأَصْبَحُوا اليَوْمَ بَعْدَ الأَكْلِ قَدْ أَكَلُوا

*“They lived at the highest points of their palaces for a while;
they were guarded there and protected by their especial guards;*

*however, these high points were of no use for them;
they fell down from their strong castles in which they lived with honor;
and became residents of the ditches of their graves;*

*How bad a place to which they descended;
after they were buried there, a call came;
as to what had happened to all those jewels, bracelets and crowns?;*

*What had happened to all those wealthy and happy faces?
They were forgotten and lost.*

*A call came from the grave responding;
that the faces have become homes for worms;
they were busy eating for a long time;
but their dawn came and they became eaten themselves.”¹⁷*

When Mutawakkil heard these poems, he cried so hard that tears rained down on his face. Some even

say that he put down his cup of wine. Yes, this is the outlook that can be educational. However, Mutawakkil did not gain any benefits from this lesson! The story of Orwe Salm has been quoted by Mohaddith Qumi on the authority of Imam Sadiq as follows:

“The Prophet David left his house while he was reading the Psalms, and birds and beasts were singing along with him. He went to a mountain where the worshipper called Ezekiel lived. He asked Ezekiel if he would let him in. However, Ezekiel did not grant him permission to enter. David cried. Then God revealed to Ezekiel not to hurt David .

Thus, he let David enter. David asked him: “Have you ever decided to commit any sins?” He said: “No.” Then David asked: “Have you ever become proud of your deeds?” He said: “No.” David asked: “Have you ever become inclined to this world?” He said: “Yes.” Then David asked: “How then do you get rid of the love for this world?” He said: “I go to the valley.”

Then Ezekiel took David to the valley where there was a metal couch on which there was a skull. There was a tableau beside the couch on which it was written: “This is the skull of Orwe Salm. He ruled for one thousand years. He built one thousand towns. He married one thousand young women. He finally reached this point where the dirt is his bed and worms are his companions. Whoever sees this should not be fooled by this world.”¹⁸ This is a lesson to take heed of.

Eye Anatomy and Physiology

How the Eye Sees

The eye is a complex organ composed of many small parts, each vital to normal vision. The ability to see clearly depends on how well these parts work together. Light rays bounce off all objects. If a person is looking at a particular object such as a tree, light is reflected off the tree to the person’s eye and enters the eye through the **cornea**. Next, light rays pass through an opening in the **iris**, called the **pupil**. The iris controls the amount of light entering the eye by dilating or constricting the pupil. In bright light, for example, the pupils shrink to the size of a pinhead to prevent too much light from entering. In dim light, the pupil enlarges to allow more light to enter the eye.

Light then reaches the **crystalline lens**. The lens focuses light rays onto the retina by bending (refracting) them. The cornea does most of the refraction and the crystalline lens fine-tunes the focus. In a healthy eye, the lens can change its shape (accommodate) to provide clear vision at various distances. If an object is close, the **ciliary muscles** of the eye contract and the lens becomes rounder. To see a distant object, the same muscles relax and the lens flattens.

Behind the lens and in front of the retina is a chamber called the **vitreous body**, which contains a clear, gelatinous fluid called **vitreous humor**. Light rays pass through the vitreous before reaching the retina. The **retina** lines the back two-thirds of the eye and is responsible for the wide field of vision that most

people experience. For clear vision, light rays must focus directly on the retina. When light focuses in front of or behind the retina, the result is blurry vision.

The retina contains millions of specialized photoreceptor cells called **rods** and **cones** that convert light rays into electrical signals that are transmitted to the brain through the optic nerve. Rods and cones provide the ability to see in dim light and to see in color, respectively.

The **macula**, located in the center of the retina, is where most of the cone cells are located. The **fovea**, a small depression in the center of the macula, has the highest concentration of cone cells. The macula is responsible for central vision, seeing color, and distinguishing fine detail. The outer portion (peripheral retina) is the primary location of rod cells and allows for night vision and seeing movement and objects to the side (i.e., peripheral vision).

The **optic nerve**, located behind the retina, transmits signals from the photoreceptor cells to the brain. Each eye transmits signals of a slightly different image, and the images are inverted. Once they reach the brain, they are corrected and combined into one image. This complex process of analyzing data transmitted through the optic nerve is called **visual processing**.

Eye Movement

Extraocular muscles

The stabilization of eye movement is accomplished by six extraocular muscles that are attached to each eyeball and perform their horizontal and vertical movements and rotation. These muscles are controlled by impulses from the cranial nerves that tell the muscles to contract or to relax. When certain muscles contract and others relax, the eye moves. The six muscles and their function are listed here:

- 1) Lateral rectus — moves the eye outward, away from the nose
- 2) Medial rectus — moves the eye inward, toward the nose
- 3) Superior rectus — moves the eye upward and slightly outward
- 4) Inferior rectus — moves the eye downward and slightly inward
- 5) Superior oblique — moves the eye inward and downward
- 6) Inferior oblique — moves the eye outward and upward

There are five different types of eye movements:

- 1) Saccades — looking from object A to object B
- 2) Pursuit — smoothly following a moving object
- 3) Convergence/divergence — both eyes turning inward/outward simultaneously
- 4) Vestibular — eyes sensing and adjusting to head movement via connections with nerves in the inner ear
- 5) Fixation maintenance — minute eye movements during fixation

Eyelids, Eyelashes, Conjunctiva

The eyelids are moveable folds of skin that protect the front surface of the eyes. They close the eyes and blink, which moistens the surface of the eyes and removes debris. The eyelashes (also called cilia) are hairs that grow at the edge of the eyelids and remove minute particles of debris away from the surface of the eyes. The conjunctiva is the thin, transparent, mucous membrane that lines the eyelids and covers the front surface of the eyeballs. The section that lines the eyelids appears red in color because it contains many blood vessels. The section that covers the cornea appears white because of the sclera behind it.

Tear Production and Elimination

Tears perform vitally important functions:

- 1) Carry bacteria-fighting compounds to the eye
- 2) Carry nutrients to and waste products away from the eye
- 3) Keep the eye moist
- 4) Provide a smooth refracting surface
- 5) Remove debris from the eye

Tear components are produced by the **lacrimal gland**, several other small glands, and cells within the eyelid. As the eyelid closes, tears are swept downward, toward the nose, and enter the **puncta**.¹⁹ As the eyes blink, tears are forced through narrow channels into the **lacrimal sac**. Once the muscles relax and the eye opens, the tears move from the sac to the **nasolacrimal duct** and into the nose. This accounts for stuffy, runny noses when crying.

Aqueous Humor Production and Elimination

Aqueous humor is nutritive watery fluid produced by the ciliary body through the **ciliary body processes** and secreted into the posterior chamber (i.e., space between the iris and the lens). It maintains pressure and provides nutrients to the lens and cornea. Aqueous humor diffuses through the pupil into the anterior chamber (between the lens and cornea) and is reabsorbed into the venous system by two routes:

- 1) Through the trabecular meshwork²⁰ into the canal of Schlemm, which carries it into the venous system: Responsible for 80–90% of aqueous drainage.
- 2) Through the anterior ciliary body directly into larger blood vessels:²¹ Responsible for 10–20% of aqueous drainage.

The Jurisprudents' Views on the Worth of the Eyes

Imam Khomeini said: "The compensation for two eyes is the same as the full compensation. There is

half of full compensation for each eye. The compensation for one whose vision is blurry, is cross-eyed, sees double images, has small eyes, can see better at night than in the daytime, cannot see at night, or has another eye disease is the same as one whose eyes are perfect.

If there is a white spot in the black of the eye in such a way that his sight is not affected, then there is full compensation for damaging this eye. However, if the white spot in the black of the eye has limited the person's sight, there is partial compensation relative to the amount of vision for damaging the eye. This is so if it can be properly detected. If not, the compensation is somewhat in between.” [22](#)

We also read the following regarding the compensation for the eye: “The compensation for both eyes is equal to that of the whole person.”[23](#) Then it is written in the same source that there are no differences among the companions on this issue. The following tradition from Abdullah ibn San'an on the authority of Imam Sadiq also supports this: “The compensation for each organ of which man has a pair is half of both.”

Thus the compensation for each eye is half of full compensation and there is no difference between a perfect eye and a defective one in this respect.”[24](#) When the great Ayatollah Golpayegani was asked about the compensation for blinding one eye of a girl, he said: “The compensation for one eye of a female is half of the full compensation for a woman.” This implies that the worth of the eyes is equal to that of life.

[1.](#) Nur al-Thaqalayn, v.5, p.581.

[2.](#) Tafsir al-Safi, v.2, p.789.

[3.](#) Here the word ‘unfamiliar’ is used for one who is not ‘Mahram’. In this sense, for women, all men except those mentioned in the above verse are unfamiliar.

[4.](#) Al-Kafi, v.5, p.559.

[5.](#) Wasa'il al-Shi'ah.

[6.](#) Hoori is used the Holy Qur'an to refer to the believers' companions in Heaven. “So, and We shall join them to Companions with beautiful, big and lustrous eyes” (Sura Dukhan, 44:54). We can read in the footnotes of verses 52:20 and 44:54 of Yusuf Ali's translation of the Holy Qur'an: “Hur implies the following ideas: (1) Purity, possibly the word ‘Hawariyun’ as applied to the disciples of Jesus, is connected with this root; (2) Beauty, especially of the eyes, where the intense white of the eyeballs stands out against the intense black of the pupils, thus giving the appearance of luster, and intense feeling, as opposed to dullness or want of expression; and (3) Truth and goodwill.”

[7.](#) Wasa'il al-Shi'ah.

[8.](#) Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v. 14, p.59.

[9.](#) Ibid.

[10.](#) Ibid.

[11.](#) Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v. 14, p. 172.

[12.](#) Ibid. p. 149.

[13.](#) Ibid. p. 150.

[14.](#) Safinah al-Bihar, 'lbr, v.2, p. 146.

[15.](#) Safinah al-Bihar.

[16.](#) Ibid.

[17.](#) Muntaha al-Amal, v.2, p.400.

[18.](#) Safinah al-Bihar, v.2, 'lbr, p. 146.

- [19.](#) The openings in the upper and lower lids, close to the nose.
- [20.](#) The collagen cords that form a spongelike, three-dimensional net.
- [21.](#) Called uveal-scleral outflow pathway.
- [22.](#) Tahrir al-Wasilah, v.2, p.572.
- [23.](#) Mabani Takmilat al-Minhaj, v.2, p.272.
- [24.](#) Majma' al- Masa'il, v.3, p.255.

Right n. 6: The Right of the Legs

حق الرجلين

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ رِجْلَيْكَ فَإِنَّ لَا تَمْشِي بِهِمَا إِلَى مَا لَا يَحِلُّ لَكَ وَلَا تَجْعَلُهُمَا مَطِيَّتَكَ فِي الطَّرِيقِ الْمُسْتَخَفَّةِ بِأَهْلِهَا فَإِنَّهَا حَامِلَتُكَ وَسَالِكَةٌ بِكَ مَسَلَّكَ الدِّينِ وَالسُّبُقِ لَكَ، وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ.

And the right of your legs is that you walk not with them toward that which is unlawful for you. And you should not direct them in the way that will lead the person they carry to being debased. Your legs will carry you in the direction of the religion and they will help you go ahead. And there is no power but in God. [1](#)

Almighty God says:

أَلَهُمْ أَرْجُلٌ يَمْشُونَ بِهَا أَمْ لَهُمْ أَيْدٍ يَبْطِشُونَ بِهَا أَمْ لَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا أَمْ لَهُمْ آذَانٌ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا قُلْ ادْعُوا شُرَكَاءَكُمْ ثُمَّ كِيدُوا فَلَا تُنْظَرُونَ

“Have they feet to walk with? Or hands to lay hold with? Or eyes to see with? Or ears to hear with? Say: ‘Call your ‘god-partners’, scheme (your worst) against me, and give me no respite!’”
[The Holy Qur’an, al-A’raf 7: 195]

We also read:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ كُلُوا مِمَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ

“O ye people! Eat of what is on earth, lawful and good; and do not follow the footsteps of the evil one, for he is to you an avowed enemy.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Baqarah 2: 168]

How Do God's Special Servants Walk

The Almighty God expresses twelve special characteristics of His special servants in Chapter Furqan of the Holy Qur'an. The first of these characteristics is regarding the way they walk as we read in the following verse:

وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هَوْنًا وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا سَلَامًا

“And the servants of (God) Most Gracious are those who walk on the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them, they say, "Peace!"” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Furqan 25:63]

This means that they walk so calmly that they reject haughtiness.² Thus, the first characteristic of God's especial servants is that they reject haughtiness, pride and selfishness that can even become manifest in the way one walks. This is because man's moral characteristics are usually displayed through his behavior.

God's Important Decree on This Issue

The following verse revealed an important decree to the Prophet :

وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا إِنَّكَ لَن تَخْرِقَ الْأَرْضَ وَلَن تَبْلُغَ الْجِبَالَ طُولًا

“Nor walk on the earth with insolence: for thou canst not rend the earth asunder, nor reach the mountains in height.” [The Holy Qur'an, Bani Isra'il 17:37]

This verse points out that haughty people stomp their feet on the ground so that others are informed when they walk. They raise their necks up to the sky so that they can show their superiority to others. The reason why some people get this way is that they forget themselves and become haughty.

In an interesting tradition from the Noble Prophet we read: “One day when the Prophet was walking in an alley he saw that people had gathered in one place. He asked for the reason. He was told that there was a mad man there and the people were attracted to his insane and funny acts. The Prophet called the people and said: Do you want me to introduce to you the very insane? Everyone was quiet and listened whole-heartedly. Then the Prophet said:

الْمُتَّبَعُ فِي مَشْيِهِ، النَّاطِرُ فِي عِطْفِيهِ، الْمَحْرُكُ جَنْبِيهِ بِمَنْكَبِيهِ الَّذِي لَا يُرْجَى خَيْرُهُ وَلَا يُؤْمَنُ شَرُّهُ فَذَلِكَ الْمَجْنُونُ، وَهَذَا الْمُبْتَلَى.

The one who walks with pride, constantly looks on either side and throws up his shoulders as he walks, from whom good is not expected and from whose evil people are not secure – that is the insane one. This man (whom you saw) is afflicted (with an illness)”.³

Humbleness does not mean that one should be lethargic when he walks. Rather one must be humble but take firm steps that show his determination and power.

The Way the Prophet Walked

There is a section on the way the Prophet walked in Makarim ul-Akhlaq. In one tradition in this section we read: Imam Ali said:

كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ إِذَا مَشَى تَكَفُّاً تَكَفُّوا كَأَنَّمَا يَتَقَلَّعُ مِنْ صَبَبٍ، لَمْ أَرْ قَبْلَهُ وَلَا بَعْدَهُ مِثْلَهُ.

“When the Prophet walked he inclined forwards as if he was going downhill (even though he was not in a hurry). I never saw anyone else walk this way before or after him.”⁴

One of the companions of the Prophet said:

مَا رَأَيْتُ أَحَدًا أَسْرَعَ فِي مَشْيِهِ مِنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ كَأَنَّمَا الْأَرْضُ تُطْوَى لَهُ وَإِنَّا لَنَجْهَدُ أَنْفُسَنَا وَإِنَّهُ لَغَيْرُ مُكْتَرٍ.

“I have never seen anyone walk faster than the Prophet did. It was as if the Earth was contracted for him. We would strive (to catch up with him) but he did not pay attention to it.”⁵

Ibn Abbas said:

كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ إِذَا مَشَى مَشْيًا يُعْرَفُ أَنَّهُ لَيْسَ بِمَشْيٍ عاجِزٍ وَلَا بِكَسَلَانٍ.

“When the Prophet of God walked, he neither walked like one lacking in strength nor like the lethargic ones.”⁶

Luqman’s Will on How to Walk

We read the following in the Holy Qur’an regarding Luqman’s will to his son:

وَلَا تُصَعِّرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ

***"And swell not thy cheek (for pride) at men, nor walk in insolence through the earth; for God loveth not any arrogant boaster."* [The Holy Qur'an, Luqman 31: 18]**

In the next verse we read:

وَأَقْصِدْ فِي مَشْيِكَ وَاعْضُضْ مِنْ صَوْتِكَ إِنَّ أَنْكَرَ الْأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيرِ

***"And be moderate in thy pace, and lower thy voice; for the harshest of sounds without doubt is the braying of the ass."* [The Holy Qur'an, Luqman 31: 19]**

We read in a tradition from the Prophet of God :

مَنْ مَشَى عَلَى الْأَرْضِ اخْتِيَالًا لَعَنَتْهُ الْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ تَحَتَّهَا وَمَنْ فَوْقَهَا.

*"The Earth, everyone on it and everyone in it curse whoever walks with pride on the Earth."*⁷

In another tradition recorded in Amali we read that the Prophet admonished against walking with pride and haughtiness and said:

مَنْ لَبَسَ ثَوْبًا فَاغْتَالَ فِيهِ خَسَفَ اللَّهُ بِهِ مِنْ شَفِيرِ جَهَنَّمَ وَكَانَ قَرِينًا قَارُونَ لِأَنَّهُ أَوَّلُ مَنْ اخْتَالَ فَخَسَفَ اللَّهُ بِهِ وَبَدَارَهُ الْأَرْضُ.

*"Whoever wears a garment and gets too proud and makes a show of it, then God will make him sink into edge of Hell. He will be the companion of Qarun (Korah), since Qarun was the first man who established haughtiness. God made him and his house sink into the earth."*⁸

We also read that Imam Sadiq said:

بَابُ أَنَّ الْإِيمَانَ مَبْثُوثٌ لِحَوَارِجِ الْبَدَنِ كُلِّهَا: وَرِجْلَاهُ اللَّتَانِ يَمْشِي بِهِمَا

*"God has made faith incumbent upon all our body parts and has divided it amongst them. He has made it incumbent upon our legs not to walk towards committing sins, rather to walk in ways to please God."*⁹

Witnesses on the Resurrection Day

God the Almighty said in the Holy Qur'an:

الْيَوْمَ نَخْتِمُ عَلَى أَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَتُكَلِّمُنَا أَيْدِيهِمْ وَتَشْهَدُ أَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ

“That Day shall We set a seal on their mouths. But their hands will speak to us, and their feet bear witness, to all that they did.” [The Holy Qur’an, Ya-Sin 36:65]

He also said:

يَوْمَ تَشْهَدُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَلْسِنَتُهُمْ وَأَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

“On the Day when their tongues, their hands, and their feet will bear witness against them as to their actions.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Nur 24:24]

There have been various views on how the body parts will witness:

1 Some believe that on that Day God will make them understand and empower them to talk, and they will talk. It is not surprising for the Creator who initially created this power in us to create it in our body parts.

2 Some believe that on that Day God will only empower them to talk but they will not understand. They will just express the facts to God.

3 Others believe that our body parts will certainly carry the effects of what was done by them during our lifetime. The appearance of these effects is like them witnessing. This view can also be seen a lot in the day-to-day sayings like “your eyes witness to your not having slept.” A Persian poet said: “The color of the face witnesses about the secret within.”¹⁰

Let’s Take Steps to Help Fulfill the Believers’ Needs

Regarding the rights of the legs Imam Sajjad said: “And the right of your legs is that you walk not with them toward that which is unlawful to you. And you should not direct them in the way that will lead the person they carry to being debased.” Therefore, we must make an effort to help fulfill the believers’ needs if we want to improve ourselves. Ali ibn Ibrahim quoted on the authority of his father, on the authority of Himad, on the authority of Ibrahim ibn Omar Yamani, on the authority of Imam Sadiq :

مَا مِنْ مُؤْمِنٍ يَمْشِي لِأَخِيهِ الْمُؤْمِنِ فِي حَاجَةٍ إِلَّا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ لَهُ بِكُلِّ خُطْوَةٍ حَسَنَةً وَحَطَّ عَنْهُ بِهَا سَيِّئَةٌ وَرَفَعَ لَهُ بِهَا دَرَجَةً.

“A believer does not move to help fulfill another believer’s needs but that God will record a good deed for him for every step he takes, and wipe out one of his wrong-doings and raise him in rank.”¹¹

We also read in Makarim ul-Akhlaq that Imam Sajjad said:

“You have no escape from standing upon the narrow bridge (Al-Sirat [over Hell]), so you should see to it

that your legs do not slip and cause you to fall into the Fire.”¹²

The People Entering Hell

God informs us about this event in the following verse of the Holy Qur'an:

وَإِنْ مِنْكُمْ إِلَّا وَارِدُهَا كَانَ عَلَى رَبِّكَ حَتْمًا مَقْضِيًّا ثُمَّ نُنْجِي الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا وَنَذَرُ الظَّالِمِينَ فِيهَا جِثِيًّا

“Not one of you but will pass over it: this is, with thy Lord, a Decree which must be accomplished. But We shall save those who guarded against evil, and We shall leave the wrongdoers therein, (humbled) to their knees.” [The Holy Qur'an, Maryam 19:71-72]

There is extensive discussion among the interpreters of the Qur'an regarding what is meant by the phrase “you shall all enter Hell” in this verse. Some believe that it means all the people will approach it whether they are good or bad. They believe that the good people will then be released, but the wicked ones will be placed there. They use the similarity in the wording in Arabic that is used in this verse, and that used in the following verse of the Holy Qur'an about Moses and what happened to him to support this view:

وَلَمَّا وَرَدَ مَاءَ مَدْيَنَ وَجَدَ

“And when he arrived at the watering (place) in Madyan, he found...” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Qasas 28:23]

Others believe that this does not imply just an approach to Hell. Rather it means that all the people will enter Hell. However, believers are saved from the Fire and the unbelievers will remain there. The last sentence of the verse and the related traditions all support this view. Jabir ibn Abdullah was asked about this verse. He pointed to both his ears and said: I heard with both my ears that the Prophet said the following. May I get deaf from both ears if I lie:

الْوُرُودُ (يعني) الدُّخُولُ. لَا يَبْقَى بَرٌّ وَلَا فَاجِرٌ إِلَّا يَدْخُلُهَا فَتَكُونُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ بَرْدًا وَسَلَامًا كَمَا كَانَتْ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ، حَتَّى أَنْ لِلنَّارِ (أَوْ قَالَ: لِحَبْلِهِمْ) ضَجِيجًا مِنْ بَرْدِهَا. ثُمَّ يُنْجِي اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا وَنَذَرُ الظَّالِمِينَ فِيهَا جِثِيًّا

“Entry in this verse means really going in. There are no good-doers or bad-doers that will not enter Hell. However, the Fire will cool off for the believers and it will be safe for them just as it was for Abraham, until the Fire [or he said: Hell] will cry out from (the excessive) cold. Then God will rescue the pious people and abandon the oppressors in it, in a state of humiliation.”¹³

In another tradition from the Prophet we read:

تَقُولُ النَّارُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ: جُزْ يَا مُؤْمِنُ، فَقَدْ أَطْفَأَ نُورُكَ لَهَبِي

“On the Resurrection Day the Fire will tell the believer: “Pass through, O believer, for your light has extinguished my flames.”¹⁴

The other traditions regarding the Bridge over Hell that is finer than hair and sharper than a sword also support this view. In a tradition from the Prophet he said:

يَرِدُ النَّاسُ النَّارَ ثُمَّ يَصْدُرُونَ بِأَعْمَالِهِمْ، فَأُولَهُمْ كَلَمَعُ الْبَرْقِ ثُمَّ كَمَرِ الرِّيحِ ثُمَّ كَحَضَرِ الْفَرَسِ ثُمَّ كَالرَّاكِبِ ثُمَّ كَشَدِّ الْأَرْجْلِ ثُمَّ كَمَشْيِهِ..

“All the people will enter Hell but leave it according to their deeds. Some come out like a flash of lightning, some come out with the speed of a strong wind, others will come running out like a fast-running horse. Some come out like a horse that is walking. Some will come out like a person that is walking fast and some leave it like a person walking at a normal speed.”¹⁵

The Ankle

The ankle is a complex mechanism. What we normally think of as the ankle is actually made up of two joints: the **subtalar joint**, and the **true ankle joint**. The true ankle joint is composed of 3 bones, seen above from a front, or anterior, view: the **tibia** which forms the inside, or medial, portion of the ankle; the **fibula** which forms the lateral, or outside portion of the ankle; and the **talus** underneath. The true ankle joint is responsible for up and down motion of the foot.

Beneath the true ankle joint is the second part of the ankle, the subtalar joint, which consists of the **talus** on top and **calcaneus** on the bottom. The subtalar joint allows side-to-side motion of the foot. The ends of the bones in these joints are covered by **articular cartilage**. The major ligaments of the ankle are: the **anterior tibiofibular** ligament, which connects the tibia to the fibula.

The **lateral collateral** ligaments, which attach the fibula to the calcaneus and gives the ankle lateral stability; and, on the medial side of the ankle, the **deltoid** ligaments, which connect the tibia to the talus and calcaneus and provide medial stability. These components of your ankle, along with the muscles and tendons of your lower leg, work together to handle the stress your ankle receives as you walk, run and jump.

The Hip

The hip is a ball-and-socket joint where the head of the femur articulates with the cuplike acetabulum of the pelvic bone.

The Knee

The bones of the knee, the **femur** and the **tibia**, meet to form a hinge joint. The joint is protected in front by the **patella**.¹⁶ The knee joint is cushioned by **articular cartilage** that covers the ends of the tibia and femur, as well as the underside of the patella. The lateral **meniscus** and medial meniscus are pads of cartilage that further cushion the joint, acting as shock absorbers between the bones. Ligaments help to stabilize the knee. The **collateral ligaments** run along the sides of the knee and limit sideways motion.

The **anterior cruciate ligament**, or **ACL**, connects the tibia to the femur at the center of the knee. Its function is to limit rotation and forward motion of the tibia. The posterior cruciate ligament, or PCL located just behind the ACL limits backward motion of the tibia. These components of your knee, along with the muscles of your leg, work together to manage the stress your knee receives as you walk, run and jump.

The Jurisprudents' Views on the Worth of the Legs

Now we will discuss the jurisprudents' view on the value of the legs. Imam Sajjad gave us many useful moral suggestions regarding the rights of the legs. But the question here is the jurisprudents' view on their worth. We read the following in Mabani Takmilat al-Minhaj: "There is full compensation for cutting off both legs. The compensation for each leg is half that amount. It does not make any difference whether the leg is cut off from the joints, the knees or the thighs." ¹⁷

There is full compensation for cutting off all the toes. We read the following in Mukhtasar ul-Manafi': "There is full compensation for both legs. There is half compensation for each leg. The place where the legs meet the knees is the limit. The compensation for the toes is the same as that for the fingers of the hands." ¹⁸

¹. In the other version it is followed by: "You have no escape from standing upon the narrow bridge (al-sirat [over Hell]), so you should see to it that your legs do not slip and cause you to fall in the Fire."

². Tafsir-i-Namunah, v. 15, footnote on p. 147.

³. Tafsir-i-Namunah, v. 15, p. 149.

⁴. Makarim al-Akhlaq, p.22.

⁵. Tafsir-i-Namuneh, v. 15, p. 153.

⁶. Makarim al-Akhlaq, p.22.

⁷. Nur al-Thaqalayn, v.4, p.207.

⁸. Ibid.

⁹. Usul al-Kafi, v.2, p.34.

¹⁰. Tafsir-i-Namuneh, v. 18, p.431.

¹¹. Usul al-Kafi, v.2, p. 197.

¹². The Complete Edition of the Treatise on Rights, Imam Sajjad; research and translation by Dr. Ali Peiravi and Ms. Lisa Zaynab Morgan.

¹³. Nur al-Thaqalayn, v.3, p.353.

¹⁴. Nur al-Thaqalayn, v.3, p.354.

[15.](#) Ibid. p.353.

[16.](#) The kneecap.

[17.](#) Mabani' Takmilat al-Minhaj, v.2, p.314.

[18.](#) Mukhtasar al-Manafi', p.301.

Right n. 7: The Right of the Hand

حق اليد

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ يَدِكَ فَإِنَّ لَا تَبْسُطَهَا إِلَى مَا لَا يَحِلُّ لَكَ فَتَنَالَ بِمَا تَبْسُطُهَا إِلَيْهِ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْعُقُوبَةَ فِي الْآجِلِ، وَمِنَ النَّاسِ بِلِسَانِ
الْإِثْمَةِ فِي الْعَاجِلِ، وَلَا تَقْبُضْهَا مِمَّا افْتَرَضَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهَا وَلَكِنْ تَوَقَّرْهَا بِقَبْضِهَا عَنْ كَثِيرٍ مِمَّا يَحِلُّ لَهَا وَبَسْطِهَا إِلَى
كَثِيرٍ مِمَّا لَيْسَ عَلَيْهَا، فَإِذَا هِيَ قَدْ عَقَلْتَ وَشَرَّفْتَ فِي الْعَاجِلِ وَجَبَ لَهَا حُسْنُ الثَّوَابِ فِي الْآجِلِ.

And the right of your hand is that you stretch it not toward that which is unlawful to you. Should you do so, you will be chastised by God in the future. And you are not secure from the blameful tongue of the people now, either. Do not prevent your hands from performing what God has made obligatory for them. You should honor your hands in such a way as to prevent them from engaging in many of the deeds that are not allowed for them. You should let them engage in many deeds that are not harmful for them. If they are used by the intellect and with honor now, then they are bound to receive a good reward in the future. ¹

Hand is used in several contexts:

1 – It is sometimes used to represent possession of rule as in the following verse:

قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَالِكُ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ إِنَّكَ عَلَى
كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

Say: "O God! Lord of Power (and Rule), Thou givest power to whom Thou pleasest, and Thou strippest off power from whom Thou pleasest: Thou enduest with honour whom Thou pleasest, and Thou bringest low whom Thou pleasest: In Thy hand is all good. Verily, over all things Thou hast power." [The Holy Qur'an, Al-i-Imran 3:26]

2 – In other places, it is used to indicate stinginess or generosity as in the following verse:

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ يَدُ اللَّهِ مَغْلُولَةٌ غُلَّتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَلُعِنُوا بِمَا قَالُوا بَلْ يَدَاهُ مَبْسُوطَتَانِ يُنْفِقُ كَيْفَ يَشَاءُ وَلَيَزِيدَنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنْهُم مَّا
أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ طُغْيَانًا وَكُفْرًا وَالْفَيْنَا بَيْنَهُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ كُلَّمَا أَوْقَدُوا نَارًا لِلْحَرْبِ أَطْفَأَهَا اللَّهُ

وَيَسْعَوْنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَسَادًا وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ

The Jews say: "God's hand is tied up." Be their hands tied up and be they accursed for the (blasphemy) they utter. Nay, both His hands are widely outstretched: He giveth and spendeth (of His bounty) as He pleaseth. But the revelation that cometh to thee from God increaseth in most of them their obstinate rebellion and blasphemy. Amongst them we have placed enmity and hatred till the Day of Judgment. Every time they kindle the fire of war, God doth extinguish it; but they (ever) strive to do mischief on earth. And God loveth not those who do mischief." [The Holy Qur'an, al-Ma'ida 5:64]

3 – In other places, it is used to refer to possession of power as in the following verse:

وَاذْكُرْ عِبَادَنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ أُولِيَ الْأَيْدِي وَالْأَبْصَارِ

"And commemorate Our Servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, possessors of Power and Vision." [The Holy Qur'an, Saad 38:45]

Hand as a Source of Corruption

Even though our two hands are such important God-given blessings that have a compensation equal to full compensation for one's life, they are also considered to be the source of corruption as we can read in the following verse:

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

"Mischief has appeared on land and sea because of (the meed) that the hands of men have earned, that (God) may give them a taste of some of their deeds: in order that they may turn back (from Evil)." [The Holy Qur'an, al-Rum 30:41]

Undoubtedly crimes are committed using hands, and affect both the individuals and the society. There will also be reactions to these deeds. We read in the following verse:

وَمَا أَصَابَكُمْ مِّنْ مُّصِيبَةٍ فَبِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَيَعْفُو عَنْ كَثِيرٍ

"Whatever misfortune happens to you is because of the things your hands have wrought, and for many (of them) He grants forgiveness." [The Holy Qur'an, al-Shura 42:30]

Thus, we realize that many misfortunes that we experience are a direct result of our own deeds, and are

sometimes divine punishment. We read in the following verse:

وَأَنْفِقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تُلْقُوا بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ وَأَحْسِنُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

“And spend of your substance in the cause of God, and make not your own hands contribute to (your) destruction; but do good; for God loveth those who do good.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Baqarah 2: 195]

Therefore, we are admonished against doing evil deeds that will result in our own destruction. We are encouraged to give charity and do good deeds. Sometimes we use our hands with which we must build our homes to destroy them as we read in the following verse:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَخْرَجَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ لِأَوَّلِ الْحَشْرِ مَا ظَنَنْتُمْ أَنْ يَخْرُجُوا وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ مَانِعَتُهُمْ حُصُونُهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ فَأَتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَمْ يَحْتَسِبُوا وَقَذَفَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الرُّعْبَ يُخْرِبُونَ بُيُوتَهُمْ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَيْدِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فَاعْتَبِرُوا يَا أُولِيَ الْأَبْصَارِ

“It is He Who got out the Unbelievers among the People of the Book from their homes at the first gathering (of the forces). Little did ye think that they would get out: And they thought that their fortresses would defend them from God! But the (Wrath of) God came to them from quarters from which they little expected (it), and cast terror into their hearts, so that they destroyed their dwellings by their own hands and the hands of the Believers. Take warning, then, O ye with eyes (to see)!” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Hashr 59:2]

This verse refers to the Jews who destroyed their own castles from within. It may also have some philosophical connotations.

Murder Committed by Hands

The most painful aspect of the story of the two sons of Adam is the murdering of one by the other. When God accepted the offering from one of them but rejected that of the other one, the latter threatened to kill the former. In response the brother said:

لَئِنْ بَسَطْتَ إِلَيَّ يَدَكَ لِتَقْتُلَنِي مَا أَنَا بِبَاسٍ بِيَدَيْ إِلَيْكَ لِأَقْتُلَكَ ۖ إِنِّي أَخَافُ اللَّهَ رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ

“If thou dost stretch thy hand against me, to slay me, it is not for me to stretch my hand against thee to slay thee: for I do fear God, the Cherisher of the Worlds.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Ma’ida 5:28]

Now let us look at the traditions about hands. In *Usul al-Kafi*, there is a whole chapter on the hand and other body parts, and what God has made incumbent upon them. Imam Sadiq said:

وَفَرَضَ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْيَدَيْنِ أَنْ لَا يَبْطِشَ بِهِمَا إِلَى مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ وَأَنْ يَبْطِشَ بِهِمَا إِلَى مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَفَرَضَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمَا مِنَ الصَّدَقَةِ وَصِلَةِ الرَّحِمِ وَالْجِهَادِ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالطَّهُورِ لِلصَّلَاةِ

“And God made it incumbent upon the hands not to extend out for what God has forbidden, and do what the Almighty God has decreed for them including giving charity, establishing the ties of kinship, fighting in the way of God, and making ablutions for the prayers.”²

Then Imam Sadiq recited the following verse of the Holy Qur'an:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قُمْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ فَاغْسِلُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ إِلَى الْمَرَافِقِ وَامْسَحُوا بِرُءُوسِكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ إِلَى الْكَعْبَيْنِ

“O ye who believe! When ye prepare for prayer, wash your faces, and your hands (and arms) to the elbows; rub your heads; and your feet to the ankles...” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Mai'da 5:6]

There are several uses for hands mentioned in the Qur'an. We will briefly refer to some of them here.

Pledge of Allegiance with Hands

The hand is used to pledge allegiance to someone. Consider the following verse in this regard:

لَقَدْ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ يُبَايِعُونَكَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرَةِ فَعَلِمَ مَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ فَأَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَثَابَهُمْ فَتْحًا قَرِيبًا

“God's Good Pleasure was on the Believers when they swore Fealty to thee under the Tree: He knew what was in their hearts, and He sent down Tranquility to them; and He rewarded them with a speedy Victory.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Fath 48: 18]

Usually hand-shaking is used in making a deal. It is also used to declare one's allegiance to someone, and one's readiness to acknowledge his power and to obey him. This is a form of a deal which brings mutual responsibilities. One accepts to obey the other, and the other one accepts to protect and defend him. Ibn Khaldoon wrote: “When they wanted to pledge allegiance with the leader, they placed their hands in his hands, like what a seller and a buyer do.”³

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُبَايِعُونَكَ إِنَّمَا يُبَايِعُونَ اللَّهَ يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ فَمَنْ نَكَثَ فَإِنَّمَا يَنْكُثُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ أَوْفَى بِمَا عَاهَدَ عَلَيْهِهُ اللَّهُ فَمَا لُغْوُ بَيْعِهِ عِندَ اللَّهِ فَمَنْ خَلَفَ بِمَا عَاهَدَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَا يَحِمْ أُجْرًا عَظِيمًا

“Verily those who plight their fealty to thee do no less than plight their fealty to God: the Hand of God is over their hands: then anyone who violates his oath, does so to the harm of his own soul,

and anyone who fulfils what he has covenanted with God, – God will soon grant him a great Reward.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Fath 48: 10]

This pledge of allegiance by the men was done by shaking hands. However, for women to pledge allegiance, a bowl of water was used to provide an intermediate media. The Prophet would put his hands in water, and the women would touch the water to pledge allegiance to him. The pledge of allegiance of the people with the Prophet and the Immaculate Imams was meant to indicate their loyalty to them, and its breach was considered a great sin. Imam Musa ibn Ja’far said:

ثَلَاثُ مَوْبِقَاتٍ: نَكْتُ الصَّفْقَةَ وَتَرَكُ السُّنَّةَ وَفَرَّقُ الْجَمَاعَةَ.

“There are three sins which will cause one’s destruction: breaching one’s allegiance, abandoning the tradition (of the Prophet), and separation of oneself from the society.”⁴

We do not intend to discuss all aspects of allegiance here. It is sufficient to note that the hands are used to pledge allegiance

Payment of the Jizyah with the Hand

One of the uses for hands mentioned in the Qur’an is the payment of ‘Jizyah’. ‘Jizyah’ is a form of tax paid by the non-Muslims who live under the protection of the Islamic state. The tax is paid in return for the protection they receive. We read in the following verse:

قَاتِلُوا الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَلَا يُحَرِّمُونَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَلَا يَدِينُونَ دِينَ الْحَقِّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ حَتَّى يُعْطُوا الْجِزْيَةَ عَنْ يَدٍ وَهُمْ صَاغِرُونَ

“Fight those who believe not in God nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by God and His Apostle, nor acknowledge the religion of Truth, (even if they are) of the People of the Book, until they pay the Jizyah with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Tawbah 9:29]

The payment of this tax is an indication of submission to the decrees of Islam and the Holy Qur’an. It is a form of tax on individuals, not their land or property. Several treaties have been signed regarding this issue. We cite one as an example here. In the treaty between Khalid ibn Walid and the Christians we read: “This is a letter from Khalid ibn Walid to Salvaba ibn Nastoofa⁵ and his tribe.

I sign this treaty with you for tax and defense. Based on this treaty, you are under our protection. We can charge you this tax as long as we protect you. Otherwise, we have no rights. This treaty is signed in

the month of Safar of the twelfth year after the migration of the Prophet to Medina.”⁶

The Anatomy of the Hand

The hand is composed of many small bones called **carpals**, **metacarpals** and **phalanges**. The two bones of the lower arm – the **radius** and the **ulna** – meet at the hand to form the wrist.

The median and ulnar nerves are the major nerves of the hand, running the length of the arm to transmit electrical impulses to and from the brain to create movement and sensation.

The skeleton of the hand is subdivided into three segments: the **carpus** or **wrist bones**; the **metacarpus** or **bones of the palm**; and the **phalanges** or **bones of the digits**.

The Carpus (Ossa Carpi)

The **carpal bones**, eight in number, are arranged in two rows. Those of the proximal row, from the radial to the ulnar side, are named the **navicular**, **lunate**, **triangular**, and **pisiform**; those of the distal row, in the same order, are named the **greater multangular**, **lesser multangular**, **capitate**, and **hamate**.

Common Characteristics of the Carpal Bones

Each bone (excepting the pisiform) presents six surfaces. Of these the *volar* or *anterior* and the *dorsal* or *posterior surfaces* are rough, for ligamentous attachment; the dorsal surfaces being the broader, except in the navicular and lunate. The *superior* or *proximal*, and *inferior* or *distal surfaces* are articular, the superior generally convex, the inferior concave; the *medial* and *lateral surfaces* are also articular where they are in contact with contiguous bones, otherwise they are rough and tuberculated. The structure in all is similar, viz., cancellous tissue enclosed in a layer of compact bone.

Bones of the Proximal Row (upper row)

The Navicular Bone (os naviculare manus; scaphoid bone)

The navicular bone is the largest bone of the proximal row. It has received its name from its fancied resemblance to a boat. It is situated at the radial side of the carpus, its long axis being from above downward, sideways, and forward. The **superior surface** is convex, smooth, of triangular shape, and articulates with the lower end of the radius. The **inferior surface**, directed downward, sideways, and backward, is also smooth, convex, and triangular, and is divided by a slight ridge into two parts, the lateral articulating with the greater multangular, the medial with the lesser multangular.

On the **dorsal surface** is a narrow, rough groove, which runs the entire length of the bone, and serves for the attachment of ligaments. The **volar surface** is concave above, and elevated at its lower and lateral part into a rounded projection, the **tubercle**, which is directed forward, provides attachment to the

transverse carpal ligament, and sometimes is the origin to a few fibers of the abductor pollicis brevis.

The **lateral surface** is rough and narrow, and provides attachment to the radial collateral ligament of the wrist. The **medial surface** presents two articular facets; of these, the superior or smaller is flattened of semilunar form, and articulates with the lunate bone; the inferior or larger is concave, forming with the lunate a concavity for the head of the capitate bone.

The Lunate Bone (os lunatum; semilunar bone)

The lunate bone may be distinguished by its deep concavity and crescentic outline. It is situated in the center of the proximal row of the carpus, between the navicular and triangular. The **superior surface**, convex and smooth, articulates with the radius. The **inferior surface** is deeply concave, and of greater extent from before backward than transversely: it articulates with the head of the capitate, and, by a long, narrow facet (separated by a ridge from the general surface), with the hamate. The **dorsal** and **volar surfaces** are rough, for the attachment of ligaments, the former being the broader, and of a somewhat rounded form. The **lateral surface** presents a narrow, flattened, semilunar facet for articulation with the navicular. The **medial surface** is marked by a smooth, quadrilateral facet, for articulation with the triangular.

The Triangular Bone (os triquetum; cuneiform bone)

The triangular bone may be distinguished by its pyramidal shape, and by an oval isolated facet for articulation with the pisiform bone. It is situated at the upper and ulnar side of the carpus. The **superior surface** presents a medial, rough, non-articular portion, and a lateral convex articular portion that articulates with the triangular articular disk of the wrist. The **inferior surface**, directed sideways, is concave, sinuously curved, and smooth for articulation with the hamate.

The **dorsal surface** is rough for the attachment of ligaments. The **volar surface** presents, on its medial part, an oval facet, for articulation with the pisiform; its lateral part is rough for ligamentous attachment. A flat, quadrilateral facet, for articulation with the lunate, marks the lateral surface, the base of the pyramid. The **medial surface**, the summit of the pyramid, is pointed and roughened, for the attachment of the ulnar collateral ligament of the wrist.

The Pisiform Bone (os pisiforme)

The pisiform bone may be known by its small size, and by presenting a single articular facet. It is situated on a plane anterior to the other carpal bones and is spheroidal in form. Its **dorsal surface** presents a smooth, oval facet, for articulation with the triangular: this facet approaches the superior, but not the inferior border of the bone. The **volar surface** is rounded and rough, and gives attachment to the transverse carpal ligament, and to the Flexor carpi ulnaris and Abductor digiti quinti. The **lateral** and **medial surfaces** are also rough, the former being concave, the latter usually convex.

Bones of the Distal Row (lower row)

The Greater Multangular Bone (*os multangulum majus; trapezium*)—The greater multangular bone may be distinguished by a deep groove on its volar surface. It is situated at the radial side of the carpus, between the navicular and the first metacarpal bone. The **superior surface** is directed upward and towards the middle; medially it is smooth, and articulates with the navicular; laterally it is rough and continuous with the lateral surface. The **inferior surface** is oval, and forms a saddle-shaped surface for articulation with the base of the first metacarpal bone.

The **dorsal surface** is rough. The **volar surface** is narrow and rough. At its upper part is a deep groove, running from above obliquely downward and towards the middle; it transmits the tendon of the Flexor carpi radialis, and is bounded laterally by an oblique ridge. This surface gives origin to the Opponens pollicis and to the Abductor and Flexor pollicis brevis; it also affords attachment to the transverse carpal ligament. The **lateral surface** is broad and rough, for the attachment of ligaments. The **medial surface** presents two facets; the upper, large and concave, articulates with the lesser multangular; the lower, small and oval, with the base of the second metacarpal.

The Lesser Multangular Bone (*os multangulum minus; trapezoid bone*)

The lesser multangular is the smallest bone in the distal row. It may be known by its wedge-shaped form, the broad end of the wedge constituting the dorsal, the narrow end the volar surface; and its four articular facets touching each other, and separated by sharp edges. The **superior surface**, quadrilateral, smooth, and slightly concave, articulates with the navicular. The **inferior surface** articulates with the proximal end of the second metacarpal bone; it is convex from side to side, concave from before backward and subdivided by an elevated ridge into two unequal facets.

The **dorsal** and **volar surfaces** are rough for the attachment of ligaments, the former being the larger of the two. The **lateral surface**, convex and smooth, articulates with the greater multangular. The **medial surface** is concave and smooth in front, for articulation with the capitate; rough behind, for the attachment of an interosseous ligament.

The Capitate Bone (*os capitatum; os magnum*)

The capitate bone is the largest of the carpal bones, and occupies the center of the wrist. It presents, above, a rounded portion or head, which is received into the concavity formed by the navicular and lunate; a constricted portion or neck; and below this, the body. The **superior surface** is round, smooth, and articulates with the lunate. The **inferior surface** is divided by two ridges into three facets, for articulation with the second, third, and fourth metacarpal bones, that for the third being the largest. The **dorsal surface** is broad and rough. The **volar surface** is narrow, rounded, and rough, for the attachment of ligaments and a part of the Adductor pollicis obliquus.

The **lateral surface** articulates with the lesser multangular by a small facet at its anterior inferior angle, behind which is a rough depression for the attachment of an interosseous ligament. Above this is a deep, rough groove, forming part of the neck, and serving for the attachment of ligaments; it is bounded superiorly by a smooth, convex surface, for articulation with the navicular. The **medial surface** articulates with the hamate by a smooth, concave, oblong facet, which occupies its posterior and superior parts; it is rough in front, for the attachment of an interosseous ligament.

The Hamate Bone (os hamatum; unciform bone)

The hamate bone may be readily distinguished by its wedge-shaped form, and the hook-like process which projects from its volar surface. It is situated at the medial and lower angle of the carpus, with its base downward, resting on the fourth and fifth metacarpal bones, and its apex directed upward and lateralward. The **superior surface**, the apex of the wedge, is narrow, convex, smooth, and articulates with the lunate.

The **inferior surface** articulates with the fourth and fifth metacarpal bones by concave facets that are separated by a ridge. The **dorsal surface** is triangular and rough for ligamentous attachment. The **volar surface** presents, at its lower and ulnar side, a curved, hook-like process, the **hamulus**, directed forward and sideways. This process gives attachment, by its apex, to the transverse carpal ligament and the Flexor carpi ulnaris; by its medial surface to the Flexor brevis and Opponens digiti quinti; its lateral side is grooved for the passage of the Flexor tendons into the palm of the hand.

It is one of the four eminences on the front of the carpus to which the transverse carpal ligament of the wrist is attached; the others being the pisiform medially, the oblique ridge of the greater multangular and the tubercle of the navicular laterally. The **medial surface** articulates with the triangular bone by an oblong facet, cut obliquely from above, downward and medialward. The *lateral surface* articulates with the capitate by its upper and posterior part, the remaining portion being rough, for the attachment of ligaments.

The Jurisprudents' View on the Value of the Hands

In Islamic jurisprudence the hands are so highly valued that one-half of full compensation is decreed for each one. The compensation for both hands is equal to full compensation for one's life: "The compensation for chopping off both hands is equal to the full compensation for one's life. The compensation for each hand is half of that amount. There is no discord among the jurisprudents on this issue."⁷

There are many traditions to support this. We can refer to the traditions that hold that there is full compensation for body parts of which we have two, like the eyes, the hands and the legs. Hisham ibn Salim quoted on the authority of Imam Sadiq : "There is full compensation for parts of which we have two, and half compensation for each."⁸

Imam Khomeini said: “There is full compensation for both hands. There is half compensation for each hand. The left or the right hands are not any different in this respect. There is half compensation for one who only has one hand either through birth or through losing one hand before.”⁹

He also said: “What is the extent of the hand that is so valuable? It extends from the joints that connect the palm of the hand to the wrist. The compensation for the fingers is half of full compensation too.”¹⁰

Trustworthiness Makes the Hands Valuable

It was said that the blood money to compensate for both hands is equal to that for one’s life. Once Abu’l-`Ala`al-Ma`arri went to see Sayyid Morteza to object to the chopping off of fingers as a penalty for theft. He said: “How is it they chop-off a hand worth five hundred Mithqals<sup>11</sup> of gold for stealing only one quarter of a Dinar?” Abu’l `Ala who was an infidel did not agree with this ruling.

Then Sayyid Morteza replied: “The nobility of trustworthiness has raised the value of the hand, but the humility of treachery reduces it. Then try to understand the Wisdom of your Lord.” In another reference the reply is recorded as: “It is the guarding of property that has raised the value of the hand, but transgression of property reduces its value. Then try to ponder over the Wisdom of your Lord.” There was another man present who replied: “The hand is highly valued when it is oppressed. But it loses its value when it oppresses.”

There are many other sayings in this regard which all support the idea that the hand is valuable as long as it is trustworthy, but it loses its value when used in treachery, for stealing or oppression.¹²

- ^{1.} If the hands are not used to engage in what is forbidden.
- ^{2.} Usul al-Kafi, v.2, p.36.
- ^{3.} Muqaddimah Ibn Khaldun, p.209
- ^{4.} Tafsir Namuneh, v.22, p.70, quoted from Bihar al-Anwar, v.67, p.185.
- ^{5.} The Christian chief.
- ^{6.} Tafsir Namuneh, v.7, p.357, quoted from Tafsir al-Minar, v.10, p.294.
- ^{7.} Mabani Tuklimat al-Minhaj, v.2, p.299.
- ^{8.} Wasa’il al-Shi’ah, v.19, p.217.
- ^{9.} Tahrir al-Wasilah, v.2, p.578.
- ^{10.} Ibid.
- ^{11.} A unit of weight equal to 4.25 grams.
- ^{12.} Rawzat al-Jinnat, v.1, p.271.

Right n. 8: The Right of the Stomach

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ بَطْنِكَ فَأَنْ لَا تَجْعَلَهُ وِعَاءً لِقَلِيلٍ مِنَ الْحَرَامِ وَلَا لِكَثِيرٍ، وَأَنْ تَقْتَصِدَ لَهُ فِي الْحَلَالِ وَلَا تُخْرِجَهُ مِنْ حَدِّ التَّقْوِيَةِ إِلَى حَدِّ التَّهْوِينِ وَذَهَابِ الْمُرُوَّةِ، وَضَبْطُهُ إِذَا هَمَّ بِالْجُوعِ وَالظَّمْأِ فَإِنَّ الشَّبْعَ الْمُنْتَهِي بِصَاحِبِهِ إِلَى التُّخْمِ مَكْسَلَةٌ وَمُنْبَطَةٌ وَمَقْطَعَةٌ عَنْ كُلِّ بَرٍّ وَكَرَمٍ. وَإِنَّ الرِّيَّ الْمُنْتَهِي بِصَاحِبِهِ إِلَى السُّكْرِ مَسْخَفَةٌ وَمَجْهَلَةٌ وَمَذْهَبَةٌ لِلْمُرُوَّةِ.

And the right of your stomach is that you make it not into a container for a little of that which is unlawful to you or a lot of it. You should be determined to eat what is lawful and not exceed the bounds of strengthening to the extent of belittling your stomach¹ to the point that you lose your manliness. And you should restrain it whenever you are extremely hungry or thirsty, since getting really full will cause indigestion, sluggishness, indolence, and it will hinder you from nobility and any good deeds. And drinking too much will make you feel drunk, light-headed, ignorant, and take away your manliness.

Imam Sajjad has described our stomach as a container for food that we must fill with moderation. We must only fill it with legitimate foods and drinks. We should do all we can to strengthen ourselves, but we should not forget moderation.

Man Needs Food

All men need food. We cannot survive if our food supplies are cut off. Some people thought that the Prophet did not need to eat food. The Holy Qur'an rejects this idea and says:

وَمَا جَعَلْنَاهُمْ جَسَدًا لَا يَأْكُلُونَ الطَّعَامَ وَمَا كَانُوا خَالِدِينَ

“Nor did We give them bodies that ate no food, nor were they exempt from death.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Anbiyaa 21:8]

In another verse of the Holy Qur'an we read:

وَقَالُوا مَالِ هَذَا الرَّسُولِ يَأْكُلُ الطَّعَامَ وَيَمْشِي فِي الْأَسْوَاقِ لَوْلَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ فَيَكُونُ مَعَهُ نَذِيرًا

“And they say: “What sort of an apostle is this, who eats food, and walks through the streets? Why has not an angel been sent down to him to give admonition with him?” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Furqan 25:7]

The Qur'an instructs us to think about our need to eat:

ثُمَّ شَفَقْنَا الْأَرْضَ شَقًّا أَنَّا صَبَبْنَا الْمَاءَ صَبًّا فَلْيَنْظُرِ الْإِنْسَانُ إِلَى طَعَامِهِ

“Then let man look at his food, (and how We provide it): For that We pour forth water in abundance, and We split the earth in fragments...” [The Holy Qur’an, Abasa 80:24-26]

The food we eat becomes the closest thing to us. After we eat something, it changes somewhat and part of it gets absorbed and turns into energy and some of it is taken to our cells or stored somewhere in the body and becomes a part of us. We will die of hunger if we cannot get enough food to eat. That is why the Holy Qur’an has placed a special emphasis on food ingredients, and more importantly on plants and vegetables. Have you thought about what is meant by “let man look at his food” in the above verse?

Obviously, it does not mean that we should just look and see what we eat. This means that we should carefully study the structure and makeup of our foods’ ingredients, and consider how each affects our body. Then we should think about how food is prepared for us by God through a renewable cycle of creation. Some people have stressed the need to consider whether it is obtained legitimately or not.

In the traditions from the Immaculate Imams the food for the mind has been stressed – that is we should be careful about how we acquire our knowledge. Imam Baqir said: “You should carefully consider from whom you acquire knowledge.”^{[2](#)}

Imam Sadiq has also stressed this point. When we look at the verse and see what follows in the above verse, we can realize that food for the body is implied, because there is a discussion of rain, splitting the earth, and the flourishing of plants which make up our food. Of course, we should consider both – food for the body and food for the mind. We should see how revelations to the hearts of the Prophets bear fruits that are then stored in the hearts of the Immaculate Imams . Then this knowledge pours out, reaches the hearts of the believers, and yields the fruits of faith and piety.^{[3](#)}

Who Creates Food

There are several verses in the Holy Qur’an regarding the creation of foods and drinks.

أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا تَحْرُثُونَ أَأَنْتُمْ تَزْرَعُونَهُ أَمْ نَحْنُ الزَّارِعُونَ لَوْ نَشَاءُ لَجَعَلْنَاهُ حُطَامًا فَظَلْتُمْ تَفَكَّهُونَ

“See ye the seed that ye sow in the ground? Is it ye that cause it to grow, or are We the Cause? Were it Our Will, We could crumble it to dry powder, and ye would be left in wonderment.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Waqi’ah 56:63-65]

Notice how it is stressed that the people plant the seeds in the ground, but it is God who makes them grow. The Prophet said:

لَا يَقُولَنَّ أَحَدُكُمْ "زَرَعْتُ" وَلْيَقُلْ "حَرَثْتُ"، فَإِنَّ الزَّارِعَ هُوَ اللَّهُ

“Do not say: I grew the plants. Say: I planted the seeds. This is because it is God who makes them grow.” [4](#)

Thus, we are reminded that God is the Creator of all things. If He wills, He can destroy whatever we plant.

In the next verse, we can see the stress on the creation and source of the water that we drink:

أَفَرَأَيْتُمُ الْمَاءَ الَّذِي تَشْرَبُونَ أَأَنْتُمْ أَنْزَلْتُمُوهُ مِنَ الْمُزْنِ أَمْ نَحْنُ الْمُنْزِلُونَ لَوْ نَشَاءُ جَعَلْنَاهُ أُجَاجًا فَلَوْلَا تَشْكُرُونَ

“See ye the water which ye drink? Do ye bring it down (in rain) from the cloud or do We? Were it Our Will, We could make it salt (and unpalatable): then why do ye not give thanks?” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Waqi’ah 56:68–70]

Here we are called in to judge ourselves on who creates water and brings down the rain, makes the rivers flow, makes the plants grow, and produces our food. Hopefully we can realize the Majesty of God.

Psychological Effects of Food

Scientists agree that food has both good and bad physical and psychological effects on us. Research laboratories are well-equipped to measure the chemical composition of foodstuff and how they affect our body. However, the psychological effects of what we eat have not yet been totally measured. Imam Sadiq said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى لَمْ يُبَيِّحْ أَكْلًا وَلَا شَرْبًا إِلَّا لِمَا فِيهِ الْمَنْفَعَةُ وَالصَّلَاحُ، وَلَمْ يَحْرِمِ إِلَّا مَا فِيهِ الضَّرَرُ وَالتَّلَفُ وَالْفَسَادُ.

“The Almighty God only allowed some things for us to eat and drink due to their benefit and good effects on us, and only forbade us some things due to their harmfulness and ill effects.” [5](#)

The leaders of Islam have all been concerned about the good and bad physical and psychological effects of what we eat and drink.

Drinking Blood Makes One Ruthless

Imam Sadiq expressed the reason why it is forbidden to drink blood:

شَرِبُ الدَّمِ يُسَيِّئُ الْخُلُقَ وَيُورِثُ الْقَسْوَةَ لِلْقَلْبِ وَقِلَّةَ الرَّأْفَةِ وَالرَّحْمَةِ وَلَا يُؤْمَنُ أَنْ يُقْتَلَ وَلَدُهُ وَوَالِدُهُ).

“Drinking blood will make you bad-tempered and ruthless. It will reduce your kindness and mercy so much that you might even kill your own son or father.” [6](#)

The Effects of Drinking Wine

Imam Sadiq expressed the reason why we are forbidden to drink wine or alcoholic drinks:

إِنَّ مُدْمِنَ الْخَمْرِ كَعَابِدٍ وَتَنٍّ، وَيُورِثُهُ الْارْتِعَاشَ وَيَهْدِمُ مَرْوَتَهُ وَتَحْمِلُهُ عَلَى أَنْ يَجْسُرَ عَلَى الْمَحَارِمِ مِنْ سَفْكِ الدِّمَاءِ وَرُكُوبِ الزَّانَا، وَلَا يُؤْمَنُ إِذَا سَكِرَ إِنْ يَثْبَعَ عَلَى مَحَارِمِهِ.

“An alcoholic is like an idol-worshipper. It (alcohol) causes him to tremble and his manliness is destroyed. It induces him to venture into what is forbidden such as bloodshed and fornication. Moreover, even his closest relatives are not secure from being molested by him when he is drunk.”⁷

The Physical Effects of Alcohol

Alcohol can easily enter the bloodstream after consumption and can quickly spread throughout the body. Alcohol has a profound effect on almost every organ and system in the body.⁸

1 Alcohol will influence our brain⁹ and disable our brain cells. It might cause the rupturing of the fine blood veins, coagulation of blood, or stoppage of the circulation of blood in the brain. Thus, it will lead to a partial or a severe brain stroke that will sometimes cause a drop in blood pressure and result in paralysis.¹⁰

2 Alcohol will cause various illnesses such as shaking of the hands or the feet, lack of control of our body parts,¹¹ and weakness of our senses.¹² It also causes insomnia.¹³

3 Alcohol will harm the tongue and our sense of taste. It will reduce the amount of saliva and cause a disorder in its reproduction. It will also cause stomach upset, indigestion, throwing up mixed with clogged blood. It will cause many illnesses in our stomach and intestine and result in ulcer and serious diarrhea.

4 It will weaken the liver,¹⁴ and cause it to swell. It will harden the kidneys and cause pain in the stomach. It might even cause jaundice.¹⁵

5 Alcohol is not usable in the body. Therefore, if we drink, it will enter our blood stream and destroy the white blood cells. It might even cause such a drop in our blood pressure that we might have a brain stroke.

6 One of the major ill effects of drinking alcohol is its influence on the lungs. Alcohol will travel along with our blood stream into our lungs, and it will irritate the lung and cause it to swell. This will result in destruction of calcium and end in tuberculosis.

7 Another ill effect of drinking alcohol is damage to the cardiovascular system.¹⁶

Alcohol Causes Insanity

Alcoholic drinks are the main cause of insanity. The statistics¹⁷ show that most insane people are those who have been drinking for many years in their life. There are nearly two hundred thousand such cases in France. Nearly ninety percent of the insanities in England have been alcohol related.¹⁸

Genetic Effects of Alcohol

Alcohol has a bad effect on the cells of a baby. A German scientist has proved that this influence will genetically affect three generations, even if they do not drink.¹⁹ That is why Islam has forbidden drinking alcohol. Imam Sajjad stressed that we should keep our stomachs void of forbidden things. The Prophet said:

مَلْعُونٌ مَنْ جَلَسَ عَلَى مَائِدَةٍ يُشْرَبُ عَلَيْهَا الْخَمْرُ.

“Whoever sits with those who are drinking is deprived of God’s Mercy.”²⁰

Ayatollah Dastghayb quoted from Sayyid Abul Ali Mawdoodi’s Tangh²¹: “The U.S. government used many ways to fight alcoholism. It used magazines, newspapers, lectures, and seminars, even movies to combat alcoholism. It spent more than eight million dollars, and published more than ten million pages of advertisement against it. Over a period of fourteen years, it spent over two hundred fifty million dollars to enforce the law to abolish alcoholic beverages.

It imprisoned three hundred and thirty-five persons, fined people over sixteen million dollars, and seized over four hundred and fifty million dollars’ worth of property. All this was of no use. It finally gave up and abolished that law in 1932 and totally freed drinking alcohol.”²¹

On the other hand, even though drinking alcoholic beverages was like drinking water for the Arabs in the Age of Ignorance, when Islam came it forbade drinking alcohol and abolished it in a very short time. Thus, it saved Muslims from all the ill effects of alcohol and alcoholism. Scientists today are well aware of the physical effects of alcohol. However, they cannot measure its moral impacts on the loss of manliness and moral values.

Some people are careful about the cleanliness of their living quarters, and the suitability of their food. Should they suspect the least bit of poisoning in their food, they will refuse to eat it. However, they do not care at all about their spiritual well-being, and listen to anything. Imam Ali said:

مَا لِي أَرَى النَّاسَ إِذَا قُرِبَ إِلَيْهِمُ الطَّعَامُ تَكَلَّفُوا إِنَارَةَ الْمَصَابِيحِ لِيُبْصِرُوا مَا يُدْخِلُونَ بُطُونَهُمْ وَلَا يَهْتَمُّونَ بِغِذَاءِ النَّفْسِ
بَأَنْ يُنِيرُوا مَصَابِيحَ أَلْبَابِهِمْ بِالْعِلْمِ لِيَسْلَمُوا مِنْ لَوَاحِقِ الْجَهَالَةِ وَالذُّنُوبِ فِي اعْتِقَادَاتِهِمْ وَأَعْمَالِهِمْ؟

“I am amazed at the people who turn on the light to see what they eat when they want to dine in the dark, but do not care about food for their mind. They do not care to illuminate their intellect with the light of knowledge to be safe from making mistakes out of ignorance and wrong beliefs.”²²

Imam Hasan said:

عَجِبْتُ لِمَنْ يَتَفَكَّرُ فِي مَأْكُولِهِ كَيْفَ لَا يَتَفَكَّرُ فِي مَعْقُولِهِ فَيُجَنَّبَ بَطْنَهُ مَا يُؤْذِيهِ وَيُودِعَ صَدْرَهُ مَا يُرْدِيهِ

“I am amazed at the people who consider what they eat but do not think about the food for their mind. They guard their stomachs from harmful things, but do not guard their hearts and minds against things that will harm them.”

There are many traditions in Islam about proper diet, and proper things to eat or drink. There is a lot of information about useful or harmful meats, fats, sweets, confectioneries, beans and vegetables. Suayd ibn Ghofleh went to see Imam Ali once at lunchtime.

He narrated: “I saw that Imam Ali was sitting down around the tablecloth with a dried piece of bread made of whole barley. I went to his servants and asked them why they were so inconsiderate not to grind the barley to make flour for the bread for the Imam . They said it was based on his personal orders. Then I returned to the Imam and asked him the reason. Imam Ali said that he had learned this from the Prophet .”²³ Imam Sadiq said: “Solomon’s bread was made of whole barley.”²⁴

Ahmad ibn Harun went to see Imam Ridha . Imam Ridha ordered food to be served. They spread the tablecloth and brought some food. There were no fresh green vegetables there. The Imam did not eat, and told his servant: “Do you know that I will not eat unless there are some green vegetables on the table? Go and bring some.” Then the servant went and brought some green vegetables, and the Imam started to eat.”²⁵

The Most Important Advice

The Almighty God said in the Qur’an:

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ خُذُوا زِينَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ

“O Children of Adam! Wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer: eat and drink: but waste not by excess, for God loveth not the wasters.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-A’raf 7:31]

It has been proved that this is the most important advice for our health. Scientists have done extensive research and have concluded that the roots of many diseases lie in excess food not being absorbed and remaining in the body. This excess fat causes an excessive pressure on the heart. It also serves as a

ready place for various infections and diseases. Therefore, the first step to achieve health is to burn off all excessive fat. The main cause of this fat accumulation in the body is overeating and wastefulness. Therefore, we should eat moderately to avoid this ugly condition.

Haroon's Christian Doctor

Sheikh Tabarsi wrote in Majma'ul Bayan that Haroon ul-Rashid had a Christian doctor in his court. He was a renowned doctor. Once he told one of his Muslim assistants: "I can see no traces of medical advice in your heavenly Book while the most useful knowledge is that of religion and the body." The Muslim scholar replied: "God the Almighty has summarized all of medicine into one-half of a verse and has said:

وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ

"Eat and drink: But waste not by excess, for God loveth not the wasters." [*The Holy Qur'an, al-A'raf 7:31*]

The Prophet has also given the following medical advice:

الْمَعِدَةُ بَيْتُ الْأَدْوَاءِ وَالْحَمِيَةُ رَأْسُ كُلِّ دَوَاءٍ وَأَعْطِ كُلَّ بَدَنٍ مَا عَوَّدَتْهُ.

"The stomach is the home for all illnesses. Abstinence is the best drug, and give your body what you have made it accustomed to."

The Christian doctor said: "Your Book and your Prophet have left nothing for Jalinus²⁶ in medicine."²⁷

Avoid Getting Full

The Noble Prophet said:

الْأَكْلُ عَلَى الشَّبَعِ يُورِثُ الْبَرَصَ.

*"Eating beyond satiation will cause leprosy."*²⁸

He also said:

لَا تُمِيتُوا الْقُلُوبَ بِكَثْرَةِ الطَّعَامِ وَالشَّرَابِ، فَإِنَّ الْقُلُوبَ تَمُوتُ كَالزُّرُوعِ إِذَا كَثُرَ عَلَيْهَا الْمَاءُ.

"Do not cause your hearts to die by overeating or over-drinking. Hearts die just as crops do when they

are over-watered.”²⁹

Avoid Forbidden Meals

The Prophet said:

مَنْ أَكَلَ لُقْمَةً حَرَامٍ لَمْ تُقْبَلْ لَهُ صَلَاةُ أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً وَلَمْ تُسْتَجَبْ لَهُ دَعْوَةُ أَرْبَعِينَ صَبَاحًا، فَكُلُّ لَحْمٍ يُنْبِتُهُ الْحَرَامُ فَالنَّارُ أَوْلَى بِهِ

“The prayers of one who eats a morsel of what is forbidden will not be accepted for forty nights and his calls and supplications will not be answered for forty days. Flesh grown from forbidden food deserves to be burnt in the Fire.”³⁰

The Prophet said:

إِذَا وَقَعَتِ اللَّقْمَةُ مِنْ حَرَامٍ فِي جَوْفِ الْعَبْدِ لَعَنَهُ كُلُّ مَلَكٍ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ، وَمَا دَامَتِ اللَّقْمَةُ فِي جَوْفِهِ لَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَيْهِ إِلَهٌ، وَمَنْ أَكَلَ لُقْمَةً مِنَ الْحَرَامِ فَقَدْ بَاءَ بِغَضَبٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ تَابَ تَابَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَإِنْ مَاتَ فَالنَّارُ أَوْلَى بِهِ

“When a morsel of what is forbidden enters the stomach of a person, every angel in the heavens and on the earth curses him. As long as the morsel is in his body, God will not look upon him. Whoever eats a morsel of what is forbidden has earned God’s wrath. If he repents, God will turn to him in forgiveness, and if he dies (without repentance) then he is more deserving of the Fire.”³¹

Regarding the legitimate meals, the Prophet said:

مَنْ أَكَلَ الْحَلَالَ أَرْبَعِينَ يَوْمًا نَوَّرَ اللَّهُ قَلْبَهُ وَأَجْرَى الْحِكْمَةَ مِنْ قَلْبِهِ عَلَى لِسَانِهِ

“God will illuminate the heart of one who eats what is lawful for forty days, and will make wisdom flow from his heart to his tongue.”³²

The Secret to Good Health

The Prophet said:

مَنْ أَكَلَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَى النِّقَاءِ وَأَجَادَ الطَّعَامَ تَمْضُغًا وَتَرَكَ الطَّعَامَ وَهُوَ يَشْتَهِيهِ وَلَمْ يَحْبِسِ الْغَائِطَ إِذَا أَتَى لَمْ يَمْرُضْ إِلَّا مَرَضَ الْمَوْتِ

“Whoever adheres to hygienic principles regarding eating, and chews his food well, stops eating while

he is still not full and does not put off going to the toilet when needed, will not suffer from any illnesses until death.”[33](#)

Imam Sajjad has instructed us to avoid excesses in eating, and practice moderation. We discussed the harms of overeating before. Now let us discuss the harms of undereating and hunger. Hunger is one of the most dangerous human conditions. A hungry person acts as if he forgets his faith and religious beliefs. He turns into a beast in an attempt to get some food to alleviate his hunger.

There was a major revolution in Basra in the 9th century. During his several years of rule, Sahib Zany committed many mass executions. He killed thousands of men, women and children. Those who survived hid in the daytime and left their hiding places at night in search of some food to eat. There was no more work to be done. No one worked on the land, and no one raised animals.

Therefore, deprivation and hunger prevailed. The people ate the cats and the dogs for some time. Then they started to eat the corpses of the dead. Even sometimes, they killed the weak people and ate them. It has been recorded in history that a woman was seen crying while she had a chopped-off head in her hands.

When asked about the reason she cried and said: “The hungry people surrounded my weak sister, and were waiting for her to die so that they could eat her. They attacked her, killed her, tore her into pieces, and ate her. They oppressed me because they did not give me a share of her meat. They gave me her head, but it is hard to eat!”[34](#) Notice how she had lost her feelings and senses, and cried over the hard to eat share of hers from her sister’s torn apart body!

The Jurisprudents’ Rule on the Stomach

If anyone hits someone else in the stomach and causes him an injury to the extent that he loses control over his urination and bowel movement, then he must pay one-third of the full compensation or blood money according to the jurisprudents’ rule.[35](#) This is based on the following tradition. Sokuni quoted on the authority of Imam Sadiq : “A man had beaten another one in the stomach so hard that he messed up his pants. Then they asked Imam Ali on how to punish him. Imam Ali said: “He should either deliver an equal blow to his stomach or receive one-third full compensation in return.”

[1.](#) By over-eating and over-drinking.

[2.](#) Tafsir al-Burhan, v.4, p.429.

[3.](#) Tafsir Namuneh, v.26, p. 146.

[4.](#) Majma’ al-Bayan, v.9, p.223; Ruh al-Bayan, v.9, p.332.

[5.](#) Mustadrak al-Wasa’il, v.3, p.71.

[6.](#) Ibid.

[7.](#) Mustadrak al-Wasa’il, v.3, p.71.

[8.](#) In the following footnotes we present the effects of alcohol on the most researched organs or organ systems.

[9.](#) The brain is the seat of human thought and consciousness. Therefore any impairment of the brain’s function can lead to drastic changes in a person’s personality and behavior. Even though the brain makes up only two percent of the body’s

weight, it takes up about 20 percent of the body's blood. Since blood is the main medium through which alcohol is spread in the body, the brain is flooded with alcohol whenever you drink. Alcohol can affect the brain's function and the function of the nervous system in general by several methods including: direct toxic effects, withdrawal, nutritional deficiency, liver disease and head trauma among others.

One of the direct toxic effects of alcohol is its ability to change the production of neurotransmitters. Alcohol has a detrimental effect on many neurological processes such as temperature regulation, sleep cycle and coordination. Also, chronic alcoholics may suffer from a condition known as Korsakoff's syndrome. Korsakoff's syndrome (KS) is a neurological disorder in which one's short term memory is nearly non-existent. Those that are afflicted with KS are unable to remember events that occur after the onset of the symptoms.

Perhaps the most obvious effect of alcohol is the actual physiological damage it does to the brain of an alcoholic. Some of the factors that determine how and to what degree one's brain is damaged by alcohol include age, gender and family history but are not limited to just these. In order for the nervous system to function properly signals must be relayed to and from the brain. Neurotransmitters are essential for nerve-to-nerve communication. They travel between the junctions, known as a synapse, between two nerve cells. Neurotransmitters stimulate receptors on the surface of nerve cells, which in turn carry the signal down the nerve and on to other nerves.

The production of receptors is very sensitive and can fluctuate in response to chemical and environmental factors. Factors that increase the sensitivity of receptors tend to down-regulate, or decrease the production of receptors while factors that inhibit a receptor tend to up-regulate or increase the production of receptors. Up and down-regulation allow the nervous system to maintain a balance of neurotransmitters and receptors. Glutamate, an amino acid, is the major excitatory neurotransmitter in the human brain. There is sufficient research to support the fact that even in small doses alcohol can affect the function of glutamate. This interference can affect memory among other things and may cause the loss of short-term memory during periods of over-drinking.

Alcohol has an inhibitory effect on glutamate, which causes the glutamate receptor to be up-regulated, especially in the hippocampus, an area of the brain responsible for memory and related to epileptic seizures. Alcoholics suffering from alcohol withdrawal often suffer from glutamate over-activity due to the up-regulation of the glutamate receptor. Glutamate over-activity has been related to cell death as caused by strokes and seizures. Malnutrition in alcoholics results in a deficiency in thiamine and magnesium, which may also contribute to glutamate over-activity. Another neurotransmitter that is affected by alcohol is gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA).

It is the main inhibitory neurotransmitter of the central nervous system. Alcohol acts as an inhibitory agent for GABA much like it does for glutamate. GABA receptors are up-regulated in alcoholics and when the inhibitory effect of alcohol is lost, GABA over-activity occurs. GABA over-excitation often results in withdrawal seizures – delirium tremens (DT) also known as rum fits. Alcohol also disrupts the function of various other neurotransmitters including serotonin, endorphins and acetylcholine. Serotonin affects moods, appetite and sleep. Stimulation of serotonin in conjunction with the release of endorphins cause the feeling of pleasure that many people get when intoxicated.

Acetylcholine is the key neurotransmitter in controlling cardiovascular mechanisms, including the dilation of blood vessels. It has also been suggested that alcohol may affect the level of catecholamines, a neurotransmitter that has been observed to be suppressed in patients with Korsakoff's syndrome. The toxic effects of alcohol may cause the nervous system to lose control of many of its functions.

[10.](#) A study published in the February issue of *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, utilized sophisticated brain scans called functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). The research was headed by Susan F. Tapert, Ph.D., UCSD assistant adjunct professor of psychiatry and a clinical psychologist at the Veterans Affairs Health Care System. She notes that "our findings suggest that even young and physically healthy individuals risk damaging their brains through chronic, heavy use of alcohol."

[11.](#) Another effect of long-term alcohol consumption is the loss of muscular coordination. Alcohol damages a part of the

brain known as the cerebellum. The cerebellum controls coordinated actions such as walking or swinging a bat. Damage to the cerebellum results in loss of coordination and can appear as imbalance and staggering.

[12.](#) Drinking alcohol has subtle effects on personality and emotions. It also impairs cognitive abilities such as perception, learning and memory. One of the most severe side effects of chronic alcohol consumption is Korsakoff's syndrome (KS). Patients suffering from KS have virtually no short-term memory. This condition is also known as anterograde amnesia. Alcoholics who develop KS can remember nothing past the day that the syndrome first set in.

Though KS does not affect long-term memories, in effect leaving a person's IQ intact, KS sufferers often are no longer able to function as normal members of society due to their complete lack of short-term memory. Perhaps the most obvious effect of alcohol on the nervous system is the physiological damage that it does to the brain. The areas of the brain that are most affected include the limbic system, diencephalon, cerebral cortex and cerebellum.

[13.](#) Chronic insomnia is complex and often results from a combination of factors, including underlying physical or mental disorders. One of the most common causes of chronic insomnia is depression. Other underlying causes include arthritis, kidney disease, heart failure, asthma, sleep apnea, narcolepsy, restless legs syndrome, Parkinson's disease and hyperthyroidism. However chronic insomnia may also be due to behavioral factors including the misuse of caffeine, alcohol or other substances; disrupted sleep/wake cycles as may occur with shift work or other nighttime activity schedules, and chronic stress.

[14.](#) The liver is where all alcohol must eventually go to be processed and neutralized. It follows that the liver is damaged from heavy, chronic alcohol consumption.

[15.](#) Scientists have long understood that alcohol abuse can lead to chronic diseases like cirrhosis of the liver. But in recent years, researchers have discovered that alcohol – in some cases only a few drinks a day – can make the liver and pancreas more susceptible to injury.

[16.](#) The heart can pump over 300 litres of blood in an hour. Since the blood is the primary medium for transporting ingested nutrients, in this case alcohol, it delivers alcohol straight to the heart and other parts of the cardiovascular system. In recent studies, it has been shown that heavy drinking causes serious damage to various parts of the cardiovascular system. For example, it causes the heart muscles to develop a disease known as cardiomyopathy. Also, heavy drinking increases the risk of unsteady heartbeat, high blood pressure and hemorrhagic stroke.

[17.](#) Published statistics indicate that there are over 18 million alcoholics living in America.

[18.](#) "Balahaye Ijtima'i", quoted from Tandorost Magazine.

[19.](#) Ibid.

[20.](#) Safinah al-Bihar, v. 1, p.427.

[21.](#) Gunahane Kabire, v. 1, p.253

[22.](#) Safinah al-Bihar, v.2, p.84.

[23.](#) Koodak (Guftar-i-Falsafi), v. 1, p.249.

[24.](#) Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, v.3, p. 103.

[25.](#) Koodak, v. 1, p.251.

[26.](#) Same as Galen 131–210 A.D. There were many who contributed to the present day medicine as we know it – from Hippocrates (Bukrat) , Plato, Aristotle and Galen to our present day researchers. Hippocrates (460–370 B.C) is the symbol of the first creative period of Greek medicine and is aptly known as the 'Father of medicine'. Plato and Aristotle (384–322 B.C) also contributed to the basis of Greek medicine in its original state; while Galen nurtured it to quite a degree.

[27.](#) Fehrist-i-Ghurur al-Hikam, p. 13.

[28.](#) Fehrist-i-Ghurur al-Hikam, p.25; Makarim al-Akhlaq, p. 147.

[29.](#) Makarim al-Akhlaq, p. 150.

[30.](#) Safinah al-Bihar, v. 1, p.24.

[31.](#) Makarim al-Akhlaq, p. 150.

[32.](#) Mahajjah al-Bayda, v.3, p.204.

[33.](#) Makarim al-Akhlaq, p. 146.

[34.](#) Tatamat al-Muntaha, p.380.

Right n. 9: The Right of the Private Part

حق الفرج

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ فَرْجِكَ فَحِفْظُهُ مِمَّا لَا يَحِلُّ لَكَ وَالْإِسْتِعَانَةُ عَلَيْهِ بِغَضِّ الْبَصَرِ - فَإِنَّهُ مِنْ أَعْوَنِ الْأَعْوَانِ - وَكَثْرَةُ ذِكْرِ الْمَوْتِ وَالتَّهْدُّدُ لِنَفْسِكَ بِاللَّهِ وَالتَّخْوِيفُ لَهَا بِهِ، وَبِاللَّهِ الْعِصْمَةُ وَالتَّأْيِيدُ وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِهِ.

And the right of your private part is that you should protect it from everything that is unlawful for you and help it by lowering your eyes – this is certainly the best way to help it. And you should also remember death often, and threaten yourself with God and try to make yourself fear God.¹ Preservation from sin and receiving help in so doing are possible by God's help. There is no strength or power but in Him.

What Imam Sajjad means by “protecting your private parts” is covering it from other people's eyes. Consider the following verse:

وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ

“And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty.”
[The Holy Qur'an, al-Nur 24:31]

Imam Sadiq said:

كُلُّ آيَةٍ فِي الْقُرْآنِ فِي ذِكْرِ الْفُرُوجِ فَهِيَ مِنَ الزَّنا إِلَّا هَذِهِ الْآيَةُ فَإِنَّهَا مِنَ النَّظَرِ.

“Every verse in the Qur'an in which the private parts are mentioned is with regard to protecting it from fornication, except for this (above) verse in which it means to protect the private parts from being seen.”²

Sexual Instincts

Sexual instincts are among the major forces in man to derive pleasure in life. These strong instincts attract men and women towards each other. The love they have for each other makes them work hard to unite with one another. That is why sex and marriage have always been a hot topic of discussion in all religious or scientific gatherings. There have been many theories related to this issue. Some of these

theories are extremist while others are normal.

Extremist Theory

Those who believe in sexual freedom including the followers of Freud have adopted an extremist theory. Freud whose ideas are based on sex has extended out of the domain of influence of sexual instincts to affect many other natural instincts that are in reality very independent of sex. He considers this instinct to be the main foundation of human culture and civilization. Freud thinks that seeking sexual pleasure and fulfillment is not limited to adulthood and exists throughout our lifetime. He considers a baby's sucking of the mother's breast to be sexually motivated and pleasing.

Freud bases his psychological theories on sexual failures. He thinks that when sexual desires are not fulfilled due to social restrictions, they are forced into the subconscious where they lend themselves to severe stress and psychological illnesses. Freud believes that all the various forms of psychological problems are rooted in the sexual instinct.

Thus, a psychoanalyst must become very aware of the person's experiences in order to treat him. Freud's opponents disagree with his idea that sexual instincts are the root of all psychological illnesses. Freud's mistake lies in his considering unusual sexual emotions to be the source of nervous or psychological illnesses. He fails to consider the person's social, economical or material environment. For example, when a simple worker has psychological problems due to lack of income, poverty and hunger, his illness is not rooted in sex. To treat him we must provide him with better work opportunities, not satiate him sexually!³

The Church and the Other Extreme

The followers of the Church, some religions, some philosophers and some teachers of ethics have considered sex to be an animal act and have called it filthy. By going to the other extreme, they have totally abandoned sex. Saint Jerome always used to say: "Let us chop off the tree of marriage by celibacy." In the Church, we see great scholars like Paulus who was one of the heads of the Church. He never married and advised all men and women not to marry.

In his first treatise addressed to Quirintian we read: "About what you wrote to me, it is better for men not to touch women. However, in order to avoid fornication, each man should have his own wife, and each woman should have her own husband. The husband must fulfill his wife's rights. The wife should fulfill the husband's rights. I wish all men were like me, but each person has a divinely given gift. Some are this way. Others are that way. Thus, I tell those who are single and the widowed women, that it is best for them to remain like me. But if they cannot restrain themselves, it is better for them to marry since it is better to marry than burn in the Fire of Hell."⁴

Islam Takes the Balanced View

Islam condemns both extremist views. The Commander of the Faithful has considered going to either extreme to be out of ignorance. He said:

لَا يُرَى الْجَاهِلُ إِلَّا مُفْرَطًا أَوْ مُفْرَطًا.

“The ignorant one will only be seen either exceeding the bounds or falling short.”

Taking a moderate stance regarding sexual instincts is liked by God and is according to the nature of our creation. In the moderate method, sexual instincts are neither let loose, nor are they totally abandoned. The law and social ethics support the fulfillment of this natural instinct in a moderate degree, and the means for its proper fulfillment are provided. In the method that is supported by God’s Prophets, people are instructed that God has encouraged the people to get married. On the other hand, any form of sexual deviation or being loose is seriously fought with, and human societies are advised against these things.

Islam and Marriage

The Almighty God has expressed one of the main characteristics of believing men or women in the following verse:

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأُزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ غَيْرُ مُلُومِينَ فَمَنْ ابْتَغَى وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْعَادُونَ

“Who abstain from sex, except with those joined to them in the marriage bond, or (the captives) whom their right hands possess, – for (in their case) they are free from blame: But those whose desires exceed those limits are transgressors.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Muminun 23:5-7]

Islam has ordered its followers to get married since sexual instincts are the most difficult to control. Islam has ordered us to make love with our legal wives or our slaves. This implies both permanent and temporary wives. There is also a mention of the misconception by the Christians who considered any sexual contact to be wrong, and went so far that the Catholic priests and the nuns did not marry all their life long and considered marriage to be contrary to their spiritual position. The Noble Prophet of Islam has paid attention to sexual instincts in his teachings and has instructed his followers not to follow celibacy. God’s Prophet said:

مَنْ أَحَبَّ فِطْرَتِي فَلْيَسْتَنْ بِسُنَّتِي، وَمِنْ سُنَّتِي النِّكَاحُ.

“Whoever likes my nature should follow my traditions. One of my traditions is marriage.”⁵

Marriage and Immunity from Sin

God’s Prophet said:

يَا مَعْشَرَ الشَّبَابِ! مَنْ اسْتَطَاعَ مِنْكُمُ الْبَاهُ فَلْيَتَزَوَّجْ، فَإِنَّهُ أَغْضُ لِلْبَصَرِ وَأَحْسَنُ لِلْفَرْجِ، وَمَنْ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ مِنْكُمُ فَلْيُذِمِّنِ الصَّوْمَ فَإِنَّ لَهُ وَجَاءً.

“O young people! Any of you who have the means to marry should do so since this is the best way to protect your eyes from corrupt and treacherous looks, and to guard the private parts from sin and immodesty. Whoever does not have the means to marry should fast continually since fasting can reduce lust.”⁶

Marriage as the Firm Foundation of Life

Islam encourages its followers to establish a family and considers the family to be the most beautiful thing in the sight of God. The Noble Prophet of God said:

مَا بُنِيَ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ بِنَاءٌ أَحَبُّ إِلَى اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَأَعَزُّ مِنَ التَّزْوِيجِ.

“There is no establishment in Islam dearer to God the Almighty than marriage.”⁷

Therefore, we must speed up the establishment of marriage. Imam Sadiq narrated that once the Prophet climbed up on the pulpit and after praising God said:

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ! إِنَّ جِبْرِيلَ أَتَانِي عَنِ اللَّطِيفِ الْخَبِيرِ فَقَالَ: إِنَّ الْأَبْكَارَ بِمَنْزِلَةِ الثَّمَرِ عَلَى الشَّجَرِ: إِذَا أَدْرَكَ ثَمَرُهُ فَلَمْ يُجَنَّتْ أَفْسَدَتْهُ الشَّمْسُ وَنَثَرَتْهُ الرِّيحُ، وَكَذَلِكَ الْأَبْكَارُ: إِذَا أَدْرَكَ مَا يُدْرِكُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَيْسَ لَهُنَّ دَوَاءٌ إِلَّا الْبُعُولَةُ وَإِلَّا لَمْ يُؤْمَنْ عَلَيْهِنَّ الْفَسَادُ، فَإِنَّهُنَّ بَشَرٌ.

“O people! Gabriel came to me from the threshold of God and said: Virgin girls are like the fruits on a tree. When they ripen, they should be plucked. Else, they will be spoiled due to exposure to the rays of the sun, and they will be scattered about due to the blowing of the wind. When girls mature and feel sexual inclinations, there is no remedy for them but a husband. If they do not get married, they are not secure from corruption since they are human (and are not immune from making mistakes).”

Marriage Provides a Garment

The Holy Qur'an has considered the chastity of men and women and has said:

هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَّكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَّهُنَّ

“They are your garments and ye are their garments.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2: 187]

Our garments cover up our sex organs and protect us against many bad conditions such as heat, cold and bad weather. Marriage will help us stay clean and pure. The Noble Prophet said:

مَنْ أَحَبَّ أَنْ يَلْقَى اللَّهَ طَاهِرًا وَمُطَهَّرًا فَلْيَتَعَفَّفْ بِزَوْجَةٍ.

“Whoever likes to meet God in a pure and purified state should protect his chastity by means of marriage.”⁸

The Prophet Disapproved of Abandoning Marriage

Those who have the means to get married and establish a family in order to save the Muslims from committing sins should do so. Islam blames those who do not do so for various reasons. Consider the following case for example. A man called Akkaf went to see God's Prophet . The Prophet asked: “Are you married?” He said: “O' Prophet of God! No.” Then the Prophet asked: “Are you healthy and wealthy?” He said: “Yes.” Then the Prophet said:

وَيْحَكَ يَا عَكَافُ! تَزَوَّجْ فَإِنَّكَ مِنَ الْخَاطِئِينَ، تَزَوَّجْ وَإِلَّا فَأَنْتَ مِنَ الْمُذْنِبِينَ، تَزَوَّجْ وَإِلَّا فَأَنْتَ مِنْ رُهْبَانٍ النَّصَارَى، تَزَوَّجْ وَإِلَّا فَأَنْتَ مِنْ إِخْوَانِ الشَّيَاطِينِ.

“Woe be to you, Akkaf! Marry, marry, for now you are of the wrongdoers! Marry, else you will be among the sinners! Marry, else you will be of the Christian monks! Marry, else you will be among the brothers of Satan!”⁹

In another tradition, we read that Imam Ridha narrated that a woman told Imam Baqir : “I am a Mutabattil.” Imam Baqir asked: “What do you mean by that?” She said: “I intend to never get married.” Imam Baqir asked: “Why?” She said: “In order to attain nobility.” Then Imam Baqir said: “Forget it. If there was any nobility in not getting married, the Blessed Fatima Zahra was more suitable to have recognized this nobility, and there is no one who can supercede her in nobility.”¹⁰ From these traditions, we realize that the leaders in Islam have advised men and women against celibacy so that they remain chaste.

Islam and Avoiding Women

A few of the companions of the Noble Prophet of God decided to avoid having sexual intercourse with their wives, eating breakfast and sleeping at night. Um Salmah realized this and told this to the Prophet . The Prophet went to them and asked:

أَتَرْغَبُونَ عَنِ النِّسَاءِ؟ إِنِّي أَتِي النِّسَاءَ وَأَكُلُ بِالنَّهَارِ وَأَنَا مُ بِاللَّيْلِ، فَمَنْ رَغِبَ عَنْ سُنَّتِي فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي.

“Do you abstain from (going to) your wives? I go to my wives, eat in the daytime and sleep at night. Whoever forsakes my tradition is not from me.”¹¹

Adultery is a Major Sin

Those who do not establish a family may commit adultery and fall into disaster. The Holy Qur'an considers adultery to be an evil deed and says:

وَلَا تَقْرُبُوا الزَّوْنَىٰ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً وَسَاءَ سَبِيلًا

“Nor come nigh to adultery: for it is a shameful (deed) and an evil, opening the road (to other evils).” [The Holy Qur'an, Bani Israil 17:32]

This short verse stresses three important points:

- 1) The verse does not state: “Do not commit adultery.” Rather it says do not even approach this wicked deed. This verse shows that although adultery is a very bad deed, there are some other deeds that might ultimately lead to it. Acts like flirting, looking, nudity, not wearing the veil, reading dirty books, viewing pornography, and going to centers of corruption or being in a private place with another person of the opposite sex are all preparatory actions which might lead to adultery.
- 2) This verse clearly expresses the extreme degree of wickedness of adultery.
- 3) This verse states that adultery will also pave the way for other forms of corruption in the society.

The Philosophy behind Forbidding Adultery

- 1) The first problem with adultery is that it will lead to social disorder. The relationship of the father and children will become unclear. This clear father-child relationship will provide life-long support for the children. Adultery will eliminate this order. Let us think for one moment that adultery is permitted in the whole world and marriage is abolished. In such a world, none of the children born will be supported. There is also no love for these children – the love that is so critical in the raising of people who will not

be criminals later. Then the whole world will turn into a big zoo where all forms of violence prevail.

2) Adultery is also a cause of the personal and social struggles between those who run the centers of corruption. The detailed account of what goes on in massage parlors and sex homes shows that many other crimes are committed where adultery is practiced.

3) It has been proven by theory and in practice that adultery leads to many contagious sexually transmitted diseases (STD's) many of which are life-threatening. [12](#)

4) Adultery is usually followed by abortion since the women who commit adultery never like to keep the baby. They even think it will be an obstacle to their future practice of adultery.

5) We should not forget that the purpose behind marriage is not satiating our sexual instincts. Rather cooperating in the establishment of a joint life, the achievement of peace of mind, having a companion, raising children and cooperation in many social affairs are also major goals in marriage. These are not possible unless men and women are dedicated to each other through marriage and adultery is forbidden.

Moving Statistics

First, let us look at the statistics related to sexually transmitted diseases (STD) in the United States.

STD Statistics

One in five people in the United States has an STD [13](#). Two-thirds of all STDs occur in people 25 years of age or younger. One in four new STD infections occur in teenagers. Cervical cancer in women is linked to HPV. [14](#) Hepatitis is 100 times more infectious than HIV. [15](#) Two-thirds of Hepatitis B (HBV [16](#)) infections are transmitted sexually. HBV is linked to chronic liver disease, including cirrhosis and liver cancer. STDs, other than HIV, cost about \$8 billion each year to diagnose and treat.

One in five Americans have genital herpes, yet at least 80 percent of those with herpes are unaware they have it. At least one in four Americans will contract an STD at some point in their lives. HPV is the most common STD in the United States. More than 5 million people are infected with HPV each year. Less than half of adults aged 18 to 44 have ever been tested for an STD other than HIV/AIDS. At least 15 percent of all infertile American women are infertile because of tubal damage caused by pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), which is the result of an untreated STD. Next let us look at the world statistics on abortion.

World-Wide Abortion Statistics

Currently 54 countries allow abortion, which is about 61 percent of the world's population [17](#). According to the pro-abortion Center for Reproductive Law and Policy in New York, 97 countries that constitute about

39 percent of the population, have abortion laws that make it illegal. The Alan Guttmacher Institute reports approximately **22** million legal abortions were reported in 1987. It is estimated that between four and nine million were not reported, totaling **26–31** million legal abortions in 1987 alone. There were a total of **10–22** million "clandestine" abortions, bringing the total worldwide figure to **36** and **53** million abortions.

The Effects of Adultery in This World and the Hereafter

So far, we discussed the philosophy behind forbidden adultery and its wicked effects and a brief account of the relevant statistics in the West. Now we shall point out some of the traditions regarding the punishment of adultery in this world and the Hereafter. Imam Ali narrated that he heard God's Prophet say:

فِي الزَّنا سِتُّ خِصالٍ؛ ثَلَاثٌ فِي الدُّنْيا وَثَلَاثٌ فِي الآخِرَةِ. فَأَمَّا اللَّوْائِي فِي الدُّنْيا فَيَذْهَبُ بِنُورِ الْوَجْهِ وَيَقْطَعُ الرِّزْقَ وَيُسْرِعُ الْفَنَاءَ. أَمَّا اللَّوْائِي فِي الآخِرَةِ فَغَضَبُ الرَّبِّ وَسُوءُ الْحِسابِ وَالْدُّخُولُ (أَوْ الْخُلُودُ) فِي النَّارِ.

“There are six bad effects of adultery. Three of them are in this world and the other three are in the Hereafter. The effects of adultery in this world are as follows:

- 1 – Adultery takes away one's sincerity and divine illumination.*
- 2 – Adultery stops the arrival of one's share of daily bread.*
- 3 – Adultery speeds up man's destruction.*

The three effects of adultery in the Hereafter are as follows:

- 1 – Adultery will raise the anger of the Lord.*
- 2 – Adultery will make the Reckoning difficult,*
- 3 – Adultery will result in entry (or remaining forever) in the Fire of Hell.”*

Adultery Brings Poverty and Destruction

God's Prophet said:

الزَّنا يُورِثُ الْفَقْرَ وَيَدْعُ الدِّيارَ بِلَاقِعَ.

“Adultery causes poverty and turns habitations into wasteland.”¹⁸

These are the evil results of adultery. Adultery will also cause sudden death. Imam Baqir narrated that it is written in Imam Ali's book that God's Prophet said:

إِذَا كَثُرَ الزَّيْنَةُ مِنْ بَعْدِي كَثُرَ مَوْتُ الْفُجَاءَةِ.

*“When adultery becomes widespread after me, there will be frequent occurrences of sudden deaths.”*¹⁹

The Final Punishment for Adultery

Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Al-Husayn quoted on the authority of Dho'aib ibn Waqid on the authority of Husayn ibn Zayd that Imam Sadiq quoted on the authority of his forefathers on the authority of the Prophet :

أَلَا وَمَنْ زَنَى بِامْرَأَةٍ مُسْلِمَةٍ أَوْ يَهُودِيَّةٍ أَوْ نَصْرَانِيَّةٍ أَوْ مَجُوسِيَّةٍ، حُرَّةً أَوْ أَمَةً، ثُمَّ لَمْ يَتُوبْ مِنْهُ وَمَاتَ مُصِرّاً عَلَيْهِ فَتَحَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى لَهُ فِي قَبْرِهِ ثَلَاثِمِائَةَ بَابٍ يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا حَيَاتٌ وَعَقَارِبُ وَتُعْبَانُ مِنَ النَّارِ، فَهُوَ يَحْتَرِقُ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ. فَإِذَا بُعِثَ مِنْ قَبْرِهِ تَأَذَّى النَّاسُ مِنْ نَنْنِ رِيحِهِ فَيُعْرِفُ بِذَلِكَ وَيَمَا كَانَ يَعْمَلُ فِي دَارِ الدُّنْيَا حَتَّى يُؤْمَرُ بِهِ إِلَى النَّارِ.

*“Beware! If a man commits adultery with a Muslim, Jewish, Christian or Magian woman– be it a free woman or a slave – and reaches the time of death without repenting, and persists on doing this wicked deed, God will open up three hundred gates into his grave from which snakes, scorpions and large serpents enter into it from the Fire. He will burn until the Resurrection Day. When he is raised from his grave, people will be tormented by his stench. He will be known by that and by his evil deeds in this world, until he will be taken into the Fire.”*²⁰

Yes, this is the punishment for the people who commit adultery. They will be thrown into the Fire of Hell.

Staying Chaste by Remembering Death

Imam Sajjad has expressed ways to remain chaste. The first thing to do is not view forbidden scenes. The second way is to remember death a lot. Now let us look at the following verse:

وَجَاءَتْ سَكْرَةُ الْمَوْتِ بِالْحَقِّ ذَلِكَ مَا كُنْتَ مِنْهُ تَحِيدُ

“And the stupor of death will bring Truth (before his eyes): This was the thing which thou wast trying to escape!” [The Holy Qur’an, Qaf 50: 19]

Death is like a state of being drunk. One will get so anxious when he realizes that he is going to be transferred from this world into the other world. He might even lose his mind realizing that he has to cut off all ties with this world with which he is used to, and he will enter a new world. Then he will be covered with fear, and experience a feeling similar to being drunk.

What is Death

There is a tradition from Imam Sajjad which states that he was asked: “What is death?” He replied:

المَوْتُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِ كَنَزْعِ ثِيَابٍ وَسَخَةِ قَمَلَةٍ وَفَكَ قَيْودٍ وَأَغْلَالٍ ثَقِيلَةٍ وَالْإِسْتِبْدَالَ بِأَفْخَرِ الثِّيَابِ وَأَطْيَبِهَا وَأَوْطَى الْمَرَاقِبِ (وَأَنْسِ الْمَنَازِلِ. وَلِلْكَافِرِ كَخْلَعِ ثِيَابٍ فَآخِرَةٍ وَالنَّقْلَ عَنْ مَنَازِلِ أَنْيَسَةٍ وَالْإِسْتِبْدَالَ بِأَوْسَخِ الثِّيَابِ وَأَخْشَنِهَا وَأَوْحَشِ الْمَنَازِلِ وَأَعْظَمِ الْعَذَابِ).

“For a believer, death is like removing dirty, lice-infested clothes and unfastening heavy chains and locks, in exchange for the most beautiful and best garments, the most comfortable mounts and the most delightful dwellings. However, for an unbeliever, death is like taking off the most magnificent clothes and moving out of loved houses, in exchange for the filthiest and coarsest clothes, the most desolate of dwellings and the greatest punishment.”²¹

Imam Husayn’s Interpretation of Death

Imam Husayn also presented a beautiful interpretation of death for his companions as follows:

صَبْرًا بَنِي الْكِرَامِ! فَمَا الْمَوْتُ إِلَّا قَنْطَرَةٌ تَعْبُرُ بِكُمْ عَنِ الْبُؤْسِ وَالضَّرَاءِ إِلَى الْجَنَانِ الْوَاسِعَةِ وَالنَّعِيمِ الدَّائِمَةِ، فَأَيُّكُمْ يَكْرَهُ أَنْ يَنْتَقِلَ مِنْ سِجْنٍ إِلَى قَصْرِ؟ وَمَا هُوَ لِأَعْدَائِكُمْ إِلَّا كَمَنْ يَنْتَقِلُ مِنْ قَصْرِ إِلَى سِجْنٍ وَعَذَابٍ. إِنَّ أَبِي حَدَّثَنِي عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ أَنَّ الدُّنْيَا سِجْنُ الْمُؤْمِنِ وَجَنَّةُ الْكَافِرِ، وَالْمَوْتُ جِسْرٌ هُوَ لَاءٌ إِلَى جَنَانِهِمْ وَجِسْرٌ هُوَ لَاءٌ إِلَى جَحِيمِهِمْ.

“O children of noble men! Persevere! Death is nothing but a bridge transferring you from hardship and suffering to the vast gardens of Heaven and lasting blessings. Which of you dislikes moving from a prison into a palace? However, death for your enemies is only as one transferred from a palace into a prison and punishment. My father quoted on the authority of God’s Prophet that this world is like a prison for believers and Heaven for unbelievers. Death is a bridge for these (believers) to their Gardens and a bridge for those (unbelievers) to their Fire.”²²

Imam Sadiq’s Interpretation of Death

Imam Sadiq was asked to describe death. He said:

هُوَ لِلْمُؤْمِنِ كَأَطْيَبِ رِيحٍ يَشْمُهُ فَيَنْعَسُ لِطِيبِهِ فَيَنْقَطِعُ التَّعَبُ وَالْأَلَمُ كُلُّهُ عَنْهُ، وَلِلْكَافِرِ كَلْسَعِ الْأَفَاعِي وَلَدَغِ الْعَقَارِبِ وَأَشَدَّ.

“Death for the believer is like breathing in a most pleasant breeze, the fragrance of which makes him

slumber and all tiredness and pain comes to an end, but for the unbeliever it is like the biting of snakes and the sting of scorpions and even more severe.”

Imam Ali said the following about the time of death when the curtains to the Unseen are drawn aside and the angels enter:

فَإِنَّكُمْ لَوْ قَدْ عَايَنْتُمْ مَا قَدْ عَايَنَ مَنْ مَاتَ مِنْكُمْ لَجَزَعْتُمْ وَوَهَلْتُمْ وَسَمِعْتُمْ وَأَطَعْتُمْ وَلَكِنْ مَحْجُوبٌ عَنْكُمْ مَا قَدْ عَايَنُوا وَقَرِيبٌ مَا يُطْرَحُ الْحِجَابُ.

“If you could see what the dead see, you would be distressed and terrified and (as a result) you would hear and obey (God’s words). However, what they see is veiled from you, and soon the veil will be drawn aside for you (and you too will see)!”²³

The Reality of Death

It is often thought that death implies an ending and total destruction while this is in contradiction with what is said in the Holy Qur’an and intellectual reasoning. From the view of the Qur’an death is an existing affair. It is just a form of transferring from one world to another. That is why death has been interpreted to be a return of our soul to the angels in the Qur’an.

Three days in a person’s life are said to be awesome for man in many Islamic traditions. They are the day on which he is born, the day he dies and sees the world beyond death, and the day on which he enters the Reckoning Ordeal and sees decrees that did not exist in this world.”²⁴ God said the following about John the son of Zachariah regarding these three days:

وَسَلَامٌ عَلَيْهِ يَوْمَ وُلِدَ وَيَوْمَ يَمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ يُبْعَثُ حَيًّا

“So Peace on him the day he was born, the day that he dies, and the day that he will be raised up to life (again)!” [The Holy Qur’an, Maryam 19: 15]

It is also said in the Qur’an that Jesus said:

وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيَّ يَوْمَ وُلِدْتُ وَيَوْمَ أَمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ أُبْعَثُ حَيًّا

“So peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day that I shall be raised up to life (again)!” [The Holy Qur’an, Maryam 19:33]

Imam Sadiq said:

ذِكْرُ الْمَوْتِ يُمِيتُ الشَّهَوَاتِ

*“The remembrance of death kills desires.”*²⁵

God’s Prophet said:

اذْكُرُوا هَادِمَ اللَّذَاتِ ... الموتُ

“Remember the destroyer of pleasures.”

He was asked: “O Prophet of God! What is the destroyer of pleasures?”

He said: “Death.”

Imam Sajjad said that remembering death would destroy lust. Man should remind himself of divine chastisement since this will also help destroy lust. It is also important to seek God’s help as the Imam said. If young people remember God and consider Him to be watching over all that they do, they will succeed and be saved. Joseph said:

وَمَا أُبْرِئُ نَفْسِي إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ إِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ رَبِّي إِنَّ رَبِّي غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

“Nor do I absolve my own self (of blame): the (human) soul is certainly prone to evil, unless my Lord do bestow His Mercy: but surely my Lord is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.” [The Holy Qur’an, Yusuf 12:53]

He entrusted himself to God and he was saved.

The Jurisprudents’ Views on the Punishment for Fornication

Islam has established rules and limitations to fight such a socially disastrous act that destroys the foundations of family life. If these rules and limitations are adhered to, then the Muslim society will be pure and there will be security for the family members. This issue has been addressed in the Holy Qur’an:

الرَّانِيَةُ وَالزَّانِي فَاجْلِدُوا كُلَّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا مِئَةَ جَلْدَةٍ وَلَا تَأْخُذْكُمْ بِهِمَا رَأْفَةٌ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ
الْآخِرِ وَلْيَشْهَدْ عَذَابُهُمَا طَائِفَةٌ مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

“The woman and the man guilty of adultery or fornication, – flog each of them with a hundred stripes: Let not compassion move you in their case, in a matter prescribed by God, if ye believe in God and the Last Day: and let a party of the Believers witness their punishment.” [The Holy

Qur'an, al-Nur 24:2]

There are three important instructions in this verse:

- 1 – The punishment for adultery or fornication for both men and women is prescribed.
- 2 – The Qur'an stresses that in interpreting this verse, we should rely on our faith in God and the Hereafter, not on our own feelings and emotions. The punishment should be carried out as stated. There is a tradition from God's Prophet in this regard. According to this tradition, some rulers who have reduced this punishment by one lash will be brought to trial in the Hereafter and asked for the reason they did so. They will say that they did so to have mercy on the people. Then God will tell them: "Were you kinder to them than I am?" Others who have hit an extra lash will be brought to trial in the Hereafter and asked for the reason they did so. They will say that they wanted to force the people to abandon committing sins. Then God will say: "Where you wiser and more knowledgeable than I am?" Then He will order that both of them be thrown into the Fire of Hell.
- 3 – The verse stresses that other believers should be present at the scene of the punishment since the aim of this punishing is not just for those who commit fornication to learn a lesson, rather it is meant to be a lesson for other people, too. This is because moral corruption might spread from the individuals involved to others in the society. As the case has been brought to court, there is no need to protect the honor of those who have committed fornication. They should be introduced to the people and punished in public so that others realize that they should respect the law.

The punishment for fornication has been prescribed to be one hundred lashes for men and women in this verse. This is a general decree. There are exceptions for this rule that we will point out. Certain conditions have been stated to be necessary for the punishment.

- 1 – The first condition is maturity. Thus, this does not apply to children who are not mature.
- 2 – The second condition is freedom of will. This applies if fornication is done with free will. Thus, someone who is raped will not be punished.
- 3 – The third condition is sanity. If the man or woman who commits fornication is insane, this punishment will not apply.[26](#)
- 4 – Imam Khomeini added: "It should also be added that the person who commits fornication should be aware of the punishment for fornication. Else this punishment will not apply."[27](#)

The exception to the above rule is for adultery that is when a married man who can make love with his wife or a married woman who can make love with her husband commits fornication. Another exception to this rule is committing incest. The third exception is committing rape. The punishment for these crimes is death.

Conditions

- 1 – To prove that fornication has been committed four just men, three just men plus two just women, or two just men plus four just women must witness that they have seen it take place.
- 2 – The place of committing fornication where they witness to have seen fornication take place should be the same for all witnesses.
- 3 – The time of committing fornication that they witness to should be the same.
- 4 – All the witnesses should witness in one court meeting.
- 5 – It is not acceptable if the four witnesses witness to have seen four different people commit fornication.
- 6 – It is not acceptable if the four witnesses who witness to have seen fornication take place cannot recognize the woman involved.
- 4 – Whenever three of the witnesses unite in their witnessing but the fourth person does not witness or disagrees with them, then the punishment of ‘Qazf’ – malicious accusation means that someone associates fornication or sodomy with a certain person²⁸ will be decreed for the three who witnessed.²⁹

¹. In the other version it is followed by:” The right of your private part is that you protect it from fornication and guard it against being looked upon.”

². Nur al-Thaqalayn, v.3, p.588.

³. Bozorgsal wa Jawan (Guftar-i-Falsafi), v. 1, p.205, quoted from Andishehayee Freud, p.35, p.70.

⁴. Ibid., v. 1, p. 195, quoted from Zanashoyee wa Akhlaq-i-Islami, pp.46–52.

⁵. Makarim al-Akhlaq, p. 196.

⁶. Ibid. p. 197.

⁷. Mustadrak al-Wasa’il, v.2, p.531.

⁸. Ibid. v.2, p.530.

⁹. Mustadrak al-Wasa’il, v.2, p.530.

¹⁰. Bozorgsal wa Jawan, v. 1, p. 194.

¹¹. Wasa’il al-Shi’ah, v. 14, p.8.

¹². The widespread disease called AIDS is just one example. A report published in the USA Today on May29, 2001 states that although AIDS was initially discovered in 1981, the death toll from it has exceeded 21.8 million people in 2000. The following is according to the Joint United Nations Programme HIV/AIDS UNAIDS “AIDS epidemic update” of December 2001. Twenty years after the first clinical evidence of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome was reported, AIDS has become the most devastating disease humankind ever faced. Since the epidemic began, more than 60 million people have been infected with the virus. HIV/AIDS is now the leading cause of death in sub-Saharan Africa. Worldwide, it is the fourth biggest killer.

At the end of 2001, an estimated 40 million people globally were living with HIV. In many parts of the developing world, the majority of new infections occur in young adults, with young women especially vulnerable. About one-third of those currently living with HIV/AIDS are aged 15–24. Most of them do not know they carry the virus. Many millions more know nothing or too little about HIV to protect themselves against it. Eastern Europe – especially the Russian Federation –

continues to experience the fastest growing epidemic in the world with the number of new HIV infections rising steeply. In 2001, there were an estimated 250,000 new infections in this region, bringing to 1 million the number of people living with HIV. Given the high levels of other sexually transmitted infections, and the high rates of injection drug abuse among young people, the epidemic looks set to grow considerably.

In Asia and the Pacific, an estimated 7.1 million people are now living with HIV/AIDS. The epidemic claimed the lives of 435,000 people in the region in 2001. The apparently low national prevalence rates in many countries in this region are dangerously deceptive. They hide localized epidemics in different areas, including some of the world's most populous countries. There is a serious threat of major, generalized epidemics. But, as Cambodia and Thailand have shown, prompt, large-scale prevention programmes can hold the epidemic at bay. In Cambodia, concerted efforts, driven by strong political leadership and public commitment, lowered HIV prevalence among pregnant women to 2.3% at the end of 2000 – down by almost a third from 1997. AIDS killed 2.3 million Africans in 2001. The estimated 3.4 million new HIV infections in sub-Saharan Africa in the past year mean that 28.1 million Africans now live with the virus. Without adequate treatment and care, most of them will not survive the next decade. Recent antenatal clinic data show that several parts of southern Africa have now joined Botswana with prevalence rates among pregnant women exceeding 30%.

In West Africa, at least five countries are experiencing serious epidemics, with adult HIV prevalence exceeding 5%. However, HIV prevalence among young adults continues to fall in Uganda, while there is evidence that prevalence among young people (especially women) is dropping in some parts of the continent. In the Middle East and North Africa, the number of people living with HIV now totals 440,000. The epidemic's advance is most marked in countries (such as Djibouti, Somalia and the Sudan) that are already experiencing complex emergencies. While HIV prevalence continues to be low in most countries in the region, increasing numbers of HIV infections are being detected in several countries, including the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Pakistan.

A larger epidemic also threatens to develop in the high-income countries, where over 75,000 people acquired HIV in 2001, bringing to 1.5 million the total number of people living with HIV/AIDS. Recent advances in treatment and care in these countries are not being consistently matched with enough progress on the prevention front. New evidence of rising HIV infection rates in North America, parts of Europe and Australia is emerging. Unsafe sex, reflected in outbreaks of sexually transmitted infections, and widespread injection drug use are propelling these epidemics, which at the same time are shifting more towards deprived communities.

An estimated 1.8 million adults and children are living with HIV in Latin American and the Caribbean – a region that is experiencing diverse epidemics. With an average adult HIV prevalence of approximately 2%, the Caribbean is the second-most affected region in the world. But relatively low national HIV prevalence rates in most South and Central American countries mask the fact that the epidemic is already firmly lodged among specific population groups. These countries can avert more extensive epidemics by stepping up their responses now.

[13.](#) American Social Health Association.

[14.](#) Human papilloma virus.

[15.](#) Human Immunodeficiency virus.

[16.](#) Hepatitis B virus.

[17.](#) International Family Planning Perspectives, 16:59, June 1990; USA Today, 8/8/96.

[18.](#) Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, Kitab al-Nikah, Abwab Nikah Mahram, Bab 3, Tradition no. 11, v. 14, p.233.

[19.](#) Ibid. p.231.

[20.](#) Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, Kitab al-Nikah, v. 14, p.233.

[21.](#) Kifayat al-Muwahhidin, v.3, p.203.

[22.](#) Ma'ani al-Akhbar, v.2, p. 196.

[23.](#) Nahj al-Balaghah, Fayz al-Islam, Sermon no.20.

[24.](#) Nur al-Thaqalayn, v.3, p.327.

[25.](#) Majmu'ah Waram, p.268.

[26.](#) Mabani' Takmilat al-Minhaj, p. 169.

[27.](#) Tahrir al-Wasilah, v.2, p.456.

[28.](#) The punishment for 'Qazf' is 80 lashes for a man or a woman.

[29.](#) Mabani' Takmilat al-Minhaj, Tahrir al-Wasilah wa Sharh-i-Lum'ah, Section on Fornication.

The Rights of Deeds

حقوق الأفعال

Right n. 10: The Right of the Prayer

حق الصلاة

فَأَمَّا حَقُّ الصَّلَاةِ فَأَنْ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّهَا وَفَادَةٌ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَأَنَّكَ قَائِمٌ بِهَا بَيْنَ يَدَيِ اللَّهِ، فَإِذَا عَلِمْتَ ذَلِكَ كُنْتَ خَلِيقًا أَنْ تَقُومَ فِيهَا مَقَامَ الدَّلِيلِ الرَّاعِبِ الرَّاهِبِ الْخَائِفِ الرَّاجِي الْمُسْكِنِ الْمُتَضَرِّعِ الْمُعْظَمِ مَنْ قَامَ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ بِالسُّكُونِ وَالْإِطْرَاقِ وَخُشُوعِ الْأَطْرَافِ وَلَيْنِ الْجَنَاحِ وَحُسْنِ الْمُنَاجَاةِ لَهُ فِي نَفْسِهِ وَالطَّلَبِ إِلَيْهِ فِي فَكَكَ رَقَبَتِكَ الَّتِي أَحَاطَتْ بِهِ خَطِيئَتُكَ وَاسْتَهْلَكَتْهَا ذُنُوبُكَ. وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

Then the right of your ritual prayer is that you should know that it is an arrival at the threshold of God and that through it you are standing before God. And when you realize that, then you will stand in the station of him who is lowly, vile, beseeching, trembling, hopeful, fearful, and abased.

And you will magnify Him Who is before you through stillness, and bowing of the head,¹ and humbleness of the limbs, and yielding of the wing,² and by saying the best supplications to Him in yourself and beseeching Him to release (from punishment) your neck that is encompassed by your offenses and destroyed by your sins. And there is no power but in God.

Imam Sajjad first stresses the importance of prayer since it is the means by which we can appear at the threshold of God. It is the means with which we can migrate from the material world, put all that entertains us behind, attend to the divine grandeur, leave the darkness of this world and enter the world of brightness. This migration should be according to the requirements stated by the Imam .

Praying is the Greatest Form of Worship

Islam has established the prayer as the most important form of worship, and has made especial recommendations to Muslims regarding it. Islam has made it incumbent upon boys and girls to pray five times each day from the time they reach adolescence. They are supposed to make up any prayers that they may skip for any excuse. Especial times are also specified for saying the prayers.

Times of the Prayer

There are verses in the Holy Qur'an that specify the times of the prayer. Consider the following verse in this regard:

وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ طَرَفَيِ النَّهَارِ وَزُلْفًا مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ ذَلِكَ ذِكْرَى لِلذَّاكِرِينَ

“And establish regular prayers at the two ends of the day and at the approaches of the night: For those things, that are good remove those that are evil: Be that the word of remembrance to those who remember (their Lord).” [The Holy Qur'an, Hud 11:114]

This verse refers to the morning, evening and night prayers. Also, consider the following verse:

أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِدُلُوكِ الشَّمْسِ إِلَى غَسَقِ اللَّيْلِ وَقُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ إِنَّ قُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ كَانَ مَشْهُودًا

“Establish regular prayers – at the sun's decline till the darkness of the night, and the morning prayer and reading: for the prayer and reading in the morning carry their testimony.” [The Holy Qur'an, Bani Israil 17:78]

This verse refers to all the five daily prayers. Also, consider the following verse:

حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ وَالصَّلَاةِ الْوُسْطَى وَقُومُوا لِلَّهِ قَانِتِينَ

“Guard strictly your (habit of) prayers, especially the Middle Prayer; and stand before God in a devout (frame of mind).” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2:238]

This verse refers to the noon and afternoon prayers.

The Most Hopeful Verse in the Qur'an

There is a tradition in Majma UI-Bayan which says: “One day Imam Ali looked at the people and asked: Do you know which verse of the Holy Qur'an is the most hopeful one? Some people said it was the

following verse:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ افْتَرَىٰ إِثْمًا عَظِيمًا

“God forgiveth not that partners should be set up with Him; but He forgiveth anything else, to whom He pleaseth; to set up partners with God is to devise a sin most heinous indeed.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Nisaa 4:48]

The Imam said no. Others said it was the following verse:

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا أَوْ يَظْلِمْ نَفْسَهُ ثُمَّ يَسْتَغْفِرِ اللَّهَ يَجِدِ اللَّهَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا

“If anyone does evil or wrongs his own soul but afterwards seeks God's forgiveness, he will find God Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Nisaa 4:110]

Again, Imam Ali said: No, that is not what I mean. Others said it was the following verse:

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِنْ رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

“Say: “O my Servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of God: for God forgives all sins: for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Zumar 39:53]

Again, Imam Ali said no. Then the people asked him which verse it was. Imam Ali said: I heard God’s Prophet say that the most hopeful verse is:[3](#)

وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ طَرَفَيِ النَّهَارِ وَزُلْفًا مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ ذَلِكَ ذِكْرَىٰ لِلذَّاكِرِينَ

“And establish regular prayers at the two ends of the day and at the approaches of the night: For those things that are good remove those that are evil: Be that the word of remembrance to those who remember (their Lord).” [The Holy Qur’an, Hud 11:114]

Moses was Appointed to Establish Prayers

Now consider the following verse which shows that Moses was appointed to establish regular prayers.

وَأَنَا اخْتَرْتُكَ فَاسْتَمِعْ لِمَا يُوحَىٰ إِنَّنِي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي

“I have chosen thee: listen, then, to the inspiration (sent to thee). Verily, I am God: There is no god but I: So serve thou Me (only), and establish regular prayer for celebrating My praise.” [The Holy Qur’an, Ta-Ha 20: 13–14]

The first point mentioned in this verse is the principle of the Unity of God that is the most important part of the call of the Prophets. The next point mentioned is God’s worshipping. Then the instruction to establish regular prayers that is the most important link between the creatures and their Creator is stressed. Praying is the most effective way not to forget God. There is no doubt that there are many factors in man’s life that distract him from God.

This verse clarifies that the appointment of Moses started with a mission to establish regular prayers. Praying several times a day is an effective means to fight this negligence. When man wakes up from his sleep that makes him forget everything in this world, and wants to start his daily activities, God has made it incumbent upon him to start his day with praying. This is done so that he can cleanse his heart and soul with God’s remembrance.

Once man is delved into his daily activities and works all morning long, he hears the call to the prayer at noon that invites him to hurry up to the prayer. He stands at the threshold of the Lord. By saying prayers and supplications, he eliminates any filth that may have covered up his soul in the morning. He does the same thing again in the evening and at night, and remembers God in his soul. God has stressed that the purpose for the prayer is to remember Him. In another verse, He has stated that His remembrance is the only means of the purification of our hearts:

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

“Those who believe, and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of God: for without doubt in the remembrance of God do hearts find satisfaction.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Ra’d 13:28]

Remember God in All Circumstances

The importance of remembering God in all circumstances is expressed in the following verse:

فَإِذَا قَضَيْتُمُ الصَّلَاةَ فَادْكُرُوا اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِكُمْ فَإِذَا اطْمَأْنَنْتُمْ فَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ كَانَتْ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ كِتَابًا مَّوْقُوتًا

“When ye pass (congregational) prayers, celebrate God’s praises, standing, sitting down, or lying down on your sides; but when ye are free from danger, set up regular prayers: for such prayers are enjoined on believers at stated times.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Nisaa 4: 103]

The statement “celebrate God’s praises, standing, sitting down, or lying down on your sides” may refer to the various positions in a battle. This is an important Islamic instruction not to neglect God under any circumstances. The above verse has been interpreted in many traditions to refer to the conditions of praying for the ill.” [4](#)

The Sayings of Imam Muhammad Ghazali

The main spirit of the prayer is humbleness and the presence of our heart during the prayer since the main goal of the prayer is to be sincere with God, and to remember the Almighty God with ultimate submission. God the Almighty said: “Establish the prayer in order to remember Me.” God’s Prophet said: “Pray as if you are saying farewell.”

This implies that one must say farewell to his own selfish desires, and everything other than God through praying. One must dedicate his full attention to his prayer.[5](#) Thus, we realize the importance placed on praying by the Qur’an and the philosophy behind it.

True Prayer

The late Fayz wrote in Al-Haqa’iq: “The true spirit of prayer is due to the following:

- 1) Sincere presence of the mind.
- 2) True understanding.
- 3) Humbleness.
- 4) Fear of the Majesty of God.
- 5) Hope in the Forgiveness of God.
- 6) Being shy of God.”

Sincere Presence of Mind

Determination is a very important factor in prayer. It can result in sincere presence of the mind during the prayer. When we are more determined to do something, our mind will be better directed at that affair. We must believe that the life of the Hereafter is preferable to that of this world since it is eternal and free from trouble as we read in the following verse:

وَمَا هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَهُوٌّ وَلَعِبٌ وَإِنَّ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ لَهِيَ الْحَيَوَانُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ

“What is the life of this world but amusement and play? But verily the Home in the Hereafter, – that is life indeed, if they but knew.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Ankabut 29:64]

We read in another place in the Holy Qur’an:

“But the Hereafter is better and more enduring.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-A’la 87: 17]

We cannot attain the life of the Hereafter except through praying. Praying is the means of approaching God. When this is combined with the belief that this world is really nothing, then we can find a sincere presence of the mind.

True Understanding

The next important factor after sincere presence of the mind is true understanding of what is being said. If one pays attention to the meaning of what he says, then he will ignore the affairs of this world, and all bothering thoughts during the prayer will leave him alone.

We can compare the situation of one who is praying and is bombarded with bothering thoughts with someone who is trying to rest and think under the shade of a tree, but is disturbed by the sounds of various birds. He picks up a stick and tries to drive them away, but the birds come back again.

Humbleness

Humbleness is a spiritual state that leads to recognition of the Grandeur and Majesty of God. This recognition is the foundation of faith. It also leads to the recognition of one’s smallness and his being subject to divine plans. The recognition of the above leads to a state of humbleness in which bowing to God, our Creator, is more meaningful.

Fear of the Majesty of God

Fear of the Majesty of God is a state of mind for man that is derived from the recognition of God’s endless power and His Will’s influence on everything in the universe. The more we recognize God’s power and influence, the more we fear His Majesty. The late scholar Naraghi has also included sincerity and said: “Sincerity, intention to get closer to God and not being hypocritical are also important in this issue.”^{[6](#)}

Hope in the Forgiveness of God

This hope is derived from the recognition of the source of Mercy of God. Once you notice God’s endless nobility and kindness, and really believe in God’s promise to reward us with Heaven for praying, then you will become hopeful of the Forgiveness of God.

Being Shy of God

Once one realizes that he is unable to fulfill God's rights that are incumbent upon him, has faults and weaknesses which constantly pull him towards the luxuries of this life, and realizes that God is Majestic and knows everything that goes on within him, then he becomes shy of God.⁷ We quoted the true aspects of prayer as mentioned by Fayz Kashani so far. Now let us quote what Hajj Mirza Javad Malaki Tabrizi said in this regard.

He refers to the writings of Shahide Awwal⁸ and says: "The Shahid compiled the one thousand obligatory points about the prayer in one book, and compiled the three thousand recommended points about prayer in another book." Then he points out an important philosophy behind the prayer that is expressed in the following verse:

اَتْلُ مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَصْنَعُونَ

"Recite what is sent of the Book by inspiration to thee, and establish regular Prayer: for Prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds; and remembrance of God is the greatest (thing in life) without doubt. And God knows the (deeds) that ye do." [The Holy Qur'an, al-Ankabut 29:45]

The Qur'an has clearly stated that prayer restrains us from engaging in shameful and unjust deeds. If our praying does not serve this purpose, we can conclude that we are praying out of hypocrisy. Even the slightest bit of sincere attention to the true spirit of the prayer will restrain man from shameful and unjust deeds.⁹

As expressed by this late scholar, there is no other issue in Islam about which there are as many points as there are about praying. The issue of prayer always takes up the biggest chapters in books on traditions and jurisprudence. The description of Imam Sajjad's illuminating words about the prayer presented here are but a few drops of the sea! Praying also has some personal, moral and social effects, which we shall briefly discuss here.

The Personal Effects of Praying

One of the personal effects of praying five times each day and appearing at the threshold of God is the strengthening of our spiritual powers and determination. Thus, we can stand up against the difficulties that we encounter just like a mountain. Another personal effect of praying is the cleansing of our heart from the filthiness of this material world since we separate ourselves from this material world and travel into the divine world each time we pray. Thus, we can attain peace of mind. It has been recorded that whenever the Prophet got troubled with the events that happened, he sought refuge in praying a lot.

Since praying is a state of meeting the Lord, he would forget his sorrow once he rushed to visit God. He said: “Once one of you stands up to pray and says supplications to his Lord, he knows that there is no distance between him and his Lord. God hears his prayers, responds to his call and fulfills his prayer.”¹⁰ Another personal effect of praying is that it will help us get rid of the selfishness and haughtiness we might experience due to our misunderstandings when we get wealth or position. This is a point of human perfection for which we strive. The late Imam Khomeini said the following about the secrets behind standing, bowing down and prostrating in prayer:

الصَّلَاةُ قُرْبَانُ كُلِّ تَقِيٍّ

“Prayer is a pious believer’s means of approach (to God).”

It is dependant on two acts – one of which is the basis of the other. The first prerequisite is to abandon selfishness – that is true piety. The second prerequisite is to seek the truth and to seek God. This is true ascension and approach to God. That is why we read in the traditions that “praying is the means of approaching God for every pious man.” These prerequisite states are gradually achieved in the three positions of standing up, bowing down and prostrating in prayer.

While standing up, we realize God the Absolute exists and is everlasting. Then we forget our selfishness. While bowing down and seeing the positions of the Names and Characteristics of God, we forget our own selfishness. When prostrating we totally abandon our selfishness, and absolutely submit to and seek God. All the positions and ranks of those who trot in His way are derived from the ranks of these three positions.”¹¹ Another personal effect of praying is that one who prays gets encouraged to improve himself and attain the highest degree of noble characteristics. He tries to eliminate all his moral wickedness. That is why the Holy Qur’an praises the believers for the good characteristics that they attain as we read in the following verses:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ

“The believers must (eventually) win through – those who humble themselves in their prayers.”

[The Holy Qur’an, al-Muminun 23: 1-2]

This winning has been interpreted to imply both worldly gains and winning in the Hereafter. Worldly gains imply survival, richness and honor. Winning in the Hereafter implies the following four:

- 1) Lasting without ever being destroyed¹²
- 2) Richness without any poverty
- 3) Honor without any humiliation
- 4) Knowledge without any ignorance

Believers are recognized by being humble in these verses. This implies that their praying is not just a series of meaningless words and actions; rather it is accompanied by full attention to God – such an attention with which they cut off themselves from others than Him.

Factors Which Yield Humbleness

The first factor that yields humbleness is recognition of the Majesty of God and the minuteness of the world. Imam Ali has indicated in *Nahjul Balaghah* that one of the signs of the pious people is:

عَظُمَ الْخَالِقُ فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ فَصَغُرَ مَا دُونَهُ فِي أَعْيُنِهِمْ.

*“Once the Creator was recognized to be Majestic by them, everything else seemed small to them.”*¹³

The second important factor that will result in humbleness is to direct one’s attention to his prayer and not pay any attention to various other issues. The third important factor is the place where one prays. We should choose a place to pray that is lacking luxury items. That is why it is not recommended to pray in front of pictures, sculptures, open doors or where people cross. Another important factor for becoming humble is to avoid committing sins. It is also important to be well familiar with the meaning of what we say in prayer and understand the philosophy behind the movements. It helps to perform the initial or post-prayer recommendable acts. One must practice praying just like any other thing in order to become apt at it and be careful not to forget to pray.¹⁴

The Social Effects of Praying

Since praying fosters a sense of social responsibility, it has important social effects. There is no doubt that man is created to be a sociable creature. The tendency to live in a group is inherent in man. Living alone bothers us. The worst form of punishment for man is to imprison him in an individual cell. Man has two kinds of responsibilities – that is individual and social responsibility. The Qur’an says:

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ رَهِينَةٌ

“Every soul will be (held) in pledge for its deeds.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Muddath’thir 74:38]

We also read the following verse in the Holy Qur’an:

مَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِنْ نَفْسِكَ وَأَرْسَلْنَاكَ لِلنَّاسِ رَسُولًا وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا

“Whatever good, (O man!) happens to thee is from God; but whatever evil happens to thee, is

from thy (own) soul. And We have sent thee as an Apostle to (instruct) mankind. And enough is God for a witness.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Nisaa 4:79]

When we consider social responsibility, it is not the individual that is important. The society is important, and we must consider what social responsibility individuals have. The Noble Prophet said:

كُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ.

“Each one of you is a ruler, and each one of you is responsible for his subjects.”

One of the most important effects of praying is that it will foster the sense of social responsibility. That is why there is a distinction made in Islam between praying individually and attending congregational prayers. The reward for these two is different. Attending congregational prayers is highly recommended in Islam. Islam has decreed a socio-religious Friday prayer that is held each week, where all the Muslims stand to pray side by side.

The prayer leader delivers his sermons and expresses the social problems of the day for all the people to know. Then they can think of solutions. When all the Muslims stand side by side, their majesty is demonstrated. This will prevent their enemies from plotting against them. Then the Muslims can form an independent nation, rely on themselves and benefit from their power and honor. It is recommendable for the lines of the people attending the congregational prayers to be densely formed and orderly.

It is even more important to note that everyone stands there side by side regardless of his position, wealth, race or nationality, and shakes hands with those around him after the prayers. Thus, the true spirit of social equality is fostered, and class differences that always hinder freedom-loving people are eliminated.

Love and sincerity are substituted for hate and animosity. Attending the congregational prayers also helps the people become aware of each other's conditions. Should one not attend the prayers one week, others will miss him, and ask what has happened to him. They will then do their best to help resolve his problems. Generally, the prayer unites the whole nation of Islam and establishes an independent society.

The Moral Effects of Praying

Man cannot approach God unless he eliminates his wicked traits and characteristics and prepares himself for the development of noble characteristics. The Qur'an says:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ تَزَكَّى وَذَكَرَ اسْمَ رَبِّهِ فَصَلَّى

“But those will prosper who purify themselves and glorify the name of their Guardian-Lord, and (lift their hearts) in prayer.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-A’la 87: 14–15]

Praying is the means of morally purifying oneself. Continued praying will help educate us in a good moral way, and restrains us from shameful deeds. We read in the Holy Qur’an:

إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ

“...For Prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds...” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Ankabut 29:45]

Praying will uproot wickedness from man, and plant nobilities instead. The following verses stress this very point:

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ خُلِقَ هَلُوعًا إِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ جَزُوعًا وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الْخَيْرُ مَنُوعًا الْأَمْصِلِينَ الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَى صَلَاتِهِمْ دَائِمُونَ

“Truly man was created very impatient – fretful when evil touches him, and niggardly when good reaches him. Not so those devoted to Prayer – those who remain steadfast to their prayer.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Ma’arij 70: 19–23]

These verses clearly demonstrate the effect of praying in the elimination of impatience, fretfulness and niggardliness from our souls. Those who are devoted to praying can rid themselves of these negative traits. It is narrated in Jami’ as-Sadat by Naraghi that Imam Ali was questioned about the meaning of prostrations in the prayer.

He replied: “The first prostration means: O’ God! You created us from the dirt. When we raise our head it means: And You brought us out of the dirt. The second prostration means: You will return us to the dirt. And when we again raise our heads it means: And You will bring us out of the dirt again.”¹⁵ It is obvious that if one really considers these points, he would try to improve himself.

Praying and the Obstacles to Perfection

Sheikh Mahmood Shabastari has beautifully expressed the obstacles to the acceptance of our prayers by God in a poetic fashion. To make it short, he states the following four conditions:

- 1) Cleansing one’s self from physical filth.
- 2) Purification of one’s self from sins.
- 3) Freeing one’s self from wicked characteristics.
- 4) Total elimination of other than God in our inner thoughts.

Once one attains these four conditions, he can hope for his prayers to be accepted.

Now that we have briefly expressed the importance of praying, its philosophy, and its personal, social and moral effects, let us consider how Imam Sajjad practically taught his followers about the importance of praying. There were even times when his close relatives felt sorry for him due to his extended prayers.

It is recorded in Bihar ul-Anwar by Allameh Majlesi that once Fatima, the daughter of Imam Husayn went to see Jabir ibn Abdullah and said: "O Companion of God's Prophet! We have rights incumbent upon you. One of these rights is that if you see one of us endangering his life due to worshipping too much you must remind him and ask him to guard himself. O Jabir! Ali ibn Al-Husayn [16](#) has prayed so much that his forehead's skin has hardened, his feet have swollen and his body has lost all the flesh on it. Please ask him to save himself."

Jabir went to see the Imam and asked permission to enter. When he entered, he saw that the Imam was sitting in his praying niche. The Imam stood up and had Jabir sit next to himself, and asked Jabir about his health. Jabir said: "Is it not true that God has created Heaven for you and Hell for your enemies? Then why do you pray so much?"

The Imam replied: "O Companion of God's Prophet! Do you know that God forgave all of the past and future sins of the Prophet, but he still did not stop worshipping? He worshipped so much that his blessed feet became swollen. When told that his past and future sins were forgiven he replied: Should I not be grateful for that?"

Then Jabir realized that his question did not have any effect on the state of affairs. He said: "You are from among the people through whom God fends off the calamities and protects the heavens and the Earth." Then Imam Sajjad said: "I will follow in my father's and my grandfather's footsteps until I meet them." Jabir said: "I have not seen anyone like Ali ibn al-Husayn among the descendants of the Prophets." [17](#)

Tavoos Faqih said: "I saw Imam Sajjad circumambulating the House of God and worshipping God from after the night prayer until dawn. When he looked around and saw that there were few people left who were circumambulating, he looked up to the heavens and said: "O Lord! The stars remaining are few, and are about to set. The eyes have been closed to sleep. However, the gates of your Mercy to those who ask are still open. O Lord! I have come to the door of your House to encompass me with your Mercy, to forgive me, and to show me the face of my grandfather Muhammad in the Hereafter."

Then the Imam cried and said: "I swear by your Majesty and Honor! I do not intend to oppose you by sinning. I am not ignorant of You and your chastisement when sinning. I do not want to expose myself to your chastisement. However, my Self wants to fool me, and your veil of Mercy helps it. O Lord! Who will save me from your chastisement? O Lord! What shall I hold on to if you cut off your rope of saving from me?"

Woe to me! I will be brought to your threshold in the Hereafter. Those whose load is light shall be told to go. Moreover, those whose load is heavy shall be told to stay. I do not know whether I will be from among those whose load is light and are told to go. Or will my heavy load force me to stay there? O Lord! The older I get, the more my mistakes become. Now it is time for me to repent. O My Ultimate desire! Will you burn me in the Fire? Where then is my hope? What will then happen to my friendship? I have come to You with my wicked deeds. There is no one else with crimes like those of mine.”

Then he cried and prostrated on the ground. He felt good. I went to him and cried. My tears dropped on his face. Then he suddenly said: “Who has prevented me from the remembrance of my Lord?” Then I replied: “O Grandson of the Prophet! That is I. I am Tavoos. Why are you doing this? Why do you cry and moan so much? We feel obliged to follow you. O Sir! Your father was such a noble man. Your mother was the Blessed Fatima . Your grandfather was God’s Prophet .” Then Imam Sajjad said: “O Tavoos! Forget about the father, the mother or the grandfather. God has created the Heaven for those who obey Him whether they are a servant or a Tunisian slave. God has created Hell for those who commit sins – even if they are masters from the Quraysh tribe. Have you not heard God say?

فَإِذَا نُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَلَا أَنْسَابَ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَلَا يَتَسَاءَلُونَ

“Then when the Trumpet is blown, there will be no more relationships between them that Day, nor will one ask after another!” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Mu’minun 23: 101][¹⁸](#)

Praying and the Forgiveness of Sins

At the end Imam Sajjad said: “...and by saying the best supplications to Him by yourself and beseeching Him to save you from the responsibilities which rest on your shoulders – surrounded by your faults and exhausted by your sins.” You should ask God to save you and forgive your sins that have overtaken you and will finally destroy you. We said earlier that praying is effective in restraining us from committing sins and wicked deeds. Now let us see how the Prophet of God represents praying as a means of forgiveness of our sins. Abi Basir quoted on the authority of Imam Baqir , on the authority of God’s Prophet :

لَوْ كَانَ عَلَى بَابِ دَارٍ أَحَدُكُمْ نَهْرٌ وَاغْتَسَلَ فِي كُلِّ يَوْمٍ مِنْهُ خَمْسَ مَرَّاتٍ أَكَانَ يَبْقَى فِي جَسَدِهِ مِنَ الدَّرَنِ شَيْءٌ؟ (قلت: لا. قال) فَإِنَّ مَثَلَ الصَّلَاةِ كَمَثَلِ النَّهْرِ الْجَارِي؛ كُلَّمَا صَلَّى صَلَاةً كَفَّرَتْ مَا بَيْنَهُمَا مِنَ الذُّنُوبِ

“If there was a flowing river right beside your house in which you washed yourself five times each day, would any dirt remain on your bodies?” He was told: “No.” Then he added: “Praying is similar to this river. Whenever you pray the sins you committed between the last time you prayed and this time will all be washed off.”[¹⁹](#)

If the person who prays fulfills all the required conditions, he will then surely be forgiven and saved from punishment as the Prophet said. The Commander of the Faithful also said the following that is recorded in *Nahjul Balaghah*:

He advised his companions as follows:

تَعَاهَدُوا أَمْرَ الصَّلَاةِ وَحَافِظُوا عَلَيْهَا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا مِنْهَا وَتَقَرَّبُوا بِهَا فَإِنَّهَا كَانَتْ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ كِتَابًا مَوْقُوتًا. أَلَا تَسْمَعُونَ إِلَى جَوَابِ أَهْلِ النَّارِ حِينَ سُئِلُوا: مَا سَلَكَكُمْ فِي سَقَرٍ؟ قَالُوا لَمْ نَكُ مِنَ الْمُصَلِّينَ. وَإِنَّهَا لَتَحُطُّ الذُّنُوبَ حَطَّ الْوَرَقِ وَتُطْلَقُهَا إِطْلَاقَ الرَّبْقِ.

*“Adhere to praying and guard it. Pray a lot and seek nearness to God through it, for prayer **“..is indeed a timed prescription for the believers”(4: 103). Have you not heard the answer of the residents of Hell when they are asked: “What drew you into Hell”? They will answer, ‘We were not of those who prayed’”(74:42-43). Indeed, prayer sheds sins just as trees shed their leaves, and it sets loose (a person’s) sins just as bonds are let loose.”***

1. And fix your eyes looking down to the ground. In the other version it is followed by: “You will approach the praye with humbleness, deep from your heart and you will perform it according to its bounds and its rights”. Then it continues.
2. Being humble.
3. Majma’ al-Bayan, v.5, p.201.
4. Tafsir Namuneh, v.4, pp. 104–105.
5. Kimiyaye Sa’adat, v. 1, pp. 165–166.
6. Ilm-i-Akhlaq-i-Islami, v.3, p.403.
7. Al-Haqa’iq, p.223.
8. Al-Shahid al-Awwal, Faqih al-Sarbidaran.
9. Translation and Commentary on Risalat al-Huquq, Sepihri, p.92, quoted from Asrar al-Salat, pp.176–177.
10. Sharh Risalat al-Huquq, Ghopanchi, v. 1, p.292.
11. Adab-i-Namaz, p.350.
12. Being eternal.
13. Nahj al-Balaghah, Fayz al-Islam, Sermon no. 104.
14. Tafsir-i-Namunah, v. 14, pp.204–205.
15. Ilm-i-Akhlaq-i-Islami, v.3, p.442.
16. Imam Sajjad .
17. Sharh-i-Risalat al-Huquq, Ghopanchi, v. 1, p.305.
18. Bihar al-Anwar, v.46, pp.81–82.
19. Wasa’il al-Shi’ah, v.3, p.7, Tradition no.3.

Right n. 11: The Right of Fasting

حق الصوم

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ الصَّوْمِ فَأَنْ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّهُ حِجَابٌ ضَرَبَهُ اللَّهُ عَلَى لِسَانِكَ وَسَمْعِكَ وَبَصَرِكَ وَفَرْجِكَ وَبَطْنِكَ لِيَسْتَرِكَ بِهِ مِنَ النَّارِ وَهَكَذَا جَاءَ فِي الْحَدِيثِ «الصَّوْمُ جُنَّةٌ مِنَ النَّارِ» فَإِنْ سَكَنْتَ أَطْرَافَكَ فِي حَبَبَتِهَا رَجَوْتَ أَنْ تَكُونَ مَحْجُوبًا. وَإِنْ أَنْتَ تَرَكْتَهَا تَضْطَرِبُ فِي حِجَابِهَا وَتَرْفَعُ جَنَابَاتِ الْحِجَابِ فَتُطْلِعُ إِلَى مَا لَيْسَ لَهَا بِالنَّظَرِ الدَّاعِيَةِ لِلشَّهْوَةِ وَالْقُوَّةِ الْخَارِجَةِ عَنْ حَدِّ التَّقْيَةِ لِلَّهِ لَمْ تَأْمَنْ أَنْ تَخْرِقَ الْحِجَابَ وَتَخْرُجَ مِنْهُ. وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ.

And the right of fasting is that you should know it is a veil, which God has set up over your tongue, your hearing and your sight, your private parts and your stomach, to protect you from the Fire. This meaning is asserted in the tradition: “Fasting is a shield against the Fire.” Thus if your parts become tranquil within the veil of fasting, you have hopes of being protected.¹ But if you leave them agitated behind the veil and let them lift the sides of the veil, so they look at things that are not lawful for them to look at that incite lust and powers that are beyond the limits of being God-fearing, you will not be safe from tearing through the veil and coming out of it. And there is no power but in God.

The Philosophy behind Fasting

Since sins are usually committed via the tongue, the eyes, the ears, the stomach or the unleashing of sexual desires, Imam Sajjad considers the philosophy behind fasting to be restraining oneself from committing sins. The Imam considers fasting to provide a veil over our body parts that will prevent them from engaging in sin. The Qur'an expresses the same philosophy behind fasting in the following verse:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

“O’ ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may (learn) self-restraint.” [The Holy Qur’an, al--Baqarah 2: 183]

We see that self-restraint has been stated to be the main reason behind fasting. Fasting implies self-restraint. It has also been used for abstaining from talking as we read in the following verse in which the Blessed Mary has been ordered not to talk in the form of a fast:

فَكُلِّي وَاشْرَبِي وَقَرِّي عَيْنًا فَإِمَّا تَرِينِ مِنَ الْبَشَرِ أَحَدًا فَقُولِي إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لِلرَّحْمَنِ صَوْمًا فَلَنْ أَكَلِمَ الْيَوْمَ إِنْسِيًّا

"So eat and drink and cool (thine) eye. And if thou dost see any man, say, 'I have vowed a fast to (God) Most Gracious, and this day will I enter into no talk with any human being'" [The Holy Qur'an, Maryam 19:26]

Fasting before Islam

From the verse Baqarah 2: 183 that was cited above we can also conclude that fasting is not limited to Muslims and it has been prescribed for those before us. It is most probable that the similarity is only in its prescription for the religions that came before Islam, not in its number of days or time of fasting.

Fasting in the Old Testament

We read the following in the Old Testament regarding fasting:

وَكَانَ هُنَاكَ عِنْدَ الرَّبِّ أَرْبَعِينَ نَهَارًا وَأَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً لَمْ يَأْكُلْ خُبْزًا وَلَمْ يَشْرَبْ مَاءً. فَكَتَبَ عَلَى اللُّوحَيْنِ كَلِمَاتِ الْعَهْدِ الْكَلِمَاتِ الْعَشْرَ.

“And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.” ² [The Old Testament, Exodus 34:28]

Fasting in the New Testament

We read the following in the New Testament regarding fasting:

ثُمَّ أَصْعَدَ يَسُوعُ إِلَى الْبَرِّيَّةِ مِنَ الرُّوحِ لِيُجَرَّبَ مِنْ إِبْلِيسَ. فَبَعْدَ مَا صَامَ أَرْبَعِينَ نَهَارًا وَأَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً جَاعَ آخِرًا.

“Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.” [The New Testament, Matthew 4: 1–2]

Fasting of the Disciples

We read the following in the New Testament regarding fasting by the disciples:

وَقَالُوا لَهُ: «لِمَاذَا يَصُومُ تَلَامِيذُ يُوْحَنَّا كَثِيرًا وَيُقَدِّمُونَ طِلْبَاتٍ وَكَذَلِكَ تَلَامِيذُ الْفَرِيسِيِّينَ أَيْضًا وَأَمَّا تَلَامِيذُكَ فَيَأْكُلُونَ وَيَشْرَبُونَ؟» فَقَالَ لَهُمْ: «أَتَقْدِرُونَ أَنْ تَجْعَلُوا بَنِي الْعُرْسِ يَصُومُونَ مَا دَامَ الْعَرِيسُ مَعَهُمْ؟ وَلَكِنْ سَتَأْتِي أَيَّامٌ حِينَ يُرْفَعُ الْعَرِيسُ عَنْهُمْ فَحِينَئِذٍ يَصُومُونَ فِي تِلْكَ الْأَيَّامِ

“And they said unto him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink? And he said unto them, Can ye make the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.” ³ [Luke, 5:33–35]

From the above we can conclude that they fasted too. The number forty is also expressed, but it is not clear how they fasted.⁴

The Period of Fasting in the Qur'an

Consider the following verse of the Holy Qur'an:

أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ فَمَن كَانَ مِنكُم مَّرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامُ مِسْكِينٍ فَمَن تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ وَأَن تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

“(Fasting) for a fixed number of days; but if any of you is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed number (should be made up) from days later. For those who can do it (with hardship), is a ransom, the feeding of one that is indigent. But he that will give more, of his own free will, – it is better for him. And it is better for you that ye fast, if ye only knew.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2: 184]

There are two opinions regarding the meaning of “a fixed number of days.” Some consider it to mean three days from each month. Ibn `Abbas adds the fasting on the day of Ashura⁵ to it. Some consider this fasting to be recommended. Others consider it to be obligatory.

Other commentators have interpreted this to refer to the month of Ramadan.⁶ The majority of the interpreters of the Holy Qur'an accept this view. They say that God briefly expresses fasting to be for one or two days, and then says it is for a fixed number of days, that is the month of Ramadan. We can also understand from this verse that fasting is obligatory for those who are not ill or on a journey. When ill or on a journey, one should not fast. However, one should compensate by feeding the poor. Abdul Rahman quoted on the authority of God's Prophet :

الصَّائِمُ فِي السَّفَرِ كَالْمُفْطِرِ فِي الْحَضَرِ.

“One who fasts while on a journey is like one who breaks his fast while he is at home.”⁷

It has been narrated on the authority of Imam Sadiq :

الصَّائِمُ فِي شَهْرِ رَمَضَانَ فِي السَّفَرِ كَالْمُفْطِرِ فِيهِ فِي الْحَضَرِ.

“One who fasts during the month of Ramadan while he is on a journey is like one who is at home and breaks his fast.”⁸

In the interpretation of the above verse, we read in Majma' al-Bayan: Ayashi quoted Muhammad ibn

Muslim on the authority of Imam Sadiq that the Prophet never fasted while on a journey. Then this verse was revealed one day at noon when they were in a place called Kara ul-Ghameem. The Prophet asked for a bowl of water, drank some, and ordered the people to drink too. Some of the people said: “It is near the end of the day. It is better to complete our fast.” Then the Prophet called them sinners. They were called sinners until the time of the death of the Prophet .

The Meaning of the Word ‘Ramadan’

The root of the word ‘Ramadan’ in Arabic is ‘ramaz’ that implies strong shining of the rays of the Sun on pebbles. The Arabs named the various months according to the conditions at the time in which they occurred. The month of fasting was coincident with the peak of the heat. Another account states that Ramadan is one of the Names of God. That is why we are instructed not to refer to the month of fasting as ‘Ramadan’ but ‘the month of Ramadan.’ In yet a third account, the month of fasting is called Ramadan because it burns away the sins.

Fasting and Patience

The Qur’an has interpreted fasting as patience. There is a tradition in which Imam Sadiq has been quoted to have said the following in the interpretation of the Almighty God’s statement “Seek help from patience and prayer”: What is meant by patience is fasting. When something really hard descends upon man, he should fast since God the Almighty says “seek help from patience” – that is fasting.”⁹ The late Majlisi has said the following in Mir’atul Uqool: The main part of fasting is imprisonment. Fasting is called patience because it imprisons one and restrains him from eating, drinking and love-making.” ¹⁰

Traditions on the Nobility of Fasting and Its Effects

We can get a better understanding of the nobility of fasting and its importance by reviewing some of the relevant traditions. Zurarah quoted on the authority of Imam Baqir :

بُنِيَ الْإِسْلَامُ عَلَى خَمْسَةِ أَشْيَاءٍ: عَلَى الصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ وَالْحَجِّ وَالصَّوْمِ وَالْوَلَايَةِ.

“There are five pillars for Islam: praying, paying the alms-tax, the holy pilgrimage, fasting and the friendship (of the Commander of the Faithful and the leaders that came after him).”¹¹

Majlisi said: These may be contemporary things since Islam is shaky without them. Believing in these is a part of Islam. It is also probable that what is meant by friendship is love of the Imams in addition to a belief in them. Isma’il ibn Abi Ziyad quoted on the authority of Imam Sadiq on the authority of his grandfathers that the Prophet told his companions:

أَلَا أُخْبِرُكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ إِنْ أَنْتُمْ فَعَلْتُمُوهُ تَبَاعَدَ الشَّيْطَانُ عَنْكُمْ كَمَا تَبَاعَدَ الْمَشْرِقُ مِنَ الْمَغْرِبِ؟ قَالُوا: بَلَى. قَالَ: الصَّوْمُ يُسَوِّدُ وَجْهَهُ وَالصَّدَقَةُ تَكْسِرُ ظَهْرَهُ وَالْحُبُّ فِي اللَّهِ وَالْمُؤَاذَرَةُ عَلَى الْعَمَلِ الصَّالِحِ تَقْطَعُ دَابِرَهُ وَالِاسْتِغْفَارُ يَقْطَعُ وَتِينَهُ، وَلِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ زَكَاةٌ وَزَكَاةُ الْأَبْدَانِ الصِّيَامُ.

*“Do you want me to tell you what you can do that will cause Satan to go as far away from you as the East is from the West?” They said: “O Prophet of God! Yes.” He said: “Fasting blackens Satan’s face. Giving charity breaks his back, love for the sake of God and helping in doing good deeds roots him out, and repentance cuts off his aorta. There is an alms tax for everything, and the alms of the body is fasting.”*¹²

The late Majlisi considers this a reliable tradition. Ibn Abi Amir quoted on the authority of some of the companions, on the authority of Imam Sadiq : Almighty God revealed to Moses : What has prevented you from supplicating to Me? He said: The bad smell of my mouth since I am fasting. God the Almighty revealed:

يَا مُوسَى! لَخُلُوفُ فَمِ الصَّائِمِ أَطْيَبُ عِنْدِي مِنْ رِيحِ الْمِسْكِ.

*O Moses! The odour of the mouth of one who is fasting is more agreeable to Me than the fragrance of musk.”*¹³

In another tradition, we read that the Prophet of God said:

الصَّوْمُ جُنَّةٌ مِنَ النَّارِ.

*“Fasting is a shield against the Fire.”*¹⁴

Fasting and the Forgiveness of Sins

Imam Baqir said: God’s Prophet told Jabir ibn Abdullah:

يَا جَابِرُ! هَذَا شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ؛ مَنْ صَامَ نَهَارَهُ وَقَامَ وَرِدًا مِنْ لَيْلِهِ وَعَفَّ بَطْنَهُ وَفَرَجَهُ وَكَفَّ لِسَانَهُ خَرَجَ مِنْ ذُنُوبِهِ كَخُرُوجِهِ مِنَ الشَّهْرِ. فَقَالَ جَابِرُ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ! مَا أَحْسَنَ هَذَا الْحَدِيثِ. فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: يَا جَابِرُ! وَمَا أَشَدَّ هَذِهِ الشُّرُوطَ.

*O Jabir! This is the month of Ramadan. Whoever fasts during its days, stands in prayer in its nights, keeps his stomach and his private parts away from what is unlawful, and restrains his tongue shall leave all his sins behind as he leaves this month.” Jabir said: “O Prophet of God! How beautiful are these words.” The Prophet said: “O Jabir! And how difficult are these conditions.”*¹⁵

Imam Sajjad also mentioned these. In another tradition from the Prophet the condition for fasting to be considered as worship is stated to be not gossiping.”¹⁶

Fasting and the Equality between the Rich and the Poor

It is quoted upon the authority of Imam Sadiq :

إِنَّمَا فَرَضَ اللَّهُ الصِّيَامَ لِيَسْتَوِيَ بِهِ الْغَنِيُّ وَالْفَقِيرُ، وَذَلِكَ أَنَّ الْغَنِيَّ لَمْ يَكُنْ لِيَجِدَ مَسَّ الْجُوعِ فَيَرْحَمَ الْفَقِيرَ لِأَنَّ الْغَنِيَّ كُلَّمَا أَرَادَ شَيْئًا قَدَرَ عَلَيْهِ، فَأَرَادَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ أَنْ يُسَوِّيَ بَيْنَ خَلْقِهِ وَأَنْ يُذِيقَ الْغَنِيَّ نَيْلَ الْجُوعِ وَالْأَلَمَ لِيَرْقَى عَلَى الضَّعِيفِ وَيَرْحَمَ الْجَائِعَ.

“God made fasting obligatory so that the rich and the poor are made equal. If there were no fasting, the rich would never experience the feeling of hunger that would make them have mercy on the poor, for whenever the rich desire something they are able to acquire it. Thus God desired to place His servants on the same level, and that the rich experience hunger and pain so that they have compassion for the weak and have mercy on the hungry.” ¹⁷

We see in this tradition that one of the philosophies behind fasting in the month of Ramadan is to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor people. Wealth has always divided human societies into two classes – the rich and the poor. The rich who possess means of comfort and convenience can never realize the hardships and pains suffered by the poor and experience what they go through. When one fasts, he gets hungry and thirsty. His human emotions get aroused and he starts to think of ways to help those who are hungry. It is interesting to note that according to Islamic jurisprudence no rich man can pay a poor man to fast instead of him. This clearly shows the purpose behind fasting.

Fasting as Viewed by Imam Ali

There are several views about fasting expressed by Imam Ali that are recorded in *Nahjul Balaghah*. For example, he said:

وَزَكَاةُ الْبَدَنِ الصِّيَامُ.

*“The alms tax of the body is fasting.”*¹⁸

We know that taxing implies growth, development and purification. Here the Imam has referred to the health-related aspect of fasting. In another place he said:

وَصَوْمُ شَهْرِ رَمَضَانَ فَإِنَّهُ جُنَّةٌ مِنَ الْعِقَابِ.

“Fasting in the month of Ramadan is a shield against the chastisement.”¹⁹

In another place he said:

خُمْصُ الْبُطُونِ مِنَ الصِّيَامِ ذُبْلُ الشِّفَاهِ مِنَ الدُّعَاءِ صُفْرُ الْأَلْوَانِ مِنَ السَّهَرِ عَلَى وُجُوهِهِمْ غَبَرَةُ الْخَاشِعِينَ، أَوْلَئِكَ إِخْوَانِي الذَّاهِبُونَ.

“They were those whose stomachs were slim due to fasting, their lips were dry from (continuous) supplications, their faces were pale from staying up at night, and their faces were covered with the dust of humbleness. They were my brothers who are gone now.”²⁰

In another of Imam Ali’s wise sayings we read:

الصِّيَامُ ابْتِلَاءٌ لِإِخْلَاصِ الْخَلْقِ.

“Fasting is a trial of people’s sincerity.”²¹

In another of Imam Ali’s wise sayings we read that on the day of celebration, he said:

إِنَّمَا هُوَ عِيدٌ لِمَنْ قَبِلَ اللَّهُ صِيَامَهُ وَشَكَرَ قِيَامَهُ، وَكُلُّ يَوْمٍ لَا يُعْصَى اللَّهُ فِيهِ فَهُوَ عِيدٌ.

“It is only a day of celebration (Eid) for those whose fasting God accepts and whose standing up in prayer (at night) He rewards. Every day in which one does not disobey God is a day of celebration.”²²

In some of his advice he said:

أوصيكم وجميع ولدي... وصلاح ذات البين

“I advise you and my children.... to improve your social affairs, since its reward is more than that of praying and fasting.”²³

Fasting Without Any Gains

Imam Ali said:

كَمْ مِنْ صَائِمٍ لَيْسَ لَهُ مِنْ صِيَامِهِ إِلَّا الْجُوعُ وَالظَّمَأُ، وَكَمْ مِنْ قَائِمٍ لَيْسَ لَهُ إِلَّا السَّهَرُ وَالْعَنَاءُ. حَبَّذَا نَوْمُ الْأَكْيَاسِ وَإِفْطَارُهُمْ.

“There are many who fast and gain nothing from their fasting other than suffering from thirst and hunger. Many stay up at night in prayer and gain nothing but sleeplessness and fatigue. How beautiful is the sleeping of the wise, and the breaking of their fasts!”[24](#)

In the well-known sermon called Qasi’ah, Imam Ali discussed the bad ending of being entrapped by Satan’s plots, and pointed out factors that can save man.

و عن ذلك ما حَرَسَ اللهُ عِبَادَهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَ الزَّكَاةِ وَ مُجَاهَدَةِ الصَّيَامِ فِي الْأَيَّامِ الْمَفْرُوضَاتِ تَسْكِيناً
لأَطْرَافِهِمْ وَ تَخْشِيعاً لِبُصَارِهِمْ وَ تَذْلِيلًا لِنَفْسِهِمْ وَ تَخْفِيزًا لِقُلُوبِهِمْ وَ إِذْهَابًا لِلْخِيَلِ عَنْهُمْ وَلَمَّا فِي ذَلِكَ مِنْ تَغْيِيرِ عِتَاقِ
الْوُجُوهِ تَوَاضُعًا وَ التَّصَاقِ كَرَائِمِ الْجَوَارِحِ بِالْأَرْضِ تَصَاغُرًا وَلِحُوقِ الْبُطُونِ بِالْمُتُونِ مِنَ الصَّيَامِ تَذُلًّا.

“God protects his believing servants from that (Satan’s plots) through praying, paying the alms-tax, striving to fast during the days that fasting is prescribed since these acts will give tranquility to their limbs and hinder them from engaging in sin. They will cause humbleness of the eyes and control of the wild self. They will cause humbleness of the heart and eliminate undue pride and haughtiness. That will be due to tender cheeks being rubbed in the dust out of humility, the most precious limbs cleaving to the earth in abjectness and stomachs adhering to their backs because of fasting in abasement (before God).”[25](#)

It is said that once an Arab who was riding a camel in the desert ran into a man who was praying. His praying fooled the Arab. He got off his camel, sat down next to him and said: “How well do you pray!” The man said: “You do not know. I am also fasting.” The man’s praying and fasting fooled the Arab, and he entrusted his camel to him. When he returned he saw neither the man nor his camel. He felt sorry and realized that he should not have been fooled by the man’s praying and fasting, and should not have entrusted his camel to him.[26](#)

Now that we have studied the various effects of fasting as expressed by Imam Ali let us see what the master of the jurisprudents, Sheikh Muhammad Hasan who is the author of Jawahir ul-Kalam, has said about the positive effects of fasting in the chapter on fasting. He said: “It has been narrated that God the Almighty said:

الصَّوْمُ لِي وَأَنَا أُجَازِي بِهِ.

Fasting is for Me, and I will reward it (even though I Myself am the reward for fasting).

He added: “The reason it is said that fasting is for God is that it is a private issue which only God knows about. This is opposed to praying that is visible by the people. It is also because through fasting, our physical strength reduces while our intellect and the various faculties are strengthened. Thus we can attain the more precise divine points, heavenly knowledge and the desirable perfections.”[27](#)

The Effects of Fasting as Viewed by Ghazali

Abu Hamed said: “Fasting is for the sake of God and has an especial nobility. Although all forms of worship are this way, there are two points specific about fasting. They are as follows:

1 Fasting is a form of abstaining that is private. It is a secret that others do not see unlike other forms of worship that are seen in public. No one but God knows about fasting, since it is a personal action done with patience.

2 Fasting is a form of self-restraint that is the greatest blow to God’s enemy. This is because lust is the tool of Satan. Eating and drinking strengthen lust. That is why God’s Prophet said:

إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لَيَجْرِي مِنَ ابْنِ آدَمَ مَجْرَى الدَّمِّ فَضَيِّقُوا مَجَارِيَهُ بِالْجُوعِ

*“Satan flows through man’s body just like blood. Block off the roaming grounds of Satan via hunger.”*²⁸

Hunger derived through fasting breaks down Satan and acts as a stronghold against him. Whoever defeats Satan has assisted God. This assistance is related to granting success by God since God has said:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن تَنْصُرُوا اللَّهَ يَنْصُرْكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَكُمْ

“O ye who believe! If ye will aid (the cause of) God, He will aid you, and plant your feet firmly.”

[The Holy Qur’an, Muhammad 47:7]

God also said:

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

“And those who strive in Our (cause), We will certainly guide them to our Paths: For verily God is with those who do right.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Ankabut 29:69]

In another verse God said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ

Verily never will God change the condition of a people until they change it themselves (with their own souls).” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Ra’d 13: 11]

The change mentioned in this verse is the elimination of lusts, since lusts are the means by which Satan influences man. We cannot discover the Grandeur of God as long as Satan influences us through our lusts. God's Prophet said:

لَوْ لَا أَنَّ الشَّيَاطِينَ يَحُومُونَ عَلَى قُلُوبِ بَنِي آدَمَ لَنَظَرُوا إِلَى مَلَكُوتِ السَّمَاءِ.

"If Satans were not hovering around the hearts of the descendants of Adam, men could look at the kingdom of the heavens."[29](#)

Fasting and Health

One of the philosophies behind fasting is health. Before considering the positive effects of fasting on our health, let us see through what ways illnesses affect our health. God's Prophet said:

الْمَعِدَةُ بَيْتُ كُلِّ دَاءٍ وَالْحِمِيَةُ رَأْسُ كُلِّ دَوَاءٍ

"The stomach is the home of every illness, and abstinence (from food) is the chief of all medicine."[30](#)

Imam Kazim said:

الْحِمِيَةُ رَأْسُ كُلِّ دَوَاءٍ وَالْمَعِدَةُ بَيْتُ الْأَدْوَاءِ.

"Abstinence is the chief of every remedy and the stomach is the home of illnesses."[31](#)

He also said:

لَيْسَ مِنْ دَوَاءٍ إِلَّا وَيُهَيِّجُ دَاءً وَلَيْسَ فِي الْبَدَنِ أَنْفَعُ مِنْ إِمْسَاكِ الْيَدِ إِلَّا عَمَّا يَحْتَاجُ إِلَيْهِ.

"There is no medicine that does not stir up an illness, and nothing is more beneficial for the body than withholding from it all except what it requires."[32](#)

God's Prophet said:

صُومُوا تَصِحُّوا.

"Fast, and you will be healthy."[33](#)

We read in these traditions from the Prophet of God and the seventh Imam who have divine knowledge

that the stomach is the home of all illnesses and we can get healthy by abstaining from eating. Al-Asbagh ibn Nubatah narrated that he heard the Commander of the Faithful advise his son Imam Hasan as follows: “O’ my son! Do you want me to teach you a practice that will make you needless of doctors?” Imam Hasan said: “Yes.” The Commander of the Faithful said that the Prophet said:

لَا تَجْلِسْ عَلَى الطَّعَامِ إِلَّا وَأَنْتَ جَائِعٌ، وَلَا تَقُمْ عَنِ الطَّعَامِ إِلَّا وَأَنْتَ تَشْتَهِيهِ، وَجَوِّدِ الْمَضْغَ، وَإِذَا نِمْتَ فَأَعْرِضْ نَفْسَكَ عَلَى الْخَلَاءِ، فَإِذَا اسْتَعْمَلْتَ هَذَا اسْتَغْنَيْتَ عَنِ الطَّبِّ.

“Do not sit down to eat unless you are hungry. Cease eating while you still have some appetite to eat. Chew your food thoroughly. Go to the toilet before you sleep. If you adhere to these you will not need medical treatment.” [34](#)

This tradition also shows that overeating is the root of all illnesses.

Unorderly Food Intake and Orderly Excretions

The skin, the liver, the kidneys and the lungs are all orderly body parts. Our kidneys even know that we should not be awakened at night in order to urinate. The kidneys reduce their secretions to lower the production of urine depending on the stage of our sleep and the darkness of the room. The skin, the lungs and the liver are similar.

However, our intake is so unorderly that even sometimes instead of taking in good and useful things we let in smoke, dust and alcohol. This will pressurize our metabolism beyond its ultimate strength and finally make us ill. The body is like a reservoir of what we eat and drink. Many organs are constantly at work trying to excrete the poisonous material in our body. They need a chance to catch up with our unorderly intake. Fasting is the perfect means to give our body a chance to get rid of the poisons within it.[35](#)

The Glands

Consider the following points regarding the glands:

- 1) The functions of the glands are interrelated. If one reduces to secrete some hormone, then the functioning of the other glands will be messed up.
- 2) The hypothalamus is one of the most important glands whose functioning is highly related to the functioning of the suprarenal glands.[36](#)
- 3) The hormones produced by the adrenal (suprarenal) glands[37](#) are very important. They can affect all the cells of our body. Any overeating or eating bad things can have bad effects on the functioning of the hypothalamus.

- 4) It has been proven that the pancreas³⁸ and the adrenal glands have an important role on longevity.
- 5) A close relationship between the functioning of the pancreas gland and the adrenal glands has been proven.
- 6) It has been proven that as we age there is a reduction in the production of the hormones secreted by the pancreas,³⁹ but aging does not affect the hormones secreted by the adrenal glands.
- 7) Vladimir Nikitin who is a professor of biochemistry experimented on rats for many years. He proved that by keeping them hungry through especial means he could extend their life expectancy from 2.5 years to 4.5 years. He believes that when the adrenal glands are kept hungry, they themselves eat up their excess hormones that cause an imbalance. Thus fasting can re-establish our hormonal balance for a while if for some reason our hormones are out of balance.⁴⁰

Studies on Metabolism

It is thought that whatever we eat is burnt to produce energy for our body and the excess is let out. This is not a correct image of the way our body works. Our body is not like a pond in which food enters from one side, and leaves from the other side. What enters our body must be fresh, but what leaves it is old. The oxygen that enters our body now will leave our body six months later. The same holds true for calcium. If radioactive nitrogen is added to our food, it will appear in the urine several weeks later.

Therefore, we should not expect an instant replacement of the old food in the body with fresh food that we eat. We must wait many days to achieve this. Dr. John Feromozan said: The stored amount of glycogen stored in the kidneys and protein in the blood and fat stored in the body is 30% for men and 20% for women. This amount is sufficient for one month.

Dr. Alexis Carrel in his book *Man the Unknown Creature* said the following about fasting: “When you fast, the sugar in the blood pours into the kidneys, the fat stored under the skin, the proteins stored in the muscles, the glands and the kidney cells are released and used up.” When we consider both of these statements we conclude that our body is totally repaired after thirty days of fasting and it gets totally rid itself of poisons and old materials.⁴¹

Fasting and Ulcers

It is a common misunderstanding that fasting causes ulcers. If it was so, then we should ask why the statistics show more cases of ulcers among the non-Muslim nations who do not fast compared to the Muslim nations. If ulcers were only common among Muslims, then we could suspect a relationship between fasting and ulcers existed. However, this is not the case and there is a growing trend of ulcers in the West. If fasting was a cause of ulcers and given the more than fourteen centuries of fasting by Muslims, ulcers should have become a hereditary disease among the Muslims. However, this is not the

Causes of Ulcers

The causes of ulcers were investigated in an international conference on diseases of the stomach in September 1966 in Tokyo. Those who attended presented their country's medical results as to the causes of ulcers. Among these reports, the following were the most common causes of ulcers:

- 1) Smoking.
- 2) Eating many hot foods.
- 3) Drinking too much water.
- 4) Usual use of coffee and spices.
- 5) Excessive use of salty or sour foods.
- 6) Drinking alcoholic beverages.

The representative from Turkey who attended this conference reported that after the end of the month of fasting it has been found that fasting accelerates this disease. This implies that fasting does not cause ulcers, but if the person is prone to get an ulcer fasting will speed it up. That is why Islam has instructed those who are ill or know that they will get ill if they fast should not fast. Their fasting is postponed to a later time.

Alexi Soforin's Medical Fasting

When we eat various foods, some of it passes through the digestive system but is not used up by the cells. It gets stored up under the skin, around the heart and around important body organs. These will cause infections after some time and result in various ailments. The more the excess food, the worse the infection will be. The illnesses have different names, but are all rooted in microbes or viruses that live where there exists excess food. Before any treatment, we must get rid of the trash.

This is only feasible if we do not give our body any food and only drink water. The body will then automatically extract the stored food and get rid of it. Then the disease will be uprooted and show signs of treatment. This method will naturally cleanse the body. If we use other methods and take drugs, the drugs will also affect the healthy cells in our body, and our body will react to the drugs. However, fasting does not have any side effects. Also, note that this is a single treatment for all illnesses.[43](#)

So far, we have discussed the views of doctors about ways to treat illnesses. We saw that abstaining and fasting is an important part of this treatment, even the last one. Therefore, God who created us made fasting obligatory so that we derive both spiritual and physical benefits from it. We mentioned

earlier that Imam Sajjad stressed the importance of controlling our various organs and directing them in a good way while fasting.

The Secrets of Fasting

The scholars have mentioned three ranks for fasting. The first rank for fasting is just restraining the stomach from eating and drinking, and restraining our sexual desires. The second rank for fasting implies the additional restraining of our ears, eyes, hands, feet and other organs. Imam Sadiq said:

...إِذَا صُمْتَ فَلْيَصُمْ سَمْعُكَ وَبَصَرُكَ وَشَعْرُكَ وَجِلْدُكَ وَ

“When you fast your hearing, your sight, your hair, your skin and other organs should also fast.”

لَا يَكُنْ يَوْمٌ صَوْمِكَ كَيَوْمٍ فِطْرِكَ.

“The day of your fasting should not be like the day that you do not fast.”

In another tradition he said:

وَدَعَ الْمِرَاءَ وَأَذَى الْخَادِمِ وَلَيْكُنْ عَلَيْكَ وَقَارُ الصَّيَامِ فَإِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ سَمِعَ امْرَأَةً تَسُبُّ جَارِيَتَهَا وَهِيَ صَائِمَةٌ فَدَعَى بِطَعَامٍ فَقَالَ لَهَا: كُلِي. فَقَالَتْ: إِنِّي صَائِمَةٌ. قَالَ: كَيْفَ تَكُونِينَ صَائِمَةً وَقَدْ سَبَبْتَ جَارِيَتَكَ؟ إِنَّ الصَّوْمَ لَيْسَ مِنَ الطَّعَامِ وَالشَّرَابِ.

Abandon quarrelling and troubling your servant. Let the dignity of those who fast be on you. Once the Prophet heard a woman who was fasting reviling her maid. The Prophet brought her some food and asked her to eat it. She said that she was fasting. The Prophet said: “How could you be fasting when you have reviled your maid? Fasting is not just abstaining from food and drink.” [44](#)

The next rank of fasting implies whole-hearted fasting. In this state, we abandon all worldly thoughts that distract us from God. This form of fasting is broken when we start to think about worldly affairs. It is said that it is breaking this form of fast even if you think about what to prepare to break the fast with, since you do not have a strong belief that God will give you the promised daily bread. This rank is specifically for the Prophets and the honest ones who are close to God. God told the Prophet :

قُلِ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ ذَرْهُمْ فِي خَوْضِهِمْ يَلْعَبُونَ

..Say: "God (sent it down)": Then leave them to plunge in vain discourse and trifling. [The Holy Qur'an, al-An'am 6:91]

Imam Sadiq narrated that God's Prophet had said:

الصَّوْمُ جُنَّةٌ: أَي سِتْرٌ مِنْ آفَاتِ الدُّنْيَا وَحِجَابٌ مِنْ عَذَابِ الْآخِرَةِ.

*“Fasting is a shield: that is, it is a covering against the calamities of this world and a protective barrier against the punishment of the Hereafter.”*⁴⁵

^{1.} From the Fire of Hell.

^{2.} King James version.

^{3.} King James version.

^{4.} There are also many other places in the Bible where fasting is discussed. Consider the following two cases for example. Daniel fasted for three weeks before receiving his vision: “In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled. And in the four and twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel; then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz:

His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground. And, behold, a hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands.

And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. Then he said unto me: Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.” (The Bible, Daniel 10:2–12)

Elijah fasted forty days before speaking with God: “Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the Prophets with the sword. So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, “May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them.” Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. “I have had enough, Lord,” he said. “Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.”

Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, “Get up and eat.” He looked around, and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again. The angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, “Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you.” So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he travelled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. There he went into a cave and spent the night. And the word of the Lord came to him: “What are you doing here, Elijah?” (The Bible, Kings 19: 1–9).

^{5.} The tenth day of the month of Muharram.

^{6.} The ninth month of the Islamic year observed as sacred with fasting practiced daily from dawn to sunset.

^{7.} Majma' al-Bayan, v.2, p.274.

^{8.} This implies that both acts are wrong.

^{9.} Mir'at al-'Uqul, v. 16, p.201.

- [10.](#) Ibid.
- [11.](#) Ibid, p. 197.
- [12.](#) Mir'at al-'Uqul, v. 16, p. 198.
- [13.](#) Ibid. p.203.
- [14.](#) Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, v.2, p. 123.
- [15.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, v.96, p.371.
- [16.](#) Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, v.2, p. 123.
- [17.](#) Mahajjah al-Bayda, v.2, p. 124.
- [18.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Subhi Salih, Hikmah no. 136.
- [19.](#) Ibid., Sermon no. 110.
- [20.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 120, Fayz al-Islam.
- [21.](#) Ibid., Wise saying no.252, Sobhi Salih.
- [22.](#) Ibid., Wise saying no.428.
- [23.](#) Ibid., Advice no.47.
- [24.](#) Ibid., Wise saying, no. 137, Fayz al-Islam.
- [25.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon no.192, Subhi Salih.
- [26.](#) Sarmayeh-e- Sokhan, v. 1, p. 14.
- [27.](#) Jawahir al-Kalam, v. 16, p. 182.
- [28.](#) Kimiya'ye Sa'adat, v. 1, p.208.
- [29.](#) Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, v.2, p. 125.
- [30.](#) Safinah al-Bihar, v.2, p. 78.
- [31.](#) Ibid. p.79.
- [32.](#) Ibid. p.78.
- [33.](#) Ibid. pp.79–80.
- [34.](#) Ibid. pp. 79–80.
- [35.](#) Awallin Daneshgah wa Akharin Payambar, v.3, pp.37–38.
- [36.](#) Located on both sides on the upper kidney poles.
- [37.](#) Cortisone, Aldosterone.
- [38.](#) The pancreas is a very important gland in the body. It digests your food and produces insulin, the main chemical for balancing the sugar level in the blood. The pancreas is a solid gland about 10 inches (25 cm) long. It is attached to the back of the abdominal cavity behind the stomach and is shaped like a tadpole.
- [39.](#) Aldosterone secretion decreases with age, which can contribute to light-headedness and drop in blood pressure with sudden position changes (orthostatic hypotension). Cortisol secretion decreases but the level stays about the same.
- [40.](#) Awallin Daneshgah wa Akharin Payambar, v.3, pp.40–41.
- [41.](#) Ibid. v.3, pp.31–35.
- [42.](#) Ahamiyate Ruzeh az Nazar-i- Ilm-i-Ruz, p.224.
- [43.](#) Fasting as a New Method to Treat Illnesses, translated into Farsi by Imami, p. 12.
- [44.](#) Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, v.2, p. 131.
- [45.](#) Ibid.

Right n. 12: The Right of the Pilgrimage

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ الْحَجِّ أَنْ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّهُ وَفَادَةٌ إِلَى رَبِّكَ، وَفِرَارٌ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ ذُنُوبِكَ وَفِيهِ قَبُولُ تَوْبَتِكَ وَقَضَاءُ الْفَرَضِ الَّذِي أَوْجَبَهُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ

And the right of pilgrimage¹ is that you should know that it is an arrival at the threshold of your Lord and a flight to Him from your sins; and through it your repentance is accepted and you perform an obligation made incumbent upon you by God.

The Arabic word ‘Hajj’ used for pilgrimage really means goal or intention. It is used in its other forms to mean road since a road helps us reach where we intend to go. The reason these ceremonies are altogether called pilgrimage or ‘Hajj’ is that once you start, you intend to visit the House of God.

Ka’ba: the First House

The Holy Qur’an says:

إِنَّ أَوَّلَ بَيْتٍ وُضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ لَلَّذِي بِبَكَّةَ مُبَارَكًا وَهُدًى لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

فِيهِ آيَاتٌ بَيِّنَاتٌ مَّقَامُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمَنْ دَخَلَهُ كَانَ آمِنًا وَلِلَّهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حِجُّ الْبَيْتِ مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلًا وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ

“The first House (of worship) appointed for men was that at Bakka²: Full of blessing and of guidance for all kinds of beings: In it are Signs Manifest; (for example), the Station of Abraham; whoever enters it attains security; Pilgrimage thereto is a duty men owe to God, – those who can afford the journey; but if any deny faith, God stands not in need of any of His creatures.” [The Holy Qur’an, Al-i-Imran 3:96-97]

This house is the first stronghold of the Unity of God. It is the oldest house of worship on the Earth. There were no centers to worship God before it. We can conclude from the various existing documents on history and Islam that this house was built by Adam . Later it was damaged by a tornado at the time of Noah . The Prophet Abraham reconstructed it as we read in the following verse of the Holy Qur’an:

رَبَّنَا إِنِّي أَسْكَنْتُ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِي زَرْعٍ عِنْدَ بَيْتِكَ

"O our Lord! I have made some of my offspring to dwell in a valley without cultivation, by Thy Sacred House..." [The Holy Qur’an, Ibrahim 14:37]

This verse implies that there were some remains of the Ka’ba when Abraham and his offspring and wife³ arrived at Mecca. Also, consider the following verse:

وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

“And remember Abraham and Isma’il raised the foundations of the House (with this prayer): “Our Lord! Accept (this service) from us: For Thou art the All-Hearing, the All-knowing.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Baqarah 2: 127]

This verse shows that the foundations of the Ka’ba existed, and all that Abraham and Isma’il did was to build the House. We can conclude the same thing from the writings of the Commander of the Faithful :

أَلَا تَرَوْنَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ سُبْحَانَهُ اخْتَبَرَ الْأَوَّلِينَ مِنْ لَدُنْ آدَمَ صَلَوَاتُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ إِلَى الْآخِرِينَ مِنْ هَذَا الْعَالَمِ بِأَحْجَارٍ لَا تَضُرُّ وَلَا تَنْفَعُ وَلَا تُبْصِرُ وَلَا تَسْمَعُ فَجَعَلَهَا بَيْتَهُ الْحَرَامَ ... ثُمَّ أَمَرَ آدَمَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ وَوَلَدَهُ أَنْ يُتَنَوُّوا أَعْطَافَهُمْ نَحْوَهُ.

“Do you not see that God the Praised One tested the earlier ones from Adam onwards till the later ones in this world, by expecting them to respect stones that neither harm nor benefit, and neither see nor hear – He made them into His Sacred House. God established it to be the place to honor Him.... Then God ordered Adam and his children to turn towards it.”⁴

Therefore, from the above verses and sermon we can conclude that the Ka’ba was built by Adam , destroyed by the tornadoes at the time of Noah and reconstructed by Abraham .

Ka’ba’s Privileges

It is clear that the Ka’ba was the first House of Worship as the above verse said. Now let us consider its privileges. At first, it is blessed both spiritually and economically. Its spiritual attractions especially during the pilgrimage season are clear for everyone. Let us first consider it from an economical view. Mecca is located on dry land and from a natural point of view, it is not at all a suitable place to live in. However, Mecca has always been one of the developed towns good for living in, ready for business, and traveling to.

Secondly, the Ka’ba is considered a source of guidance for all the people of the world even for those who worshipped idols. There are many clear signs of the Unity of God and worshipping Him in this House. Its surviving the many attacks by the enemies who intended to destroy it throughout history is in itself one such clear sign. Each one of the following is a great reminder of lasting memories: Zamzam,⁵ Safa and Marwa,⁶ Rukn, Hatim, Hajar ul-Aswad⁷ and Hijr Isma’il.

Each of the four sides of the House is called Rukn. Hatim is the name of the space between Hajar ul-Aswad and the door of the Ka’ba. Hijr Isma’il is an especial place that is constructed like an arch on the northwest side of the Ka’ba. Of these clear signs, the Station of Abraham⁸ is specifically stated in the above verse since it is the place where Abraham stood to construct the Ka’ba, perform the pilgrimage ceremonies or invite the people to perform these great ceremonies. Fourthly, it is a secure house.

After building the Ka'ba, Abraham said: "O God! Please establish this town as a secure one." God accepted the prayer of Abraham and established Mecca as a secure town. Religious laws also consider Mecca so secure that no fighting or war is allowed there. Even animals are secure in Mecca, and no one should bother them. There is a heavy fine established for hunting in the Masjid Al-Haram (the Ka'ba).

Pilgrimage is a Divine Duty

Each Muslim who has attained the required conditions must go on the pilgrimage once. If he has not done so when he is alive, someone else should be hired to do so on his behalf when he dies. The jurists have stated the following conditions for going on the pilgrimage:

- 1) Physical readiness.
- 2) Financial readiness.
- 3) Open road access to the Ka'ba.

Again, consider the following verse:

وَلِلّٰهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حِجُّ الْبَيْتِ مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ اِلَيْهِ سَبِيْلًا

Pilgrimage to the Holy House is a duty men owe to God, – those who can afford the journey...
[The Holy Qur'an, Al-i-Imran 3:96-97]

In this verse, the pilgrimage to the House of God is considered a duty for those who can afford the journey. We can also conclude that this pilgrimage is not limited to Muslims. Rather it is incumbent upon all the people to go there. This is similar to the expression that

الْكُفَّارُ مُكَلَّفُونَ بِالْفُرُوعِ كَمَا اَنْهُمْ مُكَلَّفُونَ بِالْأَصُولِ

"The pagans are duty-bound to perform the branches (of religion) as they are bound to abide by the principles."

Therefore, this verse includes all the people. However, the condition for it to be accepted is to accept Islam. Otherwise, the act will lose its true value.⁹

The Baseless Words of Ibn Abi'l-Awja

Ibn Abi'l-Awja` was a vulgar pagan whom scholars used to avoid. One day he was watching the pilgrims with some of his friends in the Al-Haram Mosque one day. Imam Sadiq was sitting in a corner of the

mosque and his followers came to ask him questions. Ibn Abi'l-Awja's friends told him that it was a good time for him to argue with Imam Sadiq . He agreed with them, went to the place where Imam Sadiq was sitting and said: "O father of Abdullah! It is a fact that such meetings are secure ones. Whoever has some mucous in his chest can cough it up. [10](#) Will you let me ask a question?" The Imam granted him permission to do so. He was so rude that he dared to say:

الى كم تدوسون هذا البيدر وتلوذون بهذا الحجر وتعبدون هذا البيت المرفوع بالطوب والمدر وتهولون حوله هرولة البعير إذا نفر؟ من فكر في هذا وقدر علم أنه فعل غير حكيم ولا ذي نظر. فقل فأنت رأس هذا الأمر وسنامه وأبوك أسه ونظامه.

"For how long will you trample on this threshing ground and seek refuge in this rock and worship this house made of bricks and clay, and trot around it like unruly camels? Whoever ponders over this and considers it will know that it is an act of one devoid of wisdom or insight. Therefore speak, for you are the leader of this affair and its best one, and your father was its foundation and its criterion."

These words implied his inner wickedness and his purely material outlook. The Imam replied:

إن من أضله الله وأعماه قلبه استوخم الحق ولم يستعذبه وصار الشيطان وليه وربّه ويورده مناهل الهلكة ولا يصدره.

"He whom God leads astray and whose heart He blinds, finds the truth to be indigestible and disagreeable. Satan becomes his friend and his master and leads him towards the source of total loss from which there is no return."

The Imam then said that God had established this House as a means by which He shall test men. God has assigned men to visit this House to measure their degree of sincerity of their worshipping Him and submission to Him. This House is the Station of the Prophets. It is the point towards which those who pray turn. The intention is not to worship the stones on the House. Rather the One being worshipped is God who is the Creator of man's body and soul. [11](#)

A Demonstration of Man's Spiritual Development

We must realize that all acts of worship including the pilgrimage are indeed demonstrations of the various levels of spiritual development of the Prophets and God's friends. They display the road covered on the journey towards God. They express how they have moved through the various stages of servitude and reached the position of proximity to God. It is clear that worshipping is the movement of man's soul towards God. The Noble Prophet said:

إِنَّمَا فُرِضَتِ الصَّلَاةُ وَأُمِرَ بِالْحَجِّ وَالطَّوَافِ وَأُشْعِرَتِ الْمَنَاسِكُ لِإِقَامَةِ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ، فَإِذَا لَمْ يَكُنْ فِي قَلْبِكَ لِلْمَذْكُورِ الَّذِي
هُوَ الْمَقْصُودُ وَالْمُبْتَغَى عَظَمَةٌ وَلَا هَيْبَةٌ فَمَا قِيَمَةُ ذِكْرِكَ؟

“The prayer was made obligatory, performing the pilgrimage and the circumambulation of the Ka’ba were commanded, and the rituals (of Hajj) were made known, only to establish the remembrance of God. If there is no sense of greatness or awe in your heart for the One remembered Who is the objective and the desired one, then of what value is your remembrance?”¹²

Therefore, the pilgrimage ceremonies are a demonstration of a perfect man’s orderly spiritual development that carefully follows the various stages of development. He cuts himself off from all material interests and worldly affairs. He pulls himself out of involvement in the darkness of the self. He reaches the state of submersion in the illumination of the Lord’s Domain. A true pilgrimage is a spiritual motion. It is a development that occurs in the real self.

Pilgrimage stands for perfection. It implies the conversion of a potential power into its physical realization. It is similar to the conversion of one metal to another one in chemistry. It is not a game or entertainment as considered by some fools. How can one compare these childish perceptions with the moving developments of those who are struggling towards proximity to God?

Malik ibn Anas, who is the founder of the Malikiyah sect, narrated that once when he was accompanying Imam Sadiq on a pilgrimage trip, the Imam who was riding a horse could not say ‘labbayk.’¹³ Every time he tried, his voice got stuck in his throat and he fell down from his horse. Malik said: “O’ grandson of the Prophet of God! Say labbayk. You must say labbayk.” Then Imam Sadiq said:

يَا بَنَ أَبِي عَامِرٍ، كَيْفَ أَجْسِرُ أَنْ أَقُولَ: لَبَّيْكَ اللَّهُمَّ لَبَّيْكَ، وَأَخْشَى أَنْ يَقُولَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ لَا لَبَّيْكَ وَلَا سَعْدَيْكَ

“O son of Abi A’mer! How dare I say “labbayk Allahumma labbayk”¹⁴ when I fear that God the Almighty may reply: “No. I neither accept you nor shall I admit you.”

If one can set out for and reach the Ka’ba, touch the Hajar al-Aswad with his hands, let his heart reside on the slopes of the Arafah Hills, let him realize God’s symbol of the forbidden, sacrifice the lamb of selfish desires using certitude and contentment as a knife, then he is a real Hajji when he returns if he has been converted to a heavenly gem.

Pilgrimage and the Forgiveness of Sins

Imam Sajjad said that pilgrimage is “a flight to Him from your sins.” Once you return from the pilgrimage, your sins are forgiven and you are freed from the heavy burden of sins just as when you were first born. There are many traditions in this regard. We shall refer to a few of them here. It has been quoted on the authority of Imam Sadiq :

إِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ تَلَقَّاهُ أَعْرَابِيٌّ فَقَالَ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، إِنِّي خَرَجْتُ أُرِيدُ الْحَجَّ فَعَاقَنِي وَأَنَا رَجُلٌ مَبِيتٌ (يعني كثير المال) فَمُرْنِي أَصْنَعُ فِي مَالِي مَا أَبْلُغُ بِهِ مَا يَبْلُغُ بِهِ الْحَاجُّ. (قال) فَالتَفَتَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَى أَبِي قُبَيْسٍ فَقَالَ: لَوْ أَنَّ أَبَا قُبَيْسٍ لَكَ زَنْتُهُ ذَهَبَةٌ حَمْرَاءُ أَنْفَقْتَهُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ مَا بَلَغْتَ مَا بَلَغَ الْحَاجُّ. إِنَّ الْحَاجَّ إِذَا أَخَذَ فِي جِهَارِهِ لَمْ يَخْطُ خُطْوَةً فِي شَيْءٍ مِنْ جِهَارِهِ إِلَّا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ لَهُ عَشْرَ حَسَنَاتٍ وَمَحَى عَنْهُ عَشْرَ سَيِّئَاتٍ وَرَفَعَ لَهُ عَشْرَ دَرَجَاتٍ، فَإِذَا رَكِبَ بَعِيرَهُ لَمْ يَرْفَعْ خُفًّا وَلَمْ يَضَعْهُ إِلَّا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَهُ مِثْلَ ذَلِكَ، فَإِذَا طَافَ بِالْبَيْتِ خَرَجَ مِنْ ذُنُوبِهِ، فَإِذَا رَمَى الْجِمَارَ خَرَجَ مِنْ ذُنُوبِهِ... فَعَدَّدَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ كَذَا وَكَذَا مَوْقِفًا إِذَا وَقَفَهَا الْحَاجُّ خَرَجَ مِنْ ذُنُوبِهِ ثُمَّ قَالَ: أَنَّى لَكَ أَنْ تَبْلُغَ مَا يَبْلُغُ الْحَاجُّ؟

A Bedouin visited the Noble Prophet of God and said: I left my house and set out for pilgrimage. However, for some reason I could not proceed, and lost the opportunity to go on pilgrimage. I am a rich man. Tell me what I can do so that God grants me what He grants a Hajji.” The Prophet looked at the Abu Qubays mountain and said: “If this mountain was made of red gold and it was all yours, you could not get the reward that God gives a Hajji if you donated it all for the sake of God.

When a pilgrim begins preparing his provisions for the journey, he is given the reward for ten good deeds and ten of his wicked deeds are forgiven for every step that he takes for its preparation. His rank near God is elevated ten degrees. When he rides in his mount, God will record the same kind of reward for him for every step that he raises up and lowers. Once he performs the circumambulations of the House of God, his sins are gone. When he throws stones at the symbols of idols, his sins depart.” The Prophet repeated the same sentence for each of the stations. Then he said: “How can you attain the reward that the Hajji attains?”

Then Imam Sadiq added:

وَلَا تُكْتَبُ عَلَيْهِ الذُّنُوبُ أَرْبَعَةَ أَشْهُرٍ وَتُكْتَبُ لَهُ الْحَسَنَاتُ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَ بِكَبِيرَةٍ.

“No sins will be recorded for him for four months (after Hajji) while his good deeds will be recorded, unless he commits a major sin.”

Pilgrimage and Asking Others

When Imam Sajjad heard someone beg from the people, he said:

وَيْحَكَ، أَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ تَسْأَلُ فِي هَذَا الْمَقَامِ؟ إِنَّهُ لَيُرْجَى لِمَا فِي بُطُونِ الْجِبَالِ فِي هَذَا الْيَوْمِ أَنْ يَكُونَ سَعِيدًا.

“Shame on you! Are you begging from others in this place? Here God’s Mercy is so encompassing that it is even expected that whatever lies in the depths of the mountains shall benefit from it and become prosperous today.”¹⁵

Regarding this tradition, the late Fayz said: “Prosperity is relative. Everything has one form of prosperity. It may be meant that plants grow from the depths of the mountains which may then undergo many changes and finally result in the formation of a fetus that turns into a prosperous man.” In another recording of this tradition in Mustadrak al-Wasa’el instead of ‘depth of the mountains’, it is written ‘inside pregnant women.’ The Arabic words for these two phrases are very similar to each other with one dot being the difference. A man asked Imam Sadiq in the Al-Haram Mosque: “Whose sin is greater than everyone else’s?” He replied:

مَنْ يَقِفُ بِهِذَيْنِ الْمَوْقِفَيْنِ؛ عَرَفَةَ وَالْمُزْدَلِفَةَ، وَسَعَى بَيْنَ هَذَيْنِ الْجَبَلَيْنِ ثُمَّ طَافَ بِهَذَا الْبَيْتِ وَصَلَّى خَلْفَ مَقَامِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ
ثُمَّ قَالَ فِي نَفْسِهِ أَوْ ظَنَّ أَنَّ اللَّهَ لَمْ يَغْفِرْ لَهُ فَهُوَ مِنْ أَعْظَمِ النَّاسِ وَزُرّاً

“Whoever stops at these two stations of Arafah and Mash’ar, does the ceremonies for between the two hills (of Safa and Marwa), circumambulates around this House and prays at the station of Abraham, then says to himself or thinks that God has not forgiven him – has committed the greatest sin.”¹⁶

Imam Sadiq said:

مَا مِنْ رَجُلٍ مِنْ أَهْلِ كُورَةٍ وَقَفَ بِعَرَفَةَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِلَّا غَفَرَ اللَّهُ لِأَهْلِ تِلْكَ الْكُورَةِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ. وَمَا مِنْ رَجُلٍ وَقَفَ
بِعَرَفَةَ مِنْ أَهْلِ بَيْتٍ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِلَّا غَفَرَ اللَّهُ لِأَهْلِ ذَلِكَ الْبَيْتِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

“Whenever a faithful man from a village or a town stops in Arafah, God will forgive all the faithful men from that village or town. Whenever a faithful man stops in Arafah, God will forgive all the faithful members of his household.”¹⁷

It should be noted that faith that is the root of piety is stressed here.

Invitation to Hajj is Honoring Man

God honors man, places the crown of nobility on his head, awakens his long asleep conscience, encourages him to be grateful and invites him to go on pilgrimage and circumambulate His House.

وَلِلَّهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حِجُّ الْبَيْتِ مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلًا

“Pilgrimage to the Sacred House is a duty men owe to God, – those who can afford the journey.”
[The Holy Qur’an, Al-i-Imran 3:97]

This means that God who has created man, provided for his sustenance and given him many blessings has the right to invite man to come to His House as a sign of being grateful to Him. This will preserve man’s nobility.

The Amazing Blessings of Hajj

Now let us consider the many blessings that God grants those who visit His House. Sa'd Al-Iskafi narrated that he heard Imam Baqir say:

إِنَّ الْحَاجَّ إِذَا أَخَذَ فِي جِهَارِهِ لَمْ يَخْطُ خُطْوَةً فِي شَيْءٍ مِنْ جِهَارِهِ إِلَّا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ لَهُ عَشْرَ حَسَنَاتٍ وَمَحَى عَنْهُ عَشْرَ سَيِّئَاتٍ وَرَفَعَ لَهُ عَشْرَ دَرَجَاتٍ حَتَّى يَفْرُغَ مِنْ جِهَارِهِ مَتَى مَا فَرَغَ.

“When someone begins preparing his provisions for the Hajj, he does not take a step in its preparation but that God the Almighty records ten good deeds for him, forgives ten of his sins, and raises his rank ten degrees until he finishes his preparations, leaves the house and starts his trip. Then God will give him better rewards.”¹⁸

Imam Sadiq said:

الْحُجَّاجُ يَصْدُرُونَ عَلَى ثَلَاثَةِ أَصْنَافٍ؛ صِنْفٌ يُعْتَقُ مِنَ النَّارِ وَصِنْفٌ يَخْرُجُ مِنْ ذُنُوبِهِ كَهَيئَةِ يَوْمِ وَلَدَتْهُ أُمُّهُ وَصِنْفٌ يُحْفَظُ فِي أَهْلِهِ وَمَالِهِ، فَذَلِكَ أَذْنَى مَا يَرْجِعُ بِهِ الْحَاجُّ.

“The Hajjis are divided into three groups after they return from Hajj. A group of them is freed from the Fire. Another group includes those whose sins are forgiven and are just as they were when they were born. The third group includes those whose family and wealth will be safeguarded. This is the minimum benefit that one gains.”¹⁹

The difference is clear since the reward one gets depends on one's intention and the degree of recognition of the secrets of worshipping.

- ¹. This right has not been mentioned in the version transmitted in Tuhaf al-'Uqul.
- ². Bakka same as Mecca, perhaps an older name. The foundation of the Ka'ba goes back to the Prophet Abraham .
- ³. Hagar
- ⁴. Nahjul Balaghah, Subhi Salih, Sermon no. 192.
- ⁵. A sacred well in Mecca situated a few metres east of the Ka'ba. The Zamzam well is also called the Well of Ishmael. The well is 35 metres deep and is marked by an elegant dome. The water is considered health-giving, and pilgrims (hajis) collect it in bottles and bring it back home to their own countries. One of the last things a haji tries to do is to dip his or her future burial clothes in the Zamzam. Muslim tradition tells that the Zamzam was opened by the angel Gabriel to save Hagar and her son Ishmael from dying of thirst when they were in the desert. From the sources available, the Zamzam appears to have been revered long before the Prophet Muhammad , that is from pre-Islamic times.
- ⁶. Part of the pilgrimage ceremony includes the devotional act of walking seven times back and forth between the knolls of Safa and Marwa. This act retraces the footsteps of Hagar (wife of Prophet Abraham) during her desperate search for water for her infant son Ishmael, after they were left in the desert by the Prophet Abraham in response to a divine vision.
- ⁷. The sacred Black Stone built into the south-east corner of the Ka'ba at a height of approximately 4 feet.
- ⁸. The step-stone used by the Prophet Abraham during the original construction of the Ka'ba.
- ⁹. Tafsir-i-Namunah, v.3, pp. 14–17.

- [10.](#) He meant that whoever has a question that bothers him can ask it.
- [11.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, v. 10, pp.209–210.
- [12.](#) Hajj, Barname'ye Takamul, pp.80, 93.
- [13.](#) An Arabic phrase said in the pilgrimage meaning "Here I am at Your service".
- [14.](#) Here I am at Your service, O Lord! Here I am!
- [15.](#) Hajj, Barnameye Takamul, p.228; quoted from al-Wafi, v.2, p.42.
- [16.](#) This means that having bad suspicions about God and being hopeless of God's mercy is very dangerous. It is a great sin.
- [17.](#) Hajj Barnameye Takamul, p.228.
- [18.](#) Hajj Barname'ye Takamul, p.48, quoted from al-Kafi, v.4, p.254.
- [19.](#) Ibid, quoted from al-Wafi, v.2, p.4.

Right n. 13: The Right of Charity

حق الصدقة

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ الصَّدَقَةِ فَأَنْ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّهَا دُخْرُكَ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ وَوَدِيعَتُكَ الَّتِي لَا تَحْتَاجُ إِلَى الْإِشْهَادِ، فَإِذَا عَلِمْتَ ذَلِكَ كُنْتَ بِمَا اسْتَوْدَعْتَهُ سِرًّا أَوْثَقَ بِمَا اسْتَوْدَعْتَهُ عِلَانِيَةً، وَكُنْتَ جَدِيرًا أَنْ تَكُونَ أَسْرَرْتَ إِلَيْهِ أَمْرًا أَعْلَنْتَهُ، وَكَانَ الْأَمْرُ بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ فِيهَا سِرًّا عَلَى كُلِّ حَالٍ وَلَمْ تَسْتَظْهِرْ عَلَيْهِ فِيمَا اسْتَوْدَعْتَهُ مِنْهَا بِإِشْهَادِ الْأَسْمَاعِ وَالْأَبْصَارِ عَلَيْهِ بِهَا كَأَنَّهَا أَوْثَقَ فِي نَفْسِكَ لَا كَأَنَّكَ لَا تَتَّقُ بِهِ فِي تَأْدِيَةِ وَدِيعَتِكَ إِلَيْكَ، ثُمَّ لَمْ تَمْتَنَنَّ بِهَا عَلَى أَحَدٍ لِأَنَّهَا لَكَ فَإِذَا امْتَنَنْتَ بِهَا لَمْ تَأْمَنْ أَنْ تَكُونَ بِهَا مِثْلَ تَهْجِينِ حَالِكٍ مِنْهَا إِلَى مَنْ مَنَنْتَ بِهَا عَلَيْهِ لِأَنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ دَلِيلًا عَلَى أَنَّكَ لَمْ تُرِدْ نَفْسَكَ بِهَا، وَلَوْ أَرَدْتَ نَفْسَكَ بِهَا لَمْ تَمْتَنَنَّ بِهَا عَلَى أَحَدٍ. وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ.

And the right of charity is that you should know that it is a storing away with your Lord and a deposit for which you will have no need for witnesses. Then once you know this you will be more confident of it if you donate it in secret than if you donate it in public.¹ It is more appropriate for you to do privately what you now do in public and keep the affairs between you and Him secret under all circumstances. And you should also not take your hearing and sight as witnesses for the donations that you make in charity as if you have the most trust in yourself.²

It should not be as if you are not sure that your donations will be returned to you. Finally you should not remind others of your favors since you have done so for yourself. If you remind them of your favors, you will not be immune from being similarly reminded of others' favors to you. Moreover this will prove that your intentions were not pure. If you had pure intentions you would not remind anyone of it. And there is no power but in God.

Imam Sajjad has stressed three important points here.

1) Charity is a form of savings. Therefore, it will not get lost. It might seem to us that we lose what we

give away in charity while it is not so. Rather the Qur'an encourages us to benefit from the wealth of this world as we see in the following verse:

وَلَا تَنْسَ نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا

Nor forget thy portion in this world... [The Holy Qur'an, al-Qasas 28:77]

2) Giving charity in private is better than in public. That may be because there is a possibility of hypocrisy and showing off in acts of charity done in public. In addition to this, the one who is receiving charity will also be belittled when charity is given in public.

3) Charity should not be mixed with mentioning it since that will nullify its effect. As we will explain later, what is donated in charity will reach God first. Even more important is the fact that when charity is given in private it helps in the development of the understanding that God is the real donator in the mind of the one who is donating something. He realizes that he is only an intermediate agent in this affair and understands the real meaning of being a servant of God.

Charity as Viewed by the Qur'an

What Imam Sajjad expressed about charity is supported by many verses of the Holy Qur'an some of which we will discuss here. We should make it clear that charity implies what one donates from his own property in order to get closer to God. It is a general term and covers both the obligatory alms tax and the recommendable forms of giving donations. God the Almighty said:

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنْبَتَتْ سَبْعَ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سُنبُلَةٍ مِئَةٌ حَبَّةٍ وَاللَّهُ يُضَاعِفُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

“The parable of those who spend their substance in the way of God is that of a grain of corn: it groweth seven ears, and each ear hath a hundred grains. God giveth manifold increase to whom He pleaseth: And God careth for all and He knoweth all things.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2:261]

This parable of how a grain of corn grows and yields a manifold increase shows how one's charity is returned to God. The Qur'an says that each person's actions are a reflection of his personality. It is not true that our actions are manifestations of our physical powers. In this parable, the one who gives charity is said to be similar to one who plants corn. The result of his act is a manifold increase. Things done in the way of God imply acts done for pleasing God alone.

Charity Helps Solve Social Class Problems

The gap between the various social classes has always been one of the major problems facing man. It is even worse today even though there have been tremendous technological advances. There are some people who are extremely rich and many others who are extremely poor today. It is clear that a society in which most of the people are hungry and poor, and some are very wealthy cannot last very long. Undoubtedly there will be stress, animosities or even fights in such a society.

A careful examination of the verses of the Qur'an on this issue clearly indicates that Islam aims to eliminate unjust social differences between the rich and the poor. It aims to establish certain means by which the standard of living of the poor people can be elevated to a point at which they can at least benefit from minimum living necessities. To achieve this goal Islam has absolutely forbidden usury. It has also established certain obligatory taxes such as the alms-tax and the one-fifth levy. It has also encouraged many voluntary forms of charity to help achieve this goal.

Motivations for Charity

The Qur'an clearly shows the various results of charity using various examples and drawing similitude. Consider the following verse in this regard:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُبْطِلُوا صَدَقَاتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَالْأَذَى كَالَّذِي يُنْفِقُ مَالَهُ رِئَاءَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَمَثَلُهُ
كَمَثَلِ صَفْوَانٍ عَلَيْهِ تُرَابٌ فَأَصَابَهُ وَابِلٌ فَتَرَكَهُ صَلْدًا لَا يَقْدِرُونَ عَلَى شَيْءٍ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوا وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ

“O ye who believe! Cancel not your charity by reminders of your generosity or by injury, – like those who spend their substance to be seen of men, but believe neither in God nor in the Last Day. They are in parable like a hard, barren rock, on which is a little soil: on it falls heavy rain, which leaves it (just) a bare stone. They will be able to do nothing with aught they have earned. And God guideth not those who reject faith.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2:264]

Consider a hard rock covered by a thin layer of dirt. If seeds are planted in the dirt, there is plenty of good weather and sunshine, and then there is a heavy rainfall, the seeds will be washed off along with the dirt. The rock is so hard that the seed cannot grow on it and the barren hard appearance of the rock will appear again.

This does not happen because the sunshine, the good climate or the rains have had a bad effect. Rather it is because the place was not suitable for growth. It has had a good appearance, but it has been solid hardness beneath.

There has been only a small layer of dirt on the surface while a deep layer of soft soil is needed for the roots to be able to grow and extract nutrients to ensure proper growth. The Qur'an draws a similitude between hypocritical acts of charity that are at times even accompanied by hurting and mentioning; and

a shallow layer of dirt on a barren hard rock. This act cannot bear any fruits. It will only result in the efforts being wasted. That is why Imam Sajjad said: “Finally you should not remind others of your favors since you have done so for yourself.”

Now let us consider the points mentioned in Tafsir-i-Namoonah regarding this verse. First, it can be concluded from this verse that some deeds might eliminate the results of other deeds. Secondly, the similitude used here is a very good one since hypocrites usually cover up their wicked inner thoughts with superficial acts of charity that are not deeply rooted in their beliefs. They do so in order to fool the people, but the vicissitudes of life will ultimately uncover their inner thoughts.³

Another Example from the Qur'an

Consider a beautiful garden on a high mountainside. The cool breeze and plentiful sunshine and rain make the flowers and trees grow. Even when there is no rain, the moisture from the dew will maintain the garden's freshness and beauty. Because of this, the garden will yield double the amount that other gardens produce. Consider the following verse that draws such a similitude:

وَمَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ وَتَثْبِيتًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ كَمَثَلِ جَنَّةٍ بِرَبْوَةٍ أَصَابَهَا وَابِلٌ فَآتَتْ أُكْلَهَا
ضِعْفَيْنِ فَإِن لَّمْ يُصِيبْهَا وَابِلٌ فَطَلٌّ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

“And the likeness of those who spend their substance, seeking to please God and to strengthen their souls, is as a garden, high and fertile: heavy rain falls on it but makes it yield a double increase of harvest, and if it receives not heavy rain, light moisture sufficeth it. God seeth well whatever ye do.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2:265]

Being located on the slope of a high mountainside, the garden presents a beautiful scene to passers-by and is safe from the threats of flooding. The people who give charity for the sake of God due to their certain belief in God are similar to such a garden. They will generate great products. It is worth mentioning here that proper motivations for charity are expressed to be seeking God's pleasure, strengthening one's faith and gaining a feeling of peace and tranquility in one's heart.

True sincere donors of charity are those who do so to please God, develop noble characteristics within themselves and terminate their conscious feelings of responsibility for the deprived. The verse ends with a warning that God sees well whatever we do in order to alert us not to harbor ill intentions in our deeds.⁴

Public vs. Private Acts of Charity

By saying “And you should not take your hearing and sight as witnesses for the donations that you make in charity...” Imam Sajjad highly stresses giving charity in private. Of course, this applies to the

recommendable forms of charity. Obligatory forms of charity such as the alms-tax can obviously be given in public. Consider the following verse:

إِنْ تُبْدُوا الصَّدَقَاتِ فَنِعِمَّا هِيَ وَإِنْ تُخْفُوهَا وَتُؤْتُوهَا الْفُقَرَاءَ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ وَيُكَفِّرْ عَنْكُمْ مِّنْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ

“If ye disclose (acts of) charity, even so it is well, but if ye conceal them, and make them reach those (really) in need, that is best for you: It will remove from you some of your (stains of) evil. And God is well acquainted with what ye do.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Baqarah 2:271]

There is no doubt that both forms of public and private charities are beneficial. When charity is given in public, others get encouraged to participate. This is even more effective if it is the obligatory form of charity. This will also end probable accusations that one has not performed his obligatory duties. If the charity is in a recommendable form, then it can serve as a means to encourage others to serve the poor and the deprived people. However, when charity is given privately it is certainly void of hypocrisy.

We read in Majma’ al-Bayan that “obligatory donations of charity should be made in public, while it is better for recommended donations of charity to be made in private.”⁵ Charity helps remove some of our sins. What are important are one’s sincerity and good intentions. It does not matter whether the people know or do not know what we do. It suffices that God knows, as He is aware of everything, whether it be done in public or private.

The Role of Charity in Man’s Life

Consider the following verse:

لَيْسَ عَلَيْكَ هُدَاهُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَن يَشَاءُ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلَأَنفُسِكُمْ وَمَا تُنْفِقُونَ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ اللَّهِ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ يُوَفَّ إِلَيْكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تُظْلَمُونَ

“It is not required of thee (O Apostle), to set them on the right path, but God sets on the right path whom He pleaseth. Whatever of good ye give benefits your own souls, and ye shall only do so seeking the “Face”⁶ of God. Whatever good ye give, shall be rendered back to you, and ye shall not be dealt with unjustly.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Baqarah 2:272]

It has been quoted on the authority of Ibn `Abbas that Muslims were not willing to give charity to non-Muslims.⁷ Then the above verse was revealed to permit them to do so when necessary. From this verse, we also realize that the benefits of what we do return to ourselves. We all know that when man knows that the results of what he does will benefit him, he will be more eager to do that deed. There are many material and spiritual benefits for charity. The spiritual effect of charity is that it strengthens our

sense of self-sacrifice, giving and love for others. Therefore, it is a powerful tool for the development of one's personality.

The economic benefits of charity are to help reduce the gap between the rich and the poor. Undoubtedly the existence of poor and deprived people in the society will lead to an outbreak of violence and crimes which may at times lead to anarchy. This would make life hard for both the rich and the poor people. Therefore giving charity is good for the society and those who make donations both economically and spiritually.

The reference to "the Face of God" in the above verse is used in a symbolic way meaning that those who give charity should sincerely do it for the sake of God. We are also warned that we will not just gain a small reward for what we give in charity. Rather we get back all that we give and not the least bit of injustice is done to us. This could also mean that our deeds will have a manifestation. After reviewing some of the verses of the Qur'an on this issue let us now study some of the relevant traditions.

Traditions on Charity and its Effects

There are many traditions about charity. We will briefly present a few of them here.

An Increase in Our Share of Daily Bread

Giving charity will increase our share of daily bread. Sakuni quoted on the authority of Imam Sadiq on the authority of God's Prophet :

تَصَدَّقُوا فَإِنَّ الصَّدَقَةَ تَزِيدُ فِي الْمَالِ كَثْرَةً، فَتَصَدَّقُوا رَحِمَكُمُ اللَّهُ.

*"Give charity since it will cause an increase in your wealth. Therefore give charity and God will have Mercy upon you."*⁸

Imam Kazim said:

اسْتَنْزِلُوا الرِّزْقَ بِالصَّدَقَةِ.

*"By giving charity seek the descension of your daily bread."*⁹

Imam Ridha quoted on the authority of his father on the authority of the Noble Prophet :

خَيْرُ مَالِ الْمَرْءِ وَذَخَائِرُهُ الصَّدَقَةُ.

“The best of a person’s wealth and savings is what he gives in charity.”¹⁰

Treatment of Our Patients

The Prophet of God said:

دَاوُوا مَرْضَاكُمْ بِالصَّدَقَةِ.

“Treat your patients by giving charity.”¹¹

Thus we realize that the ill can be treated by both medications and giving charity. Abdullah ibn San’an quoted on the authority of Imam Sadiq :

دَاوُوا مَرْضَاكُمْ بِالصَّدَقَةِ وَادْفَعُوا الْبَلَاءَ بِالْדُّعَاءِ وَاسْتَزَلُّوا الرِّزْقَ بِالصَّدَقَةِ فَإِنَّهَا تَفُكُّ مِنْ بَيْنِ لَحْيَيْ سَبْعِمِائَةِ شَيْطَانٍ.

“Treat your patients by giving charity, and fend off calamities by supplications. Seek the descension of your share of the daily bread by giving charity since it will free you from the jaws of seven hundred Satans.”¹²

Abdullah ibn San’an quoted on the authority of Imam Sadiq who said:

يُسْتَحَبُّ لِلْمَرِيضِ أَنْ يُعْطِيَ السَّائِلَ بِيَدِهِ وَيَأْمُرَ السَّائِلَ أَنْ يَدْعُو لَهُ.

“It is recommended for an ill person to give charity to a poor person with his own hands and ask the poor man to pray for him.”¹³

Preventing Calamities

Musa ibn Hasan quoted on the authority of Imam Ridha :

ظَهَرَ فِي بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ قَحْطٌ شَدِيدٌ سِنِينَ مُتَوَاتِرَةً، وَكَانَ عِنْدَ امْرَأَةٍ لُقْمَةٌ مِنْ خُبْزٍ فَوَضَعَتْهَا فِي فِيهَا لِتَأْكُلَهَا فَنادى السَّائِلُ: يَا أُمَّةَ اللَّهِ، الْجُوعُ! فَقَالَتِ الْمَرْأَةُ: أَتَصَدَّقُ فِي مِثْلِ هَذَا الزَّمَانِ. فَأَخْرَجَتْهَا مِنْ فِيهَا وَدَفَعَتْهَا إِلَى السَّائِلِ. وَكَانَ لَهَا وَلَدٌ صَغِيرٌ يَحْتَطِبُ فِي الصَّحَرَاءِ، فَجَاءَ ذَنْبٌ فَحَمَلَهُ. فَوَقَعَتِ الصَّبِيحَةُ فَعَدَّتِ الْأُمُّ فِي أَثَرِ الذَّنْبِ. فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ جِبْرِيلَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ فَأَخْرَجَ الْغُلَامَ مِنَ الذَّنْبِ فَدَفَعَهُ إِلَى أُمِّهِ. ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهَا جِبْرِيلُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ: يَا أُمَّةَ اللَّهِ، أَرْضَيْتِ لُقْمَةَ بِلُقْمَةٍ؟

There was famine among the children of Israel for many consecutive years. A woman had just one morsel to eat. She put it in her mouth to eat, but a poor man called out and said: “O lady! I am about to

die of hunger.” The woman thought that it was time to give charity, so she withdrew the food from her mouth and gave it to the poor man. She had a small child who had gone to the desert to collect some wood to burn.

A wolf came and carried him away and he screamed. The woman heard him scream, and went after the wolf. God sent Gabriel down to save the child from the wolf’s mouth and to hand him over to his mother. Then Gabriel told her: “O bondmaid of God! Are you satisfied with a morsel for a morsel?”¹⁴

This is a clear example of what is meant when Imam Sajjad says: “your donations will be returned to you.”

There is another event supporting this. Ali ibn Ibrahim quoted the following tradition about the events that happened to a Jew at the time of the Prophet on the authority of Ahmad ibn Muhammad, on the authority of Salim ibn Mukarram, on the authority of Imam Sadiq . The man was going to go somewhere. The Prophet said that a black snake would follow him and kill him. The Jew went and returned after a while with a load of wooden sticks on his back. The Prophet asked him to drop the load on the ground. He did so, and a black snake came out.

The Prophet asked the Jew what he had done that day. The Jew said that he had done nothing special. He said that he had picked up the wooden sticks and had given one of the two loaves of bread he had to eat to a poor man and had eaten one himself. The Prophet told him that his life had been saved due to his act of charity. Then the Prophet said:

الْصَّدَقَةُ تَدْفَعُ مِيتَةَ السُّوءِ.

“Giving charity drives away a bad death.”¹⁵

Hanan ibn Sodayr quoted on the authority of his father on the authority of Imam Baqir :

إِنَّ الصَّدَقَةَ لَتَدْفَعُ سَبْعِينَ بَلِيَّةٍ مِنْ بَلَايَا الدُّنْيَا مَعَ مِيتَةِ السُّوءِ، وَإِنْ صَاحِبُهَا لَا يَمُوتُ مِيتَةَ السُّوءِ أَبَدًا مَعَ مَا يُدْخِرُ لِصَاحِبِهَا فِي الْآخِرَةِ.

“Giving charity will fend off seventy of this world’s calamities and save you from a bad death in addition to granting you the rewards for the Hereafter.”¹⁶

As seen from the Qur’anic verses cited above giving charity in private or in public is recommendable and has a reward. There are also several traditions that point this out. Imam Sadiq quoted on the authority of God’s Prophet :

صَدَقَةُ السِّرِّ تُطْفِئُ غَضَبَ الرَّبِّ

“Giving charity secretly will quench God’s wrath.”¹⁷

Umar ibn Yazid quoted on the authority of Imam Sadiq :

صَدَقَةُ الْعَلَانِيَةِ تَدْفَعُ سَبْعِينَ نَوْعاً مِنْ أَنْوَاعِ الْبَلَاءِ وَصَدَقَةُ السِّرِّ تُطْفِئُ غَضَبَ الرَّبِّ.

“Giving charity openly will fend off seventy types of calamities and giving charity secretly will extinguish the wrath of the Lord.”¹⁸

Fazl ibn al-Hasan al-Tabarsi wrote in Majma’ al-Bayan that the Imam said:

صَدَقَةُ السِّرِّ تُطْفِئُ غَضَبَ الرَّبِّ وَتُطْفِئُ الْخَطِيئَةَ كَمَا يُطْفِئُ الْمَاءُ النَّارَ وَتَدْفَعُ سَبْعِينَ بَاباً مِنَ الْبَلَاءِ.

“Giving charity in secret will quench the Wrath of the Lord and wipe out wrong-doings just as water puts out fire. It will also ward off seventy types of calamities.”¹⁹

Imam Sadiq quoted on the authority of God’s Prophet :

أَرْضُ الْقِيَامَةِ نَارٌ مَا خَلَا ظِلُّ الْمُؤْمِنِ؛ فَإِنَّ صَدَقَتَهُ تُظِلُّهُ.

“The plains of the Day of Judgment will be full of Fire except for the shadow of the believer, for his acts of charity will shade him.”²⁰

The Commander of the Faithful said:

صَدَقَةُ السِّرِّ تَكْفُرُ الْخَطِيئَةَ وَصَدَقَةُ الْعَلَانِيَةِ مِثْرَةٌ فِي الْمَالِ.

“Giving charity in secret will compensate for wrong-doings and sins, and giving charity in public will increase your wealth.”²¹

He also said:

سَبْعَةٌ يُظِلُّهُمْ اللَّهُ فِي ظِلِّهِ يَوْمَ لَا ظِلَّ إِلَّا ظِلُّهُ... وَرَجُلٌ تَصَدَّقَ بِصَدَقَةٍ فَأَخْفَاهَا حَتَّى لَمْ تَعْلَمْ يَمِينُهُ مَا تُنْفِقُ شِمَالُهُ.

“God will shade seven (groups of people) under His Shadow on the Day when there is no shadow other than His... One are those who give charity in the most secret way so that their right hand does not know what their left has given in charity!”²²

- [1.](#) In the other version it is followed by: “You should know that it repels calamities and illnesses in this world and it will repel the Fire from you in the Hereafter”.
- [2.](#) That your donations in charity will be returned to you.
- [3.](#) Tafsir-i-Namuneh, v.2, p.243.
- [4.](#) Tafsir-i-Namuneh, v.2, p.243.
- [5.](#) Majma’ al-Bayan, v.2, p.384.
- [6.](#) The Arabic word “wajh” literally means face, countenance; hence favor, glory, Self, Presence.
- [7.](#) Majma’ al-Bayan.
- [8.](#) Wasa’il al-Shi’ah, v.6, p.257.
- [9.](#) Ibid.
- [10.](#) Ibid. p.258.
- [11.](#) Ibid. p.260.
- [12.](#) Wasa’il al-Shi’ah, v.6, p.260.
- [13.](#) Ibid. v.6, p.262.
- [14.](#) Ibid. p.265.
- [15.](#) Wasa’il al-Shi’ah, pp.268–277.
- [16.](#) Ibid.
- [17.](#) Ibid.
- [18.](#) Ibid.
- [19.](#) Wasa’il al-Shi’ah, p.277.
- [20.](#) Wasa’il al-Shi’ah, p.256.
- [21.](#) Sharh-i-Ghurar wa Durar, v.4. p.207.
- [22.](#) Wasa’il al-Shi’ah, v.6, p.207.

Right n. 14: The Right of the Offering

حق الهدى

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ الْهَدْيِ فَأَنْ تُخْلِصَ بِهَا الْإِرَادَةَ إِلَى رَبِّكَ وَالتَّعَرُّضَ لِرَحْمَتِهِ وَقَبُولَهُ وَلَا تُرِيدَ عَيْنُونَ النَّاظِرِينَ دُونَهُ، فَإِذَا كُنْتَ كَذَلِكَ لَمْ تَكُنْ مُتَكَلِّفًا وَلَا مُتَصَيِّعًا وَكُنْتَ إِنَّمَا تَقْصِدُ إِلَى اللَّهِ. وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُرَادُ بِالْيُسْرِ وَلَا يُرَادُ بِالْعُسْرِ كَمَا أَرَادَ بِخَلْقِهِ التَّيْسِيرَ وَلَمْ يُرِدْ بِهِمُ التَّعْسِيرَ، وَكَذَلِكَ التَّذَلُّلُ أَوْلَى بِكَ مِنَ التَّدَهُّقِ لِأَنَّ الْكُلْفَةَ وَالْمُنُونَةَ فِي الْمَتَدَهِّقِينَ. فَأَمَّا التَّذَلُّلُ وَالتَّمَسُّكُ فَلَا كُلْفَةَ فِيهِمَا وَلَا مُنُونَةَ عَلَيْهِمَا لِأَنَّهُمَا الْخِلَقَةُ وَهُمَا مَوْجُودَانِ فِي الطَّبِيعَةِ. وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

And the right of the offering¹ is that through it² you purify your will toward your Lord, and expose yourself to His Mercy, and His approval and not the eyes of the observers lower than Him. If this is so, you will neither be hypocritical nor extravagant. You will only intend the offering for God’s sake, and know that God wishes your ease, and does not wish your hardship.

He also wishes His creatures to take it easy, and does not wish them to suffer hardships. Likewise, modesty is better than arrogance, for there lies extravagance and falsehood in the arrogant, while there are no formalities or falsehoods in the humble and the servile, since they

are creatures and they exist in nature. There is no power but in God.

The Arabic word ‘*hada*’ meaning offering is used to refer to the sacrifice made for the holy pilgrimage to the Ka’ba.³ We read the following verse in the Holy Qur’an:

وَلَا تَحْلِقُوا رُءُوسَكُمْ حَتَّىٰ يَبْلُغَ الْهَدْيُ مَحَلَّهُ

“And do not shave your heads until the offering reaches the place of sacrifice...” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Baqarah 2: 196]

This is called an offering since it is like a gift some give to others after they sacrifice it. This is similar to the present that the queen of Sheba sent for Solomon as we read in the following verse:

وَإِنِّي مُرْسِلَةٌ إِلَيْهِمْ بِهِدِيٍّ فَلَنَظِرَةٌ بِمِ يَرْجِعُ الْمُرْسَلُونَ

“But I am going to send him a present, and (wait) to see with what (answer) return (my) ambassadors.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Naml 27:35]

This word has been used seven times in the Holy Qur’an. In all instances, it is used to refer to the sacrifice made for the pilgrimage.

The Sacrifice

The second obligatory act in Mina for those who go on the pilgrimage is to send an offering for sacrifice. This offering is intended to be an act to get closer to God. We read the following in Majma’ al-Bahrain: “Offering refers to any good deed done with the intention of getting closer to God.” If we want to better understand what Imam Sajjad said about the offering, we should review the Qur’anic verses on this issue. Consider the following verse:

وَأَتِمُّوا الْحَجَّ وَالْعُمْرَةَ لِلَّهِ فَإِنْ أُحْصِرْتُمْ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ وَلَا تَحْلِقُوا رُءُوسَكُمْ حَتَّىٰ يَبْلُغَ الْهَدْيُ مَحَلَّهُ فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَّرِيضًا أَوْ بِهِ أَذًى مِنْ رَأْسِهِ فَفِدْيَةٌ مِنْ صِيَامٍ أَوْ صَدَقَةٍ أَوْ نُسْكَ فَإِذَا أَمِنْتُمْ فَمَنْ تَمَتَّعَ بِالْعُمْرَةِ إِلَى الْحَجِّ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ ...

“And complete the Hajj or 'Umrah in the service of God. But if ye are prevented (from completing it), send an offering for sacrifice, such as ye may find, and do not shave your heads until the offering reaches the place of sacrifice. And if any of you is ill, or has an ailment in his scalp, (necessitating shaving), (he should) in compensation either fast, or feed the poor, or offer sacrifice; and when ye are in peaceful conditions (again), if anyone wishes to continue the 'Umrah on to the Hajj, he must make an offering, such as he can afford...” [The Holy Qur’an, al-

Baqarah 2: 196]

In this verse God has spoken of the offering three times.

The first occasion is concerned with the situation where you are in the service of God, but you are prevented from completing it because of getting ill. In this case, you must send an offering for sacrifice.

The second occasion is on the day of celebration before shaving the head and after the ritual stoning of devil. It is not allowed to shave until the offering is sacrificed.

The third case is when you are in peaceful conditions again. Sending an offering for sacrifice in Mina is the certain duty of any pilgrim who wants to participate in the pilgrimage ceremonies.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَحْلُوا شَعَائِرَ اللَّهِ وَلَا الشَّهْرَ الْحَرَامَ وَلَا الْهَدْيَ وَلَا الْقَلَائِدَ وَلَا أَمِينَ الْبَيْتِ الْحَرَامَ يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانًا

“O ye who believe! Violate not the sanctity of the symbols of God, nor of the Sacred Month, nor of the animals brought for sacrifice, nor the garlands that mark out such animals, nor the people resorting to the Sacred House, seeking of the bounty and good pleasure of their Lord.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Maida 5:3]

There are eight decrees in this verse. One is related to animals brought for sacrifice – marked or unmarked. The same issue is pointed out in the following verse:

جَعَلَ اللَّهُ الْكَعْبَةَ الْبَيْتَ الْحَرَامَ قِيَامًا لِلنَّاسِ وَالشَّهْرَ الْحَرَامَ وَالْهَدْيَ وَالْقَلَائِدَ ذَلِكَ لِتَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

“God made the Ka’ba, the Sacred House, an asylum of security for men, as also the Sacred Months, the animals for offerings, and the garlands that mark them...” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Maida 5:97]

In another verse we read:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْتُلُوا الصَّيْدَ وَأَنْتُمْ حُرْمٌ وَمَنْ قَتَلَهُ مِنْكُمْ مُتَعَمِّدًا فَجَزَاءٌ مِثْلُ مَا قَتَلَ مِنَ النَّعَمِ يَحْكُمُ بِهِ ذَوَا عَدْلٍ مِنْكُمْ هَدْيًا بِالْغُلَامَةِ

“O ye who believe! Kill not game while in the sacred precincts or in pilgrim garb. If any of you doth so intentionally, the compensation is an offering, brought to the Ka’ba of a domestic animal equivalent to the one he killed, as adjudged by two just men among you...” [The Holy Qur’an, al-

Maida 5:95]

The compensation must be donated to the Ka'ba. Jurisprudents agree that the expiation related to hunting while in Umrah should be sacrificed in Mecca and that related to hunting while in Hajj should be sacrificed in Mina. They also agree on the place of sacrifice. The issue of the sacrificial animals is again referred to in the following verse:

هُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوكُمْ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَالْهَدْيِ مَعْكُوفًا أَنْ يَبْلُغَ مَحَلَّهُ

“They are the ones who denied Revelation and hindered you from the Sacred Mosque and the sacrificial animals, detained from reaching their place of sacrifice...” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Fath 48:25]

These were the seven instances where the offering to sacrifice is mentioned in the Qur'an. We understand the importance of the offering and realize that this is done in order to obey God and to approach Him, and that it is to be taken to Ka'ba or the place of sacrifice.

The History of Offering for Sacrifice

Everyone is instructed to know when the practice of sending an offering for sacrifice started. Historical records show various forms of offering for sacrifice existed in different nations. The Qur'an has stated the origin of this practice to be at the time of the two sons of Adam as we read in the following verse:

وَاتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ ابْنَيْ آدَمَ بِالْحَقِّ إِذْ قَرَّبَا قُرْبَانًا فَتُقُبِّلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمَا وَلَمْ يُتَقَبَّلْ مِنَ الْآخَرِ قَالَ لَأَقْتُلَنَّكَ قَالَ إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ

“Recite to them the truth of the story of the two sons of Adam. Behold! They each presented a sacrifice (to God): It was accepted from one, but not from the other. Said the latter: "Be sure I will slay thee." "Surely," said the former, "God doth accept of the sacrifice of those who are righteous.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Maida 5:27]

We can see that presenting a sacrifice to God is one of the means of approaching God. Since the present of one of them was accepted, the other one threatened to kill him. The two sons of Adam used this practice to test their closeness to God. Abraham also tested his closeness to God through presenting a sacrifice.

As understood from the Old Testament, God ordered him to sacrifice an animal.⁴ The children of Abraham expressed their closeness to God through offering sacrificial animals. The offerings at the time of Moses were of two types. They used to sacrifice one group and free the second group for the sake of

God. The group that was sacrificed was also of the following three kinds:

- 1) They used to burn one group and only leave its skin for the rabbi.
- 2) They used to burn half of the second group and leave the second half for the rabbi.
- 3) The third group were those whose meat was for everyone.

The Romans used to offer sacrifice for their gods. The Priests used to spread water, honey and rose water at the time of the offering. It is recorded in history that they did not restrict themselves to the sacrifice of animals. At times, they sacrificed people too. The Phoenicians, Canaanites, Persians, Romans and Egyptians practiced this until an order to ban this practice was issued in the year 657 A.D. by the Romanian Parliament.

It is said that each year the Egyptians used to drown a fully made up virgin girl in the river. They did this with the intention of getting closer to their gods. This wicked practice continued in Egypt until Amr ibn A's banned it upon the permission of Umar ibn Khattab. This has been quoted on the authority of Ustad Ahmad Jorjani who was one of the scholars in Al-Azhar University.[5](#)

Islam forbade all forms of offering for sacrifice for idols and men. Islam taught the proper practice of sending an offering to its followers. The verses related to this issue were cited above. Since human nature is inclined towards the belief in God, man likes to offer a sacrifice to Him. Islam taught man the proper way to offer a sacrifice, and the proper thing to offer. We should not think that the blood or the meat of the sacrificed animal would reach God. No. This is just a practice to help man approach God. Therefore, it should be done with the soul intention of approaching Him. That is why God's name should be invoked when we offer a sacrifice to Him.

Offering as a Religious and Intellectual Act

It can be concluded from the above discussion that offering animals for sacrifice is a religious and intellectual act that is done to purify the soul, and improve the economy. The meat of the sacrificed animal should be distributed among the poor people for the sake of God. This we understand from the following traditions.

Imam Sadiq quoted on the authority of God's Prophet :

إِنَّمَا جَعَلَ اللَّهُ هَذَا الْأَضْحَى لِتَتَسَعَ مَسَاكِينُكُمْ مِنَ اللَّحُومِ فَأَطْعِمُوهُمْ

"God has established this sacrifice in order that your poor may have ample meat to eat. Therefore, give them meat to eat!"[6](#)

Abi Basir narrated that he told Imam Sadiq : “What is the reason for offering for sacrifice?” The Imam said:

إِنَّهُ يُغْفَرُ لِصَاحِبِهَا عِنْدَ أَوَّلِ قَطْرَةٍ تَقْطُرُ مِنْ دَمِهَا عَلَى الْأَرْضِ وَلَيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَتَّقِيهِ بِالْغَيْبِ. قَالَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى: لَنْ يَنَالَ اللَّهُ لُحُومُهَا وَلَا دِمَاؤُهَا وَلَكِنْ يَنَالُهُ التَّقْوَى مِنْكُمْ ۚ أَنْظِرْ كَيْفَ قَبِلَ اللَّهُ قُرْبَانَ هَابِيلَ وَرَدَّ قُرْبَانَ قَابِيلَ..

‘The sins of the one who is offering will be forgiven when the first drop of blood of the sacrificed animal falls on the ground. It is also a means by which God gets to know those who fear Him in the Unseen. God the Almighty said: “It is neither their meat nor their blood that reaches God: it is your piety that reaches Him...” [Hajj, 22:37]. See how God accepted the offering of Abel, but turned down that of Cain.’ [7](#) [8](#)

The reward for the one offering the sacrifice and his being forgiven are stressed in this tradition. In addition, the fact that his purity of intentions is recognized is also outlined. Imam Ali said:

لَوْ عَلِمَ النَّاسُ مَا فِي الْأُضْحِيَّةِ لاسْتَدَانُوا وَضَحَّوْا؛ إِنَّهُ لَيُغْفَرُ لِصَاحِبِ الْأُضْحِيَّةِ عِنْدَ أَوَّلِ قَطْرَةٍ تَقْطُرُ مِنْ دَمِهَا.

“If the people only knew the reward for offering animals for sacrifice, they would borrow money to make an offering. Indeed, the sins of the one who is offering a sacrificial animal are forgiven once the first drop of its blood falls on the ground.” [9](#)

It has been recorded in Wasa'il al-Shah that the Prophet of God told his daughter, the Blessed Fatima :

إِشْهَدِي ذَبْحَ ذَبِيحَتِكَ فَإِنَّ أَوَّلَ قَطْرَةٍ مِنْهَا يَغْفِرُ اللَّهُ بِهَا كُلَّ ذَنْبٍ عَلَيْكَ... وَهَذَا لِلْمُسْلِمِينَ عَامَّةً.

“Be present beside the animal you offer for sacrifice since your sins will be forgiven the moment the first drop of its blood falls down on the ground.” He then added: “This issue applies to all Muslims.” [10](#)

Imam Kazim quoted on the authority of God's Prophet :

اسْتَفْرَهُوا ضَحَايَاكُمْ فَإِنَّهَا مَطَايَاكُمْ عَلَى الصِّرَاطِ.

“Seek for sacrificial animals that are brisk and agile since they will be your mounts to cross the (Bridge of) Sirat.” [11](#)

[1.](#) The animal sacrificed during the holy pilgrimage.

[2.](#) In the other version it continues: “You desire God and you do not desire His creation; through it you desire only the exposure of your soul to God's mercy and the deliverance of your spirit on the day you encounter Him.”

- [3.](#) The House of God.
- [4.](#) Sharh-i-Risalat al-Huquq, Ghopanchi, v. 1, p.365.
- [5.](#) Ibid. pp.366-367.
- [6.](#) 'Ilal al-Shara'i, p.437.
- [7.](#) The sons of Adam.
- [8.](#) Ilal al-Shara'i, p.438.
- [9.](#) Ibid.
- [10.](#) Sharh-i-Risalat al-Huquq, Ghopanchi, v. 1, p.369.
- [11.](#) 'Ilal al-Shara'i, p.438, section 179.

The Rights of the Leaders

ثم حقوق الأئمة

Right n. 15: The Right of the Possessor of Authority

حق سائسك بالسلطان

فَأَمَّا حَقُّ سَائِسِكَ بِالسُّلْطَانِ فَإِنَّ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّكَ جُعِلْتَ لَهُ فِتْنَةً وَأَنَّهُ مُبْتَلَىٰ فِيكَ بِمَا جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ لَهُ عَلَيْكَ مِنَ السُّلْطَانِ وَأَنْ تُخْلِصَ لَهُ فِي النَّصِيحَةِ وَأَنْ لَا تُمَاجِكُهُ وَقَدْ بَسِطَتْ يَدُهُ عَلَيْكَ فَتَكُونَ سَبَبَ هَلَاكِ نَفْسِكَ وَهَلَاكِهِ. وَتَذَلُّ وَتَلَطَّفُ لِإِعْطَائِهِ مِنَ الرِّضَا مَا يَكْفِيهِ عَنْكَ وَلَا يَضُرُّ بَدِينَكَ وَتَسْتَعِينُ عَلَيْهِ فِي ذَلِكَ بِاللَّهِ. وَلَا تُعَازِهُ وَلَا تُعَانِدُهُ فَإِنَّكَ إِنْ فَعَلْتَ ذَلِكَ عَقَقْتَهُ وَعَقَقْتَ نَفْسَكَ فَعَرَضْتَهَا لِمَكْرُوهِهِ وَعَرَضْتَهُ لِلْهَلَكَةِ فِيكَ وَكُنْتَ خَلِيقًا أَنْ تَكُونَ مُعِينًا لَهُ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِكَ وَشَرِيكًا لَهُ فِيمَا أَتَىٰ إِلَيْكَ. وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ.

Then the right of the possessor of authority is that you should know that God has established you as a trial for him. God is testing him through the authority He has given him over you. And you should sincerely provide him with your advice. And you should not quarrel with him while he has full dominance over you, for thereby you cause your own destruction and his, too. And you should be humble and courteous for his gifts to attain his satisfaction with you, so that he will not harm your religion.

And you should seek God's help in this regard. Do not oppose his power and do not resist him. Should you do so, you would have disobeyed him and disobeyed yourself: thus exposing

yourself to encounter his evil and expose him to destruction by you. Thus you will deserve to be considered to be his assistant acting against yourself and as his partner in what he does to you. And there is no power but in God.

In this chapter, we review the rights of the leaders of the society as expressed by Imam Sajjad . At first, the rights of the rulers are discussed. Everyone agrees that there must be a ruler in each society in order to run the affairs. Social regulations and laws should be executed under his rule. Social security and peace should be established and chaos should be avoided so that the people can continue their lives and struggle for further development.

Imam Ali's Views on the Need for a Ruler

When the “Kharijites”¹ objected to Imam Ali about the issue of “Hakamayn”² and claimed that the verdict lies but with God, Imam Ali said:

كَلِمَةٌ حَقٌّ يُرَادُ بِهَا بَاطِلٌ! نَعَمْ إِنَّهُ لَا حُكْمَ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ، وَلَكِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ يَقُولُونَ: لَا إِمْرَةَ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ. إِنَّهُ لَا بُدَّ لِلنَّاسِ مِنْ أَمِيرٍ بَرٍّ أَوْ فَاجِرٍ يَعْمَلُ فِي إِمْرَتِهِ الْمُؤْمِنُ وَيَسْتَمْتِعُ بِهَا الْكَافِرُ وَيُبْلِغُ اللَّهُ فِيهَا الْأَجَلَ وَيُجْمَعُ بِهِ الْفِيءُ وَيُقَاتَلُ بِهِ الْعَدُوُّ وَتَأْمَنُ بِهَا السُّبُلُ وَيُؤْخَذُ بِهِ لِلضَّعِيفِ مِنَ الْقَوِيِّ حَتَّى يَسْتَرِيحَ بَرٌّ وَيُسْتَرَاخَ مِنْ فَاجِرٍ.

“The statement is right but what (they think) it means is wrong. Yes, it is true that verdict lies but with God, but these people say that (the function of) governance is only for God. The fact is that there is no escape for men from a ruler, whether good or bad. The faithful persons perform (good) acts in his rule while the unfaithful ones enjoy (worldly) benefits in it. During the rule, God would carry everything to end. Tax is collected by the ruler, enemies are fought with, roadways are protected and the right of the weak is taken from the strong till the virtuous enjoys peace and is allowed protection from (the oppression of) the wicked.”

Imam Ali stresses the need for a ruler in the society and his role. He points out that a peaceful and strong society is one in which there is a strong rule based upon which security and order is established in the society. Here the Imam stressed the absolute necessity of a ruler in the society.

Imam Ridha's Views on the Need for a Ruler

Fazl ibn Shazan quoted Imam Ridha's views on the necessity of the existence of a ruler in the society, and the reasons behind it. He then stated that the Imam said:

وَمِنْهَا أَنَّا لَا نَجِدُ فِرْقَةً مِنَ الْفِرَقِ وَلَا مَلَّةً مِنَ الْمِلَلِ بَقُوا وَعَاشُوا إِلَّا بِقِيَمٍ وَرَأْسٍ لِمَا لَا بُدَّ لَهُمْ مِنْهُ فِي أَمْرِ الدِّينِ وَالْدُنْيَا، فَلَمْ يَجُزْ فِي حِكْمَةِ الْحَكِيمِ أَنْ يَتْرَكَ الْخَلْقَ مِمَّا يُعْلَمُ أَنَّهُ لَا بُدَّ لَهُمْ مِنْهُ وَلَا قِوَامَ لَهُمْ إِلَّا بِهِ، فَيُقَاتِلُونَ بِهِ عَدُوَّهُمْ وَيُقَسِّمُونَ بِهِ فَيْئَهُمْ وَيُقِيمُ لَهُمْ جَمْعِيَّتَهُمْ وَجَمَاعَتَهُمْ وَيَمْنَعُ ظَالِمَهُمْ مِنْ مَظْلُومِهِمْ.

“One reason to support this view is that there have been no groups or nations who have been able to continue living without a leader or ruler, since people need a leader for their worldly and heavenly affairs. Therefore, it is not wise for a sage to deprive the people of what they need to continue living. They fight their enemies under his rule. They divide the booties under his supervision. They establish their Friday congregations and other gatherings through him. They seek justice for the weak ones against the oppressors by him.”³

The need for a leader is clearly established from these words expressed by Imam Ridha .

Just Leaders and Their Characteristics

God has said in the Holy Qur'an that there are two kinds of rulers: just leaders and oppressive rulers. Each one has certain characteristics that we will briefly outline here. Consider the following verse of the Holy Qur'an:

وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ الْخَيْرَاتِ وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءَ الزَّكَاةِ وَكَانُوا لَنَا عَابِدِينَ

“And We made them leaders, guiding (men) by Our Command, and We sent them inspiration to do good deeds, to establish regular prayers, and to practice regular charity; and they constantly served Us (and Us only).” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Anbiya 21:73]

The characteristics and duties expressed in this verse about leaders appointed by God are as follows:

- 1) Guiding men by God's Command
- 2) Receiving divine inspiration to do good deeds, establish regular prayers, practice regular charity in order to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor
- 3) To constantly serve God, i.e. they must have served God to attain the position of leadership of the society.

Leadership as a Requirement for Victory

God has clearly stated strength and power as a requirement for a just ruler in the Holy Qur'an. The Qur'an cites a few illustrative examples. One such example is the story of Talut that is also expressed in the Bible.⁴ Talut was a tall, strong and handsome man. He had strong nerves. He was very wise and intelligent. Some say he was called Talut because he was very tall.⁵ Consider the following verse of the Holy Qur'an:

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الْمَلَا مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مُوسَى إِذْ قَالُوا لِنَبِيِّ لَهُمْ ابْعَثْ لَنَا مَلِكًا نُقَاتِلَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ

"Hast thou not turned thy vision to the Chiefs of the Children of Israel after (the time of) Moses? They said to a Prophet (that was) among them: "Appoint for us a king, that we may fight in the cause of God...." [The Holy Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2:246]

Also, consider the following verse:

وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ بَعَثَ لَكُمْ طَالُوتَ مَلِكًا قَالُوا أَنَّى يَكُونُ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ عَلَيْنَا وَنَحْنُ أَحَقُّ بِالْمُلْكِ مِنْهُ وَلَمْ يُؤْتَ سَعَةً مِنَ الْمَالِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاهُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَزَادَهُ بَسْطَةً فِي الْعِلْمِ وَالْجِسْمِ وَاللَّهُ يُؤْتِي مُلْكَهُ مَن يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

Their Prophet said to them: "God hath appointed Talut as king over you." They said: "How can he exercise authority over us when we are better fitted than he to exercise authority, and he is not even gifted, with wealth in abundance?" He said: "God hath chosen him above you, and hath gifted him abundantly with knowledge and bodily prowess: God granteth His authority to whom He pleaseth. God careth for all, and He knoweth all things." [The Holy Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2:247]

We see that having a strong and intelligent leader is an important factor in achieving victory and success. This can clearly be seen in this verse where a knowledgeable person is appointed to rule the Children of Israel. They objected to his being poor but God responds with the fact that Talut is gifted with knowledge and bodily prowess.

Talut Heads the Army

Talut headed the army and proved his ability to run the affairs of the army and the country in a very short time. Then he went to fight against an enemy that seriously threatened them. He stressed that only those who were whole-heartedly interested in fighting with the enemy could accompany him. Then the children of Israel finally managed to overcome Jalut's forces under the leadership of a strong leader.

From studying this account, we can see that the most important aspects of leadership are divine appointment, knowledge and power. The leader uses his knowledge to recognize the proper path to progress for the society that he leads. He uses his power to implement his plans. Another point mentioned by Imam Sajjad is that God will test both the leader and his followers. We see an example of this test in the story of Talut as we read the following verse:

فَلَمَّا فَصَلَ طَالُوتُ بِالْجُنُودِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مُبْتَلِيكُمْ بِنَهَرٍ فَمَن شَرِبَ مِنْهُ فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي وَمَن لَّمْ يَطْعَمْهُ فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّي إِلَّا مَنِ اغْتَرَفَ غُرْفَةً بِيَدِهِ فَشَرِبُوا مِنْهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْهُمْ فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَهُ هُوَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ قَالُوا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا الْيَوْمَ بِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِ قَالَ الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُم مُّلَاقُوا اللَّهِ كَم مِّن فِتْنَةٍ قَلِيلَةٍ غَلَبَتْ فِتْنَةُ كَثِيرَةٍ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ

When Talut set forth with the armies, he said: "God will test you at the stream: if any drinks of its water, He goes not with my army: Only those who taste not of it go with me: A mere sip out of the

hand is excused.” But they all drank of it, except a few. When they crossed the river, – He and the faithful ones with him, – they said: “This day we cannot cope with Goliath and his forces.” But those who were convinced that they must meet God, said: “How oft, by God’s will, hath a small force vanquished a big one? God is with those who steadfastly persevere.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Baqarah 2:249]

Good Use of Power by Alexander

Another example of the good use of power is found in the story of Alexander or Zul-qarnain. In this story, Alexander runs into a people who hardly understand but are apparently rich and have an enemy. Consider the following verse in this regard:

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ بَيْنَ السَّدَّيْنِ وَجَدَ مِنْ دُونِهِمَا قَوْمًا لَا يَكَادُونَ يَفْقَهُونَ قَوْلًا

“Until, when he reached (a tract) between two mountains, he found, beneath them, a people who scarcely understood a word.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Kahf 18:93]

This refers to some people who lived in a mountainous region. They were neither Eastern nor Western. They were of a very backward civilization since the Qur’an says that they scarcely understood a word. Alternatively, it may be that they were mentally retarded. This is, of course, less probable. They had ruthless enemies called the people of Gog and Magog. They complained to Alexander about them, and offered to pay him tribute in order to build a barrier between them and the people of Gog and Magog. Consider the following verse in this respect:

قَالُوا يَا ذَا الْقُرْنَيْنِ إِنَّ يَأْجُوجَ وَمَأْجُوجَ مُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَهَلْ نَجْعَلُ لَكَ خَرْجًا عَلَىٰ أَنْ تَجْعَلَ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَهُمْ سَدًّا قَالَ مَا مَكَّنِّي رَبِّي خَيْرٌ فَأَعِينُونِي بِقُوَّةٍ أَجْعَلْ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ رَدْمًا أَتُونِي زُبَرَ الْحَدِيدِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا سَاوَىٰ بَيْنَ الصَّدَفَيْنِ قَالَ انْفُخُوا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَعَلَهُ نَارًا قَالَ أَتُونِي أُفْرِغْ عَلَيْهِ قِطْرًا

“They said: “O Zul-qarnain! The Gog and Magog (People) do great mischief on earth: shall we then render thee tribute in order that thou mightest erect a barrier between them and us?” He said: “(The power) in which my Lord has established me is better (than tribute): Help me therefore with strength (and labor): I will erect a strong barrier between you and them. Bring me blocks of iron.” At length, when he had filled up the space between the two steep mountainsides, he said, “Blow (with your bellows).” Then, when he had made it (red) as fire, he said: “Bring me, that I may pour over it, molten lead.”” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Kahf 18:94–96]

It seems that the pathway through which the people of Gog and Magog attacked them was a space between two steep mountainsides. Alexander filled up that space with blocks of iron, had it heated up and then poured molten lead over it to totally block off the passage.⁶ Then instead of being haughty for

what he had done, he politely stated that his power was that of his Lord's Mercy on him. The people thanked him. This is one of the characteristics of a strong leader. Imam Ali said:

فَإِنَّ الرِّعْيَةَ الصَّالِحَةَ تَنْجُو بِالْإِمَامِ الْعَادِلِ. أَلَا وَإِنَّ الرِّعْيَةَ الْفَاجِرَةَ تُهْلِكُ بِالْإِمَامِ الْفَاجِرِ.

“The saving of good people depends on their just leader. The destruction of bad people is due to their bad leader.”⁷

Recognize Good Leaders and Obey Them

Imam Sadiq narrated that Imam Husayn told his companions:

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ! إِنَّ اللَّهَ جَلَّ ذِكْرُهُ مَا خَلَقَ الْعِبَادَ إِلَّا لِيَعْرِفُوهُ، فَإِذَا عَرَفُوهُ عَبَدُوهُ، فَإِذَا عَبَدُوهُ اسْتَغْنَوْا عَنْ عِبَادَةِ مَا سِوَاهُ.

“O people! God created the people only in order that they get to recognize Him. When they recognize Him, they worship Him, and when they worship Him they have no need of worshipping other than Him.”

A man said: “O’ May my parents be your ransom! How do we get to recognize God?” Imam Husayn said:

مَعْرِفَةُ أَهْلِ كُلِّ زَمَانٍ إِمَامُهُمُ الَّذِي يَجِبُ عَلَيْهِمْ طَاعَتُهُ.

“For each era the people should recognize their own leader whose obedience is obligatory for them.”

Thus, we see that the Imam considers getting to know the just leader is the proper way to recognize God.

Egyptians Were Saved by a Just Leader

We read in the Holy Qur’an that when Joseph was released from jail, and his talents became apparent to the ruler of Egypt, he was offered a high position in the government. Joseph who was an honest man and knew economics well thought that he could save the people of Egypt. He asked to be appointed as the treasurer. Consider the following verse of the Holy Qur’an:

قَالَ اجْعَلْنِي عَلَى خَزَائِنِ الْأَرْضِ إِنِّي حَفِيظٌ عَلَيْمُ

“(Joseph) said: “Set me over the store-houses of the land: I will indeed guard them, as one that knows (their importance).” [The Holy Qur’an, Yusuf 12:55]

Joseph ran the affairs of the country and safely led the Egyptian people through the years of famine in such a successful way that the Qur'an considers him one of the best human leaders.

A Just Ruler Deserves to be Respected

There are many traditions that stress the necessity of respecting a just ruler. We shall mention a few of them here. The Prophet of God said:

وَقَرُّوا السَّلَاطِينَ وَجَلُّوهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ عِزُّ اللَّهِ وَظِلُّهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِذَا كَانُوا عَدُولًا.

“Respect and revere the rulers since they are the Glory of God and His shadow on earth if they are just.”⁸

It has been narrated that Umar asked the Prophet of God : “Please inform me of a ruler to whom everyone bows in respect.” The Prophet said:

(هو) ظِلُّ اللَّهِ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَإِذَا أَحْسَنَ فَلَهُ الْأَجْرُ وَعَلَيْكُمْ الشُّكْرُ، وَإِذَا أَسَاءَ فَعَلَيْهِ الْإِصْرُ وَعَلَيْكُمْ الصَّبْرُ

“He is God’s shadow on the earth. Whenever he does some good act, there will be a reward for him and you must be grateful to him. Whenever he does an evil act, he is held responsible for it and you must be patient and persevering.”⁹

We see that in this tradition the Prophet of God has stressed that we should be grateful to just rulers. It has been narrated that Imam Kazim advised his followers as follows:

لَا تُذِلُّوا رِقَابَكُمْ بِتَرْكِ طَاعَةِ سُلْطَانِكُمْ فَإِنْ كَانَ عَادِلًا فَاسْأَلُوا اللَّهَ إِيقَاءَهُ، وَإِنْ كَانَ جَائِرًا فَاسْأَلُوا اللَّهَ إِصْلَاحَهُ، فَإِنَّ صَلَاحَكُمْ فِي صَلَاحِ سُلْطَانِكُمْ، وَإِنَّ السُّلْطَانَ الْعَادِلَ بِمَنْزِلَةِ الْوَالِدِ الرَّحِيمِ فَأَحِبُّوا لَهُ مَا تُحِبُّونَ لَأَنْفُسِكُمْ وَأَكْرَهُوا لَهُ مَا تَكْرَهُونَ لَأَنْفُسِكُمْ.

“Do not debase yourselves through disobedience to your rulers. If they are just rulers, ask God for their prosperity and lasting rule. If they are oppressive rulers, ask God to guide them. Your righteousness depends on his righteousness. A just ruler is like a kind father. Like for him what you like for yourselves, and dislike for him what you dislike for yourselves.”¹⁰

We see that the Imam depicts a just ruler as a kind father. He can direct the society towards progress, development and perfection, just as a kind father raises a good child. The Noble Prophet said:

زَيْنَ اللَّهِ السَّمَاءُ بِثَلَاثَةِ: الشَّمْسِ وَالْقَمَرِ وَالْكَوَاكِبِ. وَزَيْنَ الْأَرْضِ بِثَلَاثَةِ: الْعُلَمَاءِ وَالْمَطَرِ وَالسُّلْطَانَ الْعَادِلِ.

“God has adorned the heavens with three things: the sun, the moon and the stars. He has also adorned the earth with three things: scholars, rain and just rulers.”¹¹

A Just Pagan Ruler or a Muslim Oppressive Ruler

When Hulegu Khan conquered Baghdad in 1258 A.D. he had his agents ask the wise ones in Baghdad whether a just pagan ruler is better or a Muslim oppressive ruler. When the scientists gathered in the Mustansiriyah School and read the question they refused to answer. Razi ad-din Ali ibn Tavoos who was highly respected by the sages in Baghdad was also present there. When he saw that they refused to answer the question, he started to write the answer as follows: “A just pagan ruler is better than an oppressive Muslim ruler. This is supported by a tradition from the Prophet of God , which says:

يَبْقَى الْمُلْكُ بِالْعَدْلِ مَعَ الْكُفْرِ، وَلَا يَبْقَى بِالْجَوْرِ مَعَ الْإِيمَانِ.

Rule lasts if accompanied by justice, even if it is a pagan’s rule. However, it will not last by oppression even if it is a Muslim’s rule.”¹²

Being Informed about Governmental Affairs

Another important characteristic of a good ruler is being informed about governmental affairs. We saw in the story of Talut a manifestation of this principle. He was strong and well-informed as to how to run the affairs. A ruler’s knowledge of the affairs of the government is like a lantern that lights up his way out of darkness. Some wise men have said that if a ruler lacks knowledge, he is like an elephant that runs over and destroys everything when it attacks, since it neither has knowledge nor intellect that are the means which hinder oppression.

Fear and Piety

Another good characteristic of a just ruler is piety and being God-fearing. These characteristics are a source of good blessings. When a ruler has piety, his people live in security. It is narrated that once Imam Ali called his slave. He did not respond. He called him several times again, but the slave did not respond. Then someone entered the room and told Imam Ali that the slave was standing behind the door, but did not respond.

Then the slave entered the room and Imam Ali asked him if he had heard being called. The slave replied positively. Then the Imam asked why he had not responded. The slave said: “I did not respond because I feel secure that I will not be punished by you.” Then Imam Ali said: “I thank God for establishing me as one whose creatures are secure from.”

Forgiving and Overlooking

Other good characteristics of a ruler are forgiving and overlooking people's minor faults as we read in the following verse:

وَلْيَعْفُوا وَلْيَصْفَحُوا أَلَا تُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ

“Let them forgive and overlook, do you not wish that God should forgive you?” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Nur 24:22]

Imam Ali said:

إِذَا قَدَرْتَ عَلَى عَدُوِّكَ فَاجْعَلِ الْعَفْوَ عَنْهُ شُكْرًا لِقُدْرَتِكَ عَلَيْهِ

“Forgive your enemy once you have overcome him, so as to be grateful about the blessing of the victory which you have been granted.” [13](#)

In Imam Ali's letter to Malik al-Ashtar, we read:

لَا تَتَذَمَّنْ عَلَى عَفْوٍ وَلَا تَبْجَحَنَّ بِعُقُوبَةٍ

“Never be sorry about forgiving, and never be pleased with punishing.” [14](#)

In the same letter, Imam Ali wrote:

فَأَعْطِهِمْ مِنْ عَفْوِكَ وَصَفْحِكَ مِثْلَ الَّذِي تُحِبُّ وَتَرْضَى أَنْ يُعْطِيَكَ اللَّهُ مِنْ عَفْوِهِ وَصَفْحِهِ، فَإِنَّكَ فَوْقَهُمْ، وَوَالِي الْأَمْرِ عَلَيْكَ فَوْقَكَ، وَاللَّهُ فَوْقَ مَنْ وَلَاكَ

“Forgive the people as you wish God to grant you His forgiveness. Your rank is above them, and the rank of the possessor of the rule is above yours, and God's rank is above the rank of the one who has granted you your authority.” [15](#)

Fulfilling His Engagements

Another important characteristic of a ruler is that he should fulfill his engagements. In this regard, God says:

وَأَوْفُوا بِالْعَهْدِ إِنَّ الْعَهْدَ كَانَ مَسْئُولًا

“And fulfill (every) engagement, for (every) engagement will be enquired into (on the Day of Reckoning).” [The Holy Qur’an, Bani Isra’il 17:34]

Being Informed about the Country’s Affairs

Another good characteristic for a ruler is being well-informed about the affairs of the people and the country. He should know the problems and the insufficiencies that the people are dealing with. He should do his best to pave the way for the elimination of these difficulties and set his nation on the path to progress and development. Imam Ali wrote the following to Malik al-Ashtar in this regard:

وَأَمَّا بَعْدَ هَذَا فَلَا تُطَوِّلَنَّ احْتِجَابَكَ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِكَ، فَإِنَّ احْتِجَابَ الْوُلَاةِ عَنِ الرِّعَايَةِ شُعْبَةٌ مِنَ الضِّيْقِ، وَقَلَّةُ عِلْمٍ بِالْأُمُورِ، وَالْاحْتِجَابُ مِنْهُمْ يَقْطَعُ عَنْهُمْ عِلْمَ مَا احْتَجَبُوا دُونَهُ فَيَصْغُرُ عِنْدَهُمُ الْكَبِيرُ، وَيَعْظُمُ الصَّغِيرُ، وَيَقْبَحُ الْحَسَنُ، وَيَحْسَنُ الْقَبِيحُ وَيُشَابُ الْحَقُّ بِالْبَاطِلِ

“Do not prolong your seclusion from your subjects, for the rulers’ seclusion from their subjects is a kind of limitation and (results in) a lack of knowledge about (their) affairs. Seclusion from them deprives them (the rulers) of the knowledge of what is concealed from them so that what is great becomes small for them and the small becomes great, the good is seen to be ugly and the ugly to be good, and the truth is mixed with falsehood.”

Oppressive Rulers

As we said God has set two kinds of leaders: just ones and oppressive ones. The Qur’an says:

وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَدْعُونَ إِلَى النَّارِ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ لَا يُنصَرُونَ

“And we made them (but) leaders inviting to the Fire; and on the Day of Judgment no help shall they find.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Qasas 28:41]

Oppressive rulers invite the people who follow them to the Fire of Hell. Now you may wonder how God could set some oppressive rulers while He has sent Prophets to invite man to do good and to lead man to prosperity. The answer is that having an oppressive ruler is a direct consequence of a nation’s acts. Naturally, the fact that is usually expressed as “for every action there is a reaction” is just a divine law. They have set out on a path that leads them to the rule of corrupt people. That is why they are the masters of the residents of Hell, as they were leaders of the corrupt people in this world. Thus they are cursed by God in this world, and in the next to come as God says:

وَأَتَّبَعْنَاهُمْ فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا لَعْنَةً وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ هُمْ مِنَ الْمَقْبُوحِينَ

“In this world We made a curse to follow them and on the Day of Judgment they will be among the loathed (and despised).” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Qasas 28:42]

God’s curse is depriving them of His Mercy. The curse of the angels and the believers will also be always upon them. Divine leaders invite the people to do good deeds, but corrupt rulers invite the people to corruption and the Fire. There is a tradition from Imam Sadiq in this regard. It says that divine leaders give priority to God’s orders over those of the people and their own will.

They consider God’s decrees to be the best ones. However, the second group give priority to their own orders over those of God and consider their decrees to be above His. [16](#) As each leader has some followers in this world, each leader in the Hereafter also has some followers. Bashar ibn Ghalib quoted on the authority of Imam Husayn when asked about the interpretation of the following verse:

يَوْمَ نَدْعُو كُلَّ أُنَاسٍ بِإِمَامِهِمْ

“One day We shall call together all human beings with their (respective) Imams.” [The Holy Qur’an, Bani Israil 17:71]

Imam Husayn said:

إِمَامٌ دَعَا إِلَى هُدًى فَأَجَابُوهُ إِلَيْهِ وَإِمَامٌ دَعَا إِلَى ضَلَالَةٍ فَأَجَابُوهُ إِلَيْهِ: هَؤُلَاءِ فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَهَؤُلَاءِ فِي النَّارِ. وَهُوَ قَوْلُهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: فَرِيقٌ فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَفَرِيقٌ فِي السَّعِيرِ.

“A leader invites to guidance and some people follow him. Another leader invites to corruption and some people accept his invitation. The first group will go to Heaven while the second group goes to Hell. This is what is meant by the Almighty God’s words: ‘... (when) some will be in the Garden, and some in the Blazing Fire’ [Shura 42:7].” [17](#)

Imam Sadiq said:

إِنَّ فِي وَلَايَةِ الْوَالِي الْجَائِرِ دُرُوسَ الْحَقِّ وَإِحْيَاءَ الْبَاطِلِ كُلِّهِ وَإِظْهَارَ الظُّلْمِ وَالْجَوْرِ وَالْفَسَادِ.

“Truth is erased, falsehood is revived, and injustice, oppression and corruption become manifest during the rule of an oppressive ruler.” [18](#)

The Noble Prophet of Islam said:

لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ آفَةٌ يُفْسِدُهُ وَآفَةُ هَذَا الدِّينِ وُلَاةُ السُّوءِ.

*“For everything there is a blight that corrupts it. The blight of this religion is evil rulers.”*¹⁹

Imam Baqir said:

ثَلَاثَةٌ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ حُرْمَةٌ: صَاحِبُ هَوًى مُبْتَدِعٌ وَالْإِمَامُ الْجَائِرُ وَالْفَاسِقُ الْمُعْلِنُ فُسُوقَهُ.

*“There are three groups of people who are not entitled to respect: those who have a lust for innovations (in religion), those who are oppressive leaders, and corrupt people who manifest their corrupt deeds.”*²⁰

From the above discussion, we can clearly see the role of oppressive rulers in destroying the truth and making falsehood and corruption prevail in the society.

An Oppressive Rule: From Light into Darkness

God says in the Holy Qur'an:

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَوْلِيَاؤُهُمُ الطَّاغُوتُ يُخْرِجُونَهُمْ مِّنَ النُّورِ إِلَى الظُّلُمَاتِ

“..Of those who reject faith the patrons are the evil ones: from light they will lead them forth into the depths of darkness...” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2:257]

Imam Sadiq said:

لَا دِينَ لِمَنْ دَانَ بِوِلَايَةِ إِمَامٍ جَائِرٍ لَيْسَ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَلَا عَتَبَ عَلَى مَنْ دَانَ بِوِلَايَةِ إِمَامٍ عَدْلٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ. (قال ابن أبي يعفور)
قلت: لَا دِينَ لِأُولَئِكَ وَلَا عَتَبَ عَلَى هَؤُلَاءِ؟ فقال عليه السَّلَامُ: نَعَمْ! لَا لَا دِينَ لِأُولَئِكَ وَلَا عَتَبَ عَلَى هَؤُلَاءِ. أَمَا تَسْمَعُ لِقَوْلِ
اللَّهِ: اللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ.

“Whoever accepts the leadership and rule of an oppressive ruler not appointed by God has no religion, and whoever accepts the leadership of a just leader appointed by God has no blame (on him).” Ibn Abi Ya'foor asked: “No religion for those and no blame on these?” The Imam said: “Yes. No religion for those and no blame on these! Did you not hear God's statement: ‘God is the Protector of those who have faith: from the depths of darkness He will lead them forth into light...’”[al-Baqarah, 2:257].

Treacherous Ruler as Viewed by Imam Ali

The following is a part of a letter that Imam Ali wrote to Masqalah b. Hubayrah al-Shaybani, who was his

representative in a city in the province of Fars²¹ called Ardeshir Khorrah:

بَلَّغَنِي عَنْكَ أَمْرٌ أَنْ فَعَلْتَهُ فَقَدْ أَسْخَطْتَ الْإِهْلَكَ وَعَصَيْتَ إِمَامَكَ: إِنَّكَ تَقْسِمُ فِيَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ الَّذِي حَازَتْهُ رِمَاحُهُمْ وَخِيُولُهُمْ وَأُرِيقَتْ عَلَيْهِ دِمَاؤُهُمْ فِي مَنْ اعْتَمَاكَ مِنْ أَعْرَابِ قَوْمِكَ. قَوْلَ الَّذِي فَلَقَ الْحَبَّةَ وَبَرَّءَ النَّسَمَةَ لِيَنْ كَانَ ذَلِكَ حَقًّا لَتَجِدَنَّ بِكَ عَلَيَّ هَوَانًا وَلَتَخَفَنَّ عِنْدِي مِيزَانًا، فَلَا تَسْتَهِنَ بِحَقِّ رَبِّكَ وَلَا تُصْلِحَ دُنْيَاكَ بِمَحَقِّ دِينِكَ فَتَكُونَ مِنَ الْأَخْسَرِينَ أَعْمَالًا.

“I have heard things about you that, if true, imply that you have raised your Lord’s wrath, and you have disobeyed your leader. I have been notified that you are dividing the properties of Muslims that they have earned with their spears and horses, and for which they have shed their blood, between your Arab relatives who have come to you. I swear by Him Who split the seed and created man, that if this is true then you will find yourself debased in my sight and you will be lowered in my estimation. Therefore do not make light of your Lord’s right, and do not build your world by destroying your religion lest you be of those who are ‘..the greatest losers in their works”’ (18: 103).”²²

Then he continues:

أَمَّا بَعْدُ، فَإِنَّ مِنْ أَعْظَمِ الْخِيَانَةِ خِيَانَةَ الْأُمَّةِ وَأَعْظَمُ الْغِشِّ عَلَى أَهْلِ الْمِصْرِ غِشُّ الْإِمَامِ، وَعِنْدَكَ مِنْ حَقِّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ خَمْسُمِائَةِ أَلْفِ دِرْهَمٍ فَابْعَثْ بِهَا إِلَيْنَا حِينَ يَأْتِيكَ رَسُولِي.

“Moreover, indeed the greatest form of treachery is that done to a nation, and the greatest form of deceit against the people of the city is the deceit of the leader. You have five hundred thousand Dirhams of dues belonging to the Muslims, so send it to us when my representative comes to you.” ²³

We see how Masqalah who had started to forcefully take away the people’s property is blamed by Imam Ali and his treachery is considered to be the worst possible type by the Imam .

Abu-Dharr’s Request was Turned Down

It has been quoted on the authority of Abu-Dharr: “I told the Prophet of God : Will you not appoint me to a government position?” The Prophet replied:

يَا أَبَا ذَرٍّ! إِنَّكَ ضَعِيفٌ وَإِنَّهَا أَمَانَةٌ، وَإِنَّهَا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ خِزْيٌ وَنَدَامَةٌ إِلَّا مَنْ أَخَذَ بِحَقِّهَا وَأَدَّى الَّذِي عَلَيْهِ فِيهَا.

“O Abu-Dharr! You are weak and the rule of a government is a trust. On the Day of Judgment it will be a (cause of) disgrace and remorse except for those who rightfully obtain it, and fulfil what is incumbent on them in it.”²⁴

Thus, we see that although Abu-Dharr was one of the special companions of the Prophet , he was

denied a government position, and told that he was not able to run the affairs of the government.

- [1.](#) A sect of Muslims who rebelled against the caliphate.
- [2.](#) “Hakamayn” in Arabic means two “hakims”. A “hakim” is a magistrate or one who issues decrees.
- [3.](#) Al-Hayat, v.2, p.386.
- [4.](#) The king of Palestine. Talut is the Arabic name for Saul. Consider the following verses from the Bible:
“When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families, the family of Matri was taken, and Saul the son of Kish was taken: and when they sought him, he could not be found. Therefore they enquired of the Lord further, if the man should yet come thither. And the Lord answered, Behold he hath hid himself among the stuff. And they ran and fetched him thence: and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward. And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king. [1 Samuel 10:21–24, King James version].
- [5.](#) Why did the Prophet Muhammad name Saul “Talut”? This is seemingly the only name in the Qur’an for a Biblical figure which seems to have no linguistic connection to its Biblical name. According to the Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam it is most probably chosen for poetic reasons to make his name rhyme with Jalut [Goliath, 2:249, 250]. Maybe another reason is that Saul was very tall [1 Samuel 10:21–24], and hence he is called Talut from the Arabic word ‘taala’ (to be long/tall) as suggested in Paret’s commentary on the Qur’an. But this is not directly stated in the Qur’an and thus must remain speculative. The Qur’an does state that he had an impressive physique.
- [6.](#) Tafsir-i-Namunah, v. 12, p.534.
- [7.](#) Al-Hayat, v.2, p.385.
- [8.](#) Sharh-i-Risalat al-Huquq, Ghopanchi, v. 1, p.328.
- [9.](#) Ibid.
- [10.](#) Ibid.
- [11.](#) Ibid. p.383.
- [12.](#) Sharh-i-Risalat al-Huquq, Ghopanchi, p.385.
- [13.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Fayz al-Islam, Wise saying no. 10.
- [14.](#) Ibid. Letter no. 53.
- [15.](#) Ibid.
- [16.](#) Tafsir-i-Namunah, v. 16, p.93; quoted from Tafsir Safi.
- [17.](#) Nur al-Thaqalayn, v.3, p. 192.
- [18.](#) Al-Hayat, v.2, p.405.
- [19.](#) Nahjul Fasahat, tradition no.2255.
- [20.](#) Al-Hayat, v.2, p.391.
- [21.](#) In Iran.
- [22.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Fayz al-Islam, Letter no. 43.
- [23.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, v.33, p.416.
- [24.](#) Sharh-i-Risalat al-Huquq, Ghopanchi, v. 1, p.374.

Right n. 16: The Right of the Trainer through Knowledge

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ سَائِسِكَ بِالْعِلْمِ فَالتَّعَظِيمُ لَهُ وَالتَّوْقِيرُ لِمَجْلِسِهِ وَحُسْنُ الاسْتِمَاعِ إِلَيْهِ وَالْإِقْبَالُ عَلَيْهِ وَالْمَعُونَةُ لَهُ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ
فِيمَا لَا غِنَى بِكَ عَنْهُ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ بِأَنْ تُفَرِّغَ لَهُ عَقْلَكَ وَتُحْضِرَهُ فَهْمَكَ وَتُزَكِّيَ لَهُ قَلْبَكَ وَتُجَلِّيَ لَهُ بَصَرَكَ بِتَرْكِ اللَّذَاتِ
وَنَقْصِ الشَّهَوَاتِ، وَأَنْ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّكَ فِيمَا أَلْقَى إِلَيْكَ رَسُولُهُ إِلَى مَنْ لَقِيكَ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْجَهْلِ فَلَزِمَكَ حُسْنُ التَّأْدِيبَةِ عَنْهُ إِلَيْهِمْ،
وَلَا تَخُنْهُ فِي تَأْدِيبَةِ رَسُولِهِ وَالْقِيَامِ بِهَا عَنْهُ إِذَا تَقَلَّدْتَهَا. وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ.

And the right of the one who trains you through knowledge is venerating him, and respecting his meetings, and listening well to him, and being responsive to him,¹ and helping him for yourself in the knowledge that you need by freeing your mind for him, and presenting your understanding to him, and purifying your heart for him, and fixing your eyes on him by means of abandoning leisures and diminishing lust.

And you should know that regarding what he teaches you, you are considered as his messenger to teach when you meet the ignorant ones. Therefore, it is binding upon you to render on his behalf properly, and not cheat in the fulfillment of his mission, and strive to deliver what you undertake. And there is no power but in God.

We can therefore summarize the following rights of teachers as expressed by Imam Sajjad :

- 1 – Respecting our teacher
- 2 – Seeking our teacher's help in acquiring knowledge
- 3 – Getting whole-heartedly prepared to attend our teacher's lectures
- 4 – Not raising our voice over our teacher's voice
- 5 – Not responding to questions that others ask him before he does
- 6 – Not talking with others while we are in the presence of our teacher
- 7 – Not gossiping about anyone
- 8 – Defending our teacher if someone speaks bad of him
- 9 – Covering up the faults of our teacher
- 10 – Advertising our teacher's nobility
- 11 – Not associating with our teacher's enemies
- 12 – Not acting as an enemy towards his friends

The Importance of Knowledge

Before discussing the rights of teachers, we must consider the high value of knowledge from the viewpoint of Islam and the Holy Qur'an. The value of knowledge is clear to all. Everyone values knowledge, and is naturally humble to those who possess it. The Prophet of God who was the seal of the Prophets is told to read in the very first instance of receiving divine revelations:

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ

"Read! In the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created..." [The Holy Qur'an, al-'Alaq 96: 1]

Then the subject of teaching the use of the pen is revealed:

الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ

"... He who taught (the use of) the Pen. Taught man that which he knew not." [The Holy Qur'an, al-'Alaq 96:4-5]

It is very important to notice that the very first instance of revelation of divine teachings is about reading, teaching, the pen, etc. This shows that it is teaching and knowledge that can elevate man from the lowest ranks to the highest positions, and finally approach the threshold of God. The Holy Qur'an asks man's conscience to judge about knowledge:

قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ

"Say: Are those equal, those who know and those who do not know? It is those who are endued with understanding that receive admonition." [The Holy Qur'an, al-Zumar 39:9]

Consider the following verses:

قُلْ لَا يَسْتَوِي الْخَبِيثُ وَالطَّيِّبُ

"Say: Not equal are things that are bad and things that are good ..." [The Holy Qur'an, al-Maida 5: 100]

وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَى وَالْبَصِيرُ

وَلَا الظُّلُمَاتُ وَلَا النُّورُ وَلَا الظِّلُّ وَلَا الْحَرُورُ

“The blind and the seeing are not alike, nor are the depths of Darkness and the Light. Nor are the (chilly) shade and the (genial) heat of the sun.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Fatir 35: 19–20]

The phrases “things that are good”, “the seeing”, “the light”, “the heat of the sun” all represent the results of having knowledge, while “things that are bad”, “the blind”, “depths of Darkness” and “the chilly shade” all represent the results of ignorance.

Consider the following verse:

قُلْ كَفَى بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ وَمَنْ عِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ الْكِتَابِ

Say: Enough for a witness between me and you is God, and such as have knowledge of the book.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Ra’d 13:43]

In this verse, those who have knowledge have been described to be as a witness to Prophethood along with God, and their high rank near God is clarified.

To stress the importance of acquiring knowledge, the Qur’an says:

يَرْفَعُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ

“... God will raise up to (suitable) ranks (and degrees), those of you who believe and who have been granted (mystic) knowledge ...” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Mujadila 58: 11]

Now that we have briefly expressed the value of knowledge, we will attend to the worth of the teacher.

The Importance of the Rank of a Teacher

God’s Prophet said:

زِيَارَةُ الْعُلَمَاءِ أَحَبُّ إِلَى اللَّهِ تَعَالَى مِنْ سَبْعِينَ طَوَافًا حَوْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَأَفْضَلُ مِنْ سَبْعِينَ حِجَّةً وَعُمْرَةً مَبْرُورَةً مَقْبُولَةً. وَرَفَعَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى لَهُ سَبْعِينَ دَرَجَةً وَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ الرَّحْمَةَ وَشَهِدَتْ لَهُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَنَّ الْجَنَّةَ وَجِبَتْ لَهُ.

“Visiting the knowledgeable people is more loved by God than seventy circumambulations of His Holy House, and more excellent than performing seventy Hajj and ‘Umrah (obligatory or recommended) pilgrimages that are approved and accepted. God will raise the status of the one who visits knowledgeable people seventy degrees, and send down mercy upon him and the angels will bear witness that Heaven is guaranteed for him.”²

The Noble Prophet encouraged the people to attend the meetings held by the knowledgeable people:

يَا أَبَا ذَرٍّ! الْجُلُوسُ سَاعَةً عِنْدَ مُذَاكِرَةِ الْعِلْمِ أَحَبُّ إِلَى اللَّهِ مِنْ قِيَامِ أَلْفِ لَيْلَةٍ يُصَلِّي فِي كُلِّ لَيْلَةٍ أَلْفَ رَكْعَةٍ. وَ الْجُلُوسُ سَاعَةً عِنْدَ مُذَاكِرَةِ الْعِلْمِ أَحَبُّ إِلَى اللَّهِ مِنْ أَلْفِ غَزْوَةٍ وَقِرَاءَةِ الْقُرْآنِ كُلِّهِ.

“O Abu-Dharr! Attending a scholarly discussion for an hour is more loved by God the Almighty than a thousand nights of standing in prayer, performing a thousand units of prayer each night. Attending a scholarly discussion for an hour is more loved by God than attending a thousand battles and reciting the whole Qur’an.”³

The Prophet said:

مَا مِنْ مُؤْمِنٍ يَقْعُدُ سَاعَةً عِنْدَ الْعَالِمِ إِلَّا نَادَاهُ رَبُّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: جَلَسْتَ إِلَى حَبِيبِي، وَعِزَّتِي وَجَلَالِي لِأُسْكِنَنَّكَ الْجَنَّةَ مَعَهُ وَلَا أُبَالِي.

“No believer sits with a scholar for an hour but that his Lord, the Exalted, the High, calls out to him: You sat with My beloved. I swear by My Majesty and Honor that I will make Heaven your abode. There are no obstacles for this.”⁴

We can see that the Prophet has stated that one who is busy teaching is loved by God and is considered God’s friend. Both him and the students attending his lectures are given a promise to enter Heaven. We should add that this reward is only meant for the teacher and the student who have pure intentions and work for God’s sake.

The Role of the Teacher

Imam Jawad said:

مَنْ أَصْغَى إِلَى نَاطِقٍ فَقَدْ عَبَدَهُ؛ فَإِنْ كَانَ النَّاطِقُ عَنِ اللَّهِ فَقَدْ عَبَدَ اللَّهَ، وَإِنْ كَانَ النَّاطِقُ يَنْطِقُ عَنْ لِسَانِ إِبْلِيسَ فَقَدْ عَبَدَ إِبْلِيسَ.

“Whoever listens to a speaker has worshipped him. If the speaker is from God, (and is teaching divine things,) then the listener has worshipped God. But if the speaker speaks through the tongue of Satan (and is saying evil things,) then he has worshipped Satan.”⁵

In this tradition, the role of speaking, and its possible influences is stressed to the extreme points of being divine or Satanic. If the listener considers the words of the teacher to be valuable, it can be very effective on him.

Imam Ali's Advice to Malik

In the following addressed to Malik al-Ashtar, Imam Ali recommends associating with people of knowledge:

أَكْثِرْ مُدَارَسَةَ الْعُلَمَاءِ وَمُنَاقَشَةَ الْحُكَمَاءِ فِي تَثْبِيتِ مَا صَلَّحَ عَلَيْهِ أَمْرُ بِلَادِكَ وَإِقَامَةِ مَا اسْتَقَامَ بِهِ النَّاسُ قَبْلَكَ.

“O Malik! Study often with the scholars and have frequent discussions with the wise in consolidating what is suitable for the prosperity of your land, and in establishing that by which the people before you were in a sound state.”[6](#)

The Teacher's Role

Umar ibn Abdul Aziz was a child from the Umayyad clan. He used to repeat a slogan devised by Mu`awiyah against Imam Ali when he played with other children. One day when his teacher was passing by, he heard him. Later in class when the teacher was teaching, he gave Umar a mean look. Umar asked the teacher for the reason.

The teacher said: “O’ my son! Today I heard you curse Imam Ali . Since when have you become sure that Ali deserves to be cursed?” Then Umar promised his teacher to quit doing that. This advice of the teacher was so effective that when Umar ibn Abdul Aziz became the Caliph, he banned this practice, and instead ordered the following verse to be recited:[7](#)

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ

“God commands justice, the doing of good...” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Na’l 16:90]

The son of Yazeed was called Mu`awiyah. When he became the ruler, he ruled for only a few days. Then he invited the people, climbed up the pulpit and resigned from his Caliphate. His mother and Marwan opposed his decision, but it was of no use. Then they tried to find out the reason behind his resignation.

They found out that Umar al-Maqsoos who was his teacher had been very influential in changing the course of life of Mu`awiyah and his viewpoints. Then they went to him and interrogated him as to why he had established the love for Imam Ali in the heart of Mu`awiyah. Then they dug a ditch and buried the teacher alive.[8](#) This is how a teacher can influence someone and change his life.

Which Teacher Should We Choose

In the following verses, God has clarified this for us:

فَلْيَنْظُرِ الْإِنْسَانُ إِلَى طَعَامِهِ أَنَا صَبَبْنَا الْمَاءَ صَبًّا ثُمَّ شَقَقْنَا الْأَرْضَ شَقًّا

فَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا حَبًّا

“Then let man look at his food (and how We provide it): For that We pour forth water in abundance, and We spilt the earth in fragments, And produce therein corn.” [The Holy Qur’an, ‘Abasa 80:24–27]

These verses apparently refer to our food since they discuss rain, the earth and the production of food. However, the Immaculate Imams have interpreted them to refer to our spiritual food. The late Fayz Kashani reported in his Tafsir-i-Safi: “Imam Baqir was asked about the meaning of “then let man look at his food”. The Imam replied: “By ‘his Food,’ it is meant knowledge. One must be careful where he gets it from.”⁹

Fayz Kashani then goes on to say: “There are two types of food – food for the body and food for the mind. This is because we are composed of the body and the spirit. Man should think about how food is produced. It rains, the earth gets soft, and seedlings emerge. Man should also think about his food for the mind. He should ponder over how knowledge is revealed in the lands of the Prophets to the hearts of the Prophets, and how the minds of those who are ready to become educated receive this descended revelation and blossom.

Therefore, we should try to obtain our knowledge through divine lines such as the Prophet and the Immaculate Imams . Spoiled or poisoned food is harmful to the body. At times digesting such food might take us to the border of death. Likewise, what we hear and see affects our nervous system, our mind and our spirit. We might be misled, and lose our chances of Prosperity. It might result in both our life and our Hereafter to be ruined. We have already discussed the rights of hearing and sight before in detail.

The Rights of the Teacher as Viewed by Imam Baqir

Imam Baqir said:

إِذَا جَلَسْتَ إِلَى عَالِمٍ فَكُنْ عَلَى أَنْ تَسْمَعَ أَحْرَصَ مِنْكَ عَلَى أَنْ تَقُولَ. وَتَعَلَّمْ حُسْنَ الْإِسْتِمَاعِ كَمَا تَتَعَلَّمُ حُسْنَ الْقَوْلِ، وَلَا تَقْطَعْ عَلَيْهِ حَدِيثَهُ.

“When you sit with a scholar, be more eager to hear him than to talk yourself. Learn how to listen well just as you learn how to speak well, and do not interrupt his speech.”¹⁰

In general, it is rude to interrupt someone who is talking. It is even ruder to interrupt your teacher. A polite student should wait for his teacher to finish talking, and then ask his question.

The Rights of the Teacher as Viewed by Imam Ali

Imam Sadiq quoted on the authority of Imam Ali :

إِنَّ مِنْ حَقِّ الْعَالِمِ أَنْ لَا تُكْثِرَ عَلَيْهِ السُّؤَالَ وَلَا تَأْخُذَ بِثَوْبِهِ وَإِذَا دَخَلْتَ عَلَيْهِ وَعِنْدَهُ قَوْمٌ فَسَلِّمْ عَلَيْهِمْ جَمِيعًا وَخُصَّهُ
بِالنَّحِيَّةِ دُونَهُمْ وَاجْلِسْ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا تَجْلِسْ خَلْفَهُ وَلَا تَغْمِزْ بِعَيْنِكَ وَلَا تُشْرِ بِبَدَنِكَ وَلَا تُكْثِرَ مِنْ قَوْلٍ (قَالَ فَلَانٌ وَقَالَ
فُلَانٌ) خِلَافًا لِقَوْلِهِ وَلَا تَضْجُرْ بِطُولِ صُحْبَتِهِ، فَإِنَّمَا مَثَلُ الْعَالِمِ مَثَلُ النَّخْلَةِ تَنْتَظِرُهَا حَتَّى يَسْقُطَ عَلَيْكَ مِنْهَا شَيْءٌ

"The rights of a scholar include the following:

- 1 – You should not ask him too many questions,*
- 2 – You should not take hold of his cloak.*
- 3 – When you go to see him and there are some people with him, greet them all and give him especial greetings.*
- 4 – Sit in front of him, and do not sit behind him.*
- 5 – Do not wink, or point with your fingers.*
- 6 – Do not keep saying ‘So and so said’, in opposition to what he has said.*
- 7 – Do not get upset if you have to wait a while to talk with him, since his case is similar to the case of a palm tree, that is, you have to wait for a while before you can get some dates.”¹¹*

Next, we will describe the case of a teacher and a student both of whom were Prophets. We will see how they respected their teacher and how they taught ways to teach, question and how to learn to everyone.

Respect for the Teacher in the Qur'an

In Chapter al-Kahf of the Holy Qur'an, we read the story of the mission of Moses to go after a teacher and learn what he does not know from him. The Qur'an does not name Khidhr, but calls the teacher “one of Our servants”. However, this knowledgeable wise man has been called Khidhr in many traditions.¹² Even though the Prophet Moses was one to whom God spoke directly as evidenced by the

following verse:

وَكَلَّمَ اللَّهُ مُوسَى تَكْلِيمًا

“And to Moses God spoke direct ... [The Holy Qur’an, al-Nisaa 4: 164]

And he was a Prophet and had a Book of Commandments. Moses was ordered to go to a teacher. He was accompanied by a brave young man from amongst the Israelites called “Yusha’ ibn Noon” (Joshua) to seek and finally find the teacher as we read in the following verse:

فَوَجَدَا عَبْدًا مِّنْ عِبَادِنَا آتَيْنَاهُ رَحْمَةً مِّنْ عِنْدِنَا وَعَلَّمْنَاهُ مِن لَّدُنَّا عِلْمًا

“So they found one of Our servants, on whom We have bestowed mercy from Ourselves, and whom We have taught knowledge from Our own Presence.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Kahf 18:65]

The especial characteristics of this great teacher include his attainment of the high rank of becoming a servant of God, his prosperity in receiving divine mercy, and his knowledge being taught to him by God. What is obvious is that this student has many advantages over his teacher, but he recognizes that he does not know everything, and suffers the hardships of traveling in order to benefit from the teacher’s especial knowledge. When he meets the teacher, he politely asks a question as we read:

قَالَ لَهُ مُوسَى هَلْ أَتَّبِعُكَ عَلَى أَنْ تُعَلِّمَنِ مِمَّا عُلِّمْتَ رُشْدًا قَالَ إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا وَكَيْفَ تَصْبِرُ عَلَى مَا لَمْ تُحِطْ بِهِ خُبْرًا قَالَ سَتَجِدُنِي إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ صَابِرًا وَلَا أَعْصِي لَكَ أَمْرًا

“Moses said to him: May I follow thee on the footing that thou teach me something of the (Higher) Truth which thou hast been taught? (The other) said: Verily thou wilt not be able to have patience with me! And how canst thou have patience about things about which thy understanding is not complete? Moses said: Thou wilt find me, if God so will, (truly) patient: nor shall I disobey thee in aught.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Kahf 18:66-69]

We can see some recommendations that students should use:

- 1 – Moses introduces himself to be a follower of his teacher, and recognizes his rank to be lower than that of his teacher.
- 2 – His statement “May I follow thee, on the footing that thou teach me something of the (Higher) Truth which thou hast been taught?” is a sign of absolute humbleness to his teacher.
- 3 – By saying “that thou teach me” he introduces himself to be ignorant relative to his teacher, and

highly respects his noble teacher.

4 – The concepts of following, teaching and patiently learning are all introduced in order to show that a student should follow his teacher. Then he can benefit and learn from his teacher if he is patient.

5 – By “that thou teach me something of the (Higher) Truth,” Moses shows that he is only seeking knowledge, and he is not after a higher rank and position. Therefore, all students should benefit from these words, and expect nothing from their teachers but benefiting from their knowledge.

6 – From “of the (Higher) Truth which thou hast been taught,” we realize that Moses is referring to divine knowledge that God has taught Khidhr. We also learn that the position of being a teacher is a divine rank, and man has learned knowledge from God.

7 – Moses was seeking guidance from Khidhr. He wants to benefit from the blessing of his guidance.

The Educational Remarks of the Teacher

1 – From “Verily thou wilt not be able to have patience with me,” we realize that one cannot learn if he is impatient. One must struggle hard and strive to learn.

2 – The teacher talks this way with the student in order to get him prepared not to rush into conclusions regarding the philosophy behind what Khidhr does.

3 – What is Moses after for which he suffers the hardships of the trip? He is after a good teacher. This teaches us that we should be very patient in order to get a good teacher. We have also read in traditions that we should not seek knowledge from just anyone but try to seek it from divine sources, such as the Teachings of the Immaculate Imams . In what follows, Moses objects to the acts of his teacher when he scuttles the boat; he slays a young man, or he sets up straight a wall they find at the verge of falling down. Moses objects to these acts, but later he is told the reason for doing them. [13](#)

Ghazali's Views on the Status of Teachers

Muhammad Ghazali has said that man has several states regarding wealth and knowledge:

1–Earning it.

2–Saving it.

3–Benefiting from it.

4–Helping others with it.

He believes that the best state for a teacher is when he is teaching and others are benefiting from his lectures. In this state, he is giving the people insight.

A Teacher is Like a Psychologist

A student should look at his teacher as a patient looks at a psychologist. The psychologist prescribes medications for his patient in order to help his patient gain his health. Likewise, a teacher invites his students to mental perfection and development of higher human characteristics. The teacher uses advice for healing. Thus, a student should carefully listen to his teacher in order to be saved from illnesses such as greed, haughtiness and excessive pride. [14](#)

Esteem for Teacher

One of the knowledgeable people in the old days used to give a small amount of money in charity on his way to class each day, and asked God to cover up the faults of his teacher from his eyes, and to secure the continuation of the blessing of his teacher's knowledge for him. Another knowledgeable man never loudly flipped the pages of his book so as not to disturb his teacher. [15](#)

Hamdan Isfahani narrated that he was with Sharik when Mahdi, the son of the Abbasid Caliph entered the room. He leaned on the wall and asked Sharik a question about one of the traditions. Sharik did not pay any attention to him. He repeated his question again. Again, Sharik ignored him.

The son of the Caliph told him: "Are you insulting the son of the Caliph?" Sharik said: "No. However, knowledge is more glorious at the threshold of God. I do not want to be disrespectful to it for the sake of others." Then the son of the Caliph stepped forward and sat down politely. This is how we must seek knowledge. [16](#)

That is why Imam Sajjad advises students to be humble to God. A teacher is like a spiritual father who provides sufficient food for the mind for his students. That is why students must respect their teacher. He uses his student's hearing faculty as a gateway to provide him with this food for the mind. The student must carefully listen to his teacher.

A student should realize that a teacher is the one who provides him with food for his mind and is similar to his father. He should respect his teacher as he respects his father. Therefore, he should not raise his voice above that of his teacher's. He should be very polite in front of his teacher.

A student should strive to cover up the faults of his teacher, and stress his teacher's nobilities. They asked Alexander why he respected his teacher so much, and honored him more than his parents? He replied that his parents were only the source of his worldly existence that is ephemeral, while his teacher was the source of his eternal prosperity. A society can be developed if it has capable and sympathetic teachers. Teachers have sacrificed their most valuable asset – that is their life, in order to revitalize the society and save the people from the grips of the ignorant ones and cultural thieves.

Once when Socrates was imprisoned, his students made every effort and sacrifice to save him.

However, he did not accept. He preferred to die rather than break the law and harm social order.

Finally, we mention the practice of Imam Husayn . Aba Abdul Rahman Solami taught one of the children of Imam Husayn to recite the Chapter Fatiha of the Holy Qur'an.

Imam Husayn gave him one thousand coins, one thousand robes and a mouthful of pearls. Some people considered this too great a reward. However, he said: "How can this reward compensate for his generous grant? Nothing is enough to compensate for teaching the Holy Qur'an."¹⁷

^{1.} In the other version it is followed by: "You should not raise your voice toward him. You should never answer anyone who asks him about something, in order that he may be the one who answers. You should not speak to anyone in his session nor speak ill of anyone with him. If anyone ever speaks ill of him in your presence, you should defend him. You should conceal his faults and make manifest his virtues. You should not sit with him in enmity or show hostility toward him in friendship. If you do all of this, God's angels will give witness for you that you went straight to him and learned his knowledge for God's sake, not for the sake of the people."

^{2.} Al-Hayat, v.2, p.272, quoted from 'Uddat'ul Da'i, p.66.

^{3.} Ibid. quoted from Bihar al-Anwar, v. 1, p.203.

^{4.} Ibid.

^{5.} Tuhaf al-'Uqul, p.336.

^{6.} Nahjul Balaghah, letter no.53.

^{7.} Al-Kamil, Ibn Athir, v.5, p.42.

^{8.} Hayat al-Hayawan, v. 1, p.88.

^{9.} Tafsir Safi, v.2, p.789.

^{10.} Al-Hayat, v.2, p.273, v. 1, p.222.

^{11.} Mishkat al-Anwar Fi Ghurar al-Akhbar, tradition no.687.

^{12.} Khidr means 'green'. His knowledge is fresh and green, and drawn out of the living sources of life for it is drawn from God's own Presence. See Yusuf Ali's Translation of the Holy Qur'an, n.2411, p.748.

^{13.} You can read the detailed account of this in the Holy Qur'an, al-Kahf 18:62-82.

^{14.} Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, v. 1, p. 119.

^{15.} Adab-i-Ta'lim wa Tarbiyat Islam, p.333.

^{16.} Ibid. p.323.

^{17.} Lu'lu wa'l Marjan, p.44, quoted from Manaqib Ibn ShahrAshub.

Right n. 17: The Right of the Trainer through Ownership

حق السائس بالملك

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ سَائِسِكَ بِالْمَلِكِ فَانْحَوِ مِنْ سَائِسِكَ بِالسُّلْطَانِ إِلَّا أَنْ هَذَا يَمْلِكُ مَا لَا يَمْلِكُهُ ذَاكَ، تَلْزِمُكَ طَاعَتُهُ فِيمَا دَقَّ وَجَلَّ مِنْكَ إِلَّا أَنْ تُخْرِجَكَ مِنْ وُجُوبِ حَقِّ اللَّهِ، وَيَحُولَ بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَ حَقِّهِ وَحُقُوقِ الْخَلْقِ، فَإِذَا فَضَيْتَهُ رَجَعْتَ إِلَى حَقِّهِ فَتَشَاغَلْتَ بِهِ. وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

And the right of him who trains you through [1](#) ownership [2](#) is similar to the right of the possessor of authority over you. Except this one has a right which that one does not: being that you are bound to obey him in every matter, whether small or great, except for what would lead you to abandon incumbent rights of God, or in what would intervene between you, his rights and the rights of the people. And once you fulfill them, you can commit yourself to his rights and engage in fulfilling them. And there is no power but in God.

What we can conclude from the words of Imam Sajjad is that he considers the rights of the master to be similar to those of the ruler. However, a master has an especial right that is incumbent upon the slave. This right is that the slave must obey his master. It is proper at this point to discuss the origins of slavery and its roots. Of course, here the question of ownership is discussed not just slavery.

The History of Slavery

It is not exactly clear when in history slavery originated, and various ideas have been expressed regarding its roots. Montesquieu has said the following regarding the factors which contribute to the appearance of slavery as follows:

- 1 – International rights made it a requirement for prisoners of war to be considered as slaves to be immune from being killed.
- 2 – In the Roman civil law people were allowed to sell those people who owed them money but could not pay back their debts. Another option for those who could not pay back their debts was to turn themselves into a slave for the one who had given them the loan.
- 3 – The laws of nature make the son of a slave to be considered a slave. This is because a child is subject to the same conditions as his father is.
- 4 – The right to slavery is rooted in the humiliation of one nation by another one, due to differences in their customs and habits.
- 5 – The main root of slavery is the simultaneous existence of the weak and the strong people in the human societies accompanied by an inclination towards oppression and exploitation.

Then he continues with the following:

Aristotle tried to prove that slavery existed, and will continue to exist naturally. This implies that God has created some people to be slaves for other people. If we accept what this philosopher claims and consider slavery to be a natural phenomenon, then any attempts to free slaves would be opposed to nature and useless. The above is a brief expression of the roots of slavery as expressed by Montesquieu in *Ruh ul-Qawanin*.[3](#)

Islam's Point of View on Slavery

According to Islam and opposed to Aristotle's views, man is born free and slavery is not a natural phenomenon. Imam Ali said:

النَّاسُ كُلُّهُمْ أَحْرَارٌ إِلَّا مَنْ أَقَرَّ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ بِالْعُبُودِيَّةِ.

"All people are born free except for those who (wrongfully) declare themselves to be slaves."[4](#)

He also said:

لَا تَكُنْ عَبْدَ غَيْرِكَ وَقَدْ جَعَلَكَ اللَّهُ حَقَّ السَّائِسِ بِالْمَلِكِ حُرًّا.

"Do not be slaves for others since God has established you to be free."[5](#)

These were the words of Imam Ali who was himself a hero and the most freedom-loving man. He expressed the fact that man is born free, and it is only due to some external factors that some people become slaves. This condition is also not a permanent condition. The author of The History of Rome expressed the viewpoints of Romans about slaves as follows. "According to the law, a slave is not a person, but just a tool which can talk but has no rights."[6](#)

Montesquieu wrote: "In Plato's law it was expressed that a slave does not have the natural right to self-defense. This law stripped a slave from his natural right to self-defense if he was attacked. At the same time, he was also not given any civil rights to defend himself. Therefore, he could not even go to court and file a complaint if he was attacked. In Spartan, the slaves could not file a complaint in court if they were hurt. These slaves were so desperate that they were considered not just one person's slave but slaves to the society."[7](#)

How Sick Can You Be

One of the main entertaining events for the noble Roman men was to collect the poor slaves in an arena where hungry beasts like tigers and lions were let loose to attack them. They would then laugh their hearts out once the slaves started their cries and their shouting because of being torn apart by the beasts. They also used to have fun by making two groups of slaves fight with each other with swords.

When they were wounded and bloody, these noble men would get entertained. Should anyone of the slaves refuse to participate in such terrible events, then he would be torn into pieces by the wild soldiers that stood around the arena. Another source of entertainment for the nobler Romans was to force their slaves to put their hands inside cylindrical containers filled with bees and scorpions. Then once their

faces turned color due to being bit, their masters would get pleased and laugh.[8](#)

In another part, the author of The History of Rome writes the following regarding the conditions of slaves in that country: “Slaves must just do the hard work just like animals do. They should clean the trench, pave the roads, weed out the thorns, shovel the gardens, chop off useless plants, thresh the wheat, and clean the toilets. If anyone of the slaves failed to do his duties, he was seriously punished. He was either beaten up or chained down, or tied to the wheels in a mill instead of a horse, and forced to drive it to grind. Alternatively, he was used to dig mines, or imprisoned in dark and humid basements. Animals had days off on holidays, but slaves did not.”[9](#)

The Gradual Freedom of Slaves by Islam

It is clearly recorded in history that Islam fought slavery, and gradually freed slaves. It might be asked why this was done gradually, and why Islam did not free slaves all at once. To answer this question we must realize that at the advent of Islam in the Age of Ignorance in Arabia, slavery was one of the main principles of the economy, and the continuation of trade and even the living of many depended on it. It was neither possible nor practical for the Prophet Muhammad who founded Islam to suddenly abolish slavery.

The economic order of the society would have been seriously affected. In addition, owners were not willing to free their slaves. There were many lazy people who earned their living by means of using the slaves. In order to abolish slavery, Islam first clarified the rewards for hard work, and the wickedness of laziness. Once working was considered a form of worship, and everybody was said to have the right to benefit from the results of his own work, then it was understood that being lazy is not good and everyone should benefit from his own work.

Another possibility that existed if Islam freed the slaves all at once, was that they might have rebelled and caused a bloody revolution since they had been oppressed for a long time. This would have breached social security. There are similar cases cited in history. Montesquieu has stated the following regarding the possible harms of a collective and simultaneous freeing of a group of slaves: “It is not wise to establish a law to free a large number of slaves as this would cause social disorder.”

He cited the following cases as evidence to support his statement: “As an example of this danger, we can consider Velicini where the large number of freed slaves got the right to vote and achieved the majority. Then they established a law according to which whenever one of the previous free men married a woman, one of the freed slaves should sleep with the bride on the first night of the wedding and submit her to the groom the next night.”[10](#)

Consider what Gustav Lubon stated as the third reason. “Slaves lived under especial conditions for a very long time. Because of this, they had a different style of living than the free people. Therefore, they were raised lacking any experience or aptitude. Thus, we can state that they would not have been able

to set up an independent life on their own due to their lack of experience and talent, if they were all simultaneously freed by Islam. They would have had conditions similar to those slaves who were freed in America, and their lives would have been totally ruined. [11](#)

We might present the above as reasons for Islam not simultaneously freeing slaves. Rather the means for their freedom were established gradually. Now let us consider the means provided by Islam to allow for their freedom. We will first consider the legal aspects expressed in Islamic jurisprudence and then consider the moral aspects.

Ways to Free Slaves: Jurisprudential Aspects

Islamic jurisprudence established the following ways to free the slaves:

1) Contract

A contract could be drawn according to which the slave would be freed after he paid a certain amount of money to his master. Should he fail to do so, it was incumbent upon the religious leader to pay to free him.

2) Will

A master could will that his slave be freed after his own demise.

3) Ownership of Blood Relatives

If anyone becomes the owner of his own father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, child, grandchild, sister, paternal aunt, maternal aunt, or nephew, he would instantly free them.

4) Partial Freedom

If anyone frees a slave partially, the slave will be totally freed.

5) Giving Birth to a Master's Child

If a slave woman gets pregnant by her master and delivers his child, then she will be freed.

6) Accepting Islam before the Master

If a slave accepts Islam before his master does, he would be freed.

7) Physical Harm

If a master chops off his slaves ear or nose or any other organs, then the slave will be freed.

8) Physical Ailment

If any slave gets blind, suffers from leprosy, or crippled then he will be freed, and his sustenance will be provided by the state.

9) Death of a Master without any Inheritors

If a rich master who has no one to inherit his wealth should die, then the slave would be purchased using the property left behind and thereby freed. The freed slave will inherit the rest of the master's wealth left behind.

10) A Believing Slave Serves his Master for Seven Years

There is a chapter in Wasa'il al-Sha'ah with many traditions. What we can conclude from these traditions is that a believing slave would be freed after seven years of serving his master.

11) Using the Alms Tax

One of the eight allowable ways to spend the alms tax is to purchase slaves in order to free them.

12) As Expiation

There is expiation for various acts such as intentionally breaking one's fast, or unintentional murder, or not adhering to one's pledge, oath or bet, etc. One of the ways of such expiation is to free slaves. [12](#)

Ways to Free Slaves: Practical and Moral Aspects

Islam has provided practical and moral means for the freedom of slaves. We could look at the life and the practices of the Noble Prophet of Islam and the Immaculate Imams as an example. There are recorded facts in history. The Prophet of Islam himself freed slaves such as Zayd ibn Haritheh. Then the Muslims followed his example and freed slaves.

In addition to freeing Zayd ibn Haritheh, the Prophet Muhammad married off the daughter of Jahsh to him, and they lived together for a while. Then the Prophet Mohammad appointed Zayd's son called Usama ibn Zayd as the chief of the army, and ruled that all the noble men both from among the immigrants and their helpers should obey him.

Imam Ali used his own income to free one thousand slaves. [13](#) Georgi Zaydan wrote: "Abdullah ibn Uman freed one thousand slaves and Muhammad ibn Suleiman freed seventy thousand slave men and women." [14](#)

The Rights of the Subjects

ثم حقوق الرعية

Right n. 18: The Right of Subjects through Authority

حق الرعية بالسلطان

فَأَمَّا حُقُوقُ رَعِيَّتِكَ بِالسُّلْطَانِ فَإِنَّ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّكَ إِنَّمَا اسْتَرْعَيْتَهُمْ بِفَضْلِ قُوَّتِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ فَإِنَّهُ إِنَّمَا أَحْلَاهُمْ مَحَلَّ الرِّعْيَةِ لَكَ ضَعْفُهُمْ وَذُلُّهُمْ، فَمَا أَوْلَى مَنْ كَفَاكَهُ ضَعْفُهُ وَذُلُّهُ حَتَّى صَيَّرَهُ لَكَ رَعِيَّةً وَصَيَّرَ حُكْمَكَ عَلَيْهِ نَافِذًا، لَا يَمْتَنِعُ مِنْكَ بِعِزَّةٍ وَلَا قُوَّةٍ وَلَا يَسْتَنْصِرُ فِيمَا تَعَاظَمَ مِنْكَ إِلَّا [بِاللَّهِ] بِالرَّحْمَةِ وَالْحَيَاةِ وَالْأَنَاةِ، وَمَا أَوْلَاكَ إِذَا عَرَفْتَ مَا أَعْطَاكَ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِ هَذِهِ الْعِزَّةِ وَالْقُوَّةِ الَّتِي قَهَرْتَ بِهَا أَنْ تَكُونَ لِلَّهِ شَاكِرًا، وَمَنْ شَكَرَ اللَّهَ أَعْطَاهُ فِيمَا أُنْعِمَ عَلَيْهِ. وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ.

Then the right of your subjects through authority is that¹ you should know that you have authority over them due to your power over them, and that they have been made your subjects through their weakness and humility. What do they deserve whose weakness and humility have made them your subjects, and made your authority over them effective? They do not disobey you by their own might and power.²

They cannot find a supporter against your power except by God, by His Mercy and Protection, and patience. How proper it is for you to recognize that God has granted you this increased might and power with which you have subdued others. You should be thankful to God. And God will increase His Graces to those who thank Him. And there is no power but in God.

Regarding the rights of the ruler, Imam Sajjad said that the people should obey him and avoid fighting him. Here he stresses the right of the people and states that the ruler should be fair to the people due to the power that he has. The Imam points out several important issues here. At first, the ruler should be just. Secondly, the Imam says that the ruler should act similar to a kind father. Thirdly, since the people might make mistakes during their life, the ruler should be forgiving. At last, the Imam says that the ruler should be thankful to God for the power that He has granted him.

Justice in Leadership

People consider a person who is not wishing bad for others, does not violate their rights, does not treat the people with prejudice, and treats everyone under his rule equally, to be a just ruler. On the other hand, they consider a person who violates their rights; practices prejudice, sides with the oppressors, and oppose the weak, to be an oppressive ruler. Thus, we can say that human justice implies respecting human rights, and honoring everybody's rights. This is what is meant by justice based upon rights. God has invited all men to justice in the Holy Qur'an as we read in the following verse:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ

“God commands justice, the doing of good...” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Na' 16:90]

The Prophet Muhammad said:

يَبْقَى الْمُلْكُ بِالْعَدْلِ مَعَ الْكُفْرِ، وَلَا يَبْقَى بِالْجَوْرِ مَعَ الْإِيمَانِ.

“Rule can be sustained with unbelief, but it can never last with oppression.”³

He also said:

عَدْلُ سَاعَةٍ خَيْرٌ مِنْ عِبَادَةٍ سِتِّينَ سَنَةً.

“An hour of justice is better than sixty years of worship.”

The Difference between Generosity and Justice

Imam Ali beautifully expressed the difference between generosity and justice. When asked about this, he replied:

الْعَدْلُ يَضَعُ الْأُمُورَ مَوَاضِعَهَا وَالْجُودُ يُخْرِجُهَا مِنْ جِهَتِهَا وَالْعَدْلُ سَائِسٌ عَامٌّ فَالْجُودُ عَارِضٌ خَاصٌّ فَالْعَدْلُ أَشْرَفُهُمَا وَأَفْضَلُهُمَا.

“Justice puts everything in its right place, but generosity takes them out of their places. Justice is a universal caretaker, but generosity will only benefit the one with whom you are generous. Therefore justice is nobler and more excellent.”⁴

The Prophets and Their Call to Justice

All the divinely appointed Prophets to invite the people to God have declared man's prosperity and development subject to the development of ethics and the practice of justice. Let us look at the following verse in this regard:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ ۚ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاَنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا ۚ اعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ
لِلتَّقْوَىٰ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

“O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for God, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just. That is next to piety: and fear God. For God is well acquainted with all that ye do.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Ma’ida 5:8]

No issue in Islam is as important as the issue of justice. Justice is similar to the issue of the unity of God. Both issues highly affect all the major and minor principles of Islam. Likewise, none of the practical or ideological, personal or social, and moral or legal issues are separable from the subject of the unity of God. We shall not find any of the above issues void of the concept of justice.

Therefore, it is not surprising to realize that justice has been recognized as one of the major principles of our religion, and as one of the firm ideological foundations of the Muslims. An important issue pointed out in the above verse is that grudges, tribal animosities, and personal quarrels can all hinder the practice of justice, and might lead to the violation of other people’s rights. Therefore, such practices that will lead to deviation from true justice should be abandoned since justice is more important than all of them. Therefore, practice justice since it is the most fundamental basis for piety and abstinence.

Justice in Speaking

Consider the following verse of the Holy Qur’an:

وَلَا تَقْرُبُوا مَالَ الْيَتِيمِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ حَتَّىٰ يَبْلُغَ أَشُدَّهُ وَأَوْفُوا بِالْكَيْلِ وَالْمِيزَانَ بِالْقِسْطِ ۚ لَا تَكْلِفُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا
وَإِذَا قُلْتُمْ فَاعْدِلُوا وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا قُرْبَىٰ ۚ وَبِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ أَوْفُوا ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ وَصَّاكُم بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ

“And come not nigh to the orphan’s property, except to improve it, until he attains the age of full strength; give measure and weigh with (full) justice. No burden do We place on any soul, but that which it can bear. Whenever ye speak, speak justly, even if a near relative is concerned, and fulfill the Covenant of God. Thus doth He command you, that ye may remember.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-An’am 6: 152]

In this verse, God invites the guardians of the orphans, salespersons and those who weigh goods that

they sell to adhere to justice, and even more important than this is justice in speaking. This verse recommends justice in speaking, justice in transactions, and justice when dealing with those members of the society who do not have parents.

When talking about the orphan's property, God uses the phrase "come not nigh to the orphan's property" which means do not approach it. This concept has also been used regarding some other tempting sinful acts such as prostitution, fornication, and stealing the properties of orphans who have no supporters. God admonishes the people not to approach these deeds so as to be safe from their strong and hard to resist temptations.

Justice in Judgment

Consider the following verse of the Holy Qur'an:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ نِعِمَّا يَعِظُكُمْ بِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا

"God doth command you to render back your trusts to those to whom they are due. And when you judge between man and man that ye judge with justice. Verily how excellent is the teaching which He giveth you! For God is He Who heareth and seeth all things." [The Holy Qur'an, al-Nisaa' 4:58]

In this verse, God advises us to return what we are entrusted with to its owner. Then God stresses the importance of justice when we make a judgment between people. This advice to adhere to justice has been described to be an excellent teaching, and the judge has been warned that God hears and sees everything, so he should be careful not to misjudge.

In addition, God has established justice and doing good deeds as equal to one another as expressed in the following verse:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ

"God commands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to kith and kin, and He forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and rebellion. He instructs you that ye may receive admonition." [The Holy Qur'an, al-Na' 16:90]

Also, consider the following verse:

يَا دَاوُدُ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاكَ خَلِيفَةً فِي الْأَرْضِ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ الْهَوَىٰ فَيُضِلَّكَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَضِلُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ بِمَا نَسُوا يَوْمَ الْحِسَابِ

“O David! We did indeed make thee a vicegerent on earth. So, judge thou between men in truth (and justice). Nor follow thou the lusts (of thy heart), for they will mislead thee from the Path of God. For those who wonder astray from the Path of God is a Penalty Grievous, for that they forget the Day of Account.” [The Holy Qur’an, Sad 38:26]

In this verse, God first stresses vicegerency on the Earth. Next God admonishes the Prophet David to adhere to justice in his judgments. At last, God admonishes against following lust that will mislead us to deviate from justice and forget the Resurrection Day and the Reckoning that is sure to come. We presented the above verses of the Holy Qur’an as a sample here in order to express the degree of importance of justice, and to stress that a ruler must be fair with all the people in the society. Next, we will look at several traditions regarding the issue of justice.

Abu Ali al-Ashari quoted on the authority of al-Hasan ibn Ali al-Koofi on the authority of Ubays ibn Hisham on the authority of Abdulkarim Halabi on the authority of Abi Abdullah : “Justice is more delicious than water is for a thirsty person. How extensive is justice when it is put in effect, even if it is done a little.”[5](#)

Hasan ibn Ali quoted on the authority of Ibn Mahbooh on the authority of Mu`awiyah ibn Wahab on the authority of Imam Sadiq :

الْعَدْلُ أَحْلَى مِنَ الشَّهْدِ وَالْيَمْنُ مِنَ الزَّيْدِ وَأَطْيَبُ رِيحاً مِنَ الْمِسْكِ.

“Justice is sweeter than honey, softer than butter, and more fragrant than musk.”[6](#)

It has been narrated that Ibn Abi Ya’fur asked Imam Sadiq : “How is one’s justice recognized among Muslims so that his witnessing for or against someone can be accepted?” The Imam replied:

أَنْ تَعْرِفُوهُ بِالسَّتْرِ وَالْعَفَافِ وَكَفِّ الْبَطْنِ وَالْفَرْجِ وَالْيَدِ وَاللِّسَانِ، وَيُعْرِفُ بِاجْتِنَابِ الْكِبَائِرِ الَّتِي أَوْعَدَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهَا النَّارَ مِنْ شُرْبِ الْخَمْرِ وَالزَّانَا وَالرَّيَا وَعُقُوقِ الْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْفَرَارِ مِنَ الزُّحُفِ وَغَيْرِ ذَلِكَ.

“You will recognize it through his modesty and chastity, and his restraining his stomach, private parts, hand and tongue. It will be known by his avoidance of major sins for which God has threatened (the punishment of) the Fire such as drinking wine, fornication, usury, undutiful behaviour towards parents, fleeing from a holy war, etc.”[7](#)

Mutual Rights of the People and the Ruler

Imam Ali expresses the mutual rights of the people and the ruler in *Nahjul Balaghah* as follows:

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ! إِنَّ لِي عَلَيْكُمْ حَقًّا وَلَكُمْ عَلَيَّ حَقٌّ. فَأَمَّا حَقُّكُمْ عَلَيَّ فَالنَّصِيحَةُ وَتَوْفِيرُ فَيْئَتِكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ وَتَعْلِيمُكُمْ كَيْلًا تَجْهَلُوا وَتَأْدِيبُكُمْ كَيْمًا تَعْلَمُوا. وَأَمَّا حَقِّي عَلَيْكُمْ فَالْوَفَاءُ بِالْبَيْعَةِ وَالنَّصِيحَةُ فِي الْمَشْهَدِ وَالْمَغِيبِ وَالْإِجَابَةُ حِينَ أَدْعُوكُمْ وَالطَّاعَةُ حِينَ أَمُرُّكُمْ.

“O people! I have rights incumbent upon you, and you have rights incumbent upon me. Your rights incumbent upon me include my advising you, paying your dues fully, educating you so that you do not remain ignorant, and training you until you learn. And my rights incumbent upon you include your remaining loyal to your pledge of allegiance to me, sincerely advising both in public and private, responding when I call you, and obedience when I command you.”⁸

Imam Ali mentions the rights of the people incumbent upon the ruler as giving them advice, counseling them on social and economical issues, and providing them with equal educational opportunities. The ruler should attend to the economic and educational needs of the society. The right of the ruler is that the people should remain loyal to their pledge of allegiance, and give him counsel sincerely both in private and public. The people should also stand ready to respond to the call of the ruler and obey his orders. Imam Ali also said:

وَأَعْظَمُ مَا افْتَرَضَ سُبْحَانَهُ مِنْ تِلْكَ الْحُقُوقِ حَقُّ الْوَالِي عَلَى الرَّعِيَّةِ. وَحَقُّ الرَّعِيَّةِ عَلَى الْوَالِي فَرِيضَةٌ فَرَضَهَا اللَّهُ سُبْحَانَهُ لِكُلِّ عَلَى كُلِّ فَعَلَهَا نِظَامًا لِأَلْفَتِهِمْ وَعِزًّا لِدِينِهِمْ فَلَيْسَتْ تَصْلُحُ الرَّعِيَّةُ إِلَّا بِصَلَاحِ الْوَلَاةِ وَلَا تَصْلُحُ الْوَلَاةُ إِلَّا بِاسْتِقَامَةِ الرَّعِيَّةِ. فَإِذَا أُدَّتِ الرَّعِيَّةُ إِلَى الْوَالِي حَقُّهُ وَأَدَّى الْوَالِي إِلَيْهَا حَقَّهَا عَزَّ الْحَقُّ بَيْنَهُمْ وَقَامَتْ مَنَاهِجُ الدِّينِ وَاعْتَدَلَتْ مَعَالِمُ الْعَدْلِ وَجَرَتْ عَلَى أَذْلَالِهَا السُّنَنُ فَصَلَحَ بِذَلِكَ الزَّمَانُ وَطُمِعَ فِي بَقَاءِ الدَّوْلَةِ وَبَسَّتْ مَطَامِعُ الْأَعْدَاءِ.

“The most important of these rights which God the Almighty has made incumbent are the rights of the ruler incumbent upon the people, and the rights of the people incumbent upon the ruler. God has made these mutual rights incumbent upon each one of them. He has established these rights as measures to safeguard order, friendliness, and honor in their religion.

The affairs of the people shall not improve unless the rulers are good people. Rulers will not be good people unless the people are hard-working and steadfast. If the two respect each other's rights, then their religion will be honored, and its practice will survive. Then the signs of justice will be established firmly, and divine traditions will take their natural course. If these principles are recognized and these rights are respected, then there will be an era of improvement and progress. The rule of government will last, and the enemies will be disappointed.”⁹

Imam Ali continues:

وَإِذَا غَلَبَتِ الرَّعِيَّةُ وَالْيَهَا أَوْ أَجْحَفَ الْوَالِي بِرَعِيَّتِهِ اخْتَلَفَتْ هُنَالِكَ الْكَلِمَةُ وَظَهَرَتْ مَعَالِمُ الْجَوْرِ وَكَثُرَ الْإِدْغَالُ فِي الدِّينِ وَتُرِكَتْ مَحَاجُّ السُّنَنِ فَعُمِلَ بِالْهَوَى وَعُطِلَتِ الْأَحْكَامُ وَكَثُرَتْ عِلَلُ النُّفُوسِ فَلَا يُسْتَوْحَشُ لِعَظِيمِ حَقِّ عُطْلٍ وَلَا لِعَظِيمِ بَاطِلٍ فَعِلَ فَهُنَالِكَ تَذَلُّ الْأَبْرَارِ وَتَعِزُّ الْأَشْرَارِ وَتَعْظُمُ تَبِعَاتُ اللَّهِ عِنْدَ الْعِبَادِ

“But if on the other hand, the people do not pay any attention to their ruler, or the ruler oppresses the people, then there will be discord and an increase in oppression. Then things that corrupt the religion will be mingled with religion. Divine traditions will be forced off their right course, and people will follow their desires and laws will be neglected. Diseases of the soul will increase and there will be no feeling of desolation for the great rights that have been neglected or the the major crimes committted. Then the good-doers will be humiliated and the wrongdoers will be honored. Under these circumstances, the consequences of the people’s sins will be much more severe before God.”¹⁰

In this sermon, Imam Ali has stressed on the causes of the stability of a government, and the means of existence of peace between the people and the ruler, and its consequence as national prosperity. He also outlines the roots of lack of social peace and security, and the causes of the collapse of a government.

He expresses the conditions that lead to humiliation of good people, and their exclusion from assuming social responsibilities, and the coming into power of wicked people. Then all religious affairs will be called off, corruption and deviations will become widespread and the society will be on the verge of collapse.

Imam Ali expressed the following in a letter he wrote to the border patrol:

أَمَّا بَعْدُ فَإِنَّ حَقًّا عَلَى الْوَالِي أَنْ لَا يُغَيِّرَهُ عَلَى رَعِيَّتِهِ فَضْلٌ نَالَهُ وَلَا طَوْلٌ خُصَّ بِهِ وَإِنْ زَيْدَهُ مَا قَسَمَ اللَّهُ لَهُ مِنْ نِعْمَةٍ
دُنُوًّا مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَعَطْفًا عَلَى إِخْوَانِهِ.

“Moreover, the right that is incumbent upon the ruler is not to withdraw his donations to the people from the blessings that he obtains. He should not change his ways. He should grant to the people of the special grants he receives. He should give some of what God has given him as his share to the people as to be closer to them. He should treat his brothers with kindness and benefit from their affection”¹¹

Imam Ali himself acted accordingly, and his rule was truly a just rule. He was like a kind and sympathetic father for the society and said:

أَفْقَنْعُ أَنْ يُقَالَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلَا أُشَارِكُهُمْ مَكَارِهِ الدَّهْرِ؟

“Should I be content with being called the Commander of the Faithful, and not share their hardships in this world?”¹²

No, it will never be so.

Imam Sajjad said:

“A ruler should be like a kind father and consider the members of the society as his children, and treat

them equally.”

This was put into practice during the rule of Imam Ali and the Imam made the following recommendations to Malik al-Ashtar in his well-known letter to him:

وَأَشْعِرْ قَلْبَكَ الرَّحْمَةَ لِلرَّعِيَّةِ، وَالْمَحَبَّةَ لَهُمْ، وَاللُّطْفَ بِهِمْ، وَلَا تَكُونَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ سَبْعًا ضَارِبًا تَغْتَنِمُ أَكْلَهُمْ، فَإِنَّهُمْ صِنْفَانِ: إِمَّا أَخٌ لَكَ فِي الدِّينِ، وَإِمَّا نَظِيرٌ لَكَ فِي الْخَلْقِ.

“Let your heart harbor feelings of mercy for your subjects, and love and kindness for them. Do not be like a rapacious beast of prey against them, seizing them in order to devour them, for people are in two groups: either they are your brothers in religion or they are equal to you in creation.”

Imam Sajjad said:

“The people have faults which the ruler should forgive and forget.”

Imam Ali said the following in his letter to Malik al-Ashtar:

فَإِنَّ فِي النَّاسِ عُيُوبًا إِلَّوَالِي أَحَقُّ مَنْ سَتَرَهَا، فَلَا تَكْشِفَنَّ عَمَّا غَابَ عَنْكَ مِنْهَا، فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ تَطْهِيرُ مَا ظَهَرَ لَكَ.

“Indeed people have faults, and the ruler is the one who is most suitable to cover up their faults. Therefore do not reveal those faults that are hidden from you, for your duty is only to remove what is apparent to you.”

An important point has been considered here, that is to ignore or act as if you do not know the faults of the people. Any ruler or government should be this way. The last subject related to the rights of the people that Imam Sajjad presents is that the ruler should be grateful to God for the blessing of ruling over the people.

He should realize that he does not possess any power on his own and it is in fact God who has granted him this power. He should realize that he himself is only a weak person. Imam Ali instructs Malik al-Ashtar:

وَإِذَا أَحْدَثَ لَكَ مَا أَنْتَ فِيهِ مِنْ سُلْطَانِكَ أَبْهَةً أَوْ مَخِيلَةً فَانْظُرْ إِلَى عِظَمِ مُلْكِ اللَّهِ فَوْقَكَ وَقُدْرَتِهِ مِنْكَ عَلَى مَا لَا تَقْدِرُ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ نَفْسِكَ، فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ يُطَامِنُ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ طِمَاحِكَ، وَيَكْفُ عَنْكَ مِنْ غَرْبِكَ، وَيَقِي إِلَيْكَ بِمَا عَزَبَ عَنْكَ مِنْ عَقْلِكَ.

“Should you ever feel proud and haughty due to your rule, consider the Majesty of God’s dominion above you and His power over you in what you yourself have no control. This will hinder you from your disobedience, prevent your harshness and return to you what has departed from you of your intellect

(which has become subject to your haughtiness).”

Then it is best for a ruler to be grateful for this divine blessing.

[1.](#) In the other version it continues: ”they have been made subjects through their weakness and your strength. Hence it is incumbent on you to act with justice toward them and to be like a compassionate father toward them. You should forgive them their ignorance and not hurry them to punishment and you should thank God for the power over them which He has given to you.”

[2.](#) That they do not have.

[3.](#) Sharh-i-Risalat al-Huquq, Ghopanchi, v. 1, p.385.

[4.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Fayz al-Islam, wise saying no.429.

[5.](#) Usul al-Kafi, v.2, p. 146.

[6.](#) Ibid. p. 147.

[7.](#) Al-Mizan, v.6, p.221.

[8.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Fayz al-Islam, sermon no.34.

[9.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Fayz al-Islam, sermon no .207.

[10.](#) Ibid.

[11.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Fayz al-Islam, sermon no. 50.

[12.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Subhi Salih, no.45.

Right n. 19: The Right of Subjects through Knowledge

حق الرعية بالعلم

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ رَعِيَّتِكَ بِالْعِلْمِ فَأَنْ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ جَعَلَكَ لَهُمْ فِيْمَا آتَاكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ وَوَلَاكَ مِنْ خَزَانَةِ الْحِكْمَةِ، فَإِنْ أَحْسَنْتَ فِيْمَا وَلَّاكَ اللَّهُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ وَقُمْتَ بِهِ لَهُمْ مَقَامَ الْخَازِنِ الشَّفِيقِ النَّاصِحِ لِمَوْلَاهُ فِي عِبِيدِهِ، الصَّابِرِ الْمُحْتَسِبِ الَّذِي إِذَا رَأَى ذَا حَاجَةٍ أَخْرَجَ لَهُ مِنَ الْأَمْوَالِ الَّتِي فِي يَدَيْهِ كُنْتَ رَاشِدًا، وَكُنْتَ لِدَلِكْ أَمِلًا مُعْتَقِدًا وَإِلَّا كُنْتَ لَهُ خَائِنًا وَلِخَلْقِهِ ظَالِمًا وَلِسَلْبِهِ وَعِزِّهِ مُتَعَرِّضًا.

And the right of your subjects through knowledge is that you should know that God established you over them through what He has granted you of knowledge, and the authority He has assigned you over His treasures of wisdom.

If you do well in what God has given you authority over and serve as a compassionate caretaker for them, sincere to his master in the affairs of his slaves, the steadfast one seeking reward through his good deeds, who, when he sees a needy person, takes out for him from the wealth under his control – then you will be rightly guided and will be hopeful and faithful.

Otherwise, you will be regarded as betraying Him, unjust to His creatures, and exposing yourself to God's seizing His Graces and Power from you.

And in the other version we read: “And the right of your subjects through knowledge is that you should know that God established you over them through what He has granted you of knowledge and what He has granted authority over His treasures of wisdom.

If you do well in teaching the people, not treating them roughly or annoying them, then God will increase His bounty toward you. But if you withhold your knowledge from people or treat them roughly when they seek knowledge from you, then it will be God’s right to deprive you of the knowledge and its splendor and make you fall from your place in the people’s heart.”

Imam Sajjad has pointed out the following:

1 – What one has learned of knowledge, and whatever he has gained of wisdom are all blessings of God. One does not have any of this on his own. Therefore, after considering these points one should not become haughty.

2 – What one has control over of knowledge and wisdom is only a portion of God’s treasure. He is only considered to be a trustee and a gatekeeper. He should warmly welcome others, and kindly grant them from the treasures with which he is entrusted.

3 – Imam Sajjad considers knowledgeable wise men as gatekeepers of the treasures of knowledge and wisdom. He does not deem it proper to be stingy about knowledge or wisdom, as it is not proper to be stingy with wealth.

4 – If the one who possesses knowledge acts upon his duties, he is like a sympathetic counselor who has seriously safeguarded what he is entrusted with. Otherwise, he is like one who has betrayed his master. By not respecting the rights of his subjects through knowledge, he has oppressed them, and has deprived them of their rights to be honored.

Therefore, one who possesses knowledge should seek ways to teach his students that would encourage them to learn. Any form of bad-temper, ill conduct or anger with the students will make the students lose their interest. It might even force them to quit their studies. In fact, this implies that the one who possesses knowledge has hoarded up his knowledge, and is being stingy with his knowledge by showing this kind of behavior.

A Good Teacher’s Characteristics

A good teacher is one who possesses the following desirable characteristics in teaching and encountering his students:

1 – A good teacher is one who does not assume the responsibility of teaching until he attains all the

desirable qualities and capabilities of a teacher. This is to be recognized by good people.

2 – A good teacher is one who does not entrust his knowledge to bad people to be abused and debased.

3 – A good teacher should put his knowledge to practice, and the society should be given the chance to benefit from the fruits of this act. If not, he is like those admonished in the following verse:

أَتَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنْسَوْنَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

“Do ye enjoin right conduct on the people, and forget (to practice it) yourselves.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Baqarah 2:44]

Regarding the following verse of the Holy Qur’an:

إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ غَفُورٌ

“Those truly fear God, among His servants, who have knowledge.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Fatir 35:28]

Imam Sadiq said:

الْعَالِمُ مَنْ صَدَّقَ فِعْلُهُ قَوْلَهُ وَمَنْ لَمْ يُصَدِّقْ قَوْلُهُ فِعْلُهُ فَلَيْسَ بِعَالِمٍ.

“A knowledgeable person is one whose deeds confirm his words. One whose deeds do not confirm his words is not a knowledgeable person.” ¹

4– A good teacher should be good-tempered and humble. He should train his students with patience and kindness. The Prophet of God said the following regarding scholars:

عُلَمَاءُ أُمَّتِي كَأَنْبِيَاءِ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ.

“My nation’s scholars are like the Prophet of the Israelites.” ²

This implies that the same patience and good-temper that is necessary for the Prophets to succeed in their inviting the people to follow God, is also necessary for teachers to be successful in teaching their students.

5 – A good teacher should not use the student’s lack of sincerity and intent to learn as an excuse not to

teach him. Rather he should admit him, and slowly develop this sincerity and intention to acquire knowledge in the student in the process of teaching. This is because knowledge without sincerity is similar to jewelry hanging around a pig's neck as Imam Ali said:

لَا تُعَلِّقُوا الْجَوَاهِرَ فِي أَعْنَاقِ الْخَنَازِيرِ.

“Do not hang jewels around a pig's neck.”³

6 – A good teacher should not hesitate to teach whenever he finds a student ready to learn. Jabir Jo'afi quoted on the authority of Imam Baqir:

زَكَاةُ الْعِلْمِ تَعْلِيمُهُ عِبَادَ اللَّهِ.

“The alms due to be paid on your knowledge is teaching it to God's servants.”⁴

7 – A good teacher is one whose deeds do not negate his words. An example of this might be his declaring something to be illegitimate, but doing it himself.

8 – A good teacher should be determined to express what is right as much as is in his power to do so. The Prophet of God said:

إِذَا ظَهَرَتِ الْبِدْعُ فِي أُمَّتِي فَلْيُظْهِرِ الْعَالِمُ عِلْمَهُ فَمَنْ لَمْ يَفْعَلْ فَعَلَيْهِ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ.

“When innovations (in religion) appear in my nation, then let the person of knowledge confront it. Whoever does not do so, upon him be the curse of God.”⁵

A Good Teacher's Duties to His Students and Class

The following are the duties of a good teacher to his students and class:

1 – A good teacher should foster good manners, proper ethics and religious knowledge in his students step by step. He should develop their sense of abstaining from this world.

2 – A good teacher should explain the value and the nobility of knowledge to his students. He should help them understand that the men of knowledge stand in the ranks of the Prophets.

3 – A good teacher should like for his students what he likes for himself, and should dislike for them what he dislikes for himself.

4 – A good teacher should advise his students not to follow bad examples and not to commit the

forbidden acts or what might harm them.

5 – A good teacher should not be haughty with his students. Rather he should be humble with them since the Prophet of God said:

لِيُنُؤَا لِمَنْ تُعَلِّمُونَ وَلِمَنْ تَتَعَلَّمُونَ مِنْهُ

“Be gentle with those you teach and those you learn from.”

6 – A good teacher should always be sympathetic with his students. Whenever one of them is absent, he should ask the reason. He should check on them every now and then either in person or through someone else. He should visit them if they get ill. He should try to help fulfill their needs when they become needy if he is able to assist them.

7 – A good teacher should get to know the names and characteristics of his students.

8 – A good teacher should seek the easiest way to teach. In the beginning, he should teach whatever must be taught first in order to make them understand what he is teaching. He should present the material to his students at a level that is understandable by them.

9 – A good teacher should be enthusiastic about going to class, and should avoid presenting material beyond the mental ability of his students to comprehend.

10 – A good teacher should treat all of his students the same. If they are all of the same rank, he should not prefer some to others. In addition, if there is an age-related difference in their rank, he should show more respect for the students with a higher rank to encourage the rest to work hard to attain a higher rank.

What a Teacher Should Practice

1 – A teacher should be clean, wear clean clothes, walk calmly towards his class, and enter the class with utmost dignity.⁶

2 – A teacher should remember God, and say supplications transmitted to us through the Prophet of God and the Immaculate Imams stressing the highest spiritual meanings. He should pray God to help guide him, and help him understand well, and then start to teach.

3 – A teacher should greet his students upon entering the class. If he is teaching in a mosque, he should at first say two units of prayers, ask God to save him from making any mistakes, and help him succeed.

4 – When he wants to sit down in class, he should be calm. He should sit down with dignity and having previously prepared his lecture, he should start to teach.

- 5 – He should sit down facing the Qiblah⁷ whenever possible and avoid vain talk.
- 6 – He should be sincere in his intentions to teach when he sets out to go to class. He should establish the propagation of knowledge and divine decrees as his main goal.
- 7 – He should avoid undue jokes while teaching. However, he should use jokes mildly and at proper times to break the ice and eliminate the highly formal atmosphere of the classroom.
- 8 – He should sit where every student can see him. He should look at him and reply.
- 9 – He should be happy and pleasant when he is teaching, and avoid frowning, or being bad-tempered.
- 10 – He should bless his class by starting his lecture with some verses from the Holy Qur'an.
- 11 – It is very important for a good teacher to confess that he does not know the answer to a question asked for which he does not know the answer. He should do so bravely since Imam Ali said:

إِذَا سُئِلْتُمْ عَمَّا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ فَأَهْرُبُوا... تَقُولُونَ: اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ.

“If you are asked about what you know not, then flee.” He was asked how. He replied: “Flee by saying God knows best.”

One should realize that acknowledging that you do not know the answer to that question does not reduce your status. Rather it will strengthen your status in the hearts of the people since then they realize that you are pious.

The Worth of Knowledge-Seekers in the Eyes of the Prophet

The late Al-Shahid al-Thani⁸ expresses more characteristics of a good teacher in the book Muniat al-Mureed. However, we will suffice with the above and direct our attention to the worth of the knowledge-seekers, and the reward that God has established for them.

- 1 – God's Prophet said:

مَنْ طَلَبَ عِلْماً فَأَدْرَكَهُ كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَهُ كِفْلَيْنِ مِنَ الْأَجْرِ، وَمَنْ طَلَبَ عِلْماً فَلَمْ يُدْرِكْهُ كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَهُ كِفْلاً مِنَ الْأَجْرِ.

“God will grant two rewards to whoever seeks knowledge and acquires it. And God will grant one reward to those who seek knowledge, but do not acquire it.”

- 2 – God's Prophet said:

مَنْ أَحَبَّ أَنْ يَنْظُرَ إِلَى عِتْقَاءِ اللَّهِ مِنَ النَّارِ فَلْيَنْظُرْ إِلَى الْمُتَعَلِّمِينَ: فَوَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ مَا مِنْ مُتَعَلِّمٍ يَخْتَلِفُ إِلَى بَابِ الْعَالَمِ إِلَّا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَهُ بِكُلِّ قَدَمٍ عِبَادَةَ سَنَةٍ وَبَنَى اللَّهُ لَهُ بِكُلِّ قَدَمٍ مَدِينَةً فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَيَمْشِي عَلَى الْأَرْضِ وَهِيَ تَسْتَغْفِرُ لَهُ وَيُمْسِي وَيُصْبِحُ مَغْفُوراً لَهُ وَشَهِدَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَنَّهُمْ عِتْقَاءُ اللَّهِ مِنَ النَّارِ.

“Whoever likes to see those saved by God from the Fire (of Hell) should take a look at those who seek knowledge. I swear by the One who possesses full control over my life that God grants the reward of one year of worshipping Him for each step that the knowledge-seekers take while going to and returning from the house of the knowledgeable ones. For each step they take, God builds them a city in Heaven. The Earth prays for them and seeks their forgiveness as they walk on it. Their mornings and evenings are accompanied by God’s forgiveness and the angels witness that they have been freed by God from the Fire.”⁹

3- God’s Prophet said:

مَنْ طَلَبَ الْعِلْمَ فَهُوَ كَالصَّائِمِ نَهَارَهُ وَالْقَائِمِ لَيْلَهُ وَإِنْ أَبَا مِنَ الْعِلْمِ يَتَعَلَّمُهُ الرَّجُلُ خَيْرٌ لَهُ مِنْ أَنْ يَكُونَ أَبُو قُبَيْسٍ ذَهَباً فَأَنْفَقَهُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ.

“Whoever seeks knowledge is like one who fasts in the daytime and stays up at night to worship God. For him each chapter that he learns is better than giving as much gold in charity as Mount Abu Qubays for the sake of God.”¹⁰

4- God’s Prophet said:

مَنْ جَاءَهُ الْمَوْتُ وَهُوَ يَطْلُبُ الْعِلْمَ لِيُحْيِيَ بِهِ الْإِسْلَامَ كَانَ بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ دَرَجَةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ فِي الْجَنَّةِ.

“Whoever dies while seeking knowledge with the intention of reviving Islam, then there is one rank in Heaven between him and the Prophets.”¹¹

This was a brief summary of the values of students that the Noble Prophet expressed.

¹. Usul al-Kafi, v. 1, p.36.

². Munyah al-Murid, p.182.

³. Ibid. p.184.

⁴. Usul al-Kafi, v. 1, p.41.

⁵. Usul al-Kafi, v. 1, p.54.

⁶. Munyah al-Murid, pp. 204–210.

⁷. The direction towards the Holy House of God in Makkah to which Muslims turn when they pray.

⁸. Zayn al-Din al-Juba’i al-‘Amili.

⁹. Zayn al-Din al-‘Amili.

¹⁰. Zayn al-Din al-Juba’i al-‘Amili.

¹¹. Ibid.

Right n. 20: The Right of the Wife

حق الزوجة

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ رَعِيَّتِكَ بِمِلْكِ النِّكَاحِ فَإِنَّ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ جَعَلَهَا سَكَنًا وَمُسْتَرَاحًا وَأُنْسًا وَوَاقِيَةً، وَكَذَلِكَ كُلُّ وَاحِدٍ مِنْكُمَا يَجِبُ أَنْ يَحْمَدَ اللَّهَ عَلَى صَاحِبِهِ، وَيَعْلَمَ أَنَّ ذَلِكَ نِعْمَةٌ مِنْهُ عَلَيْهِ. وَوَجِبَ أَنْ يُحْسِنَ صُحْبَةَ نِعْمَةِ اللَّهِ وَيُكْرِمَهَا وَيَرْفُقَ بِهَا وَإِنْ كَانَ حَقُّكَ عَلَيْهَا أَغْلَظَ وَطَاعَتُكَ بِهَا أَلْزَمَ فِيمَا أَحْبَبْتَ وَكَرِهْتَ مَا لَمْ تَكُنْ مَعْصِيَةً، فَإِنَّ لَهَا حَقَّ الرَّحْمَةِ وَالْمُؤَانَسَةِ، وَمَوْضِعُ السُّكُونِ إِلَيْهَا قَضَاءُ اللَّذَّةِ الَّتِي لَا بُدَّ مِنْ قَضَائِهَا وَذَلِكَ عَظِيمٌ. وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ.

And the right of your subject through matrimonial contract¹ is that you should know that God has made her a repose, a comfort and a companion, and a protector for you. It is incumbent upon each of you to thank God for the other and realize that the other one is God's blessing for you. It is obligatory to be a good companion for God's blessing, and to honor her and treat her gently.

Yet, your right over her is more incumbent² and she must obey you in every matter that you like or detest – except in acts of disobedience to God. She should enjoy the rights of mercy and intimacy, as she is an object of tranquility. You should care for her through consummation of the lust that must be consummated. And that is surely great. And there is no power but in God.

“The right of your wife (*zawja*) is that you know that God has made her a repose and a comfort for you; you should know that she is God's favor toward you, so you should honor her and treat her gently. Though her right toward you is more incumbent, you must treat her with compassion, since she is your prisoner (*asir*) whom you feed and clothe. If she is ignorant, you should pardon her.”³

This statement can be read in Makarim ul-Akhlaq: “She also has the right to have mercy on her, since she is subject to you. You must feed and clothe her. Whenever she makes a mistake out of ignorance, you should forgive her.”

We already discussed the issue of marriage and establishment of a family in chapter 9 in detail. In that chapter which was about sex, we explained that the best way to prevent adultery and the corruption of the society is through marriage and the establishment of family. We described the physical, spiritual and psychological harms of sexual corruption and fornication. Now in this chapter we will briefly discuss the duties of a spouse as viewed in the Qur'an and the traditions – as expressed by Imam Sajjad .

We already mentioned that marriage is a blessed foundation of a family. The husband and wife make a promise to each other that this relationship will last to the end of their life. This structure is not built using bricks, steel rods and cement. It is a home built upon love, comfort and delight in which the couple shall live together their whole life, and raise boys and girls to continue the human society. We shall remind you that this structure is only firm if the husband and wife know about what Islam has set forth as rightful

decrees. Otherwise, this structure will be shaken up by the erupting quakes of disharmony and bad temper.

Love and Mercy

The first characteristics mentioned by Imam Sajjad are tranquility and dwelling in love. God has considered the creation of man and woman, and their dwelling together as signs in the Holy Qur'an:

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً ۚ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

“And among His signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquility with them. And he has put love and mercy between your (hearts): Verily in that are Signs for those who reflect.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Rum 3:21]

This issue of dwelling together in love is also stated in the following verse:

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَجَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا لِيَسْكُنَ إِلَيْهَا

“It is He Who created you from a single person, and made his mate in order that he might dwell with her (in love).” [The Holy Qur'an, al-A'raf 7: 189]

The two concepts of tranquility and dwelling together, which are major God-given blessings, are presented in these verses. This includes physical and spiritual as well as individual and social aspects of tranquility and mutual life. No one can deny the physical ailments due to not marrying. Everyone is familiar with the spiritual problems and psychological disturbances that unmarried people have to deal with.

Unmarried people feel less social responsibility. This is why more cases of suicidal attempts are seen among unmarried people. They also commit more crimes. A person who gets married is no longer single. He discovers a new character within himself, and feels a lot more responsible.

In these verses, love and mercy have been expressed after tranquility and living together in peace which is the best form of life. Everyone is seeking a peaceful life. In fact, love and mercy constitute the glue and cement for the structure of the human society. There are some differences between love and mercy.

1 – Love is the initial motivation for establishing a relationship. However, at the end of life one or the other one gets weak, and mercy is needed.

2 – Love exists between the adults who can serve each other. However, children need mercy to grow

up.

3 – Love is usually a mutual feeling, while mercy is unilateral and mixed with self-sacrifice.⁴

When the life of a couple is filled with tranquility, is based on love, and is accompanied by mercy, it is firmly established. On the other hand, a life without these is a shaky life, ready to break apart. Marriage is like the first level of social life. Through marriage, one can study and learn about the rights.

There are two kinds of rights established between a couple: legal rights and moral rights. The legal rights include the right that the husband must feed and clothe his wife and provide for her shelter. They also include the right that the woman should obey her husband. These rights are the fundamentals of mutual life, and are needed in order to provide for life – just like the foundation and the structure of a building.

However, moral rights are those which both the husband and the wife are morally bound to adhere to. Should they not adhere to these rights, there is no legal obligation for them to do so. However, the beauty and pleasure of life is dependent upon performing these duties. Acts like compliance, friendship and love fall in this group. One can consider these rights as the decorations of life such as painting and fine plaster work.

“The law of creation has made men and women in need of each other in order to better unite men and women together, and strengthen the family which is the main basis for human prosperity. If men have been established as the ones for the women to financially rely on, women have been created for men to spiritually rely on. These different needs attract them to each other, and finally unite them.”⁵

Head of the Household in the Family Structure

Consider the following verse:

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَانِتَاتٌ حَافِظَاتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ وَاللَّاتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاضْرِبُوهُنَّ فَإِنْ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا كَبِيرًا

“Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because God has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means. Therefore, the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in (the husband's) absence what God would have them guard. As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (next) refuse to share their beds, (and last) beat them (lightly): But if they return to obedience, seek not against them means (of annoyance). For God is Most High, Great (above you all).” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Nisaa 4:34]

We must realize that the family is a small society, and it needs a head and a leader. The man is the head of the household. The woman is his assistant and is under his supervision. We must know that this position is granted to him due to the characteristics that exist in men. Such characteristics are his ability to let his mind rule over his feelings – as opposed to women, and his possession of more power and physical strength.

Men can use the first to plan for their life, and use the second to safeguard their family. The phrase “because God has given the one more (strength) than the other” in the above verse refers to this point. However, it is clear that entrusting men with this duty neither is considered to be a reason for their possessing a higher human character, nor is it to be a privilege for them. It is clear that in general, the human character of an assistant may be loftier than that of his boss in some aspects. However, the boss is usually more suitable than his assistant, for the performance of the duty he is made responsible for.

In this verse, women are classified into two groups. The women in the first group are righteous ones. They are humble. They respect the family structure. They are highly responsible, and perform their duties and responsibilities well. Regarding the rights that God has established and are expressed in the above verse as “what God would have them guard.” they perform their responsibilities well.

This they do regarding financial issues, and guarding their honor. The women in the second group are the disobedient ones who are seen to have signs of possible disloyalty and ill-conduct. Men are supposed to honor and respect the first group of women, and admonish, or refuse to sleep with the second group. Should these measures not work, men are supposed to punish them as decreed by Islam.[6](#)

We presented the above verse to show that according to the Holy Qur'an, men are responsible for protecting and maintaining women. Imam Sajjad stressed their right to be fed and clothed by men. All the major jurisprudents have also decreed they have the right to be fed and clothed: “It is obligatory for men to pay for the living expenses of their permanent wives.

These expenses include food, clothes, shelter, and living necessities such as rugs, blankets, cleaning apparatus, and things that women usually need during their life. This is required if she lives in his house and is obedient to him. Therefore, if she leaves the house without a religiously acceptable excuse, and leaves him then she does not deserve to be maintained. It is well-known that this responsibility of maintaining his wife is only up until the time when the wife is complaisant, and is lifted if she becomes disobedient.”[7](#)

It was said that women have two types of rights. One is her legal right to maintenance. Should the man not pay for her maintenance, she has the right to legally claim and receive it. However, rights of the second type are moral, humane rights. Respecting these rights will cause tranquility, peace, and will strengthen life and aid its continuation.

Now we will attend to these rights. The Noble Prophet has made several recommendations regarding

women on various occasions. We will present only a few here. The Prophet said:

خَيْرُكُمْ خَيْرُكُمْ لِأَهْلِهِ وَأَنَا خَيْرُكُمْ لِأَهْلِي.

*“The best of you are the ones who treat their family the best. And I am the best of you towards my family.”*⁸

He also said:

عِيَالُ الرَّجُلِ أَسْرَاؤُهُ، وَأَحَبُّ الْعِبَادِ إِلَى اللَّهِ تَعَالَى أَحْسَنُهُمْ صَنِيعًا إِلَى أَسْرَائِهِ.

*“A man's dependants are his prisoners. And the servants most loved by God are the ones who best treat their prisoners.”*⁹

Imam Baqir quoted on the authority of God's Prophet :

أَوْصَانِي جِبْرِيلُ بِالْمَرْأَةِ حَتَّى ظَنَنْتُ أَنَّهُ لَا يَنْبَغِي طَلَاقُهَا إِلَّا مِنْ فَاحِشَةٍ بَيِّنَةٍ.

*“Gabriel advised me about women so much that I thought she could not be divorced unless she clearly commits adultery.”*¹⁰

In another tradition, The Prophet said:

مَنْ احْتَمَلَ مِنْ امْرَأَتِهِ وَلَوْ كَلِمَةً وَاحِدَةً أَعْتَقَ اللَّهُ رَقَبَتَهُ مِنَ النَّارِ وَأَوْجَبَ لَهُ الْجَنَّةَ وَكَتَبَ لَهُ مِائَتِي أَلْفٍ حَسَنَةٍ وَمَحَا عَنْهُ مِائَتِي أَلْفٍ سَيِّئَةٍ وَرَفَعَ لَهُ مِائَتِي أَلْفٍ دَرَجَةٍ وَكَتَبَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ بِكُلِّ شَعْرَةٍ عَلَى بَدَنِهِ عِبَادَةَ سَنَةٍ.

*“God will save whoever bears his wife – even if it is just one (bad) word – from the Fire. God will assure him of Heaven and record two thousand good deeds for him. God will wipe out two hundred thousand of his wrong-doings and raise his rank two hundred thousand levels, and establish as many years of worshipping for him as there are hairs on his body.”*¹¹

These words of the Noble Prophet are the best advice we have received regarding women. A man is supposed to be kind and polite to his wife. He is supposed to ignore her mistakes. He is supposed to be patient with her bad temper to be granted the divine rewards that the Noble Prophet promised.

There is no doubt that there are problems in every house. At times incompatibilities may cause quarrels that might cool their relationship. This will place a gap between them, and will drive them more apart from each other. If not prevented, this might lead to separation and divorce. A young inexperienced

husband and wife who still follow their lust may get angry quickly, and attempt to take revenge on each other. In order to prevent this, Islam has advised men and women to forgive each other, and ignore one another's faults.

Ishaq ibn Ammar asked Imam Sadiq regarding the rights of a woman upon her husband. Imam Sadiq said:

يُشْبِعُ بَطْنَهَا وَيَكْسُو جَنْتَهَا وَإِنْ جَهَلْتَ غَفَرَ لَهَا. إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ خَلِيلَ الرَّحْمَنِ شَكَا إِلَى اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ خُلُقَ سَارَةَ فَأَوْحَى اللَّهُ إِلَيْهِ أَنْ مَثَلُ الْمَرْأَةِ مَثَلُ الضِّلْعِ إِنْ أَقْمَمْتَهُ انْكَسَرَ وَإِنْ تَرَكْتَهُ اسْتَمْتَعْتَ بِهِ.

“He should fill her stomach, and cover her body. If she makes a mistake, he should forgive her. Abraham – the friend of the Merciful – complained to the Almighty God about Sara's bad temper. God revealed to him: The similitude of a woman is like that of a dry bent stick. It will crack if you try to straighten it, but you will benefit from it if you leave it as it is.”¹²

Therefore, there is no use in being harsh with your wife. Nothing can be gained but misery and bitterness. The most important issue that a man should realize in life is that his wife is his life-partner. She is neither his slave, nor his housemaid. Therefore, from the viewpoint of religious jurisprudence, a man does not have the right to force his wife to work, or to take the results of her efforts in his own possession. More importantly, he should realize that he must help his spouse. Our Immaculate Leaders have outlined many rewards for men who help their wives. We will mention a few here.

The Rewards of Helping the Wives

God's Prophet told Ali :

إِسْمَعْ مِنِّي يَا أَبَا الْحَسَنِ! وَمَا أَقُولُ إِلَّا مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي: مَا مِنْ رَجُلٍ يُعِينُ امْرَأَتَهُ فِي بَيْتِهَا إِلَّا كَانَ لَهُ بِكُلِّ شَعْرَةٍ عَلَى بَدَنِهِ عِبَادَةٌ سَنَةً صِيَامُ نَهَارِهَا وَقِيَامُ لَيْلِهَا وَأَعْطَاهُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الثَّوَابِ مِثْلَ مَا أُعْطِيَ الصَّابِرِينَ وَدَاوُدَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَعِيسَى عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَامُ.

“O father of Hasan! Listen to me. I will not tell you anything but what my Lord commands. God will establish the reward of as many years of fasting in the daytime and staying up at night to pray, as there are hairs on one's body for helping his wife with the housework. The reward will be similar to what He has granted to the patient ones and the Prophet David , Jacob and Jesus .”¹³

Surely, this reward will encourage believing men to help their wives, and abstain from being forceful and bossy.

God's Prophet said:

يَا عَلِيُّ! مَنْ كَانَ فِي خِدْمَةِ الْعِيَالِ فِي الْبَيْتِ وَلَمْ يَأْتَفْ كَتَبَ اللَّهُ اسْمَهُ فِي دِيْوَانِ الشُّهَدَاءِ وَكَتَبَ لَهُ بِكُلِّ يَوْمٍ وَلَيْلَةٍ ثَوَابَ أَلْفِ شَهِيدٍ وَكَتَبَ لَهُ بِكُلِّ قَدَمٍ ثَوَابَ حِجَّةٍ وَعُمْرَةٍ وَأَعْطَاهُ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ عِرْقٍ فِي جَسَدِهِ مَدِينَةً فِي الْجَنَّةِ.

*“O Ali! God will record in the book of the martyrs the name of whoever serves his family at home, and does not disdain it. God will establish the reward of one thousand martyrs for each day and night, and will grant him the reward of the pilgrimage to the Holy House of God for every step he takes in this regard. God will reward him with a city in Heaven for every vein in his body.”*¹⁴

God's Prophet said:

يَا عَلِيُّ! خِدْمَةُ الْعِيَالِ كَفَّارَةٌ لِلْكَبَائِرِ وَتُطْفِئُ غَضَبَ الرَّبِّ وَمُهِوْرُ الْحُورِ الْعِينِ وَتَزِيدُ فِي الْحَسَنَاتِ وَالْدَّرَجَاتِ

*“O Ali! Serving the family is considered to be expiation for major sins. It will quench the Lord's wrath, and be considered as the nuptial gift for the ‘Houris’. It will be a cause of raised ranks, and increased, recorded good-deeds.”*¹⁵

Admonishing Strict Men

God's Prophet said:

مَنْ ضَرَبَ امْرَأَةً بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ فَأَنَا خَصْمُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ. لَا تَضْرِبُوا نِسَاءَكُمْ، فَمَنْ ضَرَبَهَا بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ فَقَدْ عَصَى اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ.

*“On the Resurrection Day I am the enemy of any man who unduly beats his wife. Do not beat your wives. Thus whoever unduly beats his wife has surely disobeyed God and His Prophet.”*¹⁶

God's Prophet said:

لَيْسَ مِنَّا مَنْ وُسِعَ عَلَيْهِ ثُمَّ قَتَرَ عَلَى عِيَالِهِ.

*“Whoever is affluent but is stingy with his wife does not belong to our nation.”*¹⁷

Improving the Spouse's Living Conditions

It has been narrated that Imam Sajjad said:

أَرْضَاكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَوْسَعُكُمْ عَلَى عِيَالِهِ.

“Whoever provides most amply for his family will be the most pleasing one near God.”¹⁸

Imam Ridha said:

يَنْبَغِي لِلرَّجُلِ أَنْ يُوسِعَ عَلَى عِيَالِهِ لئَلَّا يَتَمَنَّوْا مَوْتَهُ.

“A man should provide abundant provision for his family so that they do not wish for his death.”¹⁹

So far we discussed how men should be kind to their wives, not bother or hurt them; not be strict with them, but help them. Now let us see what Islam instructs women to do to counter men's services, and what role women should play in life.

The Rights of Men Incumbent Upon Women

Al-Hasan ibn Mahboob quoted on the authority of Malik ibn Atiyeh on the authority of Muhammad ibn Muslim on the authority of Imam Baqir that once a woman went to the Prophet of God and asked: “O' Prophet of God! What is the right of a man incumbent upon the woman?” The Prophet replied:

أَنْ تُطِيعَهُ وَلَا تَعْصِيَهُ، وَلَا تَصَدَّقَ مِنْ بَيْتِهِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ، وَلَا تَصُومَ طَوْعاً إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ، وَلَا تَمْنَعَهُ نَفْسَهَا وَإِنْ كَانَتْ عَلَى ظَهْرٍ قَتَبٍ، وَلَا تَخْرُجَ مِنْ بَيْتِهَا إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ، وَإِنْ خَرَجَتْ بِغَيْرِ إِذْنِهِ لَعَنَتْهَا مَلَائِكَةُ السَّمَاءِ وَمَلَائِكَةُ الْأَرْضِ وَمَلَائِكَةُ الْغَضَبِ وَمَلَائِكَةُ الرَّحْمَةِ حَتَّى تَرْجِعَ إِلَى بَيْتِهَا.

فَقَالَتْ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ مَنْ أَعْظَمُ النَّاسِ حَقًّا عَلَى الرَّجُلِ؟ قَالَ: وَالِدَاهُ. قَالَتْ: فَمَنْ أَعْظَمُ النَّاسِ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمَرْأَةِ؟ قَالَ: زَوْجُهَا.

قَالَتْ: فَمَا لِي عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْحَقِّ مِثْلُ مَا لَهُ عَلَيَّ؟ قَالَ: وَلَا مِنْ كُلِّ مَائَةٍ وَاحِدَةً.

فَقَالَتْ: وَالَّذِي بَعَثَكَ بِالْحَقِّ لَا يَمْلِكُ رَقَبَتِي رَجُلٌ أَبَدًا.

“She should obey him, and not rebel against him. She should not give away anything from his house as charity unless by his permission. She should not fast when not required to do so unless by his permission. She should not withdraw herself from him even if they are riding a camel. She should not leave the house without his permission. Should she ever leave the house without his permission, she will be cursed by the angels in the heavens and on the Earth, and the angels of wrath and mercy until she returns home.”

The woman asked: “O' Prophet of God! Who has the most rights over a man?” He said: “His parents.” She asked: “Who has the most rights over a woman?” He said: “Her husband.” She asked: “Do I have the same rights over him that he has over me?” The Prophet said: “No. Not even one one-hundredth.” Then she said: “I swear by the One who rightfully appointed you to Prophethood that no man will ever own me.”[20](#)

The Prophet said:

حَقُّ الرَّجُلِ عَلَى الْمَرْأَةِ إِنْارَةُ السِّرَاجِ وَإِصْلَاحُ الطَّعَامِ وَأَنْ تَسْتَقْبِلَهُ عِنْدَ بَابِ بَيْتِهَا فَتُرْحِّبَ بِهِ وَأَنْ تُقَدِّمَ إِلَيْهِ الطَّشْتِ وَالْمِنْدِيلَ وَأَنْ تُوضِيَهُ وَأَنْ لَا تَمْنَعَهُ نَفْسَهَا إِلَّا مِنْ عِلَّةٍ.

“The right of the man over his wife is that she should turn on the light, prepare the food, and rush to warmly welcome him when he comes home. She should take him some water and a towel, wash his hands and not withdraw herself from him unless she has an excuse.”[21](#)

The Prophet said:

لَا تُؤَدِّي الْمَرْأَةُ حَقَّ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ حَتَّى تُؤَدِّيَ حَقَّ زَوْجِهَا.

“A woman has not fulfilled God's rights unless she properly fulfills her husband's rights.”[22](#)

Imam Sadiq said:

أَيُّمَا امْرَأَةٍ بَاتَتْ وَزَوْجُهَا عَلَيْهَا سَاخِطٌ فِي حَقِّ لَمْ تُقْبَلْ مِنْهَا صَلَاةٌ حَتَّى يَرْضَى عَنْهَا.

“The prayers of a woman who passes a night while her husband is unhappy with her regarding his rights, will not be accepted until he is pleased with her.”[23](#)

The Women's Holy War

Imam Baqir has been narrated to have said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ كَتَبَ عَلَى الرِّجَالِ الْجِهَادَ وَعَلَى النِّسَاءِ الْجِهَادَ؛ فَجِهَادُ الرَّجُلِ أَنْ يَبْذُلَ مَالَهُ وَدَمَهُ حَتَّى يُقْتَلَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ، وَجِهَادُ الْمَرْأَةِ أَنْ تَصْبِرَ عَلَى مَا تَرَى مِنْ أذى زَوْجِهَا وَغَيْرِهِ.

“God, the Almighty has decreed holy war for both men and women. The holy war for men is to expend their property and their blood until they attain martyrdom in the way of God. A woman's holy war is to be patient with troubles she experiences from her husband and his jealousy.”[24](#)

Imam Baqir has considered the house to be the front in this tradition. The soldiers who fight in this front are the women. The most important weapon they use in this war is their patience. The swords and the spears are the troubles she experiences from her husband. The woman should not escape from this front. She should withstand all this with patience and perseverance until her life terminates with a good ending.

Many of the women who have not been properly educated in this respect, and are inexperienced may lose the war, abandon their house, and deprive their dear children of maternal love. Thus, they choose eternal bitterness for themselves, their husband and their children. On the other hand, there are some patient women who diligently guide the vessel of life through the stormy waves of their husbands' wrath, zeal and bothering until they settle down, and attain victory and prosperity for themselves and their children.

Imam Sadiq has admonished women not to make up for men other than their husband. He said:

أَيُّمَا امْرَأَةٍ تَطَيَّبَتْ لِغَيْرِ زَوْجِهَا لَمْ يُقْبَلْ مِنْهَا صَلَاةٌ حَتَّى تَغْتَسِلَ مِنْ طَيِّبِهَا كَغَسَلِهَا مِنْ جَنَابَتِهَا.

“God will not accept the prayers of any woman who puts on perfume for a man other than her husband until she bathes from her (having applied) perfume just as she bathes after intercourse.”[25](#)

Regarding the woman's gratefulness for her husband's efforts, Imam Sadiq said:

أَيُّمَا امْرَأَةٍ قَالَتْ لِزَوْجِهَا: مَا رَأَيْتُ مِنْكَ خَيْرًا قَطُّ، فَقَدْ حَبَطَ عَمَلُهَا.

“The good deeds of any woman who tells her husband that she has never seen any good from him during her life will be cancelled, and wiped off from her record of deeds.”[26](#)

We briefly discussed the rights of men and women. If the men and women abide by these rules in the Islamic society, they shall have a sweet and prosperous life. There is a delicate point in a verse in the Holy Qur'an:

أَحِلَّ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصِّيَامِ الرَّفَثُ إِلَى نِسَائِكُمْ هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَهُنَّ

“Permitted to you, on the night of the fast is the approach to your wives. They are your garments, and ye are their garments.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2: 187]

This is a beautiful point. The husband and wife are like garments for each other. Garments are used for coverage, tranquility, and the protection and beauty of the body. Couples cover up each other's faults, and are a means of each other's comfort and tranquility, too. This coverage encompasses all aspects of

their life.

They are supposed to cover up each other's faults. They are not supposed to talk about each other's bad temper with other people. They should not divulge their private secrets. They should respect each other. As we said before while discussing the previous traditions, they should not accuse each other, since then they will both be subject to destruction.

They should be patient and withstand each other's bad temper, so that God grants them the great promised rewards. The husband and wife are great blessings for each other as Imam Sajjad said. They should share the sweet moments of life as well as its hardships. They should possess a high spirit and ambition so that their children grow up to be eminent people. Imam Sadiq quoted on the authority of the Noble Prophet of God :

قَوْلُ الرَّجُلِ لِلْمَرْأَةِ إِنِّي أُحِبُّكَ لَا يَذْهَبُ مِنْ قَلْبِكَ أَبَدًا.

“The words of a man who tells his wife ‘I love you’ will never leave her heart and mind.”²⁷

This will cause the wife to love her husband and be his support during times of hardship.

1. Your wife.
2. In the other version it is followed by: “you must treat her with compassion, since she is your prisoner whom you feed and clothe. If she is ignorant, you should pardon her.”
3. As translated by William Chittick.
4. Tafsir-i-Namunah, v. 16, p.393.
5. Nizame Huquq Zan Dar Islam, p.242.
6. Tafsir-i-Namunah, v.3, p.372.
7. Minhaj al-Salihin, v.2, p.279.
8. Makarim al-Akhlaq, p.216.
9. Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v. 14, p. 122.
10. Ibid.
11. Makarim al-Akhlaq, p.216.
12. Makarim al-Akhlaq, p.216.
13. Jami' al-Sa'adat, v.2, p. 142.
14. Jami' al-Sa'adat,
15. Ibid. p. 143.
16. Irshad al-Qulub, v. 1, p. 175.
17. Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, v.2, p.643.
18. Ibid.
19. Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v. 15, p.249.
20. Makarim al-Akhlaq, p.214.
21. Makarim al-Akhlaq, p.214.
22. Ibid. p.215.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. Makarim al-Akhlaq, p.215.
26. Ibid.

Right n. 21: The Right of your Slave

حق الرعية بملك اليمين

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ رَعِيَّتِكَ بِمِلْكِ الْيَمِينِ فَإِنَّ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّهُ خَلَقُ رَبِّكَ، وَلَحْمُكَ وَدَمُكَ وَأَنَّكَ تَمْلِكُهُ لَا أَنْتَ صَنَعْتَهُ دُونَ اللَّهِ وَلَا خَلَقْتَ لَهُ سَمْعًا وَلَا بَصَرًا وَلَا أَجْرَيْتَ لَهُ رِزْقًا وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ كَفَاكَ ذَلِكَ، ثُمَّ سَخَّرَهُ لَكَ وَأَتَمَّنَكَ عَلَيْهِ وَاسْتَوْدَعَكَ إِيَّاهُ لِتَحْفَظَهُ فِيهِ وَتَسِيرَ فِيهِ بِسِيرَتِهِ فَتُطْعِمَهُ مِمَّا تَأْكُلُ وَتُلْبِسَهُ مِمَّا تَلْبَسُ وَلَا تُكَلِّفُهُ مَا لَا يُطِيقُ، فَإِنْ كَرِهْتَ [هُ] خَرَجْتَ إِلَى اللَّهِ مِنْهُ وَاسْتَبَدَلْتَ بِهِ وَلَمْ تُعَذِّبْ خَلْقَ اللَّهِ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ.

And the right of your subject through being your slave is that you should know that he is a creature of your Lord and is made of the same flesh and blood as you. And you only own him, but you have not created him apart from God. And you have not created his hearing and sight, nor do you provide his daily sustenance; rather it is God who gives you sufficiency for that.

Then He subjugated him to you, entrusted him to you, and provisionally consigned him to you so that you may protect him there,¹ and treat him as well as He has treated you. So feed him with what you eat yourself, and clothe him with what you clothe yourself. And do not burden him with what he cannot withstand. And if you dislike him, you ought to let him go and replace him, but do not torment God's creature. And there is no power but in God.

We discussed what Imam Sajjad presented about the right of the trainer through ownership earlier in Chapter 17. In this chapter, we shall discuss the right of the slaves. There we stated that at the beginning Islam accepted the issue of slavery and did not issue a decree as to the slaves' freedom all at once since it was not economically feasible. However, since the issue of slavery was unavoidable at first, Islam established certain rights for slaves, and advised the Muslims to wholeheartedly honor their rights.

Islam and the Worth of the Slaves

1 – Islam eliminated the distinctions between the master and the slave, and it declared all equal. The Noble Prophet Muhammad said:

إِخْوَانُكُمْ جَعَلَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِتْنَةً تَحْتَ أَيْدِيكُمْ فَمَنْ كَانَ أَخُوهُ تَحْتَ يَدِهِ فَلْيُطْعِمْهُ مِنْ طَعَامِهِ وَلْيُلْبِسْهُ مِنْ لِبَاسِهِ وَلَا يُكَلِّفْهُ مَا يَغْلِبُهُ فَإِنْ كَلَّفَهُ مَا يَغْلِبُهُ فَلْيَعِنْهُ.

“Your slaves are your brothers. God has set them as a trial under your authority. Therefore whoever has mastery over one of his brothers should feed him from what he eats himself, and should clothe him with what he wears himself, and should not burden him with tasks beyond his strength, and should assist him in doing whatever hard work he asks him to do.”²

2 – The Prophet of Islam has honored slaves so much that he has not even allowed anyone to call them a slave or a maid:

لَا يَقُلْ أَحَدُكُمْ: هَذَا عَبْدِي وَهَذِهِ أَمَتِي. وَلْيَقُلْ: فَتَايَ وَفَتَاتِي.

“No one is allowed to say this is my slave or that is my maid. You should say this is my young man, and that is my young lady.”³

3 So much was done to improve the conditions of slaves in Islam, and they were so honored so much that no one dared beat his slave lest he would be recognized as the worst person in the world. This was done so that no one can beat someone else just because he is a slave, so that no one can hurt one of the servants of God nor oppress them. Imam Sadiq quoted on the authority of God’s Prophet : “Do you want me to tell you who the worst people are?” The companions said: “Yes. O Prophet of God!” Then the Prophet said:

مَنْ سَافَرَ وَحْدَهُ وَمَنَعَ رِفْدَهُ وَضَرَبَ عَبْدَهُ.

“Those who travel alone, do not admit guests, and beat their slaves.”⁴

You can see from this tradition that the Prophet has introduced those who beat or hurt their slaves as the worst of the people.

Imam Ali and his Generosity with His Slave

Once Imam Ali went to the bazaar and purchased two garments. He bought one for two Dirhams and the other one for three Dirhams. He donated the one he had bought for three Dirhams to his slave Qanbar and took the other one for himself. His slave said: “You are the Commander of the Faithful. You climb up the pulpit and deliver sermons to the people. You deserve more to wear the more expensive garment.” Imam Ali replied: “I am ashamed to seek superiority over you in this respect. I heard God’s Prophet say:

الْبِسُوهُمْ مِمَّا تَلْبَسُونَ وَأَطْعِمُوهُمْ مِمَّا تَأْكُلُونَ.

“Clothe them with what you wear yourselves, and feed them with what you eat.”⁵

The Prophet of Islam said:

“Your slaves are your brothers. Treat them with kindness. Seek their help in performing your hard tasks, and help them in the performance of difficult tasks.” [6](#)

He also said:

أَوْصَانِي حَبِيبِي جِبْرِئِيلُ بِالرَّفْقِ بِالرَّقِيقِ حَتَّى ظَنَنْتُ أَنَّهُ سَيَضْرِبُ لَهُ أَجَلًا يَخْرُجُ فِيهِ حُرًّا.

“My friend Gabriel advised me about treating my slaves with gentleness so much that I thought he would soon establish a deadline for freeing them.” [7](#)

Abu-Dharr and Donating a Garment

Abu-Dharr al-Ghifari owned two long expensive togas with which he covered himself. After a while, he used one of them to make himself a garment. He used to wear a cloak on top of that. He donated the other one to his slave. When the people found out, they blamed him and said: “You would have looked more handsome if you used both togas to make an attire for yourself.”

Abu-Dharr replied: “But I heard the Prophet of Islam say: “Clothe your slaves with what you wear yourselves, and feed them with the same with which you feed yourselves.” [8](#) Once the Prophet of Islam noticed a man was riding while his slave was walking behind him. The Prophet said: “Let your slave ride with you since he is your brother. His spirit is similar to your spirit.” [9](#)

Imam Ridha and Slaves

Yaser and Nader were both slaves of Imam Ridha . They said that Imam Ridha told them: “Whenever you see me while you are sitting down and eating, do not move until you finish your meal.” [10](#)

Imam Sadiq and Slaves

Once Imam Sadiq asked one of his slaves to go and do something. He went, and did not return on time. The Imam went after him, and found him asleep. He sat there and waited until he woke up. Then Imam Sadiq faced him and said: “O man! Why do you sleep both at night and during the daytime? The night is for you to rest, and the day is for you to struggle to fulfill your needs.” [11](#) The few examples above are only cited to illustrate how the Immaculate Imams treated their slaves and how much they honored them and respected them.

Pledges for the Slaves

The Prophet of Islam did a lot to raise the status of the slaves. As an example, he made a pledge of brotherhood for slaves such as Bilal al-Habashi (the Abyssinian), Zayd ibn Harithe and Kharizat ibn

Zayd with free Muslims such as Khalid ibn Rowayhe Khasami, Hamza ibn Abi Talib and Abu Bakr ibn Abi Quhafah. He also married off many of the women from noble families to the slaves. He first married off his own aunt's first daughter named Zaynab, the daughter of Jahsh to the slave named Zayd ibn Harithe.

Then he married off the daughter of the head of the Bani Bayazeh tribe – the daughter of Zeyad ibn Lobayd to Jowbayr. In addition to this, he appointed Usama ibn Zayd (the son of a slave) to be the head of the Islamic armed forces and go to Syria to fight with the Roman enemies. This he did even though there were many brave free men such as Umar, Abu Bakr, and others from among the immigrants¹² and the helpers¹³ available to fill that position.

The Rewards for Freeing Slaves

So far, we have expressed the importance of the rights of the slaves as expressed by the Noble Prophet of Islam and the Immaculate Imams . Now we shall discuss the rewards for freeing slaves. We have already discussed the rights of the trainer through ownership, and the issue related to free slaves. There is a section in Wasa'il al-Sha'ah by Sheikh Toosi called "Kitab ul-'Itq". In the first chapter of this section called "Bab ul-Estehbabe" there are many traditions regarding the rewards for freeing slaves. We will mention a few of them here.

In the first tradition in this chapter we read: "Muhammad ibn al-Husayn quoted on the authority of al-Husayn ibn al-Sa'ed on the authority of Abi Abdullah Ja'far ibn Muhammad :

يَعْتِقُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ بِكُلِّ عُضْوٍ مِنْهُ عُضْوًا مِنَ النَّارِ.

*"God the Exalted the High will save whoever frees his slave from the Fire. For every organ that he frees, God will save one of his organs from the Fire."*¹⁴

In the fourth tradition in this chapter we read: "Husayn ibn Muhammad quoted on the authority of al-Hasan ibn Ali on the authority of his grandfathers on the authority of Bashir an-Nab'bal that he heard Imam Sadiq say:

مَنْ أَعْتَقَ نَسَمَةً صَالِحَةً لِرُوحِهِ اللَّهُ كَفَّرَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ مَكَانَ كُلِّ عُضْوٍ مِنْهُ عُضْوًا مِنَ النَّارِ.

*"God will forgive whoever frees a good servant of God for God's sake. God will save his organs from the Fire (of Hell) – an organ will be saved for each organ freed."*¹⁵

The Evening of the Day of ‘Arafah⁴⁹⁸ and Freeing Slaves

In the sixth tradition of this chapter, Imam Sadiq has been quoted as saying: “The Commander of the Faithful Imam Ali freed one thousand slaves using money he earned with his own hard work.” In the second chapter of this section, it has been stated that it is recommended to free slaves on the evening of the day of ‘Arafah. Two traditions from Imam Sadiq have been narrated to support this. The first one is:

يُسْتَحَبُّ لِلرَّجُلِ أَنْ يَتَقَرَّبَ إِلَى اللَّهِ عَشِيَّةَ عَرَفَةَ وَيَوْمَ عَرَفَةَ بِالْعِتْقِ وَالصَّدَقَةِ.

“It is recommended for man to seek proximity to God on the day and evening of ‘Arafah by freeing slaves and giving charity.”¹⁶

Thus from what we have described one can better comprehend the depth of the meaningful words of Imam Sajjad regarding slaves. Therefore, we should treat them as the Noble Prophet and the Immaculate Imams did.

- ^{1.} In your shelter.
- ^{2.} Islam and Human Rights, p.204, quoted from Nahjul Fasahat, p. 120.
- ^{3.} Ibid. from Shubhat al-Islam, p.34.
- ^{4.} Islam and Human Rights, p. 204, quoted from Bihar al-Anwar, v. 16, p.40.
- ^{5.} Ibid.
- ^{6.} Ibid. p.206.
- ^{7.} Ibid. quoted from “The History of Slavery” (Persian text), p.74.
- ^{8.} Islam and Human Rights, quoted from Bihar al-Anwar, v. 16, p.40.
- ^{9.} Ibid. quoted from The History of Slavery (Persian text), p.74.
- ^{10.} Ibid. quoted from Bihar al-Anwar, v. 15, p.41.
- ^{11.} Ibid.
- ^{12.} Those who emigrated from Makkah to Madina.
- ^{13.} Those who lived in Madina and helped the Prophet and the other emigrants who accompanied him.
- ^{14.} Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v. 16, pp. 2–4.
- ^{15.} Ibid.
- ^{16.} Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v. 16, pp.2–4

The Rights of Relationship

حقوق الرَّحِمِ

Right n. 22: The Right of the Mother

حق الأم

فَحَقُّ أُمِّكَ، فَإِنْ تَعَلَّمَ أَنَّهَا حَمَلَتْكَ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْمِلُ أَحَدٌ أَحَدًا وَأَطْعَمَتْكَ مِنْ ثَمَرَةِ قَلْبِهَا مَا لَا يُطْعِمُ أَحَدٌ أَحَدًا، وَأَنَّهَا وَقَتَكَ بِسَمْعِهَا وَبَصَرِهَا وَيَدَيْهَا وَرِجْلَيْهَا وَشَعْرَهَا وَبَشَرَهَا وَجَمِيعَ جَوَارِحِهَا مُسْتَبْشِرَةً بِذَلِكَ، فَرِحَةً مُوَابِلَةً، مُحْتَمِلَةً لِمَا فِيهِ مَكْرُوهُهَا وَأَلْمُهَا وَثَقُلُهَا وَغَمُّهَا حَتَّى دَفَعَتْهَا عَنْكَ يَدُ الْقُدْرَةِ وَأَخْرَجَتْكَ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ فَرَضِيَّتُ أَنْ تَشْبَعَ وَتَجُوعُ هِيَ، وَتَكْسُوكَ وَتَعْرِى، وَتُرْوِيكَ وَتَظْلِمُ، وَتُظِلُّكَ وَتَضْحَى، وَتُنْعِمَكَ بِبُوسِهَا، وَتُلَذِّذَكَ بِالنَّوْمِ بِأَرْقِهَا، وَكَانَ بَطْنُهَا لَكَ وِعَاءً، وَحِجْرُهَا لَكَ حِوَاءً، وَتُدِيهَا لَكَ سِقَاءً، وَنَفْسُهَا لَكَ وِقَاءً، تَبَاشِرُ حَرَّ الدُّنْيَا وَبَرْدَهَا لَكَ وَدُونَكَ، فَتَشْكُرُهَا عَلَى قَدْرِ ذَلِكَ وَلَا تَقْدِرُ عَلَيْهِ إِلَّا بِعَوْنِ اللَّهِ وَتَوْفِيقِهِ.

Then the right of your mother is that you should know that she carried you where no one carries anyone, and she fed you with the fruit of her heart – that which no one feeds anyone, and she protected you with her hearing and sight, and her hands and legs, and her hair and skin and all her other organs. She was highly delighted to do so. She was happy and eager, enduring the harm and the pains, and the heaviness and the grief until the Mighty Hand expelled you out of her and delivered you out to the Earth.

She did not care if she went hungry as long as you ate, and if she was naked as long as you were clothed, and if she was thirsty as long as you drank, and if she was in the sun as long as you were in the shade, and if she was miserable as long as you were happy, and if she was deprived of sleeping as long as you were resting. And her abdomen was your abode, and her lap was your seat, and her breast was your supply of drink, and her soul was your fort. She protected you from the heat and the cold of this world. Then you should thank her for all that. You will not be able to show her gratitude unless through God's help and His granting you success.

The Meaning of ‘Umm’

The Arabic word ‘Umm’ that is used for mother really means the root and the foundation. It is so widely used to mean mother that its other meanings are overshadowed.

The Use of ‘Umm’ in the Qur’an

One of the uses of ‘Umm’ in the Qur’an is to refer to a real mother as in the following verse:

وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمِّ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَرْضِعِيهِ فَإِذَا خِفْتِ عَلَيْهِ فَأَلْقِيهِ فِي الْيَمِّ وَلَا تَخَافِي وَلَا تَحْزَنِي إِنَّا رَادُّوهُ إِلَيْكَ وَجَاعِلُوهُ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ

“So We sent this inspiration to the mother of Moses: “Suckle (thy child)...” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Qasas 28:7]

The second use of ‘Umm’ in the Qur’an is to refer to its basic meaning of root and foundation as in the following verse:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ

“He it is Who has sent down to thee the Book: In it are verses basic or fundamental (of established meaning); they are the foundation of the Book: others are allegorical.” [The Holy Qur’an, Al-i-Imran 3:7]

The third use of the word ‘Umm’ in the Qur’an is to refer to the greatest of several things or the central one as in the following verse:

لَتُنذِرَ أُمَّ الْقُرَى وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا

“...that thou mayest warn the Mother of Cities¹ and all around her²...” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Shura 42:7]

Mecca was the central town in Arabia like the capital cities in the world today. Others say that Mecca is called the mother of cities because the Earth started to expand starting from there, and that Mecca is the first spot created and the first piece of dry land on the Earth. The wives of the Prophet are also considered the mothers of the believers in the Qur’an as we read in the following verse:

النَّبِيُّ أَوْلَىٰ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجُهُ أُمَّهَاتُهُمْ

“The Prophet is closer to the Believers than their own selves, and his wives are their mothers...” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Ahzab 33:6]

Considering the various meanings mentioned above one can better understand the importance of the rights of the mother.

Mother Suffers Pain

Now that we have reviewed the meanings of the word ‘Umm’ in Arabic we will consider the various important points that Imam Sajjad expressed regarding the rights of the mother. Imam Sajjad starts his discussion with pregnancy and describes how a mother suffers the hardships of the period of pregnancy and the pains of labor.

This is the type of hardship that no one else is ready to suffer for our sake. This point is clearly stressed in the Holy Qur'an in the following verse:

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ إِحْسَانًا حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ كُرْهًا وَوَضَعَتْهُ كُرْهًا وَحَمْلُهُ وَفِصَالُهُ ثَلَاثُونَ شَهْرًا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ وَبَلَغَ أَرْبَعِينَ سَنَةً قَالَ رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَىٰ وَالِدَيَّ وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ وَأَصْلِحْ لِي فِي ذُرِّيَّتِي إِنِّي تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَإِنِّي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

“We have enjoined on man kindness to his parents: In pain did his mother bear him, and in pain did she give him birth. The carrying of the (child) to his weaning is (a period of) thirty months. At length, when he reaches the age of full strength and attains forty years, he says, "O my Lord! Grant me that I may be grateful for Thy favor, which Thou has bestowed upon me, and upon both my parents, and that I may work righteousness such as Thou mayest approve; and be gracious to me in my issue. Truly have I turned to Thee and truly do I bow (to Thee) in Islam.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Ahqaf 46: 15]

Moreover, in another verse we read:

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ وَهْنًا عَلَىٰ وَهْنٍ وَفِصَالُهُ فِي عَامَيْنِ أَنْ اشْكُرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ إِلَيَّ الْمَصِيرُ

“And We have enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents: in travail upon travail did his mother bear him, and in years twain was his weaning: (hear the command), "Show gratitude to Me and to thy parents: to Me is (thy final) Goal.” [The Holy Qur'an, Luqman 31: 14]

The period of pregnancy is one of the most difficult times of a mother's life. She has to put up with many hardships from the time that she gets pregnant. She has to give a lot of her own energy to the fetus that is growing inside her. That is why she gets weak and develops many problems during pregnancy.

The Period of Pregnancy

As the fetus grows it draws more and more of the materials from the mother's body. It even affects her bones and her nerves. At times, it even does not let her rest, eat or sleep. Near the end of the period of pregnancy when the baby has grown, it even becomes difficult for the mother to sit up or stand up. However, the mother suffers all these difficulties due to the love she has for the baby that will soon be born: the baby that will smile at his mother once it is born.

Delivery is one of the hardest to bear periods of a mother's life. There are even mothers who lose their precious life during delivery. A mother is like a carrier who is delivering the most important package with which she is entrusted. She must safely deliver the baby. That is why she must take all necessary precautions to safely deliver her baby. She must be very careful about what she eats, how she moves,

where she rests, and her hygiene during the full period of pregnancy.

The duration of the trip for the package that a mother carries is nine months and no less. She must be careful that it is not harmed before reaching its destination. The baby might be harmed at any moment. The baby does not have a spirit until it reaches nearly the age of four months and ten days. Then the baby will push and the mother will be hurt, but she will thank God for her baby being alive. After a long period of hardship and suffering, the baby is born and a new period of life begins for the mother.

During the period of breast-feeding, the mother must spend all her days and nights to fulfill all the needs of the baby. The baby cannot talk during this period. He cannot tell where he is feeling pain. His only language is that of crying, and the mother must recognize all he needs through his crying. The cleansing of the baby is another very difficult task in this period. The mother must also take care of the baby during times of illness.

The Period of Breast-Feeding

The Qur'an states that the period of breast-feeding is two years as in the following verse:

وَالْوَالِدَاتُ يُرْضِعْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ حَوْلَيْنِ كَامِلَيْنِ لِمَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُتِمَّ الرَّضَاعَةَ

“The mothers shall give suck to their offspring for two whole years, if the father desires to complete the term...” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2:233]

In another verse, the full period of pregnancy and breast-feeding is said to be thirty months:

وَحَمْلُهُ وَفِصَالُهُ ثَلَاثُونَ شَهْرًا

The carrying of the (child) to his weaning is (a period of) thirty months.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Ahqaf 46: 15]

Once we subtract 24 from 30, we get 6. Could the period of pregnancy end after six months? The jurisprudents and interpreters of the Qur'an have stated that the minimum period of pregnancy is six months, and the maximum period of breast-feeding is twenty-four months. It has been recorded that some children have been born after six months of pregnancy. We can also conclude that the sooner the baby is born, the longer it must be breast-fed so that this thirty-month period of development is completed.

Ibn `Abbas has been narrated as saying that whenever a pregnancy lasts for 9 months, the mother should breast-feed the baby for 21 months. However, if the pregnancy lasts for 6 months, then the mother should breast-feed the baby for at least 24 months.³ This is also supported by natural laws since

the shortcomings of the period of pregnancy must be compensated for during the period of breast-feeding. Therefore, we notice that a mother performs great sacrifices for her baby during the periods of pregnancy and breast-feeding.

These sacrifices are both physical and emotional. It is interesting to note that the Qur'anic verse Ahqaf 46: 15 stresses kindness to both parents, but goes on to mention the sufferings of the mother and the hardships she has to go through on one's behalf. This is to awaken us, and to make us realize her great rights incumbent upon us. Then it recommends that we thank God and both our parents who are the means by which God's blessings are delivered to us.

The Mother's Share in the Development of the Child

In the verses cited above, we were instructed to be kind to both of our parents. Which of the parents has a greater share in the development of the child? The Qur'an has given a greater share to the mother due to her efforts and role during the period of pregnancy and breast-feeding. Once the sperm unites with the egg to form the initial fetus, the parents have an equal share in the development of the child. However, the mother feeds the fetus in the uterus and carries the baby until she delivers it.

Thus, she has a greater share in the development of the baby. Alexis Carl said: "Both parents have an equal share in the initial development of the cells from which other cells are constructed through successive divisions. However, in addition to providing half of the cell, the mother provides for the protoplasm that encompasses the cell. Thus, she has a greater share in the development of the fetus compared to the father. The man's duty in the development of the fetus is for a short time. However, the mother supports the fetus for nearly nine months during which it is fed by blood delivered to it from the mother's uterus."⁴

The Effects of the Mother on the Fetus

The fetus is like a part of the mother when it is in her uterus. All the physical and psychological states of the mother affect the child. The mother's physical state and what she eats all affect the child. Likewise, her thoughts and temper also affect the child. Should the mother get scared during pregnancy she will get pale. However, the fetus will be more seriously hurt. In Ea'jaze Khorakiha we read: "If a pregnant woman gets so scared that she gets pale and shivers, then there will be certain marks on the child's skin."⁵ A mother's sadness, anger, getting upset, getting suspicious, getting envious, her animosities and other bad or good traits will affect the child."⁶

The Period of Breast-Feeding as Viewed by the Qur'an

Consider the following verse of the Qur'an:

وَالْوَالِدَاتُ يُرْضِعْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ حَوْلَيْنِ كَامِلَيْنِ لِمَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُبْتِمَ الرِّضَاعَةَ وَعَلَى الْمَوْلُودِ لَهُ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ لَا تُكَلَّفُ نَفْسٌ إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا لَا تُضَارَّ وَالِدَةٌ بِوَلَدِهَا وَلَا مَوْلُودٌ لَهُ بِوَلَدِهِ وَعَلَى الْوَارِثِ مِثْلُ ذَلِكَ فَإِنْ أَرَادَا فِصَالًا عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِنْهُمَا وَتَشَاوُرٍ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا وَإِنْ أَرَدْتُمْ أَنْ تَسْتَرْضِعُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا سَلَّمْتُمْ مَا آتَيْتُم بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

“The mothers shall give suck to their offspring for two whole years, if the father desires to complete the term. But he shall bear the cost of their food and clothing on equitable terms. No soul shall have a burden laid on it greater than it can bear. No mother shall be treated unfairly on account of her child.

Nor father on account of his child, an heir shall be chargeable in the same way. If they both decide on weaning, by mutual consent, and after due consultation, there is no blame on them. If ye decide on a foster-mother for your offspring, there is no blame on you, provided ye pay (the mother) what ye offered, on equitable terms. But fear God and know that God sees well what ye do.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Baqarah 2:233]

In this verse the Qur’anic instructions about breast-feeding are outlined. We can summarize them as follows:

1 The right to breast-feed for two years belongs to the mother. It is the mother who takes care of the baby. Although the father has the right of authority over small children, the Qur’an has given the right of breast-feeding to the mother since breast-feeding establishes physical and emotional ties between the child and the mother. In short, “the mother shall give suck to their offspring for two whole years....”

2 The period of breast-feeding does not have to be two whole years unless the father desires to complete the term considering the child’s health. If the mother wants to reduce that period, she can breast-feed for a shorter time.

3 During the breast-feeding period, all the living expenses of the mother including food and clothing are to be paid for by the father of the child even if they get divorced, so that the mother can breast-feed the baby without any worries.

4 Neither the father nor the mother has the right to sacrifice the children’s life in order to resolve their own differences. This would impart an irreversible psychological blow to the child. Men should be careful not to violate the mother’s right to breast-feed their child by taking the baby away during that period. Mothers who are granted this right should not abuse it either.

5 If the father dies during the period of breast-feeding, his inheritors should provide for the living expenses of the breast-feeding mother.

6 It is up to both parents to mutually agree to stop breast-feeding the child whenever they think it proper to do so based on the child’s physical conditions.

7 We can never take away the mother's right to breast-feed her child unless she refuses to do so herself or there is a problem with her breast-feeding the baby. In such a case, we can hire another woman to breast-feed the child- partially or fully.⁷ Thus, we see that breast-feeding is the right of the mother. Now let us see how milk is produced in her body.

Milk Formation

Consider the following verse:

وَإِنَّ لَكُمْ فِي الْأَنْعَامِ لَعِبْرَةً نُّسْقِيكُم مِّمَّا فِي بُطُونِهِ مِنْ بَيْنِ فَرْثٍ وَدَمٍ لَبَنًا خَالِصًا سَائِغًا لِلشَّارِبِينَ

“And verily in cattle (too) will ye find an instructive sign. From what is within their bodies between excretions and blood, We produce, for your drink, milk, pure and agreeable to those who drink it.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Na^٤l 16:66]

As this verse states milk is produced from what is within the body between excretions and blood. It has been proven that when food is digested in the stomach and is ready to be absorbed it is spread across a very large surface in the stomach and the intestines where there are millions of tiny veins that extract the useful substances from it. This is absorbed by a sophisticated tree-like structure that starts at the nipples. When the mother eats food, her body extracts its nutrients and delivers it through this network to the fetus in the mother's uterus.

Once the baby is born and the umbilical cord is cut, food can no longer reach it this way. However, the same network directs it towards the nipples. New processing steps are carried out by the mammary glands and a new product called milk is produced for the baby. Milk is something in between excretions and blood. The glands in the breasts use the amino acids stored in the body to build the needed proteins. Some of the nutrients in milk do not exist in blood. They are produced in the glands⁸ in the breast.

Other nutrients like salt, phosphates, and vitamins enter the milk directly from the blood. Other nutrients like lactose are derived from the blood, but the breasts considerably process them. As you can see milk production is the result of absorption of food nutrients in the blood and its direct contact with the breasts. However, milk does not look like blood nor does it smell like the excretions. Scientists have stated that at least five hundred litres of blood must circulate through the breasts in order to produce one liter of milk.

To produce one litre of blood a lot of food has to go through the intestines.⁹ Milk nutrients include sodium, potassium, calcium, magnesium, zinc, copper, iron, phosphorous, chlorine, iodine, and sulphate as well as oxygen, nitrogen and carbonic acid. It also contains sugar in the form of lactose. Milk has B, P, A and D vitamins.¹⁰ That is why the Prophet said:

لَيْسَ يُجْزَى مَكَانَ الطَّعَامِ وَالشَّرَابِ إِلَّا اللَّبَنُ.

“The only thing that can be substituted for food and water is milk.”¹¹

Milk: Light and Perfect Food

Milk is a pure and delicious form of food that is suitable for people of all ages. That is why people who get ill are instructed to drink milk. Milk is very effective in the growth of bones and is recommended in case of bone injuries. It may be that the Qur’anic reference to the purity of milk refers to its ability in speeding up bone growth. This is also understood from the jurists’ decrees on breast-feeding.

They say: “If a child is breast-fed by some lady and his bones get strong and he gets chubby then he becomes familiar to her.” They also say: “Fifteen times of consecutive breast-feeding or even a full day and night of consecutive breast-feeding will cause this familiar state.” It can be concluded that even a full day and night period of breast-feeding can result in the strengthening of bones and the growth of the body.¹²

It should also be said that breast-feeding the newly-born with the initial milk produced in the mother’s breast is extremely important. In books on Islamic jurisprudence we read: “The life of the child depends on this. For this reason it is considered to be an obligatory act to feed the baby with the initial milk produced in the breast right after it is born.”¹³ It is perhaps for this reason that it was revealed to the mother of Moses to breast-feed him before putting him in the river as we read in the following verse:

وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمِّ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَرْضِعِيهِ فَإِذَا خِفْتِ عَلَيْهِ فَأَلْقِيهِ فِي الْيَمِّ

So We sent this inspiration to the mother of Moses: "Suckle (thy child), but when thou hast fears about him, cast him into the river." [The Holy Qur'an, al-Qasas 28:7]

It is through the milk that many of the characteristics of the mother are transferred to the child. Imam Ali hit Muhammad Hanifeh and said: “You have inherited fear from your mother.” The Prophet of God only drank his own mother’s milk and did not accept to be breast-fed by any other woman. Thus, we realize how important breast-feeding is in the development and growth of the child.

Mother is at the Full Service of the Child

All of the mother’s time is spent caring for the child from the moment it is born. Even a moment of neglect of the child by the mother might result in the death of the child. The day and night caring of the child by the mother deprives her of the necessary rest that she needs herself. However, the natural love for the child makes all this bearable. This has been expressed by Imam Sajjad as “she was highly

delighted to do so.”

Mother's Love

Being loved is one of the essential needs of man. Once born the need for being loved is also born with us. We can say that the need for love ranks third after our need for food and water. Psychologists consider it one of the strongest psychological excitements.

Being loved is not just needed during childhood. Rather it is a need that lasts throughout our life cycle, but is fulfilled in various forms. We can see the manifestations of the need to be loved in children. When not paid enough attention, they hang onto their parents. When other children are loved, they get jealous. In adults, we see that women get jealous of other women who talk to their fiancés or husbands. Young people compete with each other to attract someone to themselves.

Some psychologists believe that children have certain needs that are fulfilled with the sensation of warmth they feel when they are hugged or caressed. Should this need not be fulfilled, there will be bad consequences for the child. One of the scientists who believed in this said: “When children are born they should sleep with their mother and not be sent to a nursery since their need for the warmth of being hugged and caressed will not be fulfilled.”

Some psychologists even think that when for some reason a child's mother cannot sleep with the child, she should have another mother take care of and caress the baby. That is why nurseries have been established. [14](#)

Does the Baby Realize the Lack of the Mother

This question has been left unanswered since babies do not talk. However, a few experiments were conducted to discover the answer. In one study, several baby monkeys were given to a fake mother. The baby monkeys had the same reactions they had to their real mothers. The most acceptable fake mother for the baby monkeys was one constructed with a stick wrapped with sponge and rough material.

This one was preferred over another one that was not soft enough for the baby monkey to hug, but produced warm milk for the baby. In these experiments, it was noticed that whenever the baby monkeys faced a stressful situation, they ran to their fake mothers and hugged it. Can we conclude that children need the physical touch of their mother?

A Mother's Sacrifice

A mother prefers the life of the child over her own and even at times some mothers will sacrifice their own lives to save their babies. A mother can stand hardships but cannot stand to hear her baby cry. As Imam Sajjad said: “She did not care if she went hungry as long as you ate, and if she was naked as long

as you were clothed...”

A mother loves her baby in two forms. One form is a sense of maternal love like not being able to stand the baby cry. However, she also has an intellectual love for the baby. She takes him to the doctor when he gets ill. The doctor might operate on the child. The mother knows that this operation will cause the child to bleed. She will cry but withstand the operation until the child is cured. If asked why, she would say that she prefers a little damage done to the child to receive the great benefit of becoming healthy.

Heaven is Under the Mothers' Feet

The position of the mother is so lofty that the Prophet has advised us that in order to go to Heaven we must serve our mothers. This is similar to other traditions in which Heaven has been presented as being under the shade of the swords of those who fight in the way of God. Now let us look at a few traditions in this regard. [15](#) The Prophet of God said:

الْجَنَّةُ تَحْتَ أَقْدَامِ الْأُمَّهَاتِ.

“Heaven lies under the feet of mothers.”

Moses the son of Imran asked God for advice three times. God advised him to His own pure Self for all those three times. However, Moses asked for more advice. God advised him regarding his mother twice and advised him regarding his father for the third time.

جَاءَ رَجُلٌ إِلَى النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ فَقَالَ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، مَنْ أَبْرَ؟ قَالَ: أُمُّكَ. قَالَ: ثُمَّ مَنْ؟ قَالَ: أُمُّكَ. قَالَ: ثُمَّ مَنْ؟ قَالَ: أَبَاكَ.

A man went to see the Prophet of God and said: “O Prophet of God! Whom shall I treat well?” He said: “Your mother.” The man asked: “Who else?” The Prophet said: “Your mother.” The man asked: “Who else?” Again, the Prophet said: “Your mother.” Again, the man asked: “Who else?” This time the Prophet said: “Your father.”

Thus, we can see that our mothers have a greater right incumbent upon us. We can say that the mother's share is three times that of the father's based on the above tradition. Even though the father pays for the expenses of the child, the mother has a greater role in the period of pregnancy, breast-feeding and upbringing of the child. The father just pays for the needs, but it is the mother who is always with the child and never leaves him alone and whole-heartedly attends to him.

Serve the Mother or the Front

A young man went to see the Prophet along with his mother. He wanted to go to the front but his mother would not let him do so. The Prophet said:

عِنْدَ أُمِّكَ قَرٌّ وَإِنَّ لَكَ مِنَ الْأَجْرِ عِنْدَهَا مِثْلَ مَا لَكَ فِي الْجِهَادِ.

“Be at the service of your mother since it is not any less of a service than going to the war front.”

[1.](#) Makkah

[2.](#) The world.

[3.](#) Tafsir-i-Namunah, v.21, p.327.

[4.](#) Koodak (Guftar-i-Falsafi), v. 1, p.96; quoted from Insan Mawjud Nashenakhteh, pp.85–86.

[5.](#) Ea’jaze Khorakiha, p. 172.

[6.](#) Koodak, v. 1, p. 118.

[7.](#) Tafsir-i-Namunah, v.2, pp. 131–135.

[8.](#) Milk is produced in small sac-like glands (alveoli) in the breast. These sacs develop after specific hormonal (estrogen, progesterone, pituitary prolactin and placental lactogen) stimulation that begins during four to six months (second trimester) of pregnancy.

[9.](#) Awwalin Daneshgah wa Akharin Payambar, v.6, pp.71–77.

[10.](#) Mercury can also appear in milk due to silver tooth fillings. Neonatal uptake of mercury (Hg) from milk was examined in a pregnant sheep model, where radioactive mercury (Hg203)/silver tooth fillings (amalgam) were newly placed. A crossover experimental design was used in which lactating ewes nursed foster lambs.

In a parallel study, the relationship between dental history and breast milk concentrations of Hg was also examined in 33 lactating women. Results from the animal studies showed that during pregnancy, a primary fetal site of amalgam Hg concentration is the liver, and after delivery the neonatal lamb kidney receives additional amalgam Hg from mother’s milk. In lactating women with aged amalgam fillings, increased Hg excretion in breast milk and urine correlated with the number of fillings or Hg vapor concentration levels in mouth air.

It was concluded that Hg originating from maternal amalgam tooth fillings transfers across the placenta to the fetus, across the mammary gland into milk ingested by the newborn, and ultimately into neonatal body tissues. Comparisons are made to the US minimal risk level recently established for adult Hg exposure. These findings suggest that placement and removal of “silver” tooth fillings in pregnant and lactating humans will subject the fetus and neonate to unnecessary risk of Hg exposure.

[11.](#) Awwalin Daneshgah wa Akharin Payambar, v.6, p. 100.

[12.](#) Tafsir-i-Namunah, v. 1, p.292.

[13.](#) Sharh-i- Lum’ah, Kitab al-Nikah, v.5, p.452.

[14.](#) Usul-i-Ravanshenasi Ma’an, v. 1, p.441.

[15.](#) Mizan al-Hikmah, v. 10, pp.712–713.

Right n. 23: The Right of the Father

حق الأب

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ أَبِيكَ فَتَعَلَّمَ أَنَّهُ أَصْلُكَ، وَأَنَّكَ فَرْعُهُ، وَأَنَّكَ لَوْلَاهُ لَمْ تَكُنْ. فَمَهْمَا رَأَيْتَ فِي نَفْسِكَ مِمَّا يُعْجِبُكَ فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ أَبَاكَ أَصْلُ النِّعْمَةِ عَلَيْكَ فِيهِ وَاحْمَدِ اللَّهَ وَاشْكُرْهُ عَلَى قَدْرِ ذَلِكَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ.

And the right of your father is that you should know that he is your root and you are his branch. And without him, you would not be. Whenever you see anything in yourself which pleases you, you should know that your father is the root of its blessing upon you. So praise God and thank Him in recognition of that. And there is no power but in God.

Father as the Root of the Child

Imam Sajjad points out the most fundamental cause–effect relationship between a father and his child. This scientific and philosophical principle states that the father is the root of the child, or the cause of the existence of the child. Were it not for the existence of the father, the child would not exist. The existence of the child is dependent on the existence of his father. This is manifested all over the world.

The Imam reminds the children of the importance of the existence of the father and explicitly declares that the father is the root and the children are like his branches. Thus, whatever is manifested in the child has its roots in the existence of his father. Another important issue is that once a child is born he starts to grow up and continues his development while his father may have already completed his growth or be near its completion.

Therefore, it is always the cause that as the child is flourishing and becoming stronger day by day, his father is getting weaker every day. The child who realizes that he is getting stronger than his father might become too proud of himself. If he starts to feel superior to his father, he might forget to respect his father or even disrespect him. Imam Sajjad advises the children to remember that their father is the root of whatever excellent qualities they have whenever they feel this way.

This will help them overcome such sense of superiority over their father. Imam Sajjad also recommends the children to be grateful and recognize the blessings granted to them. Hence, they will be responsible children and fulfill all their duties regarding their father. This way they will also be saved from the harms they might experience in case their parents damn them.

At last, Imam Sajjad stresses that recognizing the blessings from our father, his rights and properly performing our duties regarding him is only possible through divine assistance, and we should ask God to help us in this respect. In the chapter on the rights of the mother, the Qur’anic verses stress that we

should treat our parents with kindness. We will not reiterate those here again, and suffice to the presentation of traditions related to respect for the father.

Traditions on the Importance of the Father

Muhammad ibn Yahya quoted on the authority of Ahmad ibn Esa on the authority of Hasan ibn Mahboob on the authority of Abi Val'lad Han'nat who asked Imam Sadiq regarding the meaning of the following verse of the Holy Qur'an:

وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا

“...And that ye be kind to parents.” [The Holy Qur'an, Bani Israil 17:23]

Imam Sadiq said:

الإِحْسَانُ أَنْ تُحْسِنَ صُحْبَتَهُمَا وَأَنْ لَا تُكَلِّفَهُمَا أَنْ يَسْأَلَكَ شَيْئًا مِمَّا يَحْتَاجَانِ إِلَيْهِ وَإِنْ كَانَا مُسْتَغْنَيْنِ.

“Goodness (ihsan) is that you associate with them well and that you do not constrain them to ask you for what they need, even if they may be rich.”

Then Imam Sadiq mentioned the verse of Holy Qur'an that states that you cannot get any food unless you give in charity out of what you like. Then Imam Sadiq said:

وَأَمَّا قَوْلُ اللَّهِ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى: "إِمَّا يَبْلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أَفٍّ وَلَا تَنْهَرَهُمَا" قَالَ: إِنْ أَضْجَرَكَ فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أَفٍّ وَلَا تَنْهَرَهُمَا إِنْ ضَرَبَكَ وَقَالَ "وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا" قَالَ: فَإِنْ ضَرَبَكَ فَقُلْ لَهُمَا غَفَرَ اللَّهُ لَكُمَا فَذَلِكَ مِنْكَ قَوْلٌ كَرِيمٌ، قَالَ "وَاخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ" قَالَ: لَا تَمَلَأْ عَيْنَيْكَ مِنَ النَّظَرِ إِلَيْهِمَا إِلَّا بِرَحْمَةٍ وَرِقَّةٍ، وَلَا تَرْفَعْ صَوْتَكَ فَوْقَ أَصْوَاتِهِمَا وَلَا يَدَيْكَ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمَا، وَلَا تُقَدِّمَ قَدَامَهُمَا.

As for the statement of God, the Blessed, the High: ‘Whether one or both of them attain old age in thy life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them’ (17:23), the Imam said: “If they vex you, then do not say a word of contempt to them and do not repel them if they strike you.” He said: “But address them in terms of honour’ (17:23), means: Even if they strike you, say to them: ‘May God forgive you’, and that will be your addressing them in terms of honour”. He said: “And, out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility’ (17:24), means: Do not look at them directly except with mercy and compassion. Do not raise your voice above their voices, or your hands above theirs, and do not walk ahead of them.”¹

All this means that you should not hurt them.

Ibn Mahboob quoted on the authority of Khalid ibn Nafih Bujali on the authority of Muhammad ibn

Marwan on the authority of Imam Sadiq :

إِنَّ رَجُلًا أَتَى النَّبِيَّ (ص) فَقَالَ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَوْصِنِي، فَقَالَ

“A man went to see the Prophet and asked him for advice. The Prophet said:

لَا تُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ شَيْئًا وَإِنْ حُرِّقْتَ بِالنَّارِ وَعُذِّبْتَ إِلَّا وَقَلْبُكَ مُطْمَئِنٌّ بِالْإِيمَانِ، وَوَالِدُكَ فَأَطِعْهُمَا وَبِرَّهُمَا حَيِّينَ كَانَا أَوْ
مَيِّتَيْنِ، وَإِنْ أَمْرَاكَ أَنْ تَخْرُجَ مِنْ أَهْلِكَ وَمَالِكَ فافْعَلْ فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ مِنَ الْإِيمَانِ

“Do not set any partners for God even if you are tortured or burnt in fire, but that your heart should be secure in faith. Obey your parents, and be kind to them whether they are living or deceased. If they order you to leave your family and your possessions, do so, since that is part of faith.”²

Ali ibn Ibrahim quoted on the authority of Muhammad ibn Esa ibn Ubayd on the authority of Yunus ibn Abdul Rahman on the authority of Durust ibn Abi Mansoor on the authority of Imam Kazim : “A man asked the Noble Prophet about the right of a father incumbent upon his child. The Prophet replied:

لَا يُسَمِّيهِ بِاسْمِهِ، وَلَا يَمْشِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ، وَلَا يَجْلِسُ قَبْلَهُ، وَلَا يَسْتَسَبِّحُ لَهُ

“He should not call his father by his name, and he should not walk ahead of him. He should not sit down before he does, and should not do things to cause his father to be blamed or sworn at.”³

Muhammad ibn Yahya quoted on the authority of so and so on the authority of Ibrahim ibn Shoaib that he told Imam Sadiq : “My father has gotten old, and is so weak that I have to accompany him to the toilet. Should I do so?” The Prophet said:

إِنْ اسْتَطَعْتَ أَنْ تَلِيَ ذَلِكَ مِنْهُ فافْعَلْ، وَلَقَمَهُ بِيَدِكَ، فَإِنَّهُ جَنَّةٌ لَكَ غَدًا

“Do so if you can. Put food in his mouth with your own hands, and you will see that your reward will be the Garden of Heaven in the Hereafter.”⁴

Therefore, Imam Sadiq recommends that children take care of their parents when they get old and weak just as they did when the children were young and weak.

The establishment of homes for the elderly can be justified today if they are to house ill, poor, homeless and lonely old people, or those elders who want to live in such homes themselves. However, it is very bad and painful that some children or grandchildren use these homes to reach their selfish desires; and force their old parents or grandparents to leave home and go live in such places.

They hurt their feelings in this way, and even expedite their death. The rights of the parents are so important that Islam has stressed their respect being incumbent upon children even if they are not Muslims. Ali ibn Ibrahim quoted on the authority of so and so, on the authority of Ansabat ibn Mus'ab, on the authority of Imam Baqir :

ثَلَاثٌ لَمْ يَجْعَلِ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى فِيهِنَّ رُخْصَةً: أَدَاءُ الْأَمَانَةِ إِلَى الْبَرِّ وَالْفَاجِرِ، وَالْوَفَاءُ بِالْعَهْدِ لِلْبَرِّ وَالْفَاجِرِ، وَبِرُّ الْوَالِدَيْنِ بَرِّينَ
كَانَا أَوْ فَاجِرَيْنِ.

“There are three things that God has not permitted anyone to abandon:

- 1 – Returning what we are entrusted with to its owner whether he is a good-doer or wicked.
- 2 – Honoring our covenants whether it be with good-doers or wicked people.
- 3 – Being kind to our parents whether they are good-doers or wicked people.”⁵

Duties of the Youth

The duties of the youth who believe in Islam was clarified in the Qur’anic verse and traditions presented so far. They should realize that their parents have a great right over them. They must be thankful to their parents and should never neglect or hurt them even if the parents do not perform their duties well. Imam Sadiq said:

مَنْ نَظَرَ إِلَى وَالِدَيْهِ نَظْرَ مَاقَتٍ وَهُمَا ظَالِمَانِ لَهُ لَمْ تُقْبَلْ لَهُ صَلَاةٌ.

“God will not accept the prayers of one who looks at his parents with hatred, even if they have not performed their duties towards him.”⁶

Thus, we realize that even if parents hurt their children, the children must overlook their mistakes.

The Effects of Killing One’s Father

Muhammad ibn Suhayl narrated that once during the rule of Montasar he saw a Persian rug decorated with faces of kings and some Persian script. He looked at the images more carefully and saw the face of a crowned king. Below it he read: “This is the face of King Shiroyeh who killed his father King Khosrow Parviz, but his rule did not last more than six months.

Then on the left side of the rug he saw the image of Yazeed ibn Valid ibn Abdulmalik who killed his cousin to take over his rule, but he did not last more than six months too. Then he thought that Montasar’s rule would not last more than six months because he had also killed his father to get into power.⁷

The details are as follows. Mutawakkil who was one of the Caliphs of the Abbasid clan despised Imam Ali and insulted him in his court. His son Montasar was not pleased with this behavior, and used to object to his father's action. Once when Mutawakkil was in a meeting with several important people, he insulted Imam Ali. Montasar got upset and objected to his father. Mutawakkil verbally humiliated him in front of others present. Montasar who was twenty-five years old could not stand being insulted in front of the people. He then decided to kill his father.

Al-Mutawakkil's Murder

Montasar employed several Turkish slaves in the court to kill his father. One night when Mutawakkil was having a party and was drunk having fun with ladies, he was left in the court with Fath ibn Khaqan who had a very high rank. Then the slaves attacked them with their swords and killed them both. Then they pledged allegiance to Montasar the same night. Although Mutawakkil's own behavior led to his being murdered; Montasar did not last more than six months either. It was the constant blaming of Montasar by his father that ended this way. Consider what Imam Ali said in this regard:

الإفراطُ في الملامَةِ تشبُّ نيرانَ اللّجّاجِ.

*"Excessive blaming will fuel the flames of stubbornness."*⁸

The Father's Right Over the Child

Muhaqqiq Ardebili said: "It is reasonable to say that one should avoid being damned by his parents. Traditions and Qur'anic verses also support this. Children must obey their parents. The jurists have stated that if the leader has not declared holy war or the infidels have not attacked Muslim lands, parents can prevent their children from going to war."⁹

Whatever is forbidden or incumbent upon one regarding strangers also holds for parents:

- 1) One cannot travel without the permission of his parents.
- 2) One must obey his parents.
- 3) Parents can prevent one from participation in war.
- 4) If one is to obey his parents or say his prayers, he should put off the prayers and do what his parents ask him to do.
- 5) There are times when parents can prevent one from attending the congregational prayer.¹⁰

¹. Usul al-Kafi, v.2, p. 157.

². Ibid. p. 158.

³. Usul al-Kafi, v.2, p. 158.

- [4.](#) Ibid. v.2, p. 162.
- [5.](#) Ibid.
- [6.](#) Usul al-Kafi, v.2, p.349.
- [7.](#) Tatamat al-Muntaha, p.243.
- [8.](#) Jawan (Guftar-i-Falsafi), quoted from Tuhaf al-'Uqul, p.84.
- [9.](#) Footnotes of Usul al-Kafi, v.2, p.349.
- [10.](#) Ibid.

Right n. 24: The Right of the Child

حق الولد

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ وَلَدِكَ فَتَعَلَّمَ أَنَّهُ مِنْكَ وَمُضَافٌ إِلَيْكَ فِي عَاجِلِ الدُّنْيَا بِخَيْرِهِ وَشَرِّهِ، وَأَنَّكَ مَسْئُولٌ عَمَّا وَلَّيْتَهُ مِنْ حُسْنِ الْأَدَبِ وَالِدَلَالَةِ عَلَى رَبِّهِ وَالْمَعُونَةِ لَهُ عَلَى طَاعَتِهِ فِيكَ وَفِي نَفْسِهِ، فَمُثَابٌ عَلَى ذَلِكَ وَمُعَاقِبٌ، فاعْمَلْ فِي أَمْرِهِ عَمَلَ الْمُتَزَيِّنِ بِحُسْنِ أَثَرِهِ عَلَيْهِ فِي عَاجِلِ الدُّنْيَا، الْمُعْذِرِ إِلَى رَبِّهِ فِيمَا بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ بِحُسْنِ الْقِيَامِ عَلَيْهِ وَالْأَخْذُ لَهُ مِنْهُ. وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

And the right of your child is that you should know that he is from you and he will be ascribed to you in this world due to both his good deeds and his evil deeds. And you are responsible for what has been entrusted to you in teaching him good conduct, and guiding him toward his Lord and helping him to obey Him on your behalf and for himself. Then you will be rewarded for so doing, and you will be punished.^{[1](#)}

Then regarding his affairs, act like one who will be proud of bringing him up in this world, and one who is excused by his Lord for what is between you and him for taking good care of him, and the good results you achieved. And there is no power but in God.

Imam Sajjad mentions the following points regarding the rights of children:

- 1 A father should not forget that the child is his and that the child's good or bad deeds will be ascribed to him.
- 2 A father is responsible for guiding the child to obey God, and to teach and educate him.
- 3 A father should not be indifferent to the result of the deeds of his child. There will be rewards for the child's good deeds, and punishment for the child's bad deeds for the father, too.
- 4 A father should do his best to raise the child so that his excuse is acceptable both to his child and God.

The rights of parents were presented in previous chapters. In this chapter, Imam Sajjad presents the

rights of children incumbent upon parents. There is no doubt that the very foundation of each child starts when a couple gets married and realizes that the fruit of their love and mutual life will be the children that they have and raise. Some of the traits of the children are genetically inherited from their parents. Children are thus a reflection of their parents' characteristics.

The issue of genetic inheritance of traits also holds true in plants and animals, and is not to be discussed here further. Once by God's will the child is born into this material world, Islam considers the parents highly responsible towards him. They should first realize the importance of this issue, and seek God's help in fulfilling their heavy duties. We will briefly discuss these duties here.

To successfully raise children, parents should consider the following two important points. First, they should revive the child's potential talents, and secondly they should work to eliminate the child's wrong or harmful inclinations. A good teacher is one who studies and discovers the child's talents and uses practical and scientific methods to develop them to the point of their perfection and application. He also destroys the potentially bad hereditary inclinations left over in the child from his parents or grandparents. Imam Sadiq said:

وَيَجِبُ لِلوَلَدِ عَلَى وَالِدِهِ ثَلَاثُ خِصَالٍ: اخْتِيَارُهُ لَوَالِدَتِهِ وَتَحْسِينُ اسْمِهِ وَالْمُبَالَغَةُ فِي تَأْدِيبِهِ.

*"Three rights for the child are incumbent upon his father: selecting a (good) mother for him, giving him a good name, and exerting the utmost effort in raising him well."*²

Thus Imam Sadiq has considered that parents must exert all efforts to raise their children.

Imam Sajjad said:

وَأَعِزِّي عَلَى تَرْبِيَتِهِمْ وَتَأْدِيبِهِمْ وَبَرِّهِمْ.

*"O God! Please help me in raising and educating my children and making them good people."*³

Thus, we realize that raising children is a hard task and everyone should seek God's help in this important affair.

The Rights of Children

Children have certain rights over their parents from the time that they are born. The first right relates to naming them. This right has been mentioned in many traditions. The Prophet said:

مِنْ حَقِّ الوَلَدِ عَلَى الوَالِدِ أَنْ يُحْسِنَ اسْمَهُ وَيُحْسِنَ أَدَبَهُ.

“Among the rights of child over the father are that he chooses a good name for him, and raises him well.”^{[4](#)}

The Prophet said:

سَمُّوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ أَسمَاءَ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ وَأَحْسِنُ الْأَسْمَاءَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ وَعَبْدُ الرَّحْمَنِ

“Give your children the names of the Prophets. The best names are Abdullah and Abd al-Rahman.”^{[5](#)}

The Prophet said:

مِنْ حَقِّ الْوَلَدِ عَلَى وَالِدِهِ ثَلَاثَةٌ: يُحَسِّنُ اسْمَهُ وَيُعَلِّمُهُ الْكِتَابَةَ وَيُزَوِّجُهُ إِذَا بَلَغَ

“Children have three rights over their father: that he give them a good name, teach them how to read and write, and marry them off when they mature.”^{[6](#)}

Imam Ali said:

حَقُّ الْوَلَدِ عَلَى الْوَالِدِ أَنْ يُحَسِّنَ اسْمَهُ وَيُحَسِّنَ أَدَبَهُ وَيُعَلِّمَهُ الْقُرْآنَ

“The right of a child incumbent upon his father is that the father should choose a good name for him and teach him good etiquette and the Qur’an.”^{[7](#)}

Changing bad Names by the Prophet

The Prophet Muhammad changed bad names of people and places to good ones and freed the people from bad feelings and humiliation due to having a bad name. Imam Sadiq quoted on the authority of his father that the Prophet changed the ugly names of people and towns.^{[8](#)}

Umar had a daughter whom he had named Asiyah meaning sinner. The Prophet changed her name to Jamileh meaning beautiful.^{[9](#)} In another tradition we read: “Abi Rafe’ narrated that the daughter of Umm-Salma’ was named Barrah meaning good-doer. The Prophet of God changed her name to Zaynab.”^{[10](#)}

The Prophet did this since that name connotated selfishness and some people said that she wants to claim to be pure. The Prophet changed her name to Zaynab to end the people’s humiliating her. Ahmad ibn Haytham asked Imam Ridha : “Why did the Arabs put the names of animals such as dogs, wild cats, tigers, etc. on their children?” Imam Ridha replied: “The Arabs were fighters. They named their children this way so as to frighten their enemies when they called their children during fighting.”^{[11](#)}

Bad Names: A Cause of Humiliation

The head of an Arab tribe was named Jareyah that means a kind of boa. He was frank and strong. His relatives and him were displeased with Mu`awiyah's oppressive rule and Mu`awiyah had sensed this. Mu`awiyah decided to humiliate him. Once when Mu`awiyah faced him,

Mu`awiyah said: "How lowly were you in your tribe that they named you a boa." Jareyah immediately replied: "And how lowly you were in your tribe that they named you Mu`awiyah meaning a female dog." Mu`awiyah got angry and said: "Shut up. You have no mother!" Jareyah replied: "I do have a mother. By God we have hearts which beat in your hatred." Then Mu`awiyah who was defeated said: "May God not increase the people like you." [12](#)

Another example is related to a man who lived at the time of Mu`awiyah. He was the head of his tribe and his name was Sharik ibn Aoor. The word "Sharik" means partner in Arabic, and it is not a good name. His father's name was Aoor that means "one with a defective eye" in Arabic.

Once when he went to see Mu`awiyah, Mu`awiyah said: "Your name means "partner" but there are no partners for God. You are the son of the man with a defective eye. However, a healthy man is better than one with a defective eye. You are ugly, and beauty is better than ugliness. What is the reason that the people of your tribe have chosen you as their chief?"

Sharik replied: "By God your name is Mu`awiyah which means a dog! You barked and they called you Mu`awiyah [13](#). You are the grandson of Harb that means fighting, but peace is better than fighting. You are the son of Sakhr that means rocks, but dirt is always better than rocks. How can you be the Commander of the Faithful?" This really hurt Mu`awiyah and he ordered him to depart. [14](#)

Ugliness or physical defects cause a sense of humiliation. Ugly names do the same. It is for this reason that we are instructed in Islam to choose proper names for our children. Choosing proper names will be very influential on their personality, and will make them immune to psychological complexes.

So far, we have discussed the duties of parents to choose good names for their children. Next, we will discuss the next duty of parents in educating their children and acquainting them with God. Let us see what is said in this regard in the traditions.

How Loving Affects Child Development

There is no doubt that children need both food and love to grow. They receive their food from the milk they get when they are breast-fed by their mother. This is the perfect food that God has prepared for their physical growth. The food for their spirit consists of the training and care they receive from their parents. Children need both food and love. The Prophet said:

أَحِبُّوا الصِّبْيَانَ وَارْحَمُوهُمْ فَإِذَا وَعَدْتُمُوهُمْ فَفُوا لَهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ لَا يَرَوْنَ إِلَّا أَنْتُمْ رَازِقُوهُمْ

*“Love your children, and be kind and merciful to them. Fulfill your promises made to them since children consider their father to be the one who provides for their sustenance.”*¹⁵

Loving the children and fulfilling promises made to them are stressed here so that they do not learn to break their promises. There are many ways to express your love. One way is to kiss and hug them when they are small. The Prophet said:

قَبِّلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ فَإِنَّ لَكُمْ بِكُلِّ قُبْلَةٍ دَرَجَةٌ فِي الْجَنَّةِ مَا بَيْنَ كُلِّ دَرَجَتَيْنِ خَمْسُمِائَةٍ عَامٍ

*“Kiss your children. There is an elevation in your rank in Paradise as a reward for each kiss. Each raise in rank is as much as five hundred years.”*¹⁶

Imam Ali said:

قُبْلَةُ الْوَلَدِ رَحْمَةٌ وَقُبْلَةُ الْمَرْأَةِ شَهْوَةٌ وَقُبْلَةُ الْوَالِدَيْنِ عِبَادَةٌ وَقُبْلَةُ الرَّجُلِ أَخَاهُ دِينٌ

*“Kissing the child is mercy. Kissing the woman is desire. Kissing parents is worship, and kissing one’s believing brethren is religion.”*¹⁷

Kissing is restricted for others. Imam Sadiq said:

إِذَا بَلَغَتِ الْجَارِيَةُ سِتَّ سِنِينَ فَلَا تُقَبِّلُهَا، وَالْغُلَامُ لَا يُقَبِّلُ الْمَرْأَةَ إِذَا جَاوَزَ سَبْعَ سِنِينَ

*“Men should not kiss girls who are older than six and women should not kiss boys who are older than seven.”*¹⁸

The Prophet loved his grandsons and kissed them often. Once a man named Aqra ibn Habes was present there when the Prophet kissed them. The man said: “I have ten sons, but I have never kissed any of them.” The Prophet said: “So why has God taken love out of your heart?” Therefore we realize that the Prophet considered that man’s act of not kissing his children to be a form of lack of love.”¹⁹

Excessive Love

Although Islam advises us to love our children, it admonishes us against excessive love, and its possible side effects. Imam Baqir said:

شَرُّ الْآبَاءِ مَنْ دَعَاهُ بِرُّهُ إِلَى الْإِفْرَاطِ وَشَرُّ الْأَبْنَاءِ مَنْ دَعَاهُ التَّقْصِيرُ إِلَى الْعُقُوقِ.

“The worst of fathers is one whose kindness (to his children) drives him to excess. The worst of children is one whose negligence leads him to undutifulness (towards parents).” [20](#)

Excessive love for the children might spoil them and make them haughty and selfish. Imam Ali said:

شَرُّ الْأُمُورِ الرِّضَا عَنِ النَّفْسِ.

“The worst of affairs is to be pleased with oneself.” [21](#)

Daughters are the Best Children

Parents should thank God for the children that God grants them. They should realize that children are God’s trust in them. They should realize their heavy responsibility and exert all efforts to educate and raise them. The Immaculate Imams expressed that girls should be treated more kindly than boys are. This is really stressed in the sayings of the Prophet and the Immaculate Imams . Consider the following tradition in this regard.

Hazieh Yamani quoted on the authority of God’s Prophet :

خَيْرُ أَوْلَادِكُمُ الْبَنَاتُ.

“Your daughters are your best children.” [22](#)

Imam Sadiq said:

الْبَنَاتُ حَسَنَاتٌ وَالْبَنُونَ نِعَمَةٌ؛ فَالْحَسَنَاتُ يُثَابُ عَلَيْهَا وَالنِّعْمَةُ يُسْأَلُ عَنْهَا.

“Daughters are good deeds, and sons are blessings. Good deeds will be rewarded and blessings will be questioned about.” [23](#)

The Prophet was given the glad tidings that God had granted him a daughter. His companions were so upset about the news that one could notice it from their faces. The Prophet said:

مَا لَكُمْ؟ رِيحَانَةٌ أَشْمُهَا وَرَزَقُهَا عَلَى اللَّهِ.

“Why are you so upset? A daughter is like a flower that I will smell. God will give her daily bread.” [24](#)

God's Prophet said:

نَعَمْ الْوَلَدُ الْبَنَاتُ الْمُخَدَّرَاتُ. مَنْ كَانَتْ عِنْدَهُ وَاحِدَةٌ جَعَلَهَا اللَّهُ سِتْرًا لَهُ مِنَ النَّارِ، وَمَنْ كَانَتْ عِنْدَهُ اثْنَتَانِ أَدْخَلَهُ اللَّهُ بِهِمَا الْجَنَّةَ، وَإِنْ كُنَّ ثَلَاثَةً أَوْ مِثْلُهُنَّ مِنَ الْأَخَوَاتِ وَضِعَ عَنْهُ الْجِهَادُ وَالصَّدَقَةُ.

“The best children are daughters behind veils. Whoever has one daughter, God will make her a protection for him against the Fire of Hell. Whoever has two daughters, God will make him enter Heaven with them. If one has three daughters or sisters, the duty of participation in a holy war and payment of charity are removed from him.”²⁵

Ibn Abbas quoted on the authority of God's Prophet :

مَنْ دَخَلَ السُّوقَ فَاشْتَرَى تُحَفَةً فَحَمَلَهَا إِلَى عِيَالِهِ كَانَ كَحَامِلٍ صَدَقَةٍ إِلَى قَوْمٍ مَحَاوِجٍ، وَلْيَبْدُوا بِالْإِنَاثِ قَبْلَ الذَّكُورِ فَإِنَّهُ مَنْ فَرَّحَ ابْنَةً فَكَأَنَّمَا أَعْتَقَ رَقَبَةً مِنْ وَلَدِ اسْمَاعِيلَ.

“One who goes to the bazaar to buy a present for his family is like one who has given some charity to needy people. One must put a higher priority on giving gifts to his daughters over his sons, since making one's daughter happy is like freeing a slave from the children of Ishmael.”²⁶

Raise Children to Raise Your Honor

Imam Sajjad asked us to attend to our children's affairs in such a way as to cause their social growth and increased honor. We should raise them in such a way that they can live with honor and be a source of honor for us. It was mentioned that excessive love for the child might spoil him and make him selfish. He will also be raised in such a way that he cannot rely on himself and become independent. Fathers should foster a sense of self-confidence in their children from their early childhood so that they can be strong in the face of hardships. Imam Sadiq said:

قَالَ لُقْمَانُ: يَا بُنَيَّ إِنْ تَأَدَّبْتَ صَغِيرًا انْتَفَعْتَ بِهِ كَبِيرًا، وَمَنْ عَنِ الْأَدَبِ اهْتَمَّ بِهِ وَمَنْ اهْتَمَّ بِهِ تَكَلَّفَ عِلْمُهُ وَمَنْ تَكَلَّفَ عِلْمُهُ اشْتَدَّ طَلَبُهُ وَمَنْ اشْتَدَّ طَلَبُهُ أَدْرَكَ بِهِ مَنَفَعَتَهُ.

“Luqman said: O my son! You can benefit from politeness later if you learn to be polite when you are young. One who wants to learn to be polite makes an effort to learn. He will make all efforts to acquire educational sciences. Once he learns it, he can benefit from it. O my son! Always oblige yourself to perform your personal duties, and force yourself to withstand the hardships imposed on you by others. Do not be greedy with others if you hope to attain nobility in this world. Do not place any hopes in other people. The Prophets and the Saints have all been able to attain their higher ranks by cutting hopes off the people.”²⁷

We see that Luqman advises his son not to place any hopes in what others have; thus, he helps him develop to be independent. Parents should use these recommendations in raising their children.

- [1.](#) If you fail.
- [2.](#) Tuhaf al-'Uqul, p.238.
- [3.](#) Sahifah al-Sajjadiyah.
- [4.](#) Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, v.2, p.618.
- [5.](#) Makarim al-Akhlaq, p.220.
- [6.](#) Ibid.
- [7.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Hikmah no.399.
- [8.](#) Koodak (Guftar-i-Falsafi), v.2, p.228, quoted from Gharb al-Asnad, p.45.
- [9.](#) Ibid.
- [10.](#) Ibid. quoted from Sahih Muslim, v.6, p. 173.
- [11.](#) Koodak (Guftar-i-Falsafi), quoted from Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v.5, p. 115.
- [12.](#) Koodak (Guftar-i-Falsafi), v.2, p.228, quoted from Gharb al-Asnad, p.45.
- [13.](#) The son of Abu Sufyan Sakhr b. Harb b. Umayyah.
- [14.](#) Koodak (Guftar-i-Falsafi), quoted from Samarat al-Uraq, p.59.
- [15.](#) Makarim al-Akhlaq, p.219.
- [16.](#) Ibid. p.220.
- [17.](#) Ibid. p.220.
- [18.](#) Ibid. p.223.
- [19.](#) Ibid.
- [20.](#) Tarikh Ya'qubi, v.2, p.320.
- [21.](#) Sharh-i-Ghurar wa Durar, v.4, p. 173.
- [22.](#) Makarim al-Akhlaq, pp.219-220.
- [23.](#) Ibid.
- [24.](#) Ibid.
- [25.](#) Makarim al-Akhlaq, pp.219-220.
- [26.](#) Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, v.2, p.615.
- [27.](#) Koodak (Guftar-i-Falsafi), v.2, pp.293-294.

Right n. 25: The Right of the Brother

حق الأخ

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ أَخِيكَ فَتَعَلَّمْ أَنَّهُ يَدُكَ الَّتِي تَبْسُطُهَا، وَظَهْرُكَ الَّذِي تَلْتَجِي إِلَيْهِ، وَعِزُّكَ الَّذِي تَعْتَمِدُ عَلَيْهِ، وَقُوَّتُكَ الَّتِي تَصُولُ بِهَا، فَلَا تَتَّخِذْهُ سِلَاحًا عَلَى مَعْصِيَةِ اللَّهِ وَلَا عُدَّةً لِلظُّلْمِ بِحَقِّ اللَّهِ، وَلَا تَدْعُ نُصْرَتَهُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ وَمَعُونَتِهِ عَلَى عَدُوِّهِ وَالْحَوْلَ بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ شَيَاطِينِهِ وَتَأْدِيَةِ النَّصِيحَةِ إِلَيْهِ وَالْإِقْبَالَ عَلَيْهِ فِي اللَّهِ فَإِنْ انْقَادَ لِرَبِّهِ وَأَحْسَنَ الْإِجَابَةَ لَهُ وَإِلَّا فَلْيَكُنْ اللَّهُ آثَرَ عِنْدَكَ وَأَكْرَمَ عَلَيْكَ مِنْهُ.

And the right of your brother is that you should know that he is your hand that you extend, and

your back to whom you seek refuge, and your power upon whom you rely, and your might with which you compete. Take him not as a weapon with which to disobey God, nor as a means with which to violate God's rights.

And do not neglect to help him against his own self and support him against his enemy, and intervene between him and his devils, and give him good counsel, and associate with him for God's sake. Then if he obeys his Lord and is responsible towards Him properly it is fine. Else God should be more preferable and more honorable to you than he is.^{[1](#)}

Imam Sajjad has pointed out the following three points regarding one's brother:

- 1) A brother is one's helping hand. He is our supporter and he makes us stronger. We should not use this power in order to commit sins.
- 2) We should be his assistant and support him against his enemies.
- 3) We should release him from the captivity of Satan and direct his attention towards God. If he does not accept, we should follow God's decrees and not obey our brother.

Forms of Brotherhood in Islam

Brotherhood is one of the most important issues in Islam. There are two forms of brotherhood. One is a blood relationship – that is being born of the same parents. This is the closest kind of relationship that results in either one inheriting from the other. This is considered the second level of those who inherit from us according to Islamic jurisprudence. There are certain decrees in this regard.

The second form of brotherhood is through common belief. It is the form of brotherhood that has related all the Muslims together. It has become the source of unity of all the Muslims in the world. The Arabic word for brother is “Akh”. Its real meaning is brother, friend or companion. It really refers to two people who have the same mother, father or both. It is also used for someone who has been breast-fed by one's mother. In a more general sense, it is also used for one's partner in industry or trade, one who is from the same tribe or one having the same beliefs. There are several instances in the Holy Qur'an when this word is used to refer to real brothers or believing brothers like in Chapters Yusuf and Nisaa.^{[2](#)}

The Importance of Islamic Brotherhood

The Holy Qur'an says:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

“The Believers are but a single Brotherhood: So make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers; and fear God, that ye may receive Mercy.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Hujurat

This verse expresses one of the most important slogans of Islam. Islam has put such a strong bond between the Muslims and has made them so close that it has called them brothers. Thus, Islam considers all Muslims to belong to one family. This is completely felt during the religious and political ceremonies of the pilgrimage of the Ka'ba. All the people who attend these ceremonies feel to be brothers to each other even though some have come from the West, and others have come from the East. Let us consider what the Prophet has said in this regard:

المُسْلِمُ أَخُو الْمُسْلِمِ لَا يَظْلِمُهُ وَلَا يَخْذُلُهُ وَلَا يُسْلِمُهُ.

*"A Muslim is the brother of other Muslims. He never oppresses them. He never abandons them. He never leaves them alone in the face of calamities."*³

In another tradition, the Prophet said:

مَثَلُ الْأَخَوَيْنِ مَثَلُ الْيَدَيْنِ تَغْسِلُ إِحْدَاهُمَا الْأُخْرَى.

*"Two believing brothers are like two hands each washing the other."*⁴

The Prophet's representation of two Muslims as the hands of the same body is a beautiful similitude showing that all Muslims belong to the same nation, and each Muslim is one of the hands of that nation.

A Believer: Brother of Other Believers

Imam Sadiq said:

المُؤْمِنُ أَخُو الْمُؤْمِنِ؛ عَيْنُهُ وَدَلِيلُهُ لَا يَخُونُهُ وَلَا يَظْلِمُهُ وَلَا يَغُشُّهُ وَلَا يَعِدُهُ عِدَّةً فَيُخْلِفُهُ.

*"A believer is the brother of other believers. He acts as their eyes and as their guide. He will never cheat or oppress them. He will never deceive them or act against his promises to them."*⁵

In another tradition we read: Abi Basir narrated that he heard Imam Sadiq say:

المُؤْمِنُ أَخُو الْمُؤْمِنِ كَالْجَسَدِ الْوَاحِدِ إِنْ اشْتَكَى شَيْئاً مِنْهُ وَجِدَ أَلَمَ ذَلِكَ فِي سَائِرِ جَسَدِهِ، وَأَرْوَاحُهُمَا مِنْ رُوحٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَإِنَّ رُوحَ الْمُؤْمِنِ لَأَشَدُّ اتِّصَالاً بِرُوحِ اللَّهِ مِنْ اتِّصَالِ شُعَاعِ الشَّمْسِ بِهَا.

"A believer is the brother of other believers. They are all parts of the same body. If one part hurts, other parts will feel the pain. Their souls are also derived from One Spirit. A believer's soul is so strongly

attached to God's Spirit that it is like the attachment of the sun's rays to the sun.”⁶

Brotherhood: the Greatest Blessing

The importance of the blessing of brotherhood is stressed in the Holy Qur'an as we read in the following verse:

وَاَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا وَكُنْتُمْ عَلَى شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِنَ النَّارِ فَأَنْقَذَكُمْ مِنْهَا كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ

“And hold fast, all together, by the rope which God (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves; and remember with gratitude God's favor on you; for ye were enemies and He joined your hearts in love, so that by His Grace, ye became brethren; and ye were on the brink of the pit of Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus doth God make His Signs clear to you: That ye may be guided.” [The Holy Qur'an, Al-i-Imran 3: 103]

This verse was revealed about the two large tribes of Oas and Khazraj that had deeply-rooted animosities with each other. Once the Prophet entered Medina, he settled their affairs and made them brothers one to another. However, at times they forgot this brotherhood and fighting broke out between them. However, the Prophet would immediately resolve their differences.

The Prophet instructed the Muslims to express their love and friendship to each other since it has a very important influence on the continuation of brotherhood. He said: “When one of you likes another one he should let him know about it.” ⁷

The Reward of Visiting Believing Brothers

There is a chapter on visiting believing brothers in *Usul al-Kafi* in which there are many traditions pointing out the reward of visiting our believing brothers. We shall only cite a few of them here. Imam Sadiq said:

مَنْ زَارَ أَخَاهُ فِي اللَّهِ، قَالَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: إِيَّايَ زُرْتَ وَتَوَأْبُكَ عَلَيَّ وَلَسْتُ أَرْضَى لَكَ تَوَابًا دُونَ الْجَنَّةِ.

“God the Exalted the High will say to whoever visits his brother for the sake of God: O My servant! It was Me that You visited, and your reward is incumbent on Me. I will not be pleased with a reward of anything less than Heaven for you.”⁸

In another tradition we read that Abi Hamzeh quoted on the authority of Imam Baqir :

إِنَّ الْعَبْدَ الْمُسْلِمَ إِذَا خَرَجَ مِنْ بَيْتِهِ زَائِرًا أَخَاهُ لِلَّهِ لَا لِغَيْرِهِ التَّمَاسَّ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ وَرَغْبَةً فِي مَا عِنْدَهُ وَكَلَّ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ بِهِ سَبْعِينَ أَلْفَ مَلَكٍ يُنَادُونَهُ مِنْ خَلْفِهِ إِلَى أَنْ يَرْجِعَ إِلَى مَنْزِلِهِ: أَلَا طِبْتَ وَطَابَتْ لَكَ الْجَنَّةُ.

“When the Muslim leaves his house to visit his brother for the sake of God alone, seeking God’s pleasure and hoping for his reward, God the Exalted the High will appoint seventy thousand angels who will keep calling out behind him until he returns home: Blessed you are, and may Heaven be pleasant for you.”⁹

Thus, we see that with such beautiful instructions, Islam has guaranteed the unity of Muslims and has prepared a lovely life for the believers.

Brotherhood as Viewed by Imam Ali

Imam Ali said:

الإِخْوَانُ صِنْفَانِ: أَخْوَانُ الثَّقَةِ وَأَخْوَانُ الْمُكَاشَرَةِ. فَأَمَّا أَخْوَانُ الثَّقَةِ فَهُمْ الْكَفُّ وَالْجَنَاحُ وَالْأَهْلُ وَالْمَالُ، فَإِذَا كُنْتَ مِنْ أَخِيكَ عَلَى حَدِّ الثَّقَةِ فَايْزِلْ لَهُ مَالَكَ وَبَدِّنْكَ وَصَافٍ مَنْ صَافَاهُ وَعَادٍ مَنْ عَادَاهُ وَاكْتُمْ سِرَّهُ وَعَيْبَهُ وَأَظْهَرْ مِنْهُ الْحَسَنَ، وَاعْلَمْ أَيُّهَا السَّائِلُ أَنَّهُمْ أَقَلُّ مِنَ الْكَبِيرِيتِ الْأَحْمَرِ. وَأَمَّا أَخْوَانُ الْمُكَاشَرَةِ فَإِنَّكَ تُصِيبُ لَذَّتَكَ مِنْهُمْ فَلَا تَقْطَعَنَّ ذَلِكَ مِنْهُمْ وَلَا تَطْلُبَنَّ مَا وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ مِنْ ضَمِيرِهِمْ وَابْذِلْ لَهُمْ مَا بَدَّلُوا لَكَ مِنْ طَلَاقَةِ الْوَجْهِ وَحَالَوَةِ اللِّسَانِ.

“There are two groups of brothers: real brothers and superficial brothers. Real brothers are like your hands, wings, relatives or property. Once you find such brothers, you can help them; give them from what you own; be friendly with their friends and be the enemy of their enemies; hide their secrets; cover up their faults, and reveal their good points. Beware that they are very rare. However, use your superficial brothers. Do not stop your friendship and your associations with them. However do not expect any more than this from them. When they treat you kindly and talk nicely with you, respond with gentle treatment and nice words.”¹⁰

Here Imam Ali clearly outlines our duties to our real friends as well as our superficial friends. He has set the limits of our encounters with them, and the degree to which we must help them, and benefit from their assistance.

Being Fair with Brothers

Imam Ali said:

مَعَ الْإِنْصَافِ تَدُومُ الْأُخُوَّةُ.

“Brotherhood lasts by being fair.”¹¹

When Muhammad reached the age of seven he asked his wet-nurse Halimah: “O Mother! Where are my brothers?” She said: “They have taken the sheep that God has blessed us with to the fields.” He said: “O Mother! You have not been fair with us.” His mother asked: “Why?” He said: “Is it fair for me to sit in the shade of the tent and drink milk, while my brothers are out there in the heat of the desert?”¹² God’s Prophet said:

سَيِّدُ الْأَعْمَالِ ثَلَاثَةٌ: إِنْصَافُ النَّفْسِ مِنْ نَفْسِكَ وَمُوَسَاةُ الْإِخِ فِي اللَّهِ وَذِكْرُكَ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى فِي كُلِّ حَالٍ

*“Three acts are the master of all deeds: being fair, helping our brothers for the sake of God, and remembering God the High in all circumstances.”*¹³

Brotherhood as Viewed by Imam Sadiq

Imam Sadiq said:

الْإِخْوَانُ ثَلَاثَةٌ: فَوَاحِدٌ كَالْغِذَاءِ الَّذِي يُحْتَاجُ إِلَيْهِ فِي كُلِّ وَقْتٍ، وَالثَّانِي فِي مَعْنَى الدَّاءِ وَهُوَ الْأَحْمَقُ وَالثَّالِثُ فِي مَعْنَى الدَّوَاءِ وَهُوَ اللَّبِيبُ

*“Brothers are of three kinds. The first kind is like nourishment that we always need; the second is like a disease, and they are the foolish ones. The third kind is like the remedy, and they are the intelligent ones.”*¹⁴

At last, we shall present the thirty rights of brotherhood as expressed by the Noble Prophet . This is perhaps one of the most complete traditions on the rights of brotherhood.

The Prophet’s Views on Rights of Brotherhood

God’s Prophet said:

لِلْمُسْلِمِ عَلَى أَخِيهِ ثَلَاثُونَ حَقًّا لَا بَرَاءَةَ لَهُ مِنْهَا إِلَّا بِالْأَدَاءِ أَوْ الْعَفْوِ: يَغْفِرُ زَلَّتْهُ وَيَرْحَمُ عِبْرَتَهُ وَيَسْتُرُ عَوْرَتَهُ وَيُقْبِلُ عَثْرَتَهُ وَيَقْبَلُ مَعْذَرَتَهُ وَيَرُدُّ غِيْبَتَهُ وَيُدِيمُ نَصِيحَتَهُ وَيَحْفَظُ خِلَّتَهُ وَيَرعى ذِمَّتَهُ وَيَعُودُ مَرَضَهُ وَيَشْهَدُ مَيِّتَهُ وَيَجِيبُ دَعْوَتَهُ وَيَقْبَلُ هَدِيَّتَهُ وَيُكَافِي صِلَتَهُ وَيَشْكُرُ نِعْمَتَهُ وَيَحْسِنُ نُصْرَتَهُ وَيَحْفَظُ خَلِيلَتَهُ وَيَقْضِي حَاجَتَهُ وَيَشْفَعُ مَسْأَلَتَهُ وَيُسَمِّتُ عَطْسَتَهُ وَيُرْشِدُ ضَالَّتَهُ وَيَرُدُّ سَلَامَهُ وَيُطِيبُ كَلَامَهُ وَيَبْرِّ إِنْعَامَهُ وَيُصَدِّقُ أَقْسَامَهُ وَيُوَالِي وَلِيَّهِ وَلَا يَعَادِيهِ وَيَنْصُرُهُ ظَالِمًا وَمَظْلُومًا: فَأَمَّا نُصْرَتُهُ ظَالِمًا فَيَرُدُّهُ عَنْ ظُلْمِهِ وَأَمَّا نُصْرَتُهُ مَظْلُومًا فَيُعِينُهُ عَلَى أَخْذِ حَقِّهِ وَلَا يُسَلِّمُهُ وَلَا يَخْذُلُهُ وَيُحِبُّ لَهُ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ مَا يَحِبُّ لِنَفْسِهِ وَيَكْرَهُ لَهُ مِنَ الشَّرِّ مَا يَكْرَهُ لِنَفْسِهِ

“There are thirty rights for each Muslim incumbent upon his believing brother. He cannot be relieved from them unless he honors them or is forgiven by his brother. They are as follows:

- 1 *He must forgive his brother's faults.*
- 2 *He must be kind to his brother during hard times.*
- 3 *He must hide his brother's secrets.*
- 4 *He must compensate for his brother's faults.*
- 5 *He must accept his brother's apologies.*
- 6 *He must defend his brother against those who gossip behind his back.*
- 7 *He must always advise his brother.*
- 8 *He must safeguard his brother's friendship.*
- 9 *He must honor his brother's covenant.*
- 10 *He must visit him when his brother gets ill.*
- 11 *He must attend his brother's funeral procession.*
- 12 *He must accept his brother's invitations.*
- 13 *He must accept his brother's gifts.*
- 14 *He must return his brother's favors.*
- 15 *He must be grateful for his brother's blessings.*
- 16 *He must try to help his brother.*
- 17 *He must guard his brother's honor.*
- 18 *He must fulfill his brother's needs.*
- 19 *He must intercede on behalf of his brother.*
- 20 *He must say "God bless you" when his brother sneezes.*
- 21 *He must guide his brother's lost ones.*
- 22 *He must respond to his brother's greetings.*
- 23 *He must welcome his brother's words.*
- 24 *He must welcome his brother's kindness.*

25 He must accept his brother's swearing.

26 He must like his brother's friends.

27 He must not treat his brother with animosity.

28 He must help his brother whether he is an oppressor or an oppressed one. [15](#)

29 He should not leave his brother alone in the face of calamities.

30 He must like for his brother whatever he likes for himself, and dislike for him whatever he dislikes for himself.

[1.](#) In the other version it continues with: 'And there is no power but in God'.

[2.](#) Qamus Qur'an, v. 1, pp.37-38.

[3.](#) Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, v.3, p.332.

[4.](#) Ibid.

[5.](#) Usul al-Kafi, v.3, p. 166.

[6.](#) Usul al-Kafi, v.3, p. 166.

[7.](#) Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, v.3, p.331.

[8.](#) Usul al-Kafi, Chapter on Visiting believing brothers.

[9.](#) Ibid. p.177.

[10.](#) Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, v.2, p.61.

[11.](#) Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, v.2, p.308.

[12.](#) Al-Hadith, v. 1, p.285.

[13.](#) Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, v.2, p.308.

[14.](#) Tuhaf al-'Uqul, p.239.

[15.](#) Helping an oppressor means to prevent him from acts of oppression, but helping an oppressed one means helping him to get back what is rightfully his.

The Rights of Others

Right n. 26: The Right of the Master

حق المنعم على مولاه

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ الْمُنْعَمِ عَلَيْكَ بِالْوَلَاءِ فَأَنْ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّهُ أَنْفَقَ فِيكَ مَالَهُ، وَأَخْرَجَكَ مِنْ ذُلِّ الرِّقِّ وَوَحْشَتِهِ إِلَى عِزِّ الْحُرِّيَةِ وَأَنْسَاهَا، وَأَطْلَقَكَ مِنْ أَسْرِ الْمَلِكَةِ، وَفَكَ عَنْكَ حَلْقَ الْعُبُودِيَّةِ، وَأَوْجَدَكَ رَائِحَةَ الْعِزِّ، وَأَخْرَجَكَ مِنْ سِجْنِ الْقَهْرِ، وَدَفَعَ عَنْكَ الْعُسْرَ، وَبَسَطَ لَكَ لِسَانَ الْإِنْصَافِ، وَأَبَاحَكَ الدُّنْيَا كُلَّهَا فَمَلَّكَكَ نَفْسَكَ، وَحَلَّ أَسْرَكَ، وَفَرَّغَكَ لِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّكَ، وَاحْتَمَلَ

بَذَلَ التَّقْصِيرَ فِي مَالِهِ، فَتَعَلَّمَ أَنَّهُ أَوْلَى الْخَلْقِ بِكَ بَعْدَ أَوْلَى رَحِمِكَ فِي حَيَاتِكَ وَمَوْتِكَ، وَأَحَقَّ الْخَلْقِ بِنَصْرِكَ وَمَعُونَتِكَ
وَمُكَانَفَتِكَ فِي ذَاتِ اللَّهِ، فَلَا تُؤْثِرْ عَلَيْهِ نَفْسَكَ مَا أَحْتَاجَ إِلَيْكَ.

Then the right of your master who has favored you¹ is that you should know that he has spent his property for you and has brought you out of the abasement of slavery and its desolation, and has brought you into the honor of freedom and its sociability. And he has freed you from the captivity of his own possession and has released the bonds of his slavery from you.

And he has led you to smell the scent of honor, and has brought you out of the prison of subjugation, and has repelled hardship from you, and has extended to you the tongue of fairness, and has liberated you to freely move about in the whole world, and has given you ownership of yourself, and has freed you from captivity, and has given you the freedom to worship your Lord.

And for this he has suffered a decrease in his fortune. Then you should know that he is the closest creature to you after your relations of kin in your life and after your death, and that he is the most meritorious creature to receive your assistance and support, and your help for God's sake. Therefore, do not prefer yourself to him regarding any of his needs.

Here Imam Sajjad warns the freed slave about the rights of his master– a master who has expended his property to free him, and has brought him out of the abasement of slavery into the honor of freedom – freedom of thoughts and beliefs. He has brought him out of the slavery of other than god into the honor of God's servitude. He warns him that such a master has certain rights incumbent upon him.

Thus, he should realize that such a master has the right to be helped. He should realize that he should never prefer himself to his master regarding any of his needs. We have already discussed the history of slavery. We expressed the oppressions they suffered. We also stated the factors that led to their freedom. Especially we clarified how Islam gradually established the proper conditions for their freedom. Here we shall not repeat what was said before. Rather we will present other aspects of their freedom – namely ideological freedom and the freedom of ownership.

Freedom to Think

Freedom to think is the most fundamental human right. Each individual has the right to think about anything he wants. No one is allowed to control his thinking, or interrogate him about what he thinks, or set up certain conditions that will block him from thinking and understanding properly. Although one may argue that only a slave's body is under the control of his master and his mind is free, it is obvious that in reality a slave is deprived of the opportunity to think freely.

Even if we assume that he is free to think, it is not possible for him to put his thoughts into practice. Therefore when Imam Sajjad says: "...and has brought you out of the prison of subjugation, and has

repelled hardship from you, and has extended to you the tongue of fairness...” he implies that once a slave is freed, he can think freely. He can put his thoughts into practice out there in the real world. Thus, we can say that once a slave is freed, he has attained freedom of the mind. Islam has granted its followers freedom of the mind, and has left their way to study and research open. Imam Ali said the following in this regard:

مَنْ اسْتَقْبَلَ وُجُوهَ الْأَرَاءِ عَرَفَ مَوَاقِعَ الْخَطَأِ

“Whoever looks at various aspects of thoughts can recognize positions of faults.”²

Thus, we can see that there is no censorship of thoughts in Islam. The criteria for maturity and worth of a person in Islam are considered his intellect, knowledge and thinking. One hour of thinking is considered better than seventy years of worshipping. In many verses, the Qur’an advises man to think and understand. Consider the following verse:

الَّذِينَ يَسْمَعُونَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ أَحْسَنَهُ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَاهُمُ اللَّهُ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمْ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ

“Those who listen to the Word, and follow the best (meaning) in it: those are the ones whom God has guided, and those are the ones endowed with understanding.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Zumar 39: 18]

In another verse of the Holy Qur’an we read:

قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَىٰ وَالْبَصِيرُ أَفَلَا تَتَفَكَّرُونَ

“...can the blind be held equal to the seeing?” Will ye then consider not?” [The Holy Qur’an, al-An’am 6:50]

Ideological Freedom

One’s ideology forms due to a certain background and environment. The way one is educated and some other factors are also involved in the formation of a person’s ideology. To change a person’s ideology we must rely on the same influential factors that were instrumental in its initial formation. We cannot use force to change a person’s ideology. The Holy Qur’an says the following in this regard:

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ

“Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-

Baqarah 2:256]

In another verse we read:

وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَآمَنَ مَن فِي الْأَرْضِ كُلُّهُمْ جَمِيعًا أَفَأَنْتَ تُكْرِهُ النَّاسَ حَتَّى يَكُونُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ

“If it had been thy Lord's will, they would all have believed, – all who are on earth! Wilt thou then compel mankind, against their will, to believe!” [The Holy Qur'an, Yunus 10:99]

In another verse it says:

وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّكُمْ فَمَن شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِن وَمَن شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفُرْ إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ نَارًا

“Say, “The truth is from your Lord”: Let him who will believe, and let him who will, reject (it): for the wrongdoers We have prepared a Fire..!” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Kahf 18:29]

We also read:

فَذَكِّرْ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُذَكِّرٌ لَّسْتَ عَلَيْهِم بِمُصَيِّرٍ

“Therefore do thou give admonition, for thou art one to admonish. Thou art not one to manage (men's) affairs.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Ghashiyah 88:21-22]

Moreover, in another verse we read:

قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بَصَائِرُ مِن رَّبِّكُمْ فَمَن أَبْصَرَ فَلِنَفْسِهِ وَمَن عَمِيَ فَعَلَيْهَا وَمَا أَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِحَفِيظٍ

“Now have come to you, from your Lord, proofs (to open your eyes): if any will see, it will be for (the good of) his own soul; if any will be blind, it will be to his own (harm): I am not (here) to watch over your doings.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-An'am, 6: 104]

The above verses also clarify that there is no compulsion in religion. Everyone is free to choose. Islam is a religion of the intellect, logic, science and research. It forbids following blindly. It considers any form of worshipping other than God, like idol-worshipping or worshipping cows as forms of ignorance. Islam invites man to think and acquire knowledge.

Freedom of Ownership

Addressing the freed slaves and regarding their masters, Imam Sajjad said the following regarding their masters: "...and has liberated you to freely move about in the whole world..." This freedom includes freedom of thought and freedom of ownership. Thus, a freed slave can own and use his own property. Private ownership is rooted in man's nature. It fosters encouragement and helps our lives develop. Islam honors private ownership and legally supports it. Consider the following verse in this respect:

لِّلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا اكْتَسَبُوا وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا اكْتَسَبْنَ

"...To men is allotted what they earn, and to women what they earn..." [The Holy Qur'an, al- Nisaa 4:32]

Once you legitimately earn something, then it belongs to you. Consider the following verse:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبَاطِلِ إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَ تِجَارَةً عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِّنْكُمْ

"O ye who believe! Eat not up your property among yourselves in vanities: But let there be amongst you traffic and trade by mutual good-will!" [The Holy Qur'an, al-Nisaa 4:29]

Therefore, what one earns through legitimate means belongs to him. Should he be killed while trying to protect his property, he is considered a martyr:

مَنْ قُتِلَ دُونَ مَالِهِ فَهُوَ شَهِيدٌ

"Whoever gets killed for guarding his wealth is a martyr."³

Freedom of ownership does not mean that one can obtain wealth through any possible means. Wealth obtained through work in the fields of agriculture, animal husbandry, business, industry and the like are one's legal property.

However, what one may obtain through acts like robbery, cheating in transactions, cheating in the amount of goods sold, usury or confiscation is considered to be illegitimately earned by Islam. Islam seriously fights such deeds. It places certain forms of Islamic tax and declares certain rights on what one earns legitimately. Consider the following verse regarding those who do not abide by these regulations:

وَالَّذِينَ يَكْنِزُونَ الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ وَلَا يَنْفِقُونَهَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ

يَوْمَ يُحْمَى عَلَيْهَا فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ فَتُكْوَى بِهَا جِبَاهُهُمْ وَجُنُوبُهُمْ وَظُهُورُهُمْ هَذَا مَا كُنْتُمْ لَأَنْفُسِكُمْ فَذُوقُوا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْذِبُونَ

“And there are those who bury gold and silver and spend it not in the way of God: announce unto them a most grievous penalty—On the Day when heat will be produced out of that (wealth) in the fire of Hell, and with it will be branded their foreheads, their flanks, and their backs. This is the (treasure) which ye buried for yourselves: taste ye, then, the (treasures) ye buried!” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Tawbah 9:34–35]

This was a brief study of the degrees of freedom a slave attains after being freed. Finally, Imam Sajjad stresses the importance of the freed slave being grateful to his master for freeing him. The Imam warns the freed slave that he should never forget his master’s major act of freeing him.

- [1.](#) By freeing you from slavery.
- [2.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Fayz al-Islam, wise saying 164.
- [3.](#) Islam wa Huquq al-Bashar, p.316; quoted from Al-Adalat al-Ijtima’iyat, p. 103.

Right n. 27: The Right of the Freed Slave

حق المولى الجارية عليه نعمتك

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ مَوْلَاكَ الْجَارِيَةِ عَلَيْهِ نِعْمَتُكَ فَإِنَّ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ جَعَلَكَ حَامِيَةً عَلَيْهِ، وَوَاقِيَةً وَنَاصِرًا وَمَعْقِلًا، وَجَعَلَهُ لَكَ وَسِيلَةً وَسَبَبًا بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ فَبِالْحَرِيِّ أَنْ يَحْبُبَكَ عَنِ النَّارِ فَيَكُونَ فِي ذَلِكَ ثَوَابٌ مِنْهُ فِي الْآجِلِ، وَيَحْكُمُ لَكَ بِمِيرَاثِهِ فِي الْعَاجِلِ إِذَا لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ رَحِمٌ، مُكَافَأَةً لِمَا أَنْفَقْتَهُ مِنْ مَالِكَ عَلَيْهِ وَقُمْتَ بِهِ مِنْ حَقِّهِ بَعْدَ إِنْفَاقِ مَالِكَ، فَإِنْ لَمْ تَقُمْ بِحَقِّهِ خِيفَ عَلَيْكَ أَنْ لَا يَطِيبَ لَكَ مِيرَاثُهُ. وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ.

And the right of the slave whom you have favored¹ is that you should know that² God has established you as his supporter, and shelter and assistant, and refuge, and He has established him for you as the means and as a mediator between you and Him. Then by freeing him, he will protect you from the Fire. And this is the reward you get from him in the future.

And your immediate reward is to inherit from him if he does not have any relations of kin. There is a compensation for the property you have spent for him, and respecting his rights after you spent your property. Then if you do not respect his rights, there is the fear upon you that his inheritance would not be purified for you. And there is no power but in God.

In the previous chapter, Imam Sajjad clearly expressed the rights of the master incumbent on the freed slave. In this chapter, we discuss the rights of the freed slave incumbent on his master as expressed by Imam Sajjad. In fact, the natural rights of the freed slave on his master are discussed.

Man might get haughty or proud of himself if he does someone else a favor or frees him. Then he might mention his favors to him and belittle him. Imam Sajjad has advised us so as to eliminate the possibility of this haughtiness or undue pride. He said: “You should know that God has established you as his supporter, shelter, assistant and refugee, and He has established him for you as the means and as a mediator between you and Him.”

Duties of the Freed Slave

In what follows we read: “Then by freeing him, he will protect you from the Fire. In addition, you get this reward from him in the future. In addition, your immediate reward is to inherit from him if he does not have any relations of kin. There is a compensation for the property you spent for him, and respecting his rights after you spent your property.” This refers to the jurisprudence decree that one shall inherit from his freed slave if the slave does not have any relations of kin. Therefore, there are both worldly and heavenly rewards for freeing a slave. Next, we will review some of the traditions in this regard.

The Reward for Freeing a Slave

In the second tradition in section one of the Chapter Itaq in Wasa'il al-Shah we read: “Zurarah quoted on the authority of Imam Baqir on the authority of God's Prophet :

مَنْ أَعْتَقَ مُسْلِمًا أَعْتَقَ اللَّهُ الْعَزِيزُ الْجَبَّارُ بِكُلِّ عَضْوٍ مِنْهُ عَضْوًا مِنَ النَّارِ.

*“God the Honorable, the Almighty shall rescue from the Fire (of Hell) the body parts of whoever frees a Muslim slave – a part for a part.”*³

Imam Sadiq narrated that once Fatima the daughter of Asad went to see the Prophet and said: “I have decided to free my slave maid.” The Prophet said:

إِنْ فَعَلْتَ أَعْتَقَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ عَضْوٍ مِنْهَا عَضْوًا مِنْكَ مِنَ النَّارِ.

*“If you do that, then for every body-part of hers, God will free a corresponding part of your body from the Fire (of Hell).”*⁴

Shiite Imams and Freeing Slaves

In another tradition in the same chapter, we read that Imam Sadiq said:

إِنَّ أَبَا جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ مَاتَ وَتَرَكَ سِتِّينَ مَمْلُوكًا فَأَعْتَقَ ثَلَاثَهُمْ عِنْدَ مَوْتِهِ.

“Imam Baqir had sixty slaves. At the time of his death, he freed twenty of them.”⁵

The Prophet of God and the Imams were always the first ones to free their slaves to demonstrate the worldly and heavenly benefits of this act to their followers.

¹. By freeing him.

². In the other version it is followed by: “God has made your freeing him a means of access to Him and a veil against the Fire. Your immediate reward is to inherit from him – if he does not have any relatives – as a compensation for the property you have spent for him, and your ultimate reward is the Garden.”

³. Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v. 16, pp.2–5.

⁴. Ibid.

⁵. Ibid.

Right n. 28: The Right of the One Who Treats You Kindly

حق ذي المعروف

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ ذِي الْمَعْرُوفِ عَلَيْكَ فَإِنَّ تَشْكُرَهُ وَتَذْكُرَ مَعْرُوفَهُ وَتَنْشُرَ لَهُ الْمَقَالََةَ الْحَسَنَةَ، وَتُخْلِصَ لَهُ الدُّعَاءَ فِيمَا بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَ اللَّهِ سُبْحَانَهُ، فَإِنَّكَ إِذَا فَعَلْتَ ذَلِكَ كُنْتَ قَدْ شَكَرْتَهُ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً. ثُمَّ إِنْ أَمَكَنَ مُكَافَأَتَهُ بِالْفِعْلِ كَأَفَاتِهِ وَإِلَّا كُنْتَ مُرْصِدًا لَهُ مُوْطِنًا نَفْسَكَ عَلَيْهَا.

And the right of him who treats you kindly is that you should thank him and acknowledge his kindness; and spread the good word around about him, and sincerely pray for him between you and God the Praised One. Then if you do that, you have thanked him both in private and in public. Then if you are able to practically recompense him, do recompense him. Otherwise, you should be determined to do so later.

It is inherent in man to wish to recompense those who treat him kindly. If some people do not act this way, it is because of the wicked traits they have acquired which block this mode of natural behavior in them. Those who have received proper education and have attained Islamic characteristics strengthen this inner tendency to compensate for the good deeds done for them and always wait for a chance to practically reward those who have somehow done them a favor. Imam Sajjad has clearly outlined the steps to do so as follows:

1 – You should thank him.

2 – You should acknowledge his kindness and spread the good word around about him.

3 – You should sincerely pray for him.

4 – You should practically recompense him if you can. Else, you should be determined to do so later.

Goodness and Evil are not Equal

The Holy Qur'an teaches us that goodness and evil are not equal:

وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ

Nor can Goodness and Evil be equal. Repel (Evil) with what is better: Then will he between whom and thee was hatred become as it were thy friend and intimate! [The Holy Qur'an, Ha-Mim 41:34]

It is natural that we should do good in response to those who do some good to us. In this verse, we read that we should treat those who do us some evil with kindness. This will have a great effect, and it will attract them to us.

Response to Courteous Greetings

We read in the Holy Qur'an:

وَإِذَا حُيِّتُمْ بِتَحِيَّةٍ فَحَيُّوا بِأَحْسَنَ مِنْهَا أَوْ رُدُّوهَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَسِيبًا

“When a (courteous) greeting is offered you, meet it with a greeting still more courteous, or (at least) of equal courtesy. God takes careful account of all things.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Nisaa 4:86]

Greeting each other in any form is the most basic way of expressing kindness to each other. However, we can also find in the traditions that practical forms of expressing kindness are also a part of the concept of greeting. In Ali ibn Ibrahim's commentary we read the following tradition quoted on the authority of Imam Baqir and Imam Sadiq : “What is meant by a greeting is verbal expression of greetings and any other practical forms of expressing kindness.”¹ In another tradition in Manaqib we read: “A slave maid brought a flower to give to Imam Hasan . The Imam returned her favor by freeing her from the bonds of slavery. When asked why, he recited the following verse:

وَإِذَا حُيِّتُمْ بِتَحِيَّةٍ فَحَيُّوا بِأَحْسَنَ مِنْهَا أَوْ رُدُّوهَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَسِيبًا

“When a (courteous) greeting is offered you, meet it with a greeting still more courteous, or (at least) of equal courtesy.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Nisaa 4:86]

He then added: “Freeing her was a more courteous greeting.” Thus, we can see that this offering of a more courteous greeting is a general decree that includes both verbal and physical forms of greeting.

Good, the Reward for Good

We read the following in the Holy Qur'an:

هَلْ جَزَاءُ الْإِحْسَانِ إِلَّا الْإِحْسَانُ

“Is there any Reward for Good – other than Good?” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Rahman 55:60]

In many of the commentaries on the Qur'an, the good mentioned here in this verse has been interpreted as unity of God, His recognition and submission to God. However, these are clear instances of good. In general, it includes any good deeds or words. Imam Sadiq said:

آيَةٌ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ مُسْجَلَةٌ. “قلتُ: “ما هي؟” قال: “قَوْلُ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: “هل جزاء الاحسان الا الاحسان” جَرَتْ فِي الْكَافِرِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِ وَالْبَرِّ وَالْفَاجِرِ، وَمَنْ صُنِعَ إِلَيْهِ مَعْرُوفٌ فَعَلَيْهِ أَنْ يُكَافَى بِهِ، وَلَيْسَ الْمُكَافَأَةُ أَنْ تَصْنَعَ كَمَا صُنِعَ حَتَّى يَرَبَّى، فَإِنْ صَنَعْتَ كَمَا صُنِعَ كَانَ لَهُ الْفَضْلُ بِالْإِبْتِدَاءِ.”

*“There is a verse in God’s Book that is unrestricted.” He was asked: “Which verse?” Imam Sadiq said: “It is the Almighty God’s words: **“Is there any Reward for Good – other than Good?” (55:60)** This holds true for believers, pagans, good-doers and evildoers. You must reward good for good. Whoever is done some good should respond with good. The proper compensation is not to respond with as much good as he did but with more, since if you respond equally he is ahead of you because he initiated the good deed.” [2](#)*

In Al-Mufradat Raghib said: “Doing good is loftier than doing justice because in the case of doing justice you give and take as much as you are supposed to, but in doing good you always give more than you are due to give, and take less than what you deserve to get.”

The Response to God’s Favor

We read the following in the Holy Qur'an:

وَلَا تَنْسَ نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَأَحْسِنَ كَمَا أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ

“Nor forget thy portion in this world: but do thou good, as God has been good to thee.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Qasas 28:77]

It is generally accepted that man is always hoping to receive God’s Favors. He asks God for many things and expects a lot from Him. Then how can he ignore other people’s needs and neglect their

requests. We read the following in the Holy Qur'an:

وَلْيَعْفُوا وَلْيَصْفَحُوا أَلَا تُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

“Let them forgive and overlook, do you not wish that God should forgive you?” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Nur 24:22]

In other words, we can say that at times we are given great blessings all of which we do not need. For example, He gives us our intellect with which we can run the affairs of a nation. Alternatively, he gives us so much wealth with which we can implement great social programs. All these blessings do not just belong to us. In these cases, we are just God's vicegerents on Earth to transfer these blessings to others. God has given us these blessings so that we may give them to others. He has planned to run the affairs of His servants through us.

Being Friendly with Others

The verses cited clarified how important it is to be kind with others, especially those who do us favors. Next, we will cite some of the traditions in this regard. There is a chapter dedicated to this subject in *Usul al-Kafi*. The following traditions are cited from that chapter.

Abu Basir quoted on the authority of Imam Baqir that an Arab from the Bani Tameen tribe went to see the Prophet and said: “Please advise me.” The advice that the Prophet gave him was as follows:

تَحَبَّبْ إِلَى النَّاسِ يُحِبُّوكَ.

“Be affectionate to people so that they love you.”³

Suma'at quoted on the authority of Imam Sadiq :

مُجَامَلَةُ النَّاسِ ثُلُثُ الْعَقْلِ.

“One third of the intellect is to be friendly with the people.”⁴

God's Prophet said:

التَّوَدُّدُ إِلَى النَّاسِ نِصْفُ الْعَقْلِ.

“Half of the intellect is to show love to people.”⁵

Thus, we realize that we must treat others with kindness especially those who have done us a favor. The Noble Prophet said:

مَنْ أُولِيَ مَعْرُوفًا فَلْيُكَافِيَ بِهِ فَإِنْ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ فَلْيَذْكُرْهُ فَإِنْ ذَكَرَهُ فَقَدْ شَكَرَهُ.

*“Whoever receives a favor should compensate it. If he cannot do so, at least he should mention it. Thus if he mentions it, he has thanked the one who has done him a favor.”*⁶

God’s Prophet said:

اصْنَعِ الْمَعْرُوفَ إِلَى مَنْ هُوَ أَهْلُهُ وَإِلَى مَنْ هُوَ لَيْسَ أَهْلُهُ، فَإِنْ أَصَبْتَ أَهْلَهُ فَهُوَ أَهْلُهُ وَإِنْ لَمْ تُصِبْ أَهْلَهُ فَأَنْتَ مِنْ أَهْلِهِ.

“Treat with kindness those who are worthy of it and those who are not worthy of it. For if you treat with kindness the one who is worthy of it, then he is worthy of it. And if you treat with kindness one who is not worthy of it, then you yourself are worthy of it.”

At last, let us consider what Imam Sajjad means by ‘him who treats you kindly’ – that is ‘Dhi’l-Ma’ruf’ in Arabic. We read in Ibn Abbas’s tradition: “On the Resurrection Day, the people who do good will enter the court. Their sins will be forgiven due to their good deeds. All their good deeds will remain on their record. Good marks are given to those people whose record shows that their good deeds are more than their bad deeds. They will thus be forgiven. They will all enter Heaven. Therefore doing good to the people will unite all in this world and the Hereafter. This is the reward of one who does good.

¹. Tafsir-i-Namunah, v.4, p.42.

². Tafsir Nur al-Thaqalayn, v.5, p. 199.

³. Usul al-Kafi, v.2, pp.642–643.

⁴. Ibid.

⁵. Ibid.

⁶. Tarjume wa Sharh-i-Risalat al-Huquq, Sepehri, p. 149, quoted from Sharh-i-Shabab al-Akhbar, pp. 201 & 328.

Right n. 29: The Right of the Caller to Prayer

حق المؤذن

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ الْمُؤَذِّنِ فَإِنَّهُ تَعَلَّمَ أَنَّهُ مُذَكِّرُكَ بِرَبِّكَ وَدَاعِيكَ إِلَى حَظِّكَ وَأَفْضَلَ أَعْوَانِكَ عَلَى قَضَاءِ الْفَرِيضَةِ الَّتِي افْتَرَضَهَا اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ فَتَشْكُرُهُ عَلَى ذَلِكَ شُكْرَكَ لِلْمُحْسِنِ إِلَيْكَ. وَإِنْ كُنْتَ فِي بَيْتِكَ مُهْتَمًّا لِذَلِكَ لَمْ تَكُنْ لِلَّهِ فِي أَمْرِهِ مُتَهِمًا وَعَلِمْتَ

أَنَّهُ نِعْمَةٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكَ، لَا شَكَّ فِيهَا، فَأَحْسِنْ صُحْبَةَ نِعْمَةِ اللَّهِ بِحَمْدِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهَا عَلَى كُلِّ حَالٍ

And the right of your caller to prayer is that you should know that he is 1 the one reminding you of your Lord, and is calling you to your good fortune, and is your greatest helper in fulfilling an obligation that God has made incumbent upon you. Therefore, thank him for that just as you thank one who does some good to you.

And if you are upset with him at home due to this, you should not accuse him for this since his act is for God. And you should know that he is one of the blessings of God for you. There is no doubt about it. Then you should kindly treat God's blessing, by praising God for him under all circumstances. And there is no power but in God.

In short, we must remember that the one who calls us to prayer has the following rights incumbent upon us based on the following reasons:

- 1) He is the one who reminds us of our Lord.
- 2) He is the one who unites us to get the benefits that we can derive from praying.
- 3) He is our best assistant in fulfilling an obligatory duty.

Thus, we must thank him in such a way that we thank one who does good to us. If we are upset with him, we should not accuse him since his act is for the sake of God. We should know that he is one of God's Blessings. We should treat him with kindness and be grateful to him. Materialistic forces draw us away from God. It is the one who calls us to prayer who reminds us of the Lord. He helps save us from indulging in material pleasures. He assists us towards performing the prayer that helps us prosper. A high value has been recorded for the one who calls us to prayer in the traditions and books on Islamic jurisprudence. Few have been promised the rewards that those who call the people to pray have been promised.

The Meaning of 'Azan'

'Azan' in Arabic means announcement. Consider the following verse:

وَأَذَانٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ

***"And an announcement from God and His Apostle."* [The Holy Qur'an, al-Tawbah 9:3]**

The caller to prayer loudly announces that it is time to pray. We read in the following verse:

فَإِذَا نَزَلَ مُؤَذِّنٌ بَيْنَهُمْ

...But a crier shall proclaim between them... [The Holy Qur'an, al-A'raf 7:44]

The Decree to Call for Prayer

The decree to call for prayers was revealed in the first year of the immigration of the Noble Prophet to Medina. Other dates are also recorded. The need for it became apparent when the number of Muslims became so many that it was hard for them all to know when to pray. They talked to each other and decided to establish a sign indicating that it is time to pray.

Some suggested to ring a bell but the Prophet did not agree since this was a Christian practice. Some suggested the use of a horn but the Prophet did not agree since this was a Jewish practice. Some suggested playing on the tambourine but the Prophet said that this was a Roman practice. Others suggested using fire but the Prophet said that this was a practice of the Magians.^{[2](#)}

Some suggested raising a flag, but the Prophet did not say anything. Therefore, they did not settle on anything specific. Gabriel descended when the Prophet was in Ali's house and revealed the decree for the call to prayer. Sadooq narrated in Man La Yahzuruhu al-Faqih: "Mansoor ibn Hazim quoted on the authority of Imam Sadiq : Gabriel descended to the Prophet of God when he was sleeping in Ali's house. Gabriel recited the 'Azan' and the 'Iqamah.' Then the Prophet said: O' Ali! Did you hear that? He said: "O' Prophet of God! Yes." Then the Prophet said: "Did you memorize it?" Imam Ali said: "Yes." Then the Prophet said: "Then teach it to Bilal." Then Ali taught it to Bilal.^{[3](#)}

The Jurisprudents' Rule on the Call to Prayer

It is recommended for men and women to say the 'Azan' and 'Iqamah' before they pray. It has been quoted on the authority of Al-Mashoor, as quoted by many others that it is recommended to say the 'Azan' and 'Iqamah'. It is quoted in the books Al-Jomal and its commentary, Al-Moqna'eh, Al-Nahayat, Al-Mabsoot, Al-Waseeleh, Al-Mohaz'zab, and Mofid's Akham Al-Nisaa that it is obligatory for men to say the 'Azan' and 'Iqamah' in congregational prayers. The jurisprudents have specified the following cases in which there is no need to say the 'Azan':

- 1) For the afternoon Friday prayer once it is said right either after the noon prayer or after the Friday prayer.
- 2) For the afternoon prayer on the day of Arafah if it is said right after the noon prayer.
- 3) For the night prayer on the day of celebration of sacrifice^{[4](#)} for one who is in Mash'ar al-Haram if it is said right after the evening prayer.
- 4) The afternoon or the night prayer of a 'Mustahazeh' woman who must say them right after the noon or evening prayers.

5) The afternoon or the night prayer of one who cannot control his urination or bowel movement.

In either of the above cases, there is no need to say the 'Azan' if the prayers are said right one after the other or shortly thereafter.⁵ Certain conditions have been stated by the jurists for 'Azan' and 'Iqamah'. First, one must have the intention to say the 'Azan' and 'Iqamah' from the start to the end. Therefore, if one says them without intending to approach God, it is not accepted of him.

Secondly, the one who says the 'Azan' and 'Iqamah' must have faith. However, it is not required for the one who says the call to prayer to be mature, especially when it is used as an announcement. However, all the jurists require that the one who says the call to prayer as an announcement should be a man. It is also required that the one who says the call to prayer for men should be a man.

Thirdly, 'Azan' and 'Iqamah' must be said in order. Fourthly, there must be proper continuity of expression in between the parts of the 'Azan'. Finally, the call to prayer should be said using correct Arabic.

There are certain conditions other than the prayer in which the jurists have deemed it good to say the 'Azan' and 'Iqamah' as follows:

- 1) When a child is born, it is good to say the 'Azan' in his right ear and the 'Iqamah' in his left ear.
- 2) When someone gets afraid of ogres or jinns in awesome deserts.
- 3) It is recommended to say the 'Azan' in the ear of one who has not had any meat for forty days.⁶

Now that it was said that according to the Shiites, the 'Azan' and 'Iqamah' are stressed and recommendable, and said that some jurists consider them to be obligatory for men in congregation prayers, let us see what the Sunni jurists say about this issue. Malik and Abu Hanifah agree with the Shiites and say that 'Azan' and 'Iqamah' are good in all prayers whether at home or on a trip, whether said in person or in a congregation. They consider that there are no cases in which it is obligatory to say the 'Azan' or 'Iqamah'. However, Ahmad ibn Hanbal as well as the Shafi'iyah and Malikiyah have said that 'Azan and Iqamah' are obligatory as much as necessary.

The Difference in 'Azan' Between the Sects

The Shiites believe that there are two "Hayya Ala Khayril Amal" after "Hayya Alal Falah" but the Sunnis believe that "As Salat Khayron Min al-Nawm," should follow in the morning prayer. Shiite scholars believe that "Haya Ala Kharil Amal" had been used during the lifetime of the Prophet , and his family and the Imams continued saying it. Imam Ali said:

سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ يَقُولُ: "إِنَّ خَيْرَ أَعْمَالِكُمُ الصَّلَاةُ." وَأَمَرَ بِهَا أَنْ يُؤَذَّنَ: حَيَّ عَلَى خَيْرِ الْعَمَلِ

I heard the Prophet of God say: 'The best of your deeds is the prayer. He ordered Bilal to say "Hayya Ala Khayr'il Amal" in the 'Azan'. [7](#)

The Sunnis accept this to be the case at the time of the Prophet, but say that Umar ibn al-Khattab ordered it to be removed, and to be replaced with "As Salat Khayrun Min al-Nawm" in the morning prayer. Sa'd ed-Din Taftazani quoted on the authority of Umar in Hashiye Bar Sharhul Uzzad: Umar said: There were three things at the time of the Prophet which I forbade. One was Hajj Tamattu', the second was temporary marriage, and the third one was "Hayya Ala Khayr'il Amal." [8](#) In Sharh al-Tajrid by Qushji, the above is narrated, but it ends with "I will punish whoever performs any of these." It is not clear who had authorized Umar to do that. The responsibility for this only rests upon those who follow him.

The Parts of 'Azan'

According to many traditions in Wasa'il al-Sha'ah, there are four "Allahu Akbar", two "Ashado An La Illaha Illal'lah", two "Ashado An'na Muhammadan Rasoulul'lah", and two "Hayya Alas- Salat", two "Hayya Ala al-Falah" and two "Hayya Ala Khayril Amal", two "Allahu Akbar", and two "La Illaha Illal'lah" in the 'Azan'. "Ashado An'na Ali'an Hojatul'lah" is not a part of the 'Azan', but it is recommended to say it.

The Philosophy behind 'Azan' as Expressed by Imam Ridha

The late Sadooq quoted on the authority of Imam Ridha: In fact, the people were ordered to say the call to prayer for many reasons, among which we can mention to remind those who might have forgotten to pray; to awaken the ignorant ones; to recognize those who are ignorant when it is time to pray. The one who calls to prayer invites the people to worship God through his call to prayer. He makes the people more inclined to pray and confess to the unity of God. He publicizes his own faith and submission and reminds those who have forgotten.

The one who calls to prayer starts by glorifying God and ends by testifying to His unity. Each part is repeated twice in order to affect the person who hears it. If he does not notice it the first time, he will recognize it the second time it is recited. Since the testifying to the unity of God and the Prophethood of Muhammad are the foundations of our faith, they are repeated twice. Thus, when one testifies twice to the unity of God and the Prophethood of Muhammad, he has whole-heartedly testified to all the pillars of faith. The next part of the 'Azan' is the invitation to pray, as this is its main purpose. Thus, this is the call to prosperity and good deeds, and the 'Azan' ends in the name of God, as it started with it. [9](#)

The Reward for Saying the Call To Prayer

Mu'awiyah ibn Wahab quoted on the authority of Imam Sadiq on the authority of God's Prophet:

مَنْ أَذَّنَ فِي مِصْرٍ مِنْ أَمْصَارِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ سَنَةً وَجَبَتْ لَهُ الْجَنَّةُ.

*Whoever performs the call to prayer in one of the Muslim towns for one year, Heaven is incumbent on him.”*¹⁰

Suleiman ibn Ja'far quoted on the authority of his father that once when a man from Sham went to see Imam Sadiq , the Imam told him that Bilal is the first person to go to Heaven. The man asked the reason. The Imam said: “Because he was the first one to say the call to prayer.”¹¹ In another tradition Jabir Ja'far quoted on the authority of Imam Baqir that God's Prophet said:

الْمُؤَذِّنُ الْمُحْتَسِبُ كَالشَّاهِدِ سَيْفُهُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الْفَاتِلُ بَيْنَ الصَّفَّيْنِ.

*“The one who calls to prayer, seeking a reward from God, is like one who has drawn his sword in the way of God and is fighting in between the rows.”*¹²

Imam Ali said:

يُحْشَرُ الْمُؤَذِّنُونَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ طِوَالَ الْأَعْنَاقِ.

*“Those who say the call to prayer will be raised as chiefs on the Day of Resurrection.”*¹³

The late Sadooq quoted in the Manafi tradition on the authority of Ja'far ibn Muhammad on the authority of his father on the authority of God's Prophet :

مَنْ أَذَّنَ مُحْتَسِبًا يُرِيدُ بِذَلِكَ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى أَعْطَاهُ اللَّهُ ثَوَابَ أَرْبَعِينَ أَلْفَ شَهِيدٍ وَأَرْبَعِينَ أَلْفَ صِدِّيقٍ وَيَدْخُلُ فِي شَفَاعَتِهِ أَرْبَعُونَ أَلْفَ مُسِيٍّ مِنْ أُمَّتِي إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ. إِلَّا وَإِنَّ الْمُؤَذِّنَ إِذَا قَالَ: أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، صَلَّى عَلَيْهِ سَبْعُونَ أَلْفَ مَلَكٍ وَاسْتَغْفَرُوا لَهُ وَكَانَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِي ظِلِّ الْعَرْشِ حَتَّى يَفْرُغَ اللَّهُ مِنْ حِسَابِ الْخَلَائِقِ وَيَكْتُبُ ثَوَابَ قَوْلِهِ: أَشْهَدُ أَنْ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ أَرْبَعُونَ أَلْفَ مَلَكٍ.

*“God the High will grant the reward of forty-thousand martyrs and forty-thousand veracious ones to whoever says the call for prayer for the sake of God. Due to such a person, forty-thousand sinners from my nation shall be allowed into Heaven. Indeed, when the one who says the call to prayer testifies to the unity of God, seventy thousand angels will send greetings to him and seek God's forgiveness for him. They will be in the shade of the Lord's Throne on the Resurrection Day until God finishes the reckoning of all people. Forty-thousand angels will record the reward of his testifying to the Prophethood of Muhammad .”*¹⁴

¹. In the other version it continues: “reminding you of your Lord, calling you to your good fortune, and helping you to accomplish what God has made obligatory for you. So thank him for that just as you thank one who does good to you.”

- [2.](#) Magians were priests of religious settlements from Mesopotamia and its surroundings, and existed up to the Christian epoch. They believed in the old nature religion of Iran, which preceded Zoroastrianism.
- [3.](#) Sharh-i-Risalat al-Huquq, Ghopanchi, v.2, p.89.
- [4.](#) Known as Eid al-Qurban or Eid al-Azha.
- [5.](#) 'Urwah al-Wuthqa, chapter on Azan and Iqamah.
- [6.](#) Ibid.
- [7.](#) Sharh-i-Risalat al-Huquq, Ghopanchi, v.2, p.90.
- [8.](#) Ibid.
- [9.](#) Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v.4, p.646.
- [10.](#) Ibid. pp.613-616.
- [11.](#) Ibid.
- [12.](#) Ibid.
- [13.](#) Ibid.
- [14.](#) Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v.4, pp.613-616.

Right n. 30: The Right of the Ritual Prayer Leader

حق الإمام في الصلاة

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ إِمَامِكَ فِي صَلَاتِكَ فَإِنَّ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّهُ قَدْ تَقَلَّدَ السَّفَارَةَ فِيمَا بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَ اللَّهِ وَالْوَفَادَةَ إِلَى رَبِّكَ، وَتَكَلَّمَ عَنْكَ وَلَمْ تَتَكَلَّمْ عَنْهُ، وَدَعَا لَكَ وَلَمْ تَدْعُ لَهُ، وَطَلَّبَ فِيكَ وَلَمْ تَطْلُبْ فِيهِ، وَكَفَّكَ هَمُّ الْمَقَامِ بَيْنَ يَدَيِ اللَّهِ وَالْمُسَاءَلَةَ لَهُ فِيكَ وَلَمْ تَكْفِهِ ذَلِكَ، فَإِنْ كَانَ فِي شَيْءٍ مِنْ ذَلِكَ تَقْصِيرٌ كَانَ بِهِ دُونُكَ، وَإِنْ كَانَ آثِمًا لَمْ تَكُنْ شَرِيكُهُ فِيهِ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ عَلَيْكَ فَضْلٌ، فَوَقَى نَفْسَكَ بِنَفْسِهِ، وَوَقَى صَلَاتَكَ بِصَلَاتِهِ، فَتَشْكُرُ لَهُ عَلَى ذَلِكَ. وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

And the right of your leader in your ritual prayer is that you should know that he has taken on the role of a mediator between you and God and appeared in the presence of your Lord on your behalf. And he speaks for you, but you do not speak for him; and he supplicates for you, but you do not supplicate for him; and he has beseeched for you and you do not beseech for him.

And he has spared you the anxiety of standing before God and the question of interrogation for your prayer, but you do not spare him that. Should he perform the prayer imperfectly, he is held responsible for that not you; and if he makes a mistake during the prayer, you will not be his partner in it, and there is no superiority in this for him over you. Then he protected you through himself, and he protected your prayer through his prayer. Therefore, thank him for this. And there is no power or strength but in God.

What Imam Sajjad tells us here is that the people praying should know that the prayer leader is a

mediator between them and the Lord. He is praying to God on their behalf. He asks on their behalf. He suffers the fear of being in the position of being interrogated for their sake. If there are any shortcomings in the prayers, the responsibility rests upon his shoulders.

The people attending the prayer are not considered partners in this fault. The prayer leader has no superiority over others. He is just the maintainer of others and their prayers at the threshold of God the Almighty. The discussion here is not centered on the prayer itself. Rather it is about the rights of the leader of the prayers. He – who is standing in front – is like a military leader who is calling all his followers to fight with Satan.

Now they all attend to God who is the source of all perfections. The prayer leader is guiding a caravan of hearts towards God. He expresses ultimate humbleness to God on their behalf. He unites the rich and the poor, the employer and the employee, the master and the slave, the black and the white, the informed and the uninformed together through saying the prayers.

The Wisdom behind Congregational Prayers

The Almighty God has established certain forms of worship to be done in a group. He has set up a certain time and place to do them, too. He has done so in order for the believers to achieve the blessings and effects of such social activities on their path to perfection. We can name a few of the effects of congregational prayers as follows:

- 1) When everyone in the congregation moves together in performing the various acts of bowing down, prostrating and sitting down in harmony, the Grandeur and Majesty of the Lord is manifested.
- 2) When congregational prayers are performed the might of the Muslims and their majesty and power is demonstrated.
- 3) When the people follow the prayer leader in their motions and in what they say in prayers, then they will learn to have order and to abide by the rules.
- 4) When the people pray together in a group several times each day, the social ties and the sense of brotherhood between them is reinforced.
- 5) When the people pray together in a group, they will develop a sense of mutual trust that can be used when they are to witness about something or make a deal.
- 6) Since the congregational prayers are always performed on time, they provide the best chance for one to approach God, and seek His acceptance of prayers.
- 7) When one participates in the prayer, especially the congregational prayers he abandons the material life and is delved into the spiritual life. Once he starts the prayer, he leaves everything but God behind,

and directs his full attention to God.

8) An important benefit of congregational prayers is that they are a good means of the development of mosques and places of worship. This includes both the physical and spiritual aspects of development.

9) Another important benefit of congregational prayers is that the attendees get to know each other and their ties of friendship are strengthened.

10) Finally, in the congregational prayers all people of different classes and races get together and stand in one line. There is no difference between the rich and the poor, the black and the white, the master and the slave, the informed and the uninformed person.

Congregational prayer is the best form of elimination of racism. The gap between the people from different classes or races is reduced to zero once they attend congregational prayers.

Congregational Prayers are Open to the Public

Fazl ibn Shadan quoted on the authority of Imam Ridha : [1](#)

إِنَّمَا جُعِلَتِ الْجَمَاعَةُ لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ الْإِخْلَاصُ وَالتَّوْحِيدُ وَالْإِسْلَامُ وَالْعِبَادَةُ لِلَّهِ إِلَّا ظَاهِرًا مَكْشُوفًا لِأَنَّ فِي إِظْهَارِهِ حُجَّةً عَلَى أَهْلِ الشَّرْقِ وَالْغَرْبِ لِلَّهِ وَحْدَهُ وَلِيَكُونَ الْمُنَافِقُ وَالْمُسْتَخِفُّ مُؤَدِّيًا لِمَا أَقَرَّ بِهِ يُظْهِرُ الْإِسْلَامَ وَالْمَرَاقِبَةَ وَلِتَكُونَ شَهَادَاتُ النَّاسِ بِالْإِسْلَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ جَائِزَةً مُمْكِنَةً، مَعَ مَا فِيهِ مِنَ الْمُسَاعَدَةِ عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَى وَالزَّجْرِ عَنْ كَثِيرٍ مِنْ مَعَاصِي اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ.

“Congregational prayers are decreed because true devotion, submission and servitude of God shall not be attained unless it is done in public. The public performance of such deeds is a clear testimony of the uniqueness of God for the people of the East and the West. It is to be done in public so that even hypocrites and those who belittle the Muslims in private practically have to do what they have verbally confessed in public and have to make their devotion and submission clear to the public.

This is done so that it becomes easily possible for the people to testify as to one another's being Muslim. In addition to these, another benefit of the congregational prayer is that it makes it possible to help others and to cooperate with each other. It becomes possible for the people to worship God. Through congregational prayers, a lot of the bad deeds and acts of disobedience to God the Exalted the High are forbidden.”

In another tradition we read: “Imam Sadiq quoted on the authority of his noble father who quoted on the authority of God’s Prophet :

مَنْ صَلَّى الْخَمْسَ فِي جَمَاعَةٍ فَظَنُّوا بِهِ خَيْرًا.

“Think well of one who performs all his five sessions of daily prayers in congregations.”[2](#)

This is the point that was mentioned earlier. One of the major benefits of attending congregational prayers is the mutual trust that is developed between those who attend. As Imam Ridha said in the tradition just cited above, God has established congregational prayers as the means by which men can publicly recognize the servitude to God, and the people of the East and the West can become fully aware of this divine proof. The congregational prayer also fosters cooperation, helping each other and the prevention of wicked deeds.

A Few Words from “Asrar ul-Salat”

Now we will present a few words from Asrar ul-Salat by the late Hajj Mirza Malaki Tabrizi regarding congregational prayers as follows.

The main wisdom behind the decree on congregational prayers is the unity of the hearts of the believers in God’s affair. There are many benefits to this unity including the strengthening of Islam. In addition to this, congregational prayers are very effective in the perfection of the soul, its strengthening the soul in trotting along the path towards God, and obtaining divine rewards. This is because God’s Mercy will encompass all of them if they are united in God’s way if it should be meant to descend upon anyone of them. This is true even if not all of them deserve to receive God’s Mercy.

The similitude of the unity of hearts is like that of the joining of narrow muddy streams of water. Once they join, they turn into a wide river that can cleanse everything on its way. This river will no longer become dirty from the least bit of added impurities. Thus, what is important is the unity of the hearts. If one succeeds to unite in congregational prayer with people whose hearts are united with God, then he can be hopeful to receive the reward that is promised in the traditions.

However, if the people who are attending the prayer are jealous of each other and hold a grudge against each other, then hoping to receive such rewards is a far-reaching aspiration. It is not considered hope in God, rather it is fooling oneself. When a prayer leader purifies his soul, anyone who knows him shall love him. He will also be kind with the believers due to this bond of divine love.

Therefore, their congregation will be a divine one. However, if the people who unite in prayer are really disunited in their hearts and are enemies of one another, are jealous of the God-given blessings that each other one has, then there will not be any illumination from this type of unity especially if one side involved is the prayer leader himself. This is all because the major effect of any worship is due to the way it affects the heart and illuminates it.[3](#)

The Reward for Congregational Prayers

Abu Saeed Khudhri quoted on the authority of the Noble Prophet of God : After prayer Gabriel

descended with seventy thousand angels and said: “O Muhammad! Your Lord sends greetings and grants you two gifts which He has never donated to any of the Prophets before you.”

The Prophet asked: “O Gabriel! What are these two gifts?” Gabriel said: “Three units of prayer, and saying congregational prayers five times each day.” The Prophet asked Gabriel: “What is the reward of congregational prayers for my nation?” Gabriel said: “Whenever there are two people attending congregational prayer, each one shall be rewarded the reward of one hundred and fifty prayers for each unit of congregation prayer. When there are three people, the reward will be that of two hundred and fifty prayers. When there are four people in the prayer, then their reward will be that of one thousand and two hundred prayers.

When there are five people in the prayer, the reward will be that of one thousand and three hundred prayers. When there are six people in the prayer, the reward will be that of two thousand and four hundred prayers. When there are seven people in the prayer, the reward will be that of four thousand and eight hundred prayers. When there are eight people, the reward will be that of nine thousand and six hundred prayers for each unit of prayer. When there are ten people, the reward will be that of nineteen thousand prayers.

When there are more than ten people the reward cannot be recorded. Even if all the water in all the seas in the heavens and the Earth turns into ink, and the wood from all the trees turns into pens, and all the men, the jinns and the angels start to record, they cannot record the reward. O Muhammad! Hearing the praises of the Lord that a believer hears in the congregational prayer is better than seventy pilgrimages and one thousand non-obligatory pilgrimages for him.”[4](#)

In another tradition Zurarah said: “I asked Imam Sadiq : Will the congregational prayer be right with just two people?” The Imam said: “Yes. The second man must stand on the right of the prayer leader.” [5](#) According to another tradition Johani came to the Prophet and said: “I live in the desert. After the call for the prayer, there are only my servants, my wife and my children present there. I say the prayer with them. Is this considered to be congregational prayer?” The Prophet replied: “Yes.”

Then considering all the reward, why do the followers of Imam Ali lose it all by not attending congregational prayers? Is this not a great loss for them indeed?

Stories about Ritual Prayer Leaders

Now that we have reviewed the traditions about the rewards of congregational prayers, let us consider the following stories about prayer leaders that Ghopanchi has compiled in his book Sharh-iRisalat al-Huquq.

1– An Arab man called Mujrim (meaning man of sin) was standing in the first row of the congregational prayer. As the prayer leader was praying he recited:

أَلَمْ تُهْلِكِ الْأَوَّلِينَ ثُمَّ تُنْبِعُهُمُ الْآخِرِينَ

“Did We not destroy the men of old [lit. the first ones] (for their evil)? So shall We make later (generations) follow them?” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Mursalat 77: 16–17]

The Arab man moved back to the third row. Then the prayer leader said:

كَذَلِكَ نَفْعَلُ بِالْمُجْرِمِينَ

“Thus do We deal with men of sin.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Mursalat 77: 18]

Then the Arab man said: “By God he has aimed his words at no one else but me.” He picked up his shoes and ran away from the mosque.

2 – Three brothers called Abraham, Moses and Hajj Ahmad built a mosque and asked someone to be the prayer leader for that mosque. They paid for his living expenses. One day the prayer leader recited the following verse:

إِنَّ هَذَا لَفِي الصُّحُفِ الْأُولَى صُحُفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى

“And this is in the Books of the earliest (Revelation), – The Books of Abraham and Moses.” [The Holy Qur’an, Al-A’la 87: 18–19]

When he finished, Hajj Ahmad asked: “Do you not know that the three of us built this mosque together, and that we all help run it?” The man said: “Yes I know.” Hajj Ahmad said: “Then why did you mention their names when you recited but made no mention of me?” The prayer leader said: “These are verses of the Qur’an. We cannot add to them.”

Hajj Ahmad said: “No. You had better confess that you like them more than you like me. I will hit you hard with my cane if you do not add my name in your next prayer.” Then when the prayer leader recited the next prayer he said: “The Books of Abraham, Moses and Hajj Ahmad.” After he finished the prayer, the people who prayed after him asked: “Where did you get Hajj Ahmad from?” He said: “The thought of getting hit by the cane resulted in Hajj Ahmad’s name entering in the Qur’an.”

3 – It has been narrated that once a prayer leader brought a trash can that is called “satl” in Arabic and put it behind him. When he bowed down in prayer he remembered his “satl” and thought that it was stolen. Then he raised his head and said: “Rabana Lakal Satl” instead of saying “Rabana Lakal Hamd”. Some of the people who were praying said: “Do not worry, the trash can is behind you.”

4 – A man was praying behind a prayer leader. Then the prayer leader forgot the Sura Fatiha and started repeatedly saying: “I seek refuge in God from Satan.” The man who was praying behind him

said: “It is not Satan’s fault. You are the one who forgot how to pray.”

[1.](#) ‘Ilal wa ‘Uyun al-Akhbar.

[2.](#) Ibid. p.371.

[3.](#) Tarjumeḥ wa Sharḥ-i-Risalat al-Huquq, Sepehri, pp. 153–155, quoted from Asrar al-Salat, pp.491–497.

[4.](#) Sharḥ-i-Risalat al-Huquq, Ghopanchi, v.2, pp. 144–145.

[5.](#) Wasa’il al-Shi’ah, v.5, p.379.

Right n. 31: The Right of the Sitting Companion

حق الجليس

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ الْجَلِيسِ فَأَنْ تُلِينَ لَهُ كَنَفَكَ، وَتُطِيبَ لَهُ جَانِبَكَ، وَتُنْصِفَهُ فِي مُجَارَاةِ اللَّفْظِ وَلَا تُغْرِقَ فِي نَزَعِ اللَّحْظِ إِذَا لَحَظْتَ وَتَقْصِدَ فِي اللَّفْظِ إِلَى إِفْهَامِهِ إِذَا لَفَظْتَ. وَإِنْ كُنْتَ الْجَلِيسَ إِلَيْهِ كُنْتَ فِي الْقِيَامِ عَنْهُ بِالْخِيَارِ وَإِنْ كَانَ الْجَالِسَ إِلَيْكَ كَانَ بِالْخِيَارِ. وَلَا تَقُومُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ. وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ.

And the right of your sitting companion is that you should treat him gently, warmly welcome him, be fair while talking with him, do not take your eyes off of him when you are looking at him, and pronounce your words clearly to help him understand what you say. And if you are the first one to go and sit with him, you can leave him when you wish. However, if he is the first one to come and sit with you, he can leave you when he wishes to. And you should not leave him without his permission.¹ And there is no power but in God.

Man as a Social Being

What is meant by “sitting companion” is friends or associates, be their friendship short-lived or for a long time. Whoever becomes our companion has certain rights incumbent upon us. Men of all ages at all times need companions since man has an instinctive desire for social living. Man suffers from loneliness. He would become happy if he has a good associate or friend.

The Role of Friends in Man’s Personality

Each person’s friends and associates have a great influence on his personality, worldly and religious affairs. Friends affect our behavior and the many aspects of our lives. This effect can be either positive or negative. This is so important that the Noble Prophet of God declared one of the criteria for each person’s personality to be that of his friends. He said: “It is a great tragedy for one not to have any good friends.”² Imam Ali said:

مَنْ فَقَدَ أَخًا لَهُ فِي اللَّهِ فَقَدْ أَشْرَفَ أَعْضَاءَهُ.

“When one loses his own sincere friend whose friendship with him was for the sake of God, it is as if he has lost one of his body parts.”³

Now that it has become clear that a friend has a very important role in our life, it is vital to be careful in choosing a good friend so that we can have a long-lasting relationship.

How to Choose a Good Friend

Regarding the way to choose a good friend, Imam Sadiq said:

مَنْ غَضِبَ عَلَيْكَ ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ فَلَمْ يَقُلْ فِيكَ سُوءًا فَاتَّخِذْهُ لَكَ خَلِيلًا.

“Whoever gets angry with you thrice, but does not say anything bad about you – take him for your friend.”⁴

Stable and Unstable Friendships

Imam Ali said:

مَنْ اتَّخَذَ أَخًا بَعْدَ حُسْنِ الْاِخْتِبَارِ دَامَتْ صُحْبَتُهُ وَتَأَكَّدَتْ مَوَدَّتُهُ.

“Whoever chooses a friend after properly testing him will have a lasting friendship with him.”⁵

Imam Ali said:

مَنْ اتَّخَذَ أَخًا مِنْ غَيْرِ اخْتِبَارٍ أَلْجَأَهُ الْاضْطِرَارُ إِلَى مُرَافَقَةِ الْأَشْرَارِ.

“Whoever makes friends without proper considerations will have to put up with wicked friends.”⁶

Associating With Wicked People

Saint Abdul Azeem Hassani quoted on the authority of Imam Baqir who said:

مَجَالَسَةُ الْأَشْرَارِ تَوْرِثُ سُوءَ الظَّنِّ بِالْأَخْيَارِ.

“Associating with wicked people causes a bad opinion regarding good people.”⁷

Imam Sadiq quoted on the authority of his grandfather on the authority of the Prophet of God :

ثَلَاثٌ مُجَالَسَتُهُمْ تُمِيتُ الْقُلُوبَ: الْجُلُوسُ مَعَ الْأَنْذَالِ، وَالْحَدِيثُ مَعَ النِّسَاءِ، وَالْجُلُوسُ مَعَ الْأَغْنِيَاءِ.

“Associating with the following three groups of people will make your heart perish: sitting with ignoble ones, conversing with women and sitting with the rich.”⁸

In another tradition regarding associating with the rich, Imam Sadiq said:

لَا تُجَالِسِ الْأَغْنِيَاءَ فَإِنَّ الْعَبْدَ يُجَالِسُهُمْ وَهُوَ يَرَى أَنَّ لِلَّهِ عَلَيْهِ نِعْمَةً، فَمَا يَقُومُ حَتَّى يَرَى أَنَّهُ لَيْسَ لِلَّهِ عَلَيْهِ نِعْمَةٌ.

“Do not sit with the rich. For a servant sits with them and he is aware of the blessings God has bestowed on him, but he rises up thinking that God has bestowed no blessing on him.”⁹

In another tradition, we read that the Noble Prophet said: “Do not associate with the dead! They asked him: “O Prophet of God! Who are the dead?” He replied: “They are the wasteful rich, who are delved in the material life of this world and unaware of God. They see everything as wealth and money.”

Such people do not have a living heart. Thus, the Prophet considers them to be like the dead.

Associating with the dead will result in the perishing of one's heart. That is why it is forbidden by the Prophet of Islam . In Sifat ash-Shia Sadooq – may mercy be upon him – has quoted Imam Baqir who quoted on the authority of the Commander of the Faithful :

مُجَالَسَةُ الْأَشْرَارِ تَوْرِثُ سُوءَ الظَّنِّ بِالْأَخْيَارِ، وَمُجَالَسَةُ الْأَخْيَارِ تُلْحِقُ الْأَشْرَارَ بِالْأَخْيَارِ، وَمُجَالَسَةُ الْأَبْرَارِ لِلْفُجَّارِ تُلْحِقُ الْأَبْرَارَ بِالْفُجَّارِ، فَمَنْ اشْتَبَهَ عَلَيْكُمْ أَمْرُهُ وَلَمْ تَعْرِفُوا دِينَهُ فَانظُرُوا إِلَى خُلَطَائِهِ، فَإِنْ كَانُوا أَهْلَ دِينِ اللَّهِ فَهُوَ عَلَى دِينِ اللَّهِ وَإِنْ كَانُوا عَلَى غَيْرِ دِينِ اللَّهِ فَلَا حَظَّ لَهُ مِنْ دِينِ اللَّهِ. إِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ كَانَ يَقُولُ: مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلَا يُؤَاخِيزُ كَافِرًا وَلَا يُخَالِطُنْ فَاجِرًا، وَمَنْ أَخَى كَافِرًا أَوْ خَالَطَ فَاجِرًا كَانَ كَافِرًا فَاجِرًا.

“Associating with wicked people will result in one being suspicious of the good people. Association of the wicked people with good people will result in them becoming good people. Association of good people with the sinners will convert them into sinners. Then if you are in doubt about someone and do not know the degree of his attachment to the decrees of religion, look at his friends.

If he associates with religious people, then he is a follower of God's religion. However, if he associates with people who do not follow God's religion, then he has not benefited from God's religion. Indeed the Noble Prophet of God said: One who believes in God and the Resurrection Day shall not fraternize with an unbeliever or associate with an immoral person. Whoever fraternizes with an unbeliever or associates with an immoral person is an unbeliever and immoral.”¹⁰

With Whom to Associate

Imam Sajjad said to his children:

جَالِسُوا أَهْلَ الدِّينِ وَالْمَعْرِفَةِ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَقْدِرُوا عَلَيْهِمْ فَالْوَحْدَةُ أَسْلَمُ وَأَسْلَمُ فَإِنْ أُبْيِئْتُمْ إِلَّا مُجَالَسَةَ النَّاسِ فَجَالِسُوا أَهْلَ
الْمُرُوءَاتِ فَإِنَّهُمْ لَا يَرْفُثُونَ فِي مُجَالَسَتِهِمْ.

“Associate with the people of religion and recognition (of God). If you cannot find any such people, then solitude is more companionable and safer. If you insist on associating with people, then associate with the people of honor who do not utter unseemly speech in their gatherings.”¹¹

Imam Sadiq said:

مَنْ جَالَسَ أَهْلَ الرَّيْبِ فَهُوَ مُرِيبٌ.

“Whoever associates with dubious people will be regarded as dubious.”¹²

Associate with Scholars

The Noble Prophet of God said:

إِجْلِسُوا عِنْدَ كُلِّ عَالِمٍ يَدْعُوكُمْ مِنْ خَمْسٍ إِلَى خَمْسٍ: مِنَ الشُّكِّ إِلَى الْيَقِينِ وَمِنَ الرِّيَاءِ إِلَى الْإِخْلَاصِ وَمِنَ الرِّغْبَةِ إِلَى
الزُّهْدِ وَمِنَ الْكِبَرِ إِلَى التَّوَاضُّعِ وَمِنَ الْعَدَاوَةِ إِلَى الْمَحَبَّةِ.

“Associate with every scholar who calls you away from five things towards five things:

1. *From doubt to certitude*
2. *From dissemblance to sincerity (in deeds)*
3. *From desire (of this world) to abstinence*
4. *From pride to humility*
5. *From enmity to love.* ¹³

Thus, we realize the importance of visiting the scholars. Their effect on man's spirit is clarified. We see why the Prophet of God invited us to associate with scholars.

The Role of Wise Companions

Imam Sadiq said:

الإخوان ثلاثة: فواحد كالغذاء الذي يُحتاج إليه في كل وقت، والثاني في معنى الداء وهو الأحمق والثالث في معنى الدواء وهو اللبيب.

“Brothers are of three kinds. The first kind is like nourishment that we need at all times; the second is like a disease, and they are the foolish ones. The third kind is like the remedy, and they are the intelligent ones.”

Moa'tasim in the Minister's Party

Fazl Marwan was one of the ministers of the Abbasid Caliph Moa'tasim. He was so talented that he had attained an especial position near the Caliph.

To show the people his especial position near the Caliph, he invited the Caliph to an evening party. He decorated his large house with glamorous materials, beautiful flowers, golden and silver dishes and expensive rugs. He prepared the best of the fruits and confectioneries.

Once the Caliph entered his house, he felt jealous and brought the excuse that his stomach hurt, and left the house. The minister realized that his efforts had given a negative result. He consulted with his intelligent friend Ibrahim Mooseli who was present. Ibrahim thought for a short while and told him to accompany the Caliph to the court and wait for his letter. He also advised him to read the letter in the presence of the Caliph.

Fazl followed Ibrahim's advice. After a short while, he received a letter in which it was written: “Now that the party for the Caliph has ended, the owner of the rugs and the jewels has come to take them back. Please issue permission to give them back to their owner.” Moatasim asked about the contents of the letter. The minister read the letter. Then when the Caliph realized that these were all borrowed, his hurt feelings ended. Thus, the intellect of a very intelligent friend was able to save a friend.

The Criteria for Honesty

Imam Sadiq said:

الصداقة محدودة، فمن لم تكن فيه تلك الحدود فلا تنسبه إلى كمال الصداقة، ومن لم يكن فيه شيء من تلك الحدود لا تنسبه إلى شيء من الصداقة. أولها أن تكون سريرته وعلايته لك واجدة، والثانية أن يرى زينك وزينه وشينك وشينه، والثالثة أن لا يغيره مال ولا ولاية، والرابعة أن لا يمنعك شيئاً مما تصل إليه مقدرته، والخامسة أن لا يسلمك عند

“There are certain criteria for sincere friendship. Do not attribute perfection in sincere friendship to one who does not possess these criteria. Do not attribute any (degree of) sincere friendship to one who has none of these criteria. Firstly, his inner and outer self should be the same for you. Secondly, he should consider your honor to be his honor and your dishonor to be his dishonor. Thirdly, worldly wealth and position should not change him. Fourthly, he should not refuse you anything he has the capacity to attain. And fifthly, he should not desert you in times of affliction.”¹⁴

The Prophet’s Association with the Poor Pious Ones

Consider the following verse:

وَأَصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَدَاةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ وَلَا تَعْدُ عَيْنَاكَ عَنْهُمْ تُرِيدُ زِينَةَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَلَا
تَطِعْ مَنْ أَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهُ عَنْ ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُهُ فُرُطًا

“And keep thy soul content with those who call on their Lord morning and evening, seeking His Face; and let not thine eyes pass beyond them, seeking the pomp and glitter of this life; nor obey any whose heart We have permitted to neglect the remembrance of Us, one who follows his own desires, whose case has gone beyond all bounds.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Kahf 18:28]

We learn from this verse that the value of men is not in their position or wealth. It has been said that the above verse was revealed under the following conditions. A group of the haughty rich people went to see the Prophet of God . Pointing at faithful men such as Salman, Abu-Dharr, Sohayb and Khobab they said: “O Muhammad! We will come to you if you sit at the highest position in the room and fend off these stinky folks who wear rough clothes.”¹⁵

This verse condemns the formation of various classes in the society, and attempts to establish ties between the noble people and the poor ones. In a similar way, Imam Sajjad has recommended respect for our companions, a warm welcome for them, polite conversation with them and a respectful farewell.

¹. In the other version it is followed by: “You should forget his slips and remember his good qualities, and you should tell nothing about him but good.”

². Shafi, v. 1, p. 192.

³. Sharh-i-Ghurar wa Durar, v.5, p.472.

⁴. Tarikh Ya’qubi, v.2, p.383.

⁵. Sharh-i-Ghurar wa Durar, v.5, pp.397–398.

⁶. Ibid.

⁷. Bihar al-Anwar, v.74, p. 191.

⁸. Bihar al-Anwar, v.74, p. 191.

⁹. Ibid. pp. 194–199.

¹⁰. Ibid. p. 196.

- [11.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, v.74, p. 196.
- [12.](#) Ibid. p. 197.
- [13.](#) Ithna 'Ashariyah, p.202.
- [14.](#) Ithna 'Ashariyah, p.343, quoted from al-Amali by Saduq, p.397.
- [15.](#) Tafsir-i-Namunah, v. 12, p.414.

Right n. 32: The Right of the Neighbor

حق الجار

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ الْجَارِ فَحِفْظُهُ غَائِبًا وَكَرَامَتُهُ شَاهِدًا وَنُصْرَتُهُ وَمَعُونَتُهُ فِي الْحَالَيْنِ جَمِيعًا. لَا تَتَّبِعْ لَهُ عَوْرَةً وَلَا تَبْحَثْ لَهُ عَنْ سَوْءٍ [ة] لِتَعْرِفَهَا، فَإِنْ عَرَفْتَهَا مِنْهُ عَنْ غَيْرِ إِرَادَةٍ مِنْكَ وَلَا تَكْلُفٍ كُنْتَ لِمَا عَلِمْتَ حِصْنًا حَصِينًا وَسِتْرًا سَتِيرًا، لَوْ بَحِثْتَ الْأَسِنَّةَ عَنْهُ ضَمِيرًا لَمْ تَتَّصِلْ إِلَيْهِ لَانْطَوَائِهِ عَلَيْهِ. لَا تَسْتَمِعْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَعْلَمُ. لَا تُسَلِّمُهُ عِنْدَ شَدِيدَةٍ، وَلَا تَحْسُدْهُ عِنْدَ نِعْمَةٍ. تُقِيلُ عَثْرَتَهُ وَتَغْفِرُ زَلَّتَهُ. وَلَا تَدْخِرُ حِلْمَكَ عَنْهُ إِذَا جَهِلَ عَلَيْكَ، وَلَا تَخْرُجَ أَنْ تَكُونَ سَلَمًا لَهُ. تَرُدُّ عَنْهُ لِسَانَ الشَّتِيمَةِ، وَتُبْطِلُ فِيهِ كَيْدَ حَامِلِ النَّصِيحَةِ، وَتُعَاشِرُهُ مُعَاشَرَةَ كَرِيمَةٍ. وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ.

And the right of your neighbor is that you should be a guardian for him when he is absent, and you should honor him when he is present, and you should assist and support him in both situations. You should not pursue any of his imperfections, and you should not seek any of his faults. But if you should discover any of his faults unintentionally, you should take the role of a fortified stronghold and a veiling screen regarding what you know.

You should guard them in such a way that none of his defects can be discovered even if they are thoroughly inspected with spears. And you should not eavesdrop on him, and you should not forsake him during times of hardship. And you should not envy him when he receives a blessing. Pardon his deviation and forgive his mistakes. And do not lose your temper when he behaves out of ignorance with you. And do not stop to be his supporter, and answer those who scold him. And divulge for him the deception of those who counsel him, and associate with him in an honorable manner. And there is no power or strength but in God.

The Arabic word 'jar' meaning neighbor is used with several implications in the Holy Qur'an. In some places, it is used to refer to neighbors – close or far away. In the Holy Qur'an, it is also used to refer to those who seek asylum as in the following verse:

وَإِنْ أَحَدٌ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ اسْتَجَارَكَ فَأَجِرْهُ

"If one amongst the Pagans ask thee for asylum, grant it to him..." [The Holy Qur'an, al-Tawbah

9:6]

The above word used for neighbor has the deeper meaning of security. That implies that neighbors are granted security by each other. The right of a neighbor is great both intellectually and religiously. The word ‘jar’ is used in any place where there is a great right as in the following verse:

لَا غَالِبَ لَكُمْ الْيَوْمَ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَإِنِّي جَارٌ لَّكُمْ

“No one among men can overcome you this day, while I am near to you.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Anfal 8:48]

Here in the phrase ‘I am near to you’ in Arabic the word ‘jar’ is used. The Qur’an refers to close-by and distant neighbors. We shall discuss this issue next.

The Rights of Neighbors as Viewed in the Qur’an

Consider the following verse of the Holy Qur’an:

وَاعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا وَيَالِ الْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَبِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَالْجَارِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْجَارِ
الْجُنُبِ وَالصَّاحِبِ بِالْجَنْبِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ

“Serve God, and join not any partners with Him; and do good – to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbors who are near, neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (ye meet), and what your right hands possess.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Nisaa 4:36]

The verse refers to some of the rights in Islam including those of neighbors. ‘Neighbors who are near’ in this verse has been interpreted by various commentators to imply various things. Some consider it to imply relatives. However, since the verses that have preceded this verse in the Qur’an refer to the rights of relatives this interpretation seems to be an unlikely meaning. Rather other implications seem to be more appropriate. It may mean neighbors who are closer to us in religion.

“Neighbors who are strangers” implies physical distance. According to traditions people living in up to forty houses away in either direction are considered our neighbors. It may also refer to non-Muslim neighbors who are not fighting with Muslims.¹ Now that we have studied the Qur’anic verses regarding neighbors, we will briefly review the traditions on this issue.

Traditions on the Rights of Neighbors

There are many traditions about the rights of neighbors, their due respect and their role in our security. The Prophet of God said:

مَنْ أَغْلَقَ بَابَهُ خَوْفًا مِنْ جَارِهِ عَلَى أَهْلِهِ وَمَالِهِ فَلَيْسَ جَارُهُ مُؤْمِنًا.

“The neighbor because of whom one locks the door, out of fear for one’s family and wealth, is not a believer.”

The Prophet of God was asked: “O Prophet of God! What are the rights of neighbors incumbent upon other neighbors?” He said:

مِنْ أَدْنَى حُقُوقِهِ عَلَيْهِ إِنْ اسْتَفْرَضَهُ أَفْرَضَهُ وَإِنْ اسْتَعَانَهُ أَعَانَهُ وَإِنْ اسْتَعَارَ مِنْهُ إِعَارَهُ وَإِنْ احتَاجَ إِلَى رَفْدِهِ رَفَدَهُ وَإِنْ دَعَا أَجَابَهُ وَإِنْ مَرَضَ عَادَهُ وَإِنْ مَاتَ شَيَّعَ جَنَازَتَهُ وَإِنْ أَصَابَ خَيْرًا فَرَّحَ بِهِ وَلَمْ يَحْسِدْهُ وَإِنْ أَصَابَ مُصِيبَةً حَزَنَ لِحَزْنِهِ وَلَا يَسْتَطِيلُ عَلَيْهِ بِنَاءٍ سَكَنَهُ فَيُؤْذِيهِ بِإِشْرَافِهِ عَلَيْهِ وَسَدَّ مَنَاغِذَ الرِّيحِ عَنْهُ وَإِنْ أَهْدَى إِلَى مَنْزِلِهِ طُرُقًا أَهْدَى لَهُ قِسْمًا مِنْهَا إِذَا عَلِمَ أَنَّهُ لَيْسَ عِنْدَهُ مِثْلُهَا أَوْ فَلْيَسْتَرْهَا عَنْهُ وَعَنْ عِيَالِهِ إِنْ شَحَّتْ نَفْسُهُ بِهَا. إِسْمَعُوا مَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ: لَمْ يُؤَدِّ حَقَّ الْجَارِ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ مِمَّنْ رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ، وَلَقَدْ أَوْصَانِي اللَّهُ بِالْجَارِ حَتَّى ظَنَنْتُ أَنَّهُ سَيُورُّهُ.

“The least of a neighbor’s rights on him is that if he asks him for a loan he should grant it to him. If he asks for help, he should help him. If he wants to borrow something from him, he should lend it to him. If he needs him to donate something to him, he should do so. If he invites him, he should accept his invitation. If he gets sick, he should go and visit him. If he passes away, he should attend his funeral procession.

If he receives some blessings, he should be happy and not envious of him. If a tragedy befalls him, he should grieve for his grief. He should not build a tall building in front of his dwelling which would trouble him due to its overlooking his house and obstructing the passage of breeze. If he is presented with some novelty in his house, then he should present him a part of it if he knows that he does not have something like it, otherwise he should conceal it from him and his family if he desires it for himself.”

(The Prophet of God then added:) “Listen to what I tell you. Only a few people who are blessed by God’s Mercy fulfil the rights of neighbors. God enjoined on me the rights of the neighbor to the extent that I thought He would appoint him as an heir.”²

There are three important points stressed by the Prophet in this tradition. The first point is that each person’s house is his place of peace and security, both for his property and for honor. Should one lose his security at home, he has lost his most secure stronghold. This peace and security is everyone’s certain right, and should not be violated by anyone. If one lives in such a way that threatens the security

of his neighbors, then he is not a true believing Muslim.

The second point that is stressed here is not to build tall buildings overlooking other people's houses. We all know that at the time of the Prophet there were no tall buildings in Arabia. However, the teachings of the Prophet are universal, and for all times. Thus, he instructed us not to build such buildings. This is one of the signs of the completeness of Islamic teachings and a proof of Islam being the last religion. Housing is still one of man's major social problems.

The problem of finding a secure place to live is not only one of our problems, but it is also one of most countries of the world. The Westerners have chosen living in apartments with all its problems and limitations. Our people are also following this practice. The third point that is stressed is that one should not show what he brings into his house to his neighbors, or give a little of what he brings home to his neighbors if they are poor.

It is Forbidden to Hurt One's Neighbors

Imam Sadiq said:

مَلْعُونٌ مِّنْ آذَى جَارِهِ.

*"One who troubles his neighbor is cursed."*³

On the other hand, pleasing one's neighbor is a cause of forgiveness. In Lubb al-Lubab Qutb al-Rawandi quoted on the authority of God's Prophet :

مَنْ مَاتَ وَلَهُ جِيرَانٌ ثَلَاثَةٌ كُلُّهُمْ رَاضُونَ عَنْهُ غُفِرَ لَهُ.

*"Anyone who dies with three neighbors pleased with him will be forgiven (by God)."*⁴

The Prophet of God said:

مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلَا يُؤْذِ جَارَهُ.

*"Whoever believes in God and the Final Day should not trouble his neighbors."*⁵

The Prophet also said:

حُرْمَةُ الْجَارِ عَلَى الْجَارِ كَحُرْمَةِ أُمِّهِ.

“The reverence of a neighbor incumbent on the neighbor is like the reverence due to one’s mother.”⁶

Complaining Against One’s Neighbor

Imam Sadiq narrated that someone complained to the Prophet of God about his neighbor. The Prophet turned his face away from him. He came back again. Then the Prophet told Ali , Salman and Miqdad:

إِذْهَبُوا وَنَادُوا أَنْ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ عَلَى مَنْ آذَى جَارَهُ.

“Go and publicly announce that the curse of God and the angels is on one who troubles his neighbor.”⁷

Treating Neighbors with Kindness

The Noble Prophet said:

الْبِرُّ وَحُسْنُ الْجَوَارِ زِيَادَةٌ فِي الرِّزْقِ وَعِمَارَةٌ فِي الدِّيَارِ.

“Treating one’s neighbors with kindness and being a good neighbor will result in an increase in one’s share of daily bread and the development of towns.”⁸

Imam Ridha has been quoted as having said the following in Fiqh al-Ridha:

وَأَحْسِنُ مُجَاوَرَةً مَنْ جَاوَرَكَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى يَسْأَلُكَ عَنِ الْجَارِ، وَقَدْ رُوِيَ عَنِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: أَنَّ اللَّهَ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى أَوْصَانِي بِالْجَارِ حَتَّى ظَنَنْتُ أَنَّهُ يَرِثُنِي.

“Be a good neighbor for your neighbors since God will ask you about the neighbour. God’s Prophet has been quoted as having said: God the Almighty enjoined on me the rights of the neighbor to the extent that I thought he will inherit from me.”⁹

Be Considerate With Your Neighbors

It is quoted on the authority of God’s Prophet :

مَا آمَنَ بِي مَنْ بَاتَ شَبْعَانَ وَجَارُهُ جَائِعٌ.

“Whoever spends the night with a full stomach, while his neighbor is hungry, does not believe in me.”¹⁰

He also said:

مَا آمَنَ بِي مَنْ بَاتَ شَبْعَانٌ وَجَارُهُ طَاوٍ، مَا آمَنَ بِي مَنْ بَاتَ كَاسِيًا وَجَارُهُ عَارٍ.

“One who spends the night with a full stomach while his neighbor is hungry, has not believed in me. One who spends the night clothed, while his neighbor has no clothes, has not believed in me.” [11](#)

In a letter to his governor Uthman ibn Hunayf, Imam Ali wrote:

أَأَبِيتُ مِبْطَانًا وَحَوْلِي بُطُونٌ غَرْتِي وَأَكْبَادٌ حَرَّتِي؟

“Should I pass the night with a full stomach while around me are hungry and thirsty bellies?” [12](#)

Bad Neighbors

It has been quoted on the authority of God’s Prophet :

أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ جَارٍ سَوْءٍ فِي دَارٍ إِقَامَةٍ تَرَكَ عَيْنَاهُ وَيَرَعَاكَ قَلْبُهُ، إِنْ رَأَكَ بِخَيْرٍ سَاءَهُ وَإِنْ رَأَكَ بِشَرٍّ سَرَّهُ.

“I seek refuge in God from an evil neighbor next to one’s place of residence. His eyes see you and his heart watches you. If he sees you in a good state, it grieves him, and if he sees you in a bad state, it makes him happy.” [13](#)

Investigate Before Buying a House

The Noble Prophet said:

إِلْتَمِسُوا الْجَارَ قَبْلَ شِرَاءِ الدَّارِ وَالرَّفِيقَ قَبْلَ الطَّرِيقِ.

“Ask about the neighbor before buying the house, and the travelling companion before starting the journey.” [14](#)

The Domain of Neighborhood

Imam Sadiq quoted on the authority of the Commander of the Faithful :

حَرِيمُ الْمَسْجِدِ أَرْبَعُونَ دَارًا وَالْجَوَارُ أَرْبَعُونَ دَارًا مِنْ أَرْبَعَةِ جَوَانِبِهَا.

“The domain of the neighborhood of a mosque and a house is forty houses in four directions.” [15](#)

Imam Sajjad said: “The people living in forty houses on either side of your house are your neighbors. You must respect their rights, live with them, and associate with them in peace. Seek God’s help to do so.

- [1.](#) Tafsir-i-Namunah, v.3, pp.380–381.
- [2.](#) Mustadrak al-Wasa’il, v.2, p.79.
- [3.](#) Mustadrak al-Wasa’il, v.2, pp.78–79.
- [4.](#) Ibid.
- [5.](#) Ibid.
- [6.](#) Ibid.
- [7.](#) Mustadrak al-Wasa’il, v.2, pp.78–79.
- [8.](#) Ibid.
- [9.](#) Ibid. p.80.
- [10.](#) Ibid. pp.78–79.
- [11.](#) Mustadrak al-Wasa’il, v.2, pp.78–79.
- [12.](#) Ibid.
- [13.](#) Ibid.
- [14.](#) Ibid.
- [15.](#) Ibid.

Right n. 33: The Right of the Companion

حق صاحب

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ الصَّاحِبِ فَإِنَّ تَصَحُّبَهُ بِالْفَضْلِ مَا وَجَدْتَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلًا وَإِلَّا فَلَا أَقْلَ مِنَ الْإِنْصَافِ، وَأَنْ تُكْرِمَهُ كَمَا يَكْرِمُكَ، وَتَحْفَظَهُ كَمَا يَحْفَظُكَ، وَلَا يَسْبِقَكَ فِيمَا بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ إِلَى مَكْرَمَةٍ، فَإِنْ سَبَقَكَ كَأَفَاتِهِ. وَلَا تُقْصِرَ بِهِ عَمَّا يَسْتَحِقُّ مِنَ الْمَوَدَّةِ. تُلْزِمُ نَفْسَكَ نَصِيحَتَهُ وَحَيَاطَتَهُ وَمُعَاضَدَتَهُ عَلَى طَاعَةِ رَبِّهِ وَمَعُونَتَهُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ فِيمَا لَا يَهْمُ بِهِ مِنْ مَعْصِيَةِ رَبِّهِ، ثُمَّ تَكُونُ [عَلَيْهِ] رَحْمَةً وَلَا تَكُونُ عَلَيْهِ عَذَابًا. وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

And the right of the companion is that you should act as his companion with nobility as much as you can, otherwise you should at least treat him with fairness. Honor him as he honors you, and guard him as he guards you, and do not let him precede you in generosity. And if he precedes you, then recompense him. Do not fall short of giving him the love that he deserves. Commit yourself to advise him, care for him, and help him perform the acts of obedience to his Lord, and help him restrain himself from any act of disobedience of his Lord that he might attempt. Then be a mercy upon him, and not a chastisement. And there is no power but in God.

To summarize the Imam’s words, we can say:

- 1) Treat him with nobility as much as possible. At least be fair with him.

- 2) Honor him as he honors you. Try to be the first one to treat the other one with kindness. Return his favors.
- 3) Commit yourself to advise him to do acts of obedience to God.
- 4) Always restrain him from sinful acts. Try to be like a blessing for him.

We read the following in the Qur'an:

يَا صَاحِبِي السِّجْنِ أَأَرَبَابٌ مُتَفَرِّقُونَ خَيْرٌ أَمْ اللَّهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ

“O my two companions of the prison! (I ask you): are many lords differing among themselves better, or the One God, Supreme and Irresistible?” [The Holy Qur'an, Yusuf 12:39]

In the Arabic text of the following verse, the word used for ‘a wife’ actually means a companion.

وَأَنَّهُ تَعَالَى جَدُّ رَبِّنَا مَا اتَّخَذَ صَاحِبَةً وَلَا وَلَدًا

“And Exalted is the Majesty of our Lord: He has taken neither a wife nor a son.” [The Holy Qur'an, Jinn 72:3]

In the following verse the word companion refers to the Noble Prophet of God :

مَا ضَلَّ صَاحِبُكُمْ وَمَا غَوَى

“Your Companion is neither astray nor being misled.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Najm 53:2]

Thus, we can say that companion refers to someone that is with us either for a short time or for a long time. There is a right that is incumbent upon us for our companion.

Learning from Friends

One of man's characteristics is learning from friends. We influence others. Others influence us. Therefore, the Holy Qur'an warns us about the possibility of deviation and depicts for us a scene in the Hereafter when man realizes that ignorant and tricky companions have corrupted him. Then he wishes that he had never made friends with them. However, then it is too late to be sorry. The Holy Qur'an says:

وَيَوْمَ يَعَضُّ الظَّالِمُ عَلَى يَدَيْهِ يَقُولُ يَا لَيْتَنِي اتَّخَذْتُ مَعَ الرَّسُولِ سَبِيلًا

لَقَدْ أَضَلَّنِي عَنِ الذِّكْرِ بَعْدَ إِذْ جَاءَنِي وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ لِلْإِنْسَانِ خَذُولًا

“The Day that the wrongdoer will bite at his hands, he will say, "Oh! Would that I had taken a (straight) path with the Apostle! Ah! Woe is me! Would that I had never taken such a one for a friend! He did lead me astray from the Message (of God) after it had come to me! Ah! The Evil One is but a traitor to man!"...” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Furqan 25:27-29]

Man’s state of extreme sorrow for following the footsteps of an evil friend is shown in these verses. Although these verses refer to the Hereafter, there are many people who greatly suffer from the companionship of bad friends, love their property, and honor.

Bad Companions as Viewed in the Traditions

There are many traditions that advise man not to make friends with bad people in order to prevent any losses and any future state of becoming sorry. Imam Ali said:

لَا تَصْحَبِ الشَّرِيرَ فَإِنَّ طَبْعَكَ يَسْرِقُ مِنْ طَبْعِهِ شَرًّا وَأَنْتَ لَا تَعْلَمُ.

“Avoid the companionship of wicked people since your nature will unknowingly adopt their wickedness.”^{[1](#)}

Imam Sadiq said:

مَنْ يَصْحَبُ صَاحِبَ السَّوِّ لَا يَسْلَمُ.

“Whoever associates with bad friends will not remain sound.”^{[2](#)}

He also said:

مَنْ لَمْ يَتَجَنَّبْ مُصَاحَبَةَ الْأَحْمَقِ يُوشِكُ أَنْ يَتَخَلَّقَ بِأَخْلَاقِهِ.

“Whoever does not avoid the companionship of a fool will come close to adopting his behavior.”^{[3](#)}

These traditions point out that man is influenced by his friends and will adopt their behavior. If his friends are stupid or wicked, then he will unknowingly adopt their behavior and act like them. The fact that the physicians have pointed out about contagious diseases is not limited to physical illnesses. Some mental illnesses are contagious too. When Imam Ali said: “... your nature will unknowingly adopt their wickedness...” he referred exactly to this fact. In addition, when Imam Sadiq said: “Whoever associates with bad friends will not remain sound...” he referred to this fact too.

The Consequences of Becoming Friends with a Fool

As an example of the consequences of becoming friends with a fool, consider the following story. A person needed to dig a well in his yard asked someone to come and dig one for him. A large amount of dirt was dug out of the well and piled up in the yard. He wondered what to do with that dirt. He went to a friend of his to ask for advice. His friend was a fool!

He told him to dig another well in the yard and then throw the dirt from the first one in it. He did the same, but ended up with a large amount of dirt from the second well piled up on the other side of his yard. He went to his friend again to ask for more advice. His friend told him to simply pour the dirt from the second well he had dug into the first one!

As another example, consider the following story. Once a cow stuck his head into a large earthenware jar to eat, but his head was stuck in it. The owner thought for a while, but he could not find a way to get the cow's head out of the jar.

Then he went to the magistrate to get help. The magistrate came to the place where the cow was and ordered the cow's head to be cut off once he saw what had happened. They cut off the cow's head and it fell in the jar. They tried to bring it out but did not manage to do so. Then the magistrate ordered them to break the jar to get it out. Therefore, the jar was broken and the cow's head was chopped off too. This is the result of following the advice of a fool!

It has been narrated on the authority of Solomon:

لَا تَحْكُمُوا عَلَى رَجُلٍ بِشَيْءٍ حَتَّى تَنْظُرُوا إِلَى مَنْ يُصَاحِبُهُ، فَإِنَّمَا يُعْرَفُ الرَّجُلُ بِأَشْكَالِهِ وَأَقْرَانِهِ وَيُنْسَبُ إِلَى أَصْحَابِهِ وَأَخْدَانِهِ.

“Do not express an opinion about a person before you consider with whom he keeps company, since a man is only known through the type of friends and associates he has, and is described in relation to his companions and intimates.”⁴

Imam Ali said:

لَا خَيْرَ فِي صُحْبَةٍ مَنِ اجْتَمَعَ فِيهِ سِتُّ خِصَالٍ: إِنْ حَدَّثَكَ كَذِبَكَ وَإِنْ حَدَّثَتْهُ كَذِبَكَ وَإِنْ اسْتَمَنَّتْهُ خَانَكَ وَإِنْ اسْتَمَنَّاكَ أَتَاهَمَكَ وَإِنْ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِ كَفَّرَكَ وَإِنْ أَنْعَمَ عَلَيْكَ مَنَّ بِنِعْمَتِهِ.

“There is no good in the companionship of one in whom six qualities are combined:

1 – Those who lie when they tell you something.

2 – Those who consider you to be telling a lie when you tell them something.

- 3 – Those who betray you after you trust them.
 4 – Those who will accuse you of something after they trust you.
 5 – Those who will not be grateful when you confer a favour on them.
 6 – Those who, if they confer a favour on you, will make mention of it.”

Whom not to Associate With

Imam Baqir said: My father advised me as follows:

يَا بُنَيَّ لَا تَصْحَبَنَّ خَمْسَةَ وَلَا تُحَادِثْهُمْ وَلَا تُرَافِقْهُمْ فِي طَرِيقٍ. فَقُلْتُ: جُعِلْتُ فِدَاكَ يَا أَبَتِ، مَنْ هَؤُلَاءِ الْخَمْسَةُ؟ قَالَ: لَا تَصْحَبَنَّ فَاسِقًا فَإِنَّهُ يَبِيعُكَ بِأَكْلَةٍ فَمَا دُونَهَا. قُلْتُ: يَا أَبَتِ، وَمَا دُونُهَا؟ قَالَ: يَطْمَعُ فِيهَا ثُمَّ لَا يَنَالُهَا. قُلْتُ: يَا أَبَتِ، وَمَنْ الثَّانِي؟ قَالَ: لَا تَصْحَبَنَّ الْبَخِيلَ فَإِنَّهُ يَقْطَعُ بِكَ فِي مَالِهِ أَحْوَجَ مَا كُنْتَ إِلَيْهِ. فَقُلْتُ: وَمَنْ الثَّالِثُ؟ قَالَ: لَا تَصْحَبَنَّ كَذَّابًا فَإِنَّهُ بِمَنْزِلَةِ السَّرَابِ يُبْعِدُ عَنْكَ الْقَرِيبَ وَيُقَرِّبُ مِنْكَ الْبَعِيدَ. قُلْتُ: وَمَنْ الرَّابِعُ؟ قَالَ: لَا تَصْحَبَنَّ الْأَحْمَقَ فَإِنَّهُ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَنْفَعَكَ فَيُضِرُّكَ. قُلْتُ: وَمَنْ الْخَامِسُ؟ قَالَ: لَا تَصْحَبَنَّ قَاطِعَ رَحِمٍ فَإِنِّي وَجَدْتُهُ مَلْعُونًا فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ فِي ثَلَاثَةِ مَوَاضِعَ.

“O my son! Be sure not to associate, converse or travel with five groups of people.” I asked him: “O father. May I be your ransom! Who are these five groups of people?” He replied: “Do not associate with corrupt people since they will sell you for morsel or less than that.” I asked him: “O father! What is meant by less?” He said: “They will desire it but will not get what they wanted.”

Then I asked: “O father! Who are the second group?” He said: “Do not associate with misers since they will deprive you of their property when you need it the most.” I asked: “Who are the third group?” He said: “Do not associate with liars since they are like a mirage. They will make the near seem distant to you and make the distant seem near.” Then I asked: “Who are the fourth group of people?” He replied: “Do not associate with fools, since they will cause you harm even though they intend to help you. Then I asked: “Who are the fifth group?” He said: “Do not associate with those who cut off ties with their relatives since I have found them cursed in three places in the Qur’an.”

Now let us consider the verses that Imam Sajjad referred to:

فَهَلْ عَسَيْتُمْ إِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ أَنْ تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَتَقَطَّعُوا أَرْحَامَكُمْ

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ فَأَصَمَّهُمْ وَأَعَمَّى أَبْصَارَهُمْ

“Then, is it to be expected of you, if ye were put in authority, that ye will do mischief in the land, and break your ties of kith and kin? Such are the men whom God has cursed for He has made them deaf and blinded their sight.” [The Holy Qur’an, Muhammad 47:22–23]

These verses are about a group of hypocrites. And for the second occasion:

وَالَّذِينَ يَنْقُضُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمُ اللَّعْنَةُ وَلَهُمْ سُوءُ الدَّارِ

“But those who break the Covenant of God, after having plighted their word thereto, and cut asunder those things which God has commanded to be joined, and work mischief in the land; – on them is the curse; for them is the terrible home!” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Ra’d 13:25]

The ideological and scientific corruption of the materialistic people is summarized in the following three in the above verse:

- 1 – Breaking divine covenants, including natural, intellectual and religious ones.
- 2 – Cutting off relationships including ties with God, with divine leaders and with oneself.
- 3 – Corruption on the Earth.

In addition, the third verse reads as follows:

الَّذِينَ يَنْقُضُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ

“Those who break God’s Covenant after it is ratified, and who sunder what God Has ordered to be joined, and do mischief on earth: These cause loss (only) to themselves.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Baqarah 2:27]

Visiting near relations is so important that the Prophet of God said:

صِلْهُ الرِّحِمَ تَعْمُرِ الدِّيَارَ وَتَزِيدُ فِي الْأَعْمَارِ وَإِنْ كَانَ أَهْلُهَا غَيْرَ أَخْيَارٍ

“Establishing the ties of kinship will result in the development of towns and an increase in the lifespans, even if those who adhere to it are not of the good ones.”⁵

Imam Hasan’s Advice to Junadah

In a part of his advice to Junadah ibn Amyat, Imam Hasan said:

وَإِذَا نَازَعَتْكَ نَفْسُكَ إِلَى مُصَاحَبَةِ الرَّجَالِ فَاصْحَبْ مَنْ إِذَا صَحِبْتَهُ زَانَكَ وَإِذَا خَدِمْتَهُ صَانَكَ وَإِذَا أَرَدْتَ مَعُونَةً أَعَانَكَ وَإِنْ قُلْتَ صَدَقَ قَوْلُكَ وَإِنْ صِلْتَ شَدَّ صَوْلُكَ وَإِنْ مَدَدْتَ يَدَكَ لِفَضْلٍ مَدَّهَا وَإِنْ بَدَتْ مِنْكَ تَلَمَّةٌ سَدَّهَا وَإِنْ رَأَى مِنْكَ حَسَنَةً عَدَّهَا وَإِنْ سَأَلْتَهُ أَعْطَاكَ وَإِنْ سَكَتَ عَنْهُ ابْتَدَأَكَ وَإِنْ نَزَلَتْ بِكَ إِحْدَى الْمُلِمَّاتِ وَاسَاكَ

“If you feel you need to associate with others, associate with the following people:

- 1) Associate with people whose association is like an adornment for you.*
- 2) Associate with people who will protect you when you serve them.*
- 3) Associate with people who will help you when you need help.*
- 4) Associate with people who will accept what you tell them as the truth.*
- 5) Associate with people who will strengthen any bonds of friendship that you initiate with them.*
- 6) Associate with people who will accept your favors when you favor them out of nobility.*
- 7) Associate with people who will cover up anything that might harm your honor.*
- 8) Associate with people who will recognize your good deeds towards them.*
- 9) Associate with people who will grant you when you ask, and if you are silent, give you without your asking.*
- 10) Associate with people who will be sympathetic with you when you face hardships.”[6](#)*

The Commander of the Faithful said:

لَا تَصْحَبْ إِلَّا عَاقِلًا تَقِيًّا وَلَا تُخَالِطْ إِلَّا عَالِمًا زَكِيًّا وَلَا تُودِعْ سِرَّكَ إِلَّا مُؤْمِنًا وَفِيًّا

“Do not be friends with anyone unless he is pious and intelligent. Only associate with a righteous scholar. Do not entrust your secrets to anyone except believers who honor their promises.”[7](#)

He also said:

وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ صُحْبَةَ الْعَالِمِ وَاتِّبَاعَهُ دِينٌ يُدَانُ بِهِ، وَطَاعَتُهُ مَكْسَبَةٌ لِلْحَسَنَاتِ مَمْحَاةٌ لِلْسَيِّئَاتِ وَذَخِيرَةٌ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَرَفْعَةٌ فِي حَيَاتِهِمْ وَمَمَاتِهِمْ

“Know that associating with the scholar and following him is a practice with which God is served. Obedience to him results in the attainment of good deeds and the elimination of evil deeds. It will be a savings for believers, and an elevation in their position in this life and after death.”[8](#)

[1.](#) Sharh Nahjul Balaghah, Ibn Abi al-Hadid, v.20, p.272.

[2.](#) Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, v.2, p.65.

[3.](#) Ibid. p.64.

[4.](#) Safinah al-Bihar, v.2,p.27.

[5.](#) Tafsir-i-Namunah, v. 1, p. 105.

[6.](#) Sharh-i-Risalat al-Huquq, Ghopanchi, v.2, p.210.

[7.](#) Ibid. p.209.

[8.](#) Sharh-i-Risalat al-Huquq, Ghopanchi, p.209.

Right n. 34: The Right of the Partner

حق الشريك

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ الشَّرِيكِ، فَإِنْ غَابَ كَفَيْتُهُ، وَإِنْ حَضَرَ سَاوَيْتُهُ، وَلَا تَعَزِّمْ عَلَى حُكْمِكَ دُونَ حُكْمِهِ، وَلَا تَعْمَلْ بِرَأْيِكَ دُونَ مُنَاطَرَتِهِ، وَتَحْفَظْ عَلَيْهِ مَالَهُ وَتَنْفِي عَنْهُ خِيَانَتَهُ فِيمَا عَزَّ أَوْ هَانَ فَإِنَّهُ بَلَّغَنَا أَنَّ «يَدَ اللَّهِ عَلَى الشَّرِيكِينِ مَا لَمْ يَتَخَاوُنَا». وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ.

And the right of the partner is that you should take care of his affairs in his absence. And you should treat him equally when he is present. And you should not make any decisions on your own without considering his opinion. And you should not act according to your own opinion before discussing it with him. You should safeguard his property, and refuse to betray him in what is of great or little importance, since it has been transmitted to us: “God’s hand is above (the hands of) the two partners as long as they do not betray each other.” And there is no power but in God.

The concept of partnership has been mentioned in the Holy Qur’an when referring to Moses and his brother Aaron. Here Aaron is to become a partner with Moses to help him invite Pharaoh to obey God.

اشْدُدْ بِهِ أَزْرِي

وَأَشْرِكْهُ فِي أَمْرِي

“Add to my strength through him. And make him share my task.” [The Holy Qur’an, Ta-Ha 20:31–32]

A partner is one who has a share in something or some work. We read in the following verse:

وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ شَرِيكٌ فِي الْمُلْكِ

“...Nor has He a partner in His dominion...” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Furqan 25:2]

This refers to God having no partners. Of course, God has created many angels and forces to act as intermediate means to run the affairs of the universe. This also refers to ascribing partners to God.

أَمْ لَهُمْ شِرْكٌ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ

“...Or have they a share in the heavens?” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Fatir 35:40]

An infidel is one who associates partners with God.^{[1](#)}

Partnership as Viewed in Jurisprudence

A partnership is not established unless it is regarding two things that are totally alike in all respects, and are mingled into each other. Then each partner allows the other one to use it.^{[2](#)} Some jurists have also required that partnership should be verbally expressed in Arabic or another language. Partners should be adults, and they should be sound-minded. They should fully opt to engage in partnership and have the right to use their property. In Qawa'id al-Ahkam Allameh Hilli said: “There are four types of partnership:

- 1 – Partnership of property (Shirkah al-Amwal)
- 2 – Partnership by contributing effort and skill (Shirkah al-Abdan)
- 3 – Partnership based on negotiation (Shirkah al-Mufavezah)
- 4 – Partnership based on credit and reliability (Shirkah al-Wujuh)

However, no forms except the first type are right.”^{[3](#)} Therefore, partnership is only correct in regards to property when done subject to the conditions expressed by the jurists.

Business Etiquette

For business to be right and for any earned profits to be legitimate, there is certain trade etiquette in Islam. There is a whole chapter on “business etiquette” in Wasa'il al-Shah. As partnership is part of trade, it is subject to that etiquette. Imam Sadiq quoted on the authority of the Noble Prophet :

مَنْ بَاعَ وَاشْتَرَى فَلْيَحْفَظْ خُمْسَ خِصَالٍ وَإِلَّا فَلَا يَشْتَرِي وَلَا يَبِيعُ: الرِّبَا وَالْحَلْفَ وَكَيْتْمَانَ الْعَيْبِ وَالْحَمْدَ إِذَا بَاعَ
وَالذَّمَّ إِذَا اشْتَرَى.

“Whoever buys or sells should adhere to the following or not engage in trade:

- 1 – Avoid usury.
- 2 – Do not swear in trade.
- 3 – Do not cover up the flaws in his goods.
- 4 – Do not praise what he wants to sell.
- 5 – Do not put down what he wants to buy.”^{[4](#)}

In another tradition in Istikharat we read that Ibn Tavoos quoted on the authority of Muhammad ibn Yahya: “A friend of mine decided to go on a business trip, but postponed it until he could go to visit Imam Sadiq and seek his advice. When he went to see Imam Sadiq and asked for advice, the Imam

said: I advise you to be honest. Do not cover up the flaws of what you want to sell.

Do not cheat or fool the one who buys goods from you since it is illegitimate to do so. You should like for others what you like for yourself. Do not swear since false swearing will cause you to go to Hell. A businessman is at a loss unless what he gives and takes is right. Therefore, pray when you decide to start your trip and ask God for good. My father said that the Prophet of God recommended asking God for good when you want to go on a trip just as he taught the Qur'an." [5](#)

Partnership as Viewed in Traditions

The Noble Prophet said that God the Almighty said:

أَنَا ثَالِثُ الشَّرِيكَيْنِ مَا لَمْ يَخُنْ أَحَدُهُمَا صَاحِبَهُ، فَإِذَا خَانَ خَرَجْتُ مِنْ بَيْنِهِمَا.

"I am the third party in any partnership as long as one of the partners does not cheat the other. If he cheats him, I leave the partnership." [6](#)

Husayn ibn Mukhtar asked Imam Sadiq : "If one who has a partner finds out that his partner has cheated him, does he have the right to take the same amount of money from what they share?" Imam Sadiq replied:

شُوِّدَ! إِنَّمَا اشْتَرَكَا بِأَمَانَةِ اللَّهِ، وَإِنِّي لِأُحِبُّ لَهُ إِنْ رَأَى شَيْئًا مِنْ ذَلِكَ أَنْ يَسْتُرَ عَلَيْهِ وَمَا أُحِبُّ أَنْ يَأْخُذَ مِنْهُ شَيْئًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمِهِ.

"How unseemly! They only entered into partnership in the security of God. I wish him to cover up his partner's mistake, and do not like him to take anything without the knowledge of his partner." [7](#)

Thus, we realize that partners should not cheat each other. They should not take things from their joint property in each other's absence since this act would violate the rights of the other partner.

[1.](#) Qamus-i-Qur'an, v.4, p.20.

[2.](#) Al-Khalaf, Shaykh Tusi, v.2, p. 138.

[3.](#) Qawa'id al-Ahkam, v. 1, p.242.

[4.](#) Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v.2, p.284.

[5.](#) Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v.2, p.285.

[6.](#) Nahjul Fasaha, Kalameh 767.

[7.](#) Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v. 13, p. 187.

Right n. 35: The Right of Property

حق المال

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ الْمَالِ، فَأَنْ لَا تَأْخُذَهُ إِلَّا مِنْ حِلِّهِ، وَلَا تُنْفِقَهُ إِلَّا فِي حِلِّهِ، وَلَا تُحَرِّفَهُ عَنْ مَوَاضِعِهِ، وَلَا تَصْرِفَهُ عَنْ حَقَائِقِهِ، وَلَا تَجْعَلُهُ إِذَا كَانَ مِنَ اللَّهِ إِلَّا إِلَيْهِ وَسَبَباً إِلَى اللَّهِ. وَلَا تُؤْثِرَ بِهِ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ مَنْ لَعَلَّهُ لَا يَحْمَدُكَ، وَبِالْحَرِيِّ أَنْ لَا يُحْسِنَ خِلَافَتَهُ فِي تَرْكِتِكَ وَلَا يَعْمَلُ فِيهِ بِطَاعَةِ رَبِّكَ فَتَكُونَ مُعِيناً لَهُ عَلَى ذَلِكَ أَوْ بِمَا أَحْدَثَ فِي مَالِكَ أَحْسَنَ نَظَرًا لِنَفْسِهِ، فَيَعْمَلَ بِطَاعَةِ رَبِّهِ فَيَذْهَبَ بِالْغَنِيمَةِ وَتَبُوءَ بِالْإِثْمِ وَالْحَسْرَةِ وَالنَّدَامَةِ مَعَ التَّبَعَةِ. وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ.

And the right of your property is that you should not attain it except by legitimate means and you should only spend it for legitimate causes. You should not spend it improperly, you should not use it wrongfully, and you should only use what is from God in His way and as a means to approach Him.

In it (your property) you should not prefer above yourself one who does not show gratitude to you, and in fact will neither use your legacy well nor use it in obedience to your Lord. In that case you will be an aid to him in that. Or you may bequeath your property to one who spends it in the way of obedience to God in ways better than you do. Then he will gain the benefits, and you will be left with the sins, the regret and the remorse together with the ill consequences. And there is no power but in God.

We can summarize this as follows:

- 1 Proper ways to obtain wealth, and give charity.
- 2 The proper direction of use of property and its due right.
- 3 The source of wealth is God. Therefore, wealth must be spent in His way.
- 4 Wealth should be used wisely. Otherwise, it will be left as inheritance. The inheritors might use it properly and gain the related benefits of this world and the Hereafter. The loss might be left for the one who earned it in the first place.

Wealth is not stable. It might belong to us one day and belong to others later. We read the following in the Holy Qur'an:

الْمَالُ وَالْبَنُونَ زِينَةُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا

“Wealth and sons are allurements of the life of this world.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Kahf 18:46]

Forms of Ownership

There are two forms of ownership: true ownership and virtual ownership. True ownership is the form of ownership in which the owner has absolute control over things he owns. Examples include the ownership of the cause over the effect or the mind over imagination. God is the true owner of all things as we can see in the following verse:

وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّحِيطًا

“But to God belong all things in the heavens and on earth. And He it is that encompasseth all things.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Nisaa 4: 126]

True ownership cannot be transferred from the owner. However, virtual ownership is the form of ownership in which the owner can use the property and prevent other people from using it. This is like the ownership of man over his wealth. This form of ownership has been developed through the social association of people with one another. That is why it is called virtual. There is no true developmental relationship between the owner and the property. This form of ownership is transferable.

Man is the Center of Creation

As viewed by Islam, man is the center of God’s creation. Everything else is created to be subject to him. The Holy Qur’an counts the blessings and considers them to be for man’s use as we can read in the following verse:

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا

“It is He Who hath created for you all things that are on earth.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Baqarah 2:29]

Also, consider the following verse in this regard:

أَلَمْ تَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ

“Do ye not see that God has subjected to your (use) all things in the heavens and on earth?” [The Holy Qur’an, Luqman 31:20]

And the following verse:

هُوَ أَنْشَأَكُمْ مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ وَاسْتَعْمَرَكُمْ فِيهَا

"It is He Who hath produced you from the earth and settled you therein." [The Holy Qur'an, Hud 11:61]

And the following:

وَأَتَوْهُمْ مِّن مَّالِ اللَّهِ الَّذِي آتَاكُمْ

"Give them something yourselves out of the means which God has given to you." [The Holy Qur'an, al-Nur 24:33]

Thus, we see that God has given man a central role in creation, and everything is created for man.

God has created everything including wealth for man's benefit. The economic system is an important part of the overall Islamic system. It has been set up to meet man's basic needs such as food, clothing, housing, defense, recreation, health and hygiene, as well as his psychological needs such as man's desire for beauty.

The World as Viewed by Islam

We can group the verses of the Holy Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet and the Immaculate Imams regarding the life of this world into three distinct groups. First, let us look at the Qur'anic verses in this regard:

1 – There are some verses that blame the life of this world to be play and amusement as we read in the following verse:

إِنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَلَهْوٌ

"The life of this world is but play and amusement." [The Holy Qur'an, Muhammad 47:36]

Also, consider the following verse:

وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَعِبٌ وَلَهْوٌ

"What is the life of this world but play and amusement?" [The Holy Qur'an, al-An'am 6:32]

And the following verse:

وَمَا هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَهُوٌ وَلَعِبٌ

“What is the life of this world but amusement and play?” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Ankabut 29:64]

And the following:

اعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَلَهُمْ زِينَةٌ وَتَفَاخُرٌ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ

“Know ye (all) that the life of this world is but play and amusement, pomp and mutual boasting and multiplying, (in rivalry) among yourselves, riches and children” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Hadid 57:20]

2 – In the second group of verses the life of this world and its associated things are considered to be good and desirable as we read in the following verses using the Arabic word “Fadlihi”:

وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ عَيْلَةً فَسَوْفَ يُغْنِيكُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ إِنْ شَاءَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ

“And if ye fear poverty soon will God enrich you, if He wills, out of His bounty. For God is All-Knowing, All-Wise.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Tawbah 9:28]

وَتَرَى الْفُلْكَ مَوَاجِرَ فِيهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ

“And thou seest the ships therein that plough the waves, that ye may seek (thus) of the bounty of God.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Naṣr 16: 14]

الَّذِينَ يَخْلُونِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبُخْلِ وَيَكْتُمُونَ مَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ

“(Nor) those who are niggardly or enjoin niggardliness on others, or hide the bounties which God hath bestowed on them.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Nisaa 4:37]

وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ لَمَسَّكُمْ فِي مَا أَفَضْتُمْ فِيهِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

“Were it not for the grace and mercy of God on you, in this world and the Hereafter, a grievous penalty would have seized you in that ye rushed glibly into this affair.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Nur 24: 14]

And using the Arabic word ‘Khayr’ in the following verses:

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ إِنْ تَرَكَ خَيْرًا

“It is prescribed when death approaches any of you if he leave any goods.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Baqarah 2: 180]

و

مَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلَأَنْفُسِكُمْ وَمَا تُنْفِقُونَ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ اللَّهِ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ يُوَفَّ إِلَيْكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تُظْلَمُونَ

“Whatever of good ye give benefits your own souls, and ye shall only do so seeking the "Face" of God. Whatever good ye give, shall be rendered back to you, and ye shall not be dealt with unjustly.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Baqarah 2:272]

وَإِنَّهُ لِحُبِّ الْخَيْرِ لَشَدِيدٌ

“And violent is he in his love of wealth.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-‘Adiyat 100:8]

وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الْخَيْرُ مَنُوعًا

“And niggardly when good reaches him.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Ma’arij 70:21]

And using the Arabic word ‘Rahmat’ in the following verses:

وَلَئِنْ أَذَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنَّا رَحْمَةً ثُمَّ نَزَعْنَاهَا مِنْهُ إِنَّهُ لَيَكُونُ مِنْكُمْ كَفُورٌ

“If We give man a taste of Mercy from Ourselves, and then withdraw it from him, behold! He is in despair and (falls in) blasphemy.” [The Holy Qur’an, Hud 11:9]

قُلْ لَوْ أَنْتُمْ تَمْلِكُونَ خَزَائِنَ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّي إِذَا لَأَمْسَكْتُمْ خَشْيَةَ الْإِنْفَاقِ

“Say: If ye had control of the Treasures of the Mercy of my Lord, behold, ye would keep them back, for fear of spending them!” [The Holy Qur’an, Bani Israel 17: 100]

فَأَرَادَ رَبُّكَ أَنْ يَبْلُغَا أَشُدَّهُمَا وَيَسْتَخْرِجَا كَنْزَهُمَا رَحْمَةً مِّنْ رَبِّكَ

“So thy Lord desired that they should attain their age of full strength and get out their treasure – a mercy (and favor) from thy Lord.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Kahf 18:82]

And using the Arabic word ‘Hasana’ in the following verses:

فَإِذَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْحَسَنَةُ قَالُوا لَنَا هَذِهِ

“But when good (times) came, they said: This is due to us!” [The Holy Qur’an, al-A`raaf 7:131]

إِنْ تُصِيبَكَ حَسَنَةٌ تَسُوءُهُمْ

“If good befalls thee, it grieves them.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Tawbah 9:50]

There are also some verses in which worldly deprivation under some circumstances is considered a form of divine chastisement.

3 – The third group of verses describe the above two groups and attempt to clarify the seemingly contradictory nature of the above classifications of the life of this world. In these verses, we are told that the life of this world is good when it is directed towards the life of the Hereafter as a preparatory stage for it. However, if the life of this world on its own is stressed upon, then it is blameworthy. Consider the following verse in this regard:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَاءَنَا وَرَضُوا بِالْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَاطْمَأَنَّنُوا بِهَا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ آيَاتِنَا غَافِلُونَ

أُولَئِكَ مَا لَهُمْ النَّارُ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ

“Those who rest not their hope on their meeting with Us, but are pleased and satisfied with the life of the present, and those who heed not Our Signs – their abode is the Fire because of the (evil) they earned.” [The Holy Qur’an, Yunus 10:7-8]

The World as Viewed by the Traditions

Imam Ali said:

الدُّنْيَا مَتَجَرُّ أَوْلِيَاءِ اللَّهِ

“The world is a trade center for God’s friends.”¹

The Noble Prophet said:

الدُّنْيَا مَزْرَعَةٌ الْآخِرَةُ.

“The world is a farm for the Hereafter.”²

He also said:

نِعْمَ الْعَوْنُ الدُّنْيَا عَلَى الْآخِرَةِ.

“The world is the best aid for the Hereafter.”³

He also said:

نِعْمَ الْمَالُ الصَّالِحُ لِلْعَبْدِ الصَّالِحِ.

“How good is wealth for a good servant!”⁴

Thus, we can conclude that this world is an intermediate step and a means to reach the Hereafter. The phrases “trade center”, “farm”, and “helper” used in these traditions to refer to this world imply that one cannot attain prosperity in the Hereafter without using the life of this world. However, if we forget the role of this world and consider it the ultimate goal for man, then we will become negligent and seek our absolute welfare in this world. The Holy Qur’an says:

وَلَوْ بَسَطَ اللَّهُ الرِّزْقَ لِعِبَادِهِ لَبَغَوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ

“If God were to enlarge the provisions for His servants, they would indeed transgress beyond all bounds through the earth...” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Shura 42:47]

It also says:

كَأَلَّا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِرَبِّهِ لَكَنُفٍ

“Nay, but man doth transgress all bounds, in that he looks upon himself as self-sufficient.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-‘Alaq 96:6-7]

In addition, in another verse we read:

وَإِذَا أَنْعَمْنَا عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ أَعْرَضَ وَتَأَيَّ بِجَانِبِهِ وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ كَانَ يَؤُوسًا

“Yet when We bestow our favors on man, he turns away and becomes remote on his side...” [The Holy Qur’an, Bani Israil 17:83]

That is why divinely guided leaders have always stressed the concept of sufficiency in this world. In a tradition from the Prophet of God we read:

اللَّهُمَّ ارْزُقْ مُحَمَّدًا وَآلَ مُحَمَّدٍ وَمَنْ أَحَبَّ مُحَمَّدًا وَآلَ مُحَمَّدٍ الْعِفَافَ وَالْكَفَافَ

*“O God! Grant Muhammad and the family of Muhammad and those who love Muhammad and the family of Muhammad, chastity and sufficiency.”*⁵

It is also written in Nahjul Balaghah:

وَلَا تَسْأَلُوا فِيهَا فَوْقَ الْكَفَافِ وَلَا تَطْلُبُوا مِنْهَا أَكْثَرَ مِنَ الْبَلَغِ.

“Do not ask herein for more than what is enough and do not demand from it more than sufficiency.”

Through these verses and traditions it became clear that wealth and its role in economy is very important in life. We also realize that our life should be accompanied by a strong belief. Now let us consider how Islam views obtaining wealth and spending it.

Earning and Collecting Wealth

All men like wealth. Is this love for wealth and motivation to own, a part of man’s nature or is it an acquired form of behavior? Some people believe this to be a part of man’s nature since even animals have an instinct to own which can be observed from their behavior. Some scientists consider this love for ownership not to be an independent instinctive force.

Rather they think it is a means by which man can fulfill other instinctive needs such as eating, clothing, housing, sex, and child-rearing. Animals exert their ownership over objects that they need for specific purposes. The various forms of this ownership can be seen regarding their food, companions, and nest or a place to live. The tendency to own is stronger in animals regarding their stronger inclinations such as hunger, sex and child-rearing.

William James considered ownership to be a form of social expression of personality or a form of psychological volumetric expansion. He said: “The word me does not imply my psychological forces only. Rather it also includes my clothes, my house, my automobile, my property, my bank account, etc. All these things arouse the same senses in me.”⁶

Even though the love for wealth is not instinctive, it has slowly become a value in the society since wealth can help fulfill many of man's desires. The Qur'an says:

وَأِنَّهُ لِحُبِّ الْخَيْرِ لَشَدِيدٌ

“And violent is he in his love of wealth.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-'Adiyat 100:8]

Imam Sadiq said:

لَا خَيْرَ فِي مَنْ لَا يَحِبُّ جَمْعَ الْمَالِ مِنْ حَلَالٍ يَكْفُ بِهِ وَجْهَهُ وَيَقْضِي بِهِ دَيْنَهُ وَيَصِلُ بِهِ رَحْمَهُ.

“There is no good in one who does not like to legitimately earn wealth to safeguard his honor, pay back his debts and establish the bonds of kinship.”⁷

The Goal of Obtaining Wealth

Once when the Prophet of God was sitting with a few of his companions, he saw a strong young man who was working hard and had been working since dawn. The companions expressed their unhappiness about that man's acts and said: “We wish this young man used his strength and youth in God's way.”

The Prophet said:

لَا تَقُولُوا هَذَا! فَإِنَّهُ إِنْ كَانَ يَسْعَى عَلَى نَفْسِهِ لِيَكْفِيَهَا عَنِ الْمَسْأَلَةِ وَيُغْنِيَهَا عَنِ النَّاسِ فَهُوَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ، وَإِنْ كَانَ يَسْعَى عَلَى أَبْوَيْنَ ضَعِيفَيْنِ أَوْ ذُرِّيَّةٍ ضِعَافٍ لِيُغْنِيَهُمْ وَيَكْفِيَهُمْ فَهُوَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ، وَإِنْ كَانَ يَسْعَى تَفَاخُرًا وَتَكَاثُرًا فَهُوَ فِي سَبِيلِ الشَّيْطَانِ.

“No. Do not say this. If he is working so hard in order to prevent himself from asking from people and to be free of need of them, then he is working in God's way. If he is working hard to fulfill the needs of his weak parents or children, to make them free of need, then he is working in God's way. However, if he is working hard to collect a lot of wealth and show off to others, then he is working in Satan's way.”⁸

Thus we realize that whoever works hard to fulfill his needs and safeguard his honor is serving God and such acts of earning wealth are not only not blameworthy, but are considered to be a duty for every man as well. The deeds and types of behavior of the Immaculate Imams are a strong document to support this. Let us read what Muhammad ibn Monkadir said about Imam Baqir . Imam Sadiq said that Muhammad ibn Monkadir once said: “I did not think that Ali ibn Al-Husayn ⁹ would appoint a better leader after himself.

However, once I saw his son Muhammad ibn Ali ¹⁰ and decided to advise him. However, it turned out that he advised me instead. I was in the outskirts of Medina on a very hot day when I saw him working

on the farm. I asked myself why such an old man from the Quraysh tribe is working so hard seeking wealth on such a hot day. After greeting him, I asked him why he was working so hard seeking worldly gains.

I said: May God improve your condition. Why is a noble man from the Quraysh tribe seeking worldly gains at this time of day? What would happen to you if the angel of death comes to take your life in this condition? Then he greeted back and said: “If the angel of death arrives while I am working so hard as I am doing now in order to earn a living for myself and children so that I do not have to beg from you for my needs, then I will be found in a state of servitude of God. I should be worried to be caught by the angel of death in a sinful state.”

Then I said: “Yes, you are right. May God have Mercy on you! I wanted to advise you, but you were the one who gave me advice.”¹¹ Thus, we see that our religious leaders made an effort to earn their living so that they did not have to ask others for what they needed. They also taught their followers to earn their own living and not beg.

Those who are working to earn a living for themselves, their wife and children are considered to be in the ranks of those who participate in a holy war in Islam. Imam Sadiq said: “Whoever strives to earn a living for his wife is like one who is fighting in the way of God.”¹² In addition, one who abandons his wife and does not fulfill her needs is deprived of God’s Mercy. The Noble Prophet of God said:

مَلْعُونٌ مَلْعُونٌ مَنْ يَضِيعُ مَنْ يَعُولُ

*“Cursed, cursed, is one who neglects his dependants.”*¹³

Obtaining Wealth by Legitimate Means

Imam Baqir quoted on the authority of the Noble Prophet during the Farewell Pilgrimage:¹⁴

أَلَا إِنَّ الرُّوحَ الْأَمِينَ نَفَثَ فِي رَوْعِي أَنَّهُ لَا تَمُوتُ نَفْسٌ حَتَّى تَسْتَكْمِلَ رِزْقَهَا، فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَجْمِلُوا فِي الطَّلَبِ وَلَا يَحْمِلَنَّكُمْ اسْتِبْطَاءُ شَيْءٍ مِنَ الرِّزْقِ أَنْ تَطْلُبُوهُ بِمَعْصِيَةِ اللَّهِ، فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى قَسَمَ الْأَرْزَاقَ بَيْنَ خَلْقِهِ حَلَالًا وَلَمْ يُقَسِّمْهَا حَرَامًا، فَمَنْ اتَّقَى اللَّهَ وَصَبَرَ أَتَاهُ اللَّهُ بِرِزْقِهِ مِنْ حِلِّهِ، وَمَنْ هَتَكَ حِجَابَ السِّتْرِ وَعَجَلَ فَأَخَذَهُ مِنْ غَيْرِ حِلِّهِ قُصَّ بِهِ مِنْ رِزْقِهِ الْحَلَالِ وَحُوسِبَ عَلَيْهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ.

“Indeed, Gabriel informed me that no one shall die before receiving his full share of daily bread. Thus, fear God and be moderate in seeking sustenance. Do not rush to earn your daily bread from illegitimate or sinful ways if your daily bread is delayed a little. Indeed God the Exalted the High has divided legitimate daily bread among his creatures, and has not divided illegitimate daily bread among them.

Therefore, God shall grant whoever fears God and is patient and perseveres, his share of legitimate daily bread. But whoever tears up the covering veil (of innocence) and rushes to obtain wealth by illegitimate means will lose a portion of his share of legitimate daily bread. He will also be held accountable for his illegitimate earnings on the Resurrection Day.”¹⁵

Therefore, we learn that patience and perseverance are important. If we do not earn as much as we want, we should not try to illegitimately earn wealth since by so doing we will not only lose a portion of our legitimate daily bread, but we will also be held accountable at the just threshold of God.

Convenient and Hard to Earn Income

Imam Sadiq said:

الرِّزْقُ مَقْسُومٌ عَلَى ضَرْبَيْنِ أَحَدُهُمَا وَاصِلٌ إِلَى صَاحِبِهِ وَإِنْ لَمْ يَطْلُبْهُ وَالْآخَرُ مُعَلَّقٌ بِطَلْبِهِ. فَالَّذِي قُسِمَ لِلْعَبْدِ عَلَى كُلِّ حَالٍ آتِيهِ وَإِنْ لَمْ يَسْعَ لَهُ، وَالَّذِي قُسِمَ لَهُ بِالسَّعْيِ فَيَنْبَغِي أَنْ يَلْتَمِسَهُ مِنْ وُجُوهِهِ وَهُوَ مَا أَحَلَّهُ اللَّهُ لَهُ دُونَ غَيْرِهِ، فَإِنْ طَلَبَهُ مِنْ جِهَةِ الْحَرَامِ فَوَجَدَهُ حُسْبَ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ رِزْقِهِ وَحُوسِبَ بِهِ.

“The daily bread is divided into two parts. One part of it will be earned whether you ask for it or not. However, the second part is what you must go out to work for and try to earn. You will obtain the first part no matter what, even if you do not ask for it. However, it is best for you to use legitimate means to earn the other portion that you must seek to obtain. Should you obtain it through illegitimate means, it will still be considered to be a portion of your share of daily bread, but you will be held responsible for it.”¹⁶

What was said so far clarifies what Imam Sajjad said about wealth. He also said that your wealth might be left as inheritance for one who might use it right and get its reward in the Hereafter, too. The Commander of the Faithful said:

إِنَّ أَعْظَمَ الْحَسْرَاتِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ حَسْرَةُ رَجُلٍ كَسَبَ مَالًا فِي غَيْرِ طَاعَةِ اللَّهِ فَوَرَّثَهُ رَجُلًا فَأَنْفَقَهُ فِي طَاعَةِ اللَّهِ سُبْحَانَهُ فَدَخَلَ بِهِ الْجَنَّةَ وَدَخَلَ الْأَوَّلُ بِهِ النَّارَ.

“On the Resurrection Day the greatest regret will be felt by the man who earned wealth through sinful ways, and left it as inheritance for a person who spent it in obeying God. The latter will be rewarded Paradise on that account, while the former one will enter the Fire on account of it.”¹⁷

This is a real cause for sorrow! To suffer the hardships of earning wealth, and the chastisement of using illegitimate means to earn it!

¹ Nahjul Balaghah, Subhi Salih, Hikmah 131: “Certainly this world is a house of truth for him who appreciates it; a place of safety for him who understands it; a house of riches for him who collects provision from it (for the next world); and a house

of instruction for him who draws instruction from it. It is the place of worship for the lovers of God; the place of prayer for the angels of God; the place where the revelation of God descends; and the marketing place for those devoted to God. Herein they earn mercy and herein they acquire Paradise by way of profit.”

[2.](#) Daramadi Bar Iqtisad Islami, v. 1. p.47.

[3.](#) Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v. 12, p. 17.

[4.](#) Ibid.

[5.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, v.72, p.59.

[6.](#) Bozorgsal wa Jawan (Guftar-i-Falsafi), v. 1, p.272, quoted from Ravanshenasi Ijtima'i, v. 1, p. 104.

[7.](#) Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v. 12, p. 19.

[8.](#) Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, v.3, p. 140.

[9.](#) Imam al-Sajjad .

[10.](#) Imam al-Baqir .

[11.](#) Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v. 12, pp.9–10.

[12.](#) Ibid. p.27.

[13.](#) Ibid. p.27.

[14.](#) The last performance of the pilgrimage of the Holy House of God by the Prophet Muhammad .

[15.](#) Ibid. p.27.

[16.](#) Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v. 12, p.29.

[17.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Subhi Salih, Hikmat no. 429.

Right n. 36: The Right of the Creditor

حق الغريم الطالب

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ الْغَرِيمِ الطَّالِبِ لَكَ، فَإِنْ كُنْتَ مُوسِرًا أَوْفَيْتَهُ وَكَفَيْتَهُ وَأَغْنَيْتَهُ وَلَمْ تَرُدُّدْهُ وَتَمْطُلْهُ فَإِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ - قَالَ - «مَطْلُ الْغَنِيِّ ظُلْمٌ». وَإِنْ كُنْتَ مُعْسِرًا أَرْضَيْتَهُ بِحُسْنِ الْقَوْلِ وَطَلَبْتَ إِلَيْهِ طَلِبًا جَمِيلًا وَرَدَدْتَهُ عَنْ نَفْسِكَ رَدًّا لَطِيفًا، وَلَمْ تَجْمَعْ عَلَيْهِ زَهَابَ مَالِهِ وَسُوءَ مُعَامَلَتِهِ فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ لَوْمْ. وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ.

And the right of him to whom you owe¹ is that you should pay him back if you have the means to do so. You should meet his need, make him rich, and avoid putting him off and procrastinating. The Prophet, may God's peace be upon him and his household, said: "The procrastination of the rich is oppression." But if you are in hardship, you should satisfy him by using good words. You should gently ask him and send him away with gentleness. You should not take his property and mistreat him too. That is meanness. And there is no power but in God.

In short, Imam Sajjad said: "One should pay back his debt if he can do so. It is not right to postpone the repayment of a debt. One should talk gently and be good-tempered when dealing with the creditor. Otherwise, one is blameworthy since he has taken the money and is rude to the creditor too.

Our life has many vicissitudes. It is not always the same. At times, we are rich. At other times, we may

be poor. We must try hard to maintain our dignity under all conditions. When rich we should not become rebellious and sinful. In addition, when we are poor we should not debase ourselves. An important issue in Islam is helping others during times when they need money by giving them a loan. We are also advised to give more time to those who do not have money to pay back their loan to us. There are many verses of the Holy Qur'an that outline the value and importance of this issue.

Loaning to God

Charity is recommended in Islam. In addition, an important form of loan in Islam is an interest-free loan. This is considered by the Qur'an to be loaning to God as we read in the following verse:

إِنْ تُقْرِضُوا اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا يُمْضَاعِفْهُ لَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ شَكُورٌ حَلِيمٌ

“If ye loan to God, a beautiful loan, He will double it to your (credit), and He will grant you Forgiveness: for God is most Ready to appreciate (service), Most Forbearing.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Tagabun 64: 17]

This implies that loaning to God will be rewarded by Him and is a cause of forgiveness and divine appreciation. In another verse we read:

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضَاعِفْهُ لَهُ وَلَهُ أَجْرٌ كَرِيمٌ

“Who is he that will loan to God a beautiful loan? For (God) will increase it manifold to his credit, and he will have (besides) a liberal Reward.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Hadid 57: 11]

In another verse the Qur'an says:

إِنَّ الْمُسَدِّقِينَ وَالْمُصَدِّقَاتِ وَأَقْرَضُوا اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا يُمْضَاعِفْ لَهُمْ وَلَهُمْ أَجْرٌ كَرِيمٌ

“For those who give in charity, men and women, and loan to God a beautiful loan, it shall be increased manifold (to their credit), and they shall have (besides) a liberal reward.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Hadid 57: 18]

Some consider loaning to God to be just charity while others also include giving interest-free loans to believers:

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضَاعِفْهُ لَهُ أَضْعَافًا كَثِيرَةً وَاللَّهُ يَقْبِضُ وَيَبْسُطُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

“Who is he that will loan to God a beautiful loan, which God will double unto his credit and multiply many times? It is God that giveth (you) want or plenty, and to Him shall be your return.”
[The Holy Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2:245]

Usury as Viewed by the Qur'an

Giving charity and interest-free loans were mentioned to be highly valued acts in Islam. In these acts, one only considers the pleasure of God and intends to help others. On the contrary, there is the question of usury that has extremely detrimental social effects. We read in the following verse of the Holy Qur'an:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَذَرُوا مَا بَقِيَ مِنَ الرِّبَا إِن كُنتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

فَإِن لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوا فَأْذَنُوا بِحَرْبٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَإِن تُبْتِغُوا فَلَكُمْ رُؤُوسُ أَمْوَالِكُمْ لَا تَظْلِمُونَ وَلَا تُظْلَمُونَ

“O ye who believe! Fear God, and give up what remains of your demand for usury, if ye are indeed believers. If ye do it not, take notice of war from God and His Apostle: But if ye turn back, ye shall have your capital sums: Deal not unjustly, and ye shall not be dealt with unjustly.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2:278-279]

Here we note that taking usury is against our beliefs, and is considered to be like staging a war against God and the Prophet . If one repents from doing this heinous act, then he can take back his money without taking any interest. In another verse we read:

الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ الرِّبَا لَا يَقُومُونَ إِلَّا كَمَا يَقُومُ الَّذِي يَتَخَبَّطُهُ الشَّيْطَانُ مِنَ الْمَسِّ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا الْبَيْعُ مِثْلُ الرِّبَا وَأَحَلَّ اللَّهُ الْبَيْعَ وَحَرَّمَ الرِّبَا فَمَنْ جَاءَهُ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِ فَانْتَهَىٰ فَلَهُ مَا سَلَفَ وَأَمْرُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَمَنْ عَادَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ يَمْحَقُ اللَّهُ الرِّبَا وَيُرْبِي الصَّدَقَاتِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ كَفَّارٍ أَثِيمٍ

“Those who devour usury will not stand except as stand one whom the Evil one by his touch hath driven to madness. That is because they say: “Trade is like usury,” but God hath permitted trade and forbidden usury. Those who after receiving direction from their Lord, desist, shall be pardoned for the past; their case is for God (to judge); but those who repeat (the offence) are companions of the Fire: they will abide therein (for ever). God will deprive usury of all blessing, but will give increase for deeds of charity: For He loveth not creatures ungrateful and wicked.”
[The Holy Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2:275-276]

Here we see usurers depicted like insane men. This may refer to their social behavior since their deeds are similar to mad people. They do not care for sympathy, love, cooperation and the like. It may also refer to the way they will be resurrected in the Hereafter since our looks in the Hereafter portray our

deeds in this world. Imam Sadiq said:

آكِلُ الرِّبَا لَا يَخْرُجُ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا حَتَّى يَتَخَبَّطَهُ الشَّيْطَانُ.

“A usurer shall not depart this world without Satan driving him insane.”²

Some people question whether or not the roots of insanity are derived from Satan. As we know, insanity is a form of psychological illness. Some believe that it is a form of being touched by Satan. This belief was very popular among the Arabs. As we know, following satanic thoughts will cause one to think differently. Consequently, he will not be able to distinguish right from wrong. In this verse, the state of usurers is presented – both here and in the Hereafter.

The Justifications of Usurers

Usurers claim that their deed is similar to engaging in trade. They should be told that God has allowed trade, but He has forbidden usury. This is because in trade both sides are equally prone to lose or gain, while in usury the one who gives the loan never loses. Also note that in normal trade both sides help develop production and consumption, while a usurer helps neither.

In addition, our capital will be channeled into the wrong directions causing the economy to suffer when usury is practiced, while trade fosters the healthy flow of capital in the economy. Devouring usury will also result in animosities and class disputes while engaging in trade does not. Usury is discussed in the following verses of the Holy Qur'an as follows:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَأْكُلُوا الرِّبَا أَضْعَافًا مُضَاعَفَةً وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

“O ye who believe! Devour not usury, doubled and multiplied; but fear God; that ye may (really) prosper.” [The Holy Qur'an, Al-i-Imran 3: 130]

وَأَخْذِهِمُ الرِّبَا وَقَدْ نُهُوا عَنْهُ وَأَكْلِهِمْ أَمْوَالَ النَّاسِ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ مِنْهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا

“...That they took usury, though they were forbidden; and that they devoured men's substance wrongfully. We have prepared for those among them who reject faith a grievous punishment.”
[The Holy Qur'an, al-Nisaa 4: 160-161]

Giving Time to the Debtor

Imam Sajjad has recommended paying back one's debt if he can. However, if he does not have enough

money to pay it back, the Imam recommends us to give him time to do so. We also read the following verse in the Holy Qur'an:

وَإِنْ كَانَ ذُو عُسْرَةٍ فَنَظِرَةٌ إِلَىٰ مَيْسَرَةٍ وَأَنْ تَصَدَّقُوا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

“If the debtor is in a difficulty, grant him time till it is easy for him to repay. But if ye remit it by way of charity, that is best for you if ye only knew.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2:280]

The verses on charity, interest-free loans, and forbidden usury were presented earlier. Here we see that the repayment of a loan is a duty. However, we are also told that we should give the debtor time to repay if he is in difficulty. This is opposed to the common practice in the Age of Ignorance when debtors in a difficulty were charged more interest and put under more pressure to pay back. In Islamic law, it is clearly stated that we cannot take back our loan by seizing the living necessities of the debtor.

We can only seize what he might have that is extra. This is a clear form of support for the weak classes of the society. Still a more important issue is presented here. We are told that a loftier act would be to remit the debt by way of charity if we can. This is a form of self-sacrifice that is highly valued. We can see this side by side with the advice to the debtor to talk gently with the creditor. The rights of both sides are clearly described here. Now let us look at some related material presented in volume 2 of Shafi by the late Fayz. In a tradition the reward for giving more time is mentioned: Imam Sadiq said:

مَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُظِلَّهُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ لَا ظِلَّ إِلَّا ظِلُّهُ... فَلْيُنْظِرْ مُعْسِراً أَوْ يَدَعْ لَهُ مِنْ حَقِّهِ

“Those who desire to be in the Shade of God on the Day on which there is no other shade, should give time to debtors who are unable to pay back their debt or remit it.”³

Imam Sadiq narrated that once the Prophet climbed the pulpit and said:

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ! لِيُبَلِّغَ الشَّاهِدُ الْغَائِبَ مِنْكُمْ. أَلَا وَمَنْ أَنْظَرَ مُعْسِراً كَانَ لَهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ فِي كُلِّ يَوْمٍ ثَوَابُ صَدَقَةٍ بِمِثْلِ مَا لَهُ حَتَّى يَسْتَوْفِيَهُ.

“O People! You who are present and can witness to what I say! Deliver my words to those who are absent. Beware! God will reward the one who gives time to a debtor who cannot pay back his debt with the reward of charity on his loan for each day that the repayment of the loan is postponed.”

Then Imam Sadiq recited the following verse:

وَإِنْ كَانَ ذُو عُسْرَةٍ فَنَظِرَةٌ إِلَىٰ مَيْسَرَةٍ وَأَنْ تَصَدَّقُوا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

“If the debtor is in a difficulty, grant him time till it is easy for him to repay. But if ye remit it by way of charity, that is best for you if ye only knew.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Baqarah 2:280]

Then he said:

إِنَّهُ مُعْسِرٌ فَتَصَدَّقُوا عَلَيْهِ بِمَا لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ

*“He is a poor person, so give charity to him from what he owes you, and it will be better for you.”*⁴

The Prophet said:

كَمَا لَا يَحِلُّ لِغَرِيمِكَ أَنْ يَمْطُلَكَ وَهُوَ مُوسِرٌ فَكَذَلِكَ لَا يَحِلُّ لَكَ أَنْ تُعْسِرَهُ إِذَا عَلِمْتَ أَنَّهُ مُعْسِرٌ

*“Just as it is not permissible for your creditor to postpone the repayment of a loan if he is well to do, similarly it is not permissible for you to demand your money back from him if you know that he is in straitened circumstances.”*⁵

Imam Sadiq was told that Abdul Rahman ibn Seyabeh who had passed away had an unpaid debt to someone. They had asked the creditor to forgive his debt, but he had not accepted to do so. The Imam said:

وَيْحَهُ! أَمَا يَعْلَمُ أَنَّ لَهُ بِكُلِّ دِرْهَمٍ عَشْرَةَ إِذَا حَلَّلَهُ وَإِنْ لَمْ يَحْلِلْهُ فَإِنَّمَا هُوَ دِرْهَمٌ بِدِرْهَمٍ

“Woe to him! Does he not know that for each Dirham that he forgives he shall be rewarded ten Dirhams? But if he does not forgive, he can only receive one Dirham for each Dirham.”

¹. In the other version it continues: “ a debt that, if you have the means, you pay him back, and if you are in straitened circumstances, you satisfy him with good words and you send him away with gentleness.”

². Tafsir-i-Namunah, v.2, p.272, quoted from Nur al-Thaqalayn, v. 1, p.291.

³. Shafi, v.2, p. 110.

⁴. Shafi, v.2, p. 110.

⁵. Ibid.

Right n. 37: The Right of the Associate

حق الخليط

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ الْخَلِيطِ فَأَنْ لَا تَغْرَهُ وَلَا تَغْشَهُ وَلَا تُكَذِّبَهُ وَلَا تُغْفِلَهُ وَلَا تَخْدَعَهُ وَلَا تَعْمَلَ فِي انْتِفَاضِهِ عَمَلَ الْعَدُوِّ الَّذِي لَا يُبْقِي

عَلَى صَاحِبِهِ وَإِنْ اطمَأَنَّ إِلَيْكَ اسْتَفْصَيْتَ لَهُ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ وَعَلِمْتَ أَنَّ غَبْنَ الْمُسْتَرْسِلِ رِبًا. وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

And the right of the associate is that you should not mislead, or cheat him, lie to him or fool him, and you should not trick him. And you should not treat him as an enemy does who does not spare his friend. If he trusts you, you should be very careful of yourself for his sake, and realize that cheating the intimate ones is like usury. And there is no power but in God.

An associate is anyone with whom we somehow associate, such as a classmate, a partner or a friend. Imam Sajjad said that whoever is somehow associating with us has a right. This right is that we should not cheat him, and avoid any kind of trickery with him, and we should not deal with him as we would with our enemies. We should not harm him once he trusts us. There are many verses of the Holy Qur'an and traditions that were presented regarding the rights of the companion. These hold true for our associate too, but we will not restate them here. We will just mention a few traditions regarding the rights of our associates.

Traditions Regarding the Associates

Imam Sadiq quoted on the authority of God's Prophet :

أَسْعَدُ النَّاسِ مَنْ خَالَطَ كِرَامَ النَّاسِ

*"The most prosperous people are the ones who associate with the noblest people."*¹

One of the main factors influencing our prosperity has been pointed out to be having noble friends in this tradition. God's Prophet also said:

سَأَلُوا الْعُلَمَاءَ وَخَالَطُوا الْحُكَمَاءَ وَجَالَسُوا الْفُقَرَاءَ

*"Ask from the learned, associate with the wise, and sit with the poor."*²

In this tradition we are advised to maintain our association with the wise people.

Characteristics of a Good Friend

The Noble Prophet said:

مَنْ أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِهِ خَيْرًا رَزَقَهُ خَلِيلًا صَالِحًا إِنْ نَسِيَ ذِكْرَهُ وَإِنْ ذَكَرَ أَعَانَهُ

“He to whom God intends good, He will provide him a righteous friend who will remind him (to remember God) should he forget, and who will help him when he remembers.”³

Friends we choose must be intelligent and experienced. It was pointed out earlier that we should avoid ignorant or dumb friends. Our friends should also be religious and inclined to do good deeds. They should also be polite and good-mannered. A wicked friend will draw one to ill-conduct. Also a friend should be personally inclined to be our friend, and be a real friend. We have been admonished against cheating or tricking our friends by Imam Sajjad .

There is a chapter on this subject in *Usul al-Kafi*. We read the following in the first tradition of this chapter: “The Commander of the Faithful said:

لَوْلَا أَنَّ الْمَكْرَ وَالْخَدِيعَةَ فِي النَّارِ لَكُنْتُ أَمْكَرَ النَّاسِ.

“Were it not that guile and deceit resulted in the Fire (of Hell), I would have been the most guileful of people.”⁴

A deceitful person is not an intelligent one. Being deceitful implies acting opposite to what you are thinking. In the third tradition in this chapter we read: Imam Sadiq quoted on the authority of God’s Prophet :

لَيْسَ مِنَّا مَنْ مَكَرَ مُسْلِمًا

“One who is deceitful to a Muslim is not from us.”⁵

The Commander of the Faithful said the following regarding those who lie:

..يَنْبَغِي لِلرَّجُلِ الْمُسْلِمِ أَنْ يَجْتَنِبَ مُوَاخَاةَ الْكَذَّابِ، فَإِنَّهُ يَكْذِبُ حَتَّى يَجِيءَ بِالصِّدْقِ فَلَا يُصَدَّقُ.

“A Muslim should avoid becoming friends with a liar, for he will lie until when he finally tells the truth, he will not be believed.”⁶

In short, a good friend is one of the best blessings of God. He has certain rights incumbent upon us. We should not oppress him by telling him lies, or cheating him. Each friend must honor the rights of his friends.

¹. Bihar al-Anwar, v.74, p. 185.

². Ibid. p. 188.

³. Sharh-i-Risalat al-Huquq, Ghopanchi, v.2, p.289.

⁴. Usul al-Kafi, v.2, p.336.

5. Ibid. p.337.

6. Bihar al-Anwar, v.74, p.341.

Right n. 38: The Right of the Adversary

The Right of the Adversary who has a claim against you

حق الخصم المدعي عليك

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ الْخَصْمِ الْمُدَّعِي عَلَيْكَ، فَإِنْ كَانَ مَا يَدَّعِي عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا لَمْ تَنْفَسِخْ فِي حُجَّتِهِ وَلَمْ تَعْمَلْ فِي إِبْطَالِ دَعْوَتِهِ وَكُنْتَ خَصْمَ نَفْسِكَ لَهُ وَالْحَاكِمَ عَلَيْهَا وَالشَّاهِدَ لَهُ بِحَقِّهِ دُونَ شَهَادَةِ الشُّهُودِ، فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ حَقُّ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكَ، وَإِنْ كَانَ مَا يَدَّعِيهِ بَاطِلًا رَفَقْتَ بِهِ وَرَوَعْتَهُ وَنَاشَدْتَهُ بِدِينِهِ وَكَسَرْتَ حَدَّتَهُ عَنْكَ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَأَلْقَيْتَ حَشْوَ الْكَلَامِ وَلَغَطَهُ الَّذِي لَا يَرُدُّ عَنْكَ عَادِيَةَ عَدُوِّكَ بَلْ تَبَوُّءُ بِإِثْمِهِ وَبِهِ يَشْحَذُ عَلَيْكَ سَيْفَ عِدَاوَتِهِ لِأَنَّ لَفْظَةَ السُّوءِ تَبْعَثُ الشَّرَّ. وَالْخَيْرُ مُقْمِعَةٌ لِلشَّرِّ. وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ.

And the right of the adversary who has a claim against you is that if his claim against you is true,¹ you should not nullify his proof or abolish his claim. And you should dispute against yourself on his behalf and be a fair judge against yourself, and give witness to his right against you without the witnessing of any witnesses. This is the right of God that is made incumbent upon you. But if what he claims against you is false, treat him with gentleness and remind him to fear God, and implore him by his religion.

And by reminding him of God, you should help reduce his fury against you. Avoid using indecent words and yelling at him since this will not eliminate the animosity of your enemy, but it will result in your suffering from the sin he commits against you. And it will also result in his sharpening of the sword of animosity towards you, since indecent words will cause evil, but good words will eradicate evil. And there is no power but in God.

The Right of the Adversary against whom you have a claim

حق الخصم المدعى عليه

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ الْخَصْمِ الْمُدَّعَى عَلَيْهِ فَإِنْ كَانَ مَا تَدَّعِيهِ حَقًّا أَجْمَلْتَ فِي مُقَاوَلَتِهِ بِمَخْرَجِ الدَّعْوَى، فَإِنَّ لِلدَّعْوَى غِلْظَةً فِي سَمْعِ الْمُدَّعَى عَلَيْهِ. وَقَصَدْتَ قَصْدَ حُجَّتِكَ بِالرِّفْقِ وَأَمْهَلَ الْمُهْلَةَ وَأَبَيَّنَ الْبَيَانَ وَاللُّطْفَ وَاللُّطْفَ وَلَمْ تَتَشَاغَلْ عَنْ حُجَّتِكَ

بِمُنَازَعَتِهِ بِالْقِيلِ وَالْقَالَ فَتَذْهَبُ عَنْكَ حُجَّتُكَ وَلَا يَكُونُ لَكَ فِي ذَلِكَ دَرَكٌ. وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ.

And the right of the adversary against whom you have a claim is that if your claim against him is true,² you should use pleasant words while you are filing your claim, since hearing the claim is harsh for the defendant. And you should provide your evidence with lenience, and respite, and with the clearest statements, and with absolute gentleness. And you should not dispute with him over gossip lest your proofs will be voided and you will lose the opportunity to prove them. And there is no power but in God.

Sources of Quarrelling

One of the fundamental desires of man in this short life is to have peace and security. Man wishes to have a life filled with love and peace and free of quarrelling. On the other hand, man is also subject to his whims. He is greedy, selfish, lazy and haughty. These factors drive him to not be pleased with what is rightly his, and violate other people's rights.

It is obvious that the more the crowd in one place, the more quarrelling there will be among them. It is not possible for both sides of a quarrel to be right. Usually one side is the one who is transgressing. Thus, we need a judge in the society to handle these cases to resolve the quarrels and establish justice between them. This is one of the major reasons for the appointment of Prophets in the different eras in history.

Islam Invites Man to Destroy the Roots of Quarrels

The illuminating teachings of Islam invite man to love and friendship, and even forgiving and self-sacrifice. These instructions lead man to eliminate the roots of problems in the society so that quarrels do not even start. We read the following verse in the Holy Qur'an regarding the followers of Islam after those who accepted Islam and migrated to Medina, and those who already lived in Medina and helped the Prophet and his followers:

وَالَّذِينَ جَاءُوا مِن بَعْدِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَانِنَا الَّذِينَ سَبَقُونَا بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ فِي قُلُوبِنَا غِلًّا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ رَؤُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ

“And those who came after them say: ‘Our Lord! Forgive us, and our brethren who came before us into the Faith, and leave not, in our hearts, rancor (or sense of injury) against those who have believed. Our Lord! Thou art indeed Full of Kindness, Most Merciful.’ [The Holy Qur’an, al-Hashr 59: 10]

In this verse, we see the spirit of love in the Muslims that can eliminate quarrels. The same holds true for

the life of the Hereafter. We read the following in the Holy Qur'an:

وَنَزَعْنَا مَا فِي صُدُورِهِمْ مِّنْ غِلٍّ

“And We shall remove from their hearts any lurking sense of injury.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-A`raaf 7:43]

God has promised us the peaceful life we desire but cannot find in this world in the Hereafter. Thus, Islam has instructed man to abandon fighting in life. If there is quarrelling between people, Islam has given certain instructions to eliminate the fight.

Resolving the Differences

There is a chapter in *Usul al-Kafi* on resolving the differences between the people. Muslims are invited to help resolve the differences between other Muslims. This is considered a form of worshipping. Habib al-Ahwal narrated that he heard Imam Sadiq had said:

صَدَقَهُ يَجِبُهَا اللَّهُ إِصْلَاحَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ إِذَا تَفَاسَدُوا وَتَقَارُبُ بَيْنَهُمْ إِذَا تَبَاعَدُوا.

“The charity God likes is resolving the differences between the people who have problems with each other; and helping them get closer to each other when their discord has caused them to become separated.”³

In another tradition, we read that Imam Sadiq said:

لَأَنْ أُصْلِحَ بَيْنَ اثْنَيْنِ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِنْ أَنْ أُتَصَدَّقَ بِدِينَارَيْنِ.

“Helping resolve the differences between two people is more desirable to me than giving two Dinars in charity.”⁴

However, if the differences do not get resolved this way their case has to be settled in court. Islam has the best judicial system in order to give everybody his or her due rights. The judge must be a just person, and consider the two sides of the agreement in the same manner. He should also try to please God in his ruling on the case.

Islam's Judicial Rules

The most important steps implemented in European countries regarding judges are as follows:

1 A judge must be independent and immune and be able to prosecute anyone no matter what his rank or position of power is.

2 A judge must be paid a high enough salary to meet his financial needs so that he does not give in to a rich man and rule unjustly. It is said that the British government has dealt nicely with this issue.

3 All should be treated equally in court.

These issues, which are highly respected in European courts, are all parts of the teachings of Islam.

The Power of the Judge

The judge is granted so much power in Islam that even none of the members of the Islamic government can surpass that power. Only the ruler and his representative possess a higher degree of power. The Commander of the Faithful wrote the following in his letter to Malik al-Ashtar when he appointed him as his representative in Egypt:

ثُمَّ اخْتَرُ لِلْحُكْمِ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَفْضَلَ رَعِيَّتِكَ فِي نَفْسِكَ... وَأَعْطِهِ مِنَ الْمَنْزِلَةِ لَدَيْكَ مَا لَا يَطْمَعُ فِيهِ غَيْرُهُ مِنْ خَاصَّتِكَ،
لِيَأْمَنَ بِذَلِكَ أَغْتِيَالَ الرِّجَالِ لَهُ عِنْدَكَ.

“Choose for the administration of justice among people one who is, in your view, the best of your subjects.... Grant him the rank near you to which none of your special companions may aspire, so that by it he may be safe from people slandering him before you”⁵

Financial Independence of the Judge

Islam has granted the highest degree of financial independence to the judge. Imam Ali ordered Malik to give the judge as much money as he needs so that his financial needs do not affect the way he makes judgments.

The Duties of the Judge in the Court

The stress Islam has placed on equal treatment for both sides in the court is so much that even the current practice in Europe does not meet these high standards. It may even be that men cannot implement these standards for many more centuries. The judge should treat both sides equally in the court. Both parties should sit in the same place even if one side of the case is the ruler and the other party is a simple peasant. No privilege should be established for either party. Consider the following case.

Haroon Choosing a Judge

It is recorded in history that when the Abbasid Caliph Haroon ul-Rashid finished his pilgrimage he entered Medina. The people asked him to appoint a just judge since the judge had passed away. They introduced two men to him as candidates. In order to establish their degree of suitability for this position, Haroon called one of them to enter. The prime minister was standing in front of Haroon.

When the man entered, Haroon told him that there was some disagreement related to an estate between him and the prime minister. In addition, Haroon asked the man to resolve the case. The man thought for a while after hearing the reasons for the disagreement and said that Haroon is right. Haroon asked him to leave, and called in the other man. He repeated the same fictitious story again and asked the man to judge between them.

The man said: "I cannot judge between you since one side of the argument is sitting in the highest position of power while the other side is standing up in front of him. According to Islam you should both be in the same position before I can judge between you." Haroon ul-Rashid enjoyed the man's reply and appointed him as the judge immediately.

A judge is even supposed to treat the two sides equally in the way that he looks or points at them. He should also talk to each of them for about the same time. He should treat them both in the same way. Imam Ali said:

فاخْفِضْ لَهُمْ جَنَاحَكَ وَأَلِنْ لَهُمْ جَانِبَكَ وَأَبْسُطْ لَهُمْ وَجْهَكَ وَأَسِرْ بَيْنَهُمْ فِي اللَّحْظَةِ وَالنَّظَرَةِ حَتَّى لَا يَطْمَعَ الْعُظْمَاءُ فِي حَيْفِكَ لَهُمْ وَلَا يَيْئَسَ الضُّعَفَاءُ مِنْ عَدْلِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ.

*"Humble yourself to them, be gentle with them and meet with them in a friendly, cheerful manner. Treat them equally in your regard and consideration of them, so that the strong do not hope for your acting unjustly (in their favour), while the weak do not despair of your justice to them."*⁶

The Words of Shahid al-Awwal About the Duties of the Judge

In Al-Lum'ah Al-Dimishqiyah the words of Shahid al-Awwal about the duties of the judge are recorded as follows: "It is incumbent upon the judge to treat the two sides equally in talking, looking, greeting, respecting, listening and being just. If one of the parties is a Muslim and the other one is a pagan, the judge can let the Muslim man sit down while the pagan one stands up.

The judge does not have to be whole-heartedly inclined to both sides in this case. This is the jurisprudents' view on the duties of the judge. Regarding the way the judge should act in the court we read in Al-Lum'ah al-Dimishqiyah: "If one side of the fight starts to talk, the judge should listen to him. If both sides do so, the judge should listen to the one on the right. If both remain silent the judge should

say that either one can present his claim, or they can both talk.”⁷

The Plaintiff and the Defendant

What is the difference between the plaintiff and the defendant? Shahid al-Awwal said: “The plaintiff is the side whose abandoning of the claim shall end the dispute. However, the defendant is the other side of the dispute. He cannot end the dispute. There are three possible responses by the defendant. He accepts the claim, rejects it or remains silent. Each form of response is different as viewed by the judge.

Evidence and Oath

We read in Wasa'il al-Sha'ah that the evidence is to be provided by the plaintiff, and oath is for the defendant.⁸ This has been quoted from Imam Sadiq on the authority of God's Prophet . Abi Basir quoted on the authority of Imam Sadiq :

إِنَّ اللَّهَ حَكَمَ فِي دِمَائِكُمْ بِغَيْرِ مَا حَكَمَ فِي أَمْوَالِكُمْ؛ حَكَمَ فِي أَمْوَالِكُمْ أَنَّ الْبَيِّنَةَ عَلَى الْمُدَّعِي وَالْيَمِينَ عَلَى الْمُدَّعَى عَلَيْهِ، وَحَكَمَ فِي دِمَائِكُمْ أَنَّ الْبَيِّنَةَ عَلَى مَنْ أَدْعَى عَلَيْهِ وَالْيَمِينَ عَلَى مَنْ ادَّعَى لِئَلَّا يَبْطُلَ دَمُ امْرِئٍ مُسْلِمٍ.

“God’s ruling regarding your blood (that has been shed) is different from His ruling on your property. God has ruled that, regarding your property, the evidence is incumbent on the plaintiff and the oath on defendant, but regarding your blood (that has been shed) the evidence is incumbent on the defendant and the oath on the plaintiff, so that the blood of a Muslim may not be shed without compensation.”⁹

Imam Ridha provided the following in response to a question asked:

وَالْعِلَّةُ فِي أَنَّ الْبَيِّنَةَ فِي جَمِيعِ الْحُقُوقِ عَلَى الْمُدَّعِي وَالْيَمِينَ عَلَى الْمُدَّعَى عَلَيْهِ مَا خَلَا الدَّمَ لِأَنَّ الْمُدَّعَى عَلَيْهِ جَادٍ وَلَا يُمْكِنُ إِقَامَةُ الْبَيِّنَةِ عَلَى الْجُحُودِ لِأَنَّهُ مَجْهُولٌ وَصَارَتِ الْبَيِّنَةُ فِي الدَّمِ عَلَى الْمُدَّعَى عَلَيْهِ وَالْيَمِينَ عَلَى الْمُدَّعَى لِأَنَّهُ حَوْطٌ يَحْتَاطُ بِهِ الْمُسْلِمُونَ لِئَلَّا يَبْطُلَ دَمُ امْرِئٍ مُسْلِمٍ وَلِيَكُونَ ذَلِكَ زَاجِرًا وَنَاهِيًا لِلْقَاتِلِ لِشِدَّةِ إِقَامَةِ الْبَيِّنَةِ عَلَى الْجُحُودِ عَلَيْهِ لِأَنَّ مَنْ يَشْهَدُ عَلَى أَنَّهُ لَمْ يَفْعَلْ قَلِيلٌ.

“The reason why evidence, in all cases other than that of bloodshed, is incumbent on the plaintiff and the oath on the defendant is that the defendant denies the claim and it is not possible to establish evidence for denial.

However, in case of bloodshed, the evidence is due from the defendant and the oath from the plaintiff. This is because it is a safeguard which protects the Muslims, so that the blood of a Muslim may not go uncompensated, and so that it may be a restraint and a deterrent for the murderer, because of the difficulty of establishing the evidence for denial, for there will be few who will testify that he has not done it..”¹⁰

We learned from the above the jurisprudents' view on the claiming side and the claimant's side. Imam Sajjad presented the moral aspects of this issue. He reminded both sides of their moral duties. He invites both sides to the truth and admonishes them against pursuing falsehood. Thus, it is better for both sides of any dispute to remember the recommendations of Imam Sajjad and take their case to a just judge – not an oppressive one. Many traditions exist to support this.

- [1.](#) In the other version it continues: “you give witness to it against yourself. You do not wrong him and you give him his full due. If what he claims against you is false, you act with kindness toward him and you show nothing in his affair other than kindness; you do not displease your Lord in his affair. And there is no strength save in God.”
- [2.](#) In the other version, it continues: “you maintain polite moderation in speaking to him and you do not deny him his right. If your claim is false, you fear god, repent to Him and abandon your claim.”
- [3.](#) Usul al-Kafi, v.2, p.209.
- [4.](#) Ibid.
- [5.](#) Nahjul Balaghah,
- [6.](#) Nahjul Balaghah.
- [7.](#) Al-Lum'ah al-Dimishqiyah, Book of al-Qada.
- [8.](#) Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v. 18, pp. 170–173.
- [9.](#) Ibid.
- [10.](#) Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v. 18, pp. 170–173.

Right n. 39: The Right of Him Who Seeks Your Advice

حق المستشار

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ الْمُسْتَشِيرِ، فَإِنْ حَضَرَكَ لَهُ وَجْهٌ رَأَى جَهْدَتَ لَهُ فِي النَّصِيحَةِ، وَأَشْرَتْ عَلَيْهِ بِمَا تَعْلَمُ أَنَّكَ لَوْ كُنْتَ مَكَانَهُ عَمِلْتَ بِهِ، وَذَلِكَ لِيَكُنْ مِنْكَ فِي رَحْمَةٍ وَلَيْنٍ، فَإِنَّ اللَّيْنَ يُؤْنِسُ الْوَحْشَةَ وَإِنَّ الْغِلْظَ يُوحِشُ مَوْضِعَ الْإِنْسِ. وَإِنْ لَمْ يَحْضُرْكَ لَهُ رَأْيٌ وَعَرَفْتَ لَهُ مَنْ تَثِقُ بِرَأْيِهِ وَتَرْضَى بِهِ لِنَفْسِكَ دَلَّلْتَهُ عَلَيْهِ وَأَرَشَدْتَهُ إِلَيْهِ، فَكُنْتَ لَمْ تَأْلُهُ خَيْرًا وَلَمْ تَدْخِرْهُ نُصْحًا. وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ.

And the right of him who seeks your advice is that you should exert all efforts to advise him if you can provide him with a good opinion, and suggest to him to choose what you would have chosen if you were in his place. You should do so with mercy and with lenience since lenience will eliminate fear while rudeness will eliminate friendliness.

But if you do not have any good advice for him, you should refer him to someone else whom you know and trust his advice yourself. You should spare no efforts to guide him towards the good and do your best to advise him. And there is no power but in God.

In short, Imam Sajjad says that once someone seeks advice, a right is established for him. This right is clearly providing him with proper advice if we can, or referring him to someone else whom we know and can provide him with some good advice.

Consultation in Islam

Consultation is one of the most important issues in Islam. It helps us get our affairs done in a more reasonable fashion. If we do not consult others regarding our affairs, then our affairs will not be done in a perfect way, since by ourselves we cannot consider all aspects of an issue no matter how intelligent we are. Once issues are presented for consultation, and several experienced people use their intellect to help, then the job will be done more perfectly.

Consultation is so important in Islam that even the Prophet , who received divine revelations and was highly intelligent, consulted with others and respected their views. This was done in order to establish consultation as a practice among Muslims. His consultations were related to public issues about the execution of divine rules, and not on legislative issues.

Effects of Consultation

People who seek other people's advice regarding their affairs seldom fail. Others who consider themselves needless of other people's advice and do not do so, and just rely on their own minds, usually make mistakes even though they may be very intelligent. Such an attitude makes one unpopular and stops the flow of suggestions towards him.

Those who consult others regarding their affairs will not experience other people's jealousy if they succeed, since others will consider this success as their own. Even if one fails, others will not blame him since they will consider this failure to be their own fault. They will treat him sympathetically.

One can also evaluate the degree of friendship of others when he seeks their advice. This will pave the way for future success. This might have been one of the reasons that the Prophet sought other people's advice, even though he was very intelligent.

Consultation as Viewed by the Holy Qur'an

Consider the following verse from the Holy Qur'an:

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانْفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ

"It is part of the Mercy of God that thou dost deal gently with them Wert thou severe or harsh-

hearted, they would have broken away from about thee: so pass over (their faults), and ask for (God's) forgiveness for them; and consult them in affairs (of moment). Then, when thou hast taken a decision put thy trust in God. For God loves those who put their trust (in Him).” [The Holy Qur'an, Al-i-Imran 3: 159]

It was revealed during the Battle of Uhud. It deals with an important aspect of leadership. A good leader is one who forgives those who make mistakes, but realize their mistake and repent. If a leader does not forgive such people, and treats them with harshness, then the people will soon leave him unsupported, he will fail to implement his plans, and thus he fails to lead.

In this verse, the Prophet is instructed by God to consult the people regarding his affairs. The Prophet obviously did not consult the people regarding revelations. Rather he consulted them regarding the ways in which he implemented divine decrees.

In other words, he never consulted the people on legislative issues: Rather they were consulted on executive issues. For example, in the Battle of Badr the Muslims set up their camps in a given location by the order of the Prophet . One of the companions called Hobab ibn Monzar asked: “Is camping in this location decreed by God, or is it your own opinion?” The Prophet said: “No. There is no divine ruling on this issue.” Then Hobab said: “This is not a good place to camp.” The Prophet agreed with him.

We also read in the Holy Qur'an:

وَالَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَى بَيْنَهُمْ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ

“Those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular Prayer; who (conduct) their affairs by mutual Consultation; who spend out of what We bestow on them for Sustenance.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Shura 42:38]

As we can see the issue of consultation is stressed in this verse also right after establishing regular prayers.

Consultation as Viewed in the Traditions

There are many traditions about consultation from the life of the Prophet and the Immaculate Imams . The Prophet said:

مَا شَقِيَ عَبْدٌ قَطُّ بِمَشُورَةٍ وَلَا سَعِدَ بِاسْتِغْنَاءٍ رَأَى

“No one has ever been wretched after consultation, and no one has become prosperous through being satisfied with his own opinion.”¹

Imam Ali said:

مَنْ اسْتَبَدَّ بِرَأْيِهِ هَلَكَ وَمَنْ شَاوَرَ الرِّجَالَ شَارَكَهُمْ فِي عُقُولِهِمْ.

“One who only follows his own opinion will perish, but one who consults people shares with them in their intellect.”²

The Noble Prophet said:

إِذَا كَانَ خِيَارُكُمْ أُمَرَاءُكُمْ وَأَغْنِيَاؤُكُمْ سُمَحَاءُكُمْ وَأَمْرُكُمْ شُورَى بَيْنَكُمْ فَظَهَرَ الْأَرْضُ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ مِنْ بَطْنِهَا، وَإِذَا كَانَ أُمَرَاؤُكُمْ شِرَارُكُمْ وَأَغْنِيَاؤُكُمْ بُخَلَاءُكُمْ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ أَمْرُكُمْ شُورَى بَيْنَكُمْ فَبَطْنُ الْأَرْضِ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ مِنْ ظَهْرِهَا.

“If your good people are your rulers, your rich ones are generous, and your affairs are carried out in consultation with each other, then the surface of the earth is better for you than its depths. However, if your rulers are your evil ones, your rich are miserly, and your affairs are not carried out in consultation with each other, then being under the earth is better for you than being on it.”³

Imam Kazim said:

يَا هِشَامُ! مَجَالَسَةُ أَهْلِ الدِّينِ شَرَفُ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمُشَاوَرَةُ الْعَاقِلِ النَّاصِحِ يُمْنٌ وَبَرَكََةٌ وَرُشْدٌ وَتَوْفِيقٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ، فَإِذَا أَشَارَ عَلَيْكَ الْعَاقِلُ النَّاصِحُ فَإِيَّاكَ وَالْخِلَافَ، فَإِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ الْعَطَبَ.

“O Hisham! Associating with people of religion is nobility in this world and the Hereafter. Consulting with an intelligent, sincere advisor is good fortune and a blessing and guidance. It is a form of divine success. Therefore, beware of acting against the advice of an intelligent, sincere advisor whose advice you seek, for in that lies ruin.”⁴

Whom to Consult With

Chapters 21 and 22 of Wasa'il al-Shah deal specifically with whom to consult with. We shall present a few traditions from these chapters here.

Imam Sadiq quoted on the authority of his Noble father that the Prophet of God was asked: “What does ‘Hazm’ mean?” He replied:

مُشَاوَرَةُ ذَوِي الرَّأْيِ وَاتِّبَاعُهُمْ.

“Consulting with those who are well-informed and following their advice.”⁵

Imam Sadiq said that one of the recommendations of the Prophet to Imam Ali was:

لَا مُظَاهَرَةَ أَوْثَقُ مِنَ الْمُشَاوَرَةِ وَلَا عَقْلَ كَالْتَدَبِيرِ.

“There is no aid more reliable than consultation, and there is no intellect like pondering over the affairs.” [6](#)

Imam Baqir said: “There are four lines in the Torah the first of which is as follows:

مَنْ لَا يَسْتَشِيرُ يَنْدَمُ.

“One who does not seek advice regarding his affairs will regret it.” [7](#)

Imam Ali said:

لَا ظَهِيرَ كَالْمُشَاوَرَةِ.

“There is no aid like consultation.” [8](#)

Imam Sadiq said:

اسْتَشِيرْ فِي أَمْرِكَ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ.

“In your affairs, only consult with those people who are fearful of God.” [9](#)

Imam Sadiq said:

اسْتَشِيرِ الْعَاقِلَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ فَإِنَّهُ لَا يَأْمُرُ إِلَّا بِخَيْرٍ، وَإِيَّاكَ وَالْخِلَافَ فَإِنَّ مُخَالَفَةَ الْوَرَعِ الْعَاقِلِ مَفْسَدَةٌ فِي الدِّينِ وَالْدُنْيَا.

“Consult with men who are intelligent, since they will only advise you to do good. Beware of opposing (their) advice, for opposing the God-fearing intelligent man is a cause of ruin in religion and in this world.” [10](#)

Imam Sadiq said:

إِنَّ الْمَشُورَةَ لَا تَكُونُ إِلَّا بِحُدُودِهَا وَإِلَّا كَانَتْ مَضَرَّتُهَا عَلَى الْمُسْتَشِيرِ أَكْثَرَ مِنْ مَنَفَعَتِهَا لَهُ؛ فَأُولَٰئِهَا أَنْ يَكُونَ الَّذِي تَشَاوَرَ عَاقِلًا، وَالثَّانِيَةُ أَنْ يَكُونَ حُرًّا مُتَدِينًا، وَالثَّالِثَةُ أَنْ يَكُونَ صَدِيقًا مُؤَاحِيًا، وَالرَّابِعَةُ أَنْ تُطْلِعَهُ عَلَى سِرِّكَ فَيَكُونَ عِلْمُهُ بِهِ كَعِلْمِكَ بِنَفْسِكَ.

*“Consultation should be carried out within its limits, otherwise it will be more harmful than beneficial to the one seeking advice. Firstly, the one consulted should be intelligent. Secondly, he should be a free, religious man. Thirdly, he should be a sincere friend. Fourthly, when he becomes acquainted with your inner thoughts, his knowledge of it should be like your knowledge of yourself.”*¹¹

Whom Not to Consult With

Undoubtedly we cannot consult with just anyone. We were advised to consult with those who are intelligent, God-fearing, honest and trustworthy and who wish us well. Consulting with some people might cause us harm and deprivation. The Commander of the Faithful in his letter to Malik al-Ashtar tells us whom not to consult with:

لَا تُدْخِلَنَّ فِي مَشُورَتِكَ بَخِيلًا يَعْذِلُكَ عَنِ الْفَضْلِ وَيَعِدُّكَ الْفَقْرَ، وَلَا جَبَانًا يُضَعِّفُكَ عَنِ الْأُمُورِ وَلَا حَرِيصًا يُزَيِّنُ لَكَ الشَّرَّ بِالْجَوْرِ.

*“Do not include in your consultations a miser who turns you away from generosity and threatens you with poverty, or a coward who renders you weak in your affairs, or a greedy person who makes covetousness (for wealth and power) accompanied by tyranny seem attractive to you .”*¹²

As stated before consultation is a means of finding the proper way to do things. It is meant to help us do the right thing. Therefore, we should not consult with wicked, stingy, greedy or cowardly people. They will not help us if we consult with them. Rather they will cause misery for us. That is why Imam Sajjad has said: “But if you do not have any good advice for him, you should refer him to someone else whom you know and trust his advice yourself.”

- ^{1.} Tafsir-i-Namunah, v.3, p. 145.
- ^{2.} Nahjul Balaghah, Subhi Salih, Hikmah 161.
- ^{3.} Tafsir-i-Namunah, v.3, p. 145.
- ^{4.} Tuhaf al-‘Uqul, p.293.
- ^{5.} Wasa’il al-Shi’ah, v.8, pp.424–427.
- ^{6.} Ibid.
- ^{7.} Ibid.
- ^{8.} Ibid.
- ^{9.} Wasa’il al-Shi’ah, v.8. pp.424–427.
- ^{10.} Ibid.
- ^{11.} Ibid.
- ^{12.} Nahjul Balaghah, Fayz al-Islam, letter no.53.

Right n. 40: The Right of Him Whose Advice You Seek

حق المشير

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ الْمَشِيرِ عَلَيْكَ فَلَا تَتَّهِمُهُ فِيمَا لَا يُوَافِقُكَ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ رَأْيِهِ إِذَا أَشَارَ عَلَيْكَ فَإِنَّمَا هِيَ الْآرَاءُ وَتَصَرُّفُ النَّاسِ فِيهَا وَاحْتِلَافُهُمْ. فَكُنْ عَلَيْهِ فِي رَأْيِهِ بِالْخِيَارِ إِذَا اتَّهَمْتَ رَأْيَهُ، فَأَمَّا تُّهْمَتُهُ فَلَا تَجُوزُ لَكَ إِذَا كَانَ عِنْدَكَ مِمَّنْ يَسْتَحِقُّ الْمَشَاوَرَةَ. وَلَا تَدْعُ شُكْرَهُ عَلَى مَا بَدَأَ لَكَ مِنْ إِشْخَاصِ رَأْيِهِ وَحُسْنِ وَجْهِ مَشُورَتِهِ، فَإِذَا وَافَقَكَ حَمِدْتَ اللَّهَ وَقَبِلْتَ ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَخِيكَ بِالشُّكْرِ وَالْإِرْصَادِ بِالْمُكَافَأَةِ فِي مِثْلِهَا إِنْ فَرَعَ إِلَيْكَ. وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ.

And the right of him whose advice you seek is that you should not accuse him when he gives you advice that does not conform to your own opinion. It is quite natural that opinions are divergent and people have various views about their affairs in which they disagree. You are free not to accept his advice if you doubt it.

However, you are not permitted to accuse him of providing you with ill advice as long as you consider him to be of those worthy of consultation. Do not stop thanking him for the thoughts and the good advice he has given you. And if it was appropriate for you, you should thank God for it, accept it from your brother with gratitude, and be ready to act similarly for him should one day he seek your advice. And there is no power but in God.

Imam Sajjad advises us not to accuse the one whose advice we seek, if what they suggest does not agree with our own opinion. If his advice is in agreement with our own opinion, then we should thank God and be grateful to the person who advised us.

An Advisor's Honesty and Trustworthiness

In the previous discussions, we described whose advice we should seek. We also expressed the expected qualities of a good advisor using traditions. There is a chapter in Wasa'il al-Shah in this respect.

This is the first tradition in that chapter: Imam Sadiq said: "A man went to see the Commander of the Faithful and said: "I have come to seek your advice and that of Hasan, Husayn and Abdullah ibn Ja'far about marriage." The Blessed Imam Ali said:

المُسْتَشَارُ مُؤْتَمَنٌ.

“One whose advice is sought is a confidant”. [1](#)

Then he told the man his viewpoints.

In the second tradition, we read that Imam Sadiq said:

مَنْ اسْتَشَارَ أَخَاهُ فَلَمْ يَنْصَحْهُ مَحْضَ الرَّأْيِ سَلَبَهُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ رَأْيَهُ.

“One whose brother seeks counsel from him and he does not counsel him with sincerity, God will deprive him of his soundness in judgment.” [2](#)

Two important points have been mentioned in these two traditions. First off all, one whose advice is sought is trustworthy. Therefore, he will never cheat one. Therefore, one who seeks advice should never accuse the one whose advice he seeks. He should not be suspicious of him, as Imam Sajjad has said. Secondly, the one whose advice is sought should sincerely express whatever he thinks. Should he hesitate to do so, God will take away his effective point of view, since he has not been grateful for the blessing of being asked for advice.

Seeking the Advice of Those Lower in Rank

An interesting point about seeking advice is that we can even seek the advice of those who are lower in rank than we are. We do not necessarily have to seek the advice of those in a higher position than we are. There is a chapter in Wasa'il al-Shah in this regard. In the second tradition in this chapter, we read: Fuzayl ibn Yasar said that Imam Sadiq sought his advice on some issue.

Fuzayl asked the Imam how could such a lowly person like himself give advice to such a person like the Imam ? The Imam replied: “Whenever I seek your advice.” [3](#) In the third tradition of this chapter we read: “Hasan ibn Jahm narrated that he was with Imam Ridha when the Imam remembered his noble father and said: “His intellect was extremely superior to the intellect of the people of his time, and sometimes he used to seek the advice of one of his black slaves.” Then he was asked: “Can you seek the advice of such people?” Then Imam Ridha replied: “In fact, God the Blessed and the High expresses facts when they talk, and on many occasions my father used to act upon their advice regarding the garden.” [4](#)

Imam Ali's Viewpoints on Advisor

The compiler of *Nahjul Balaghah*, who is Sayyid Razi, narrated that once Abdullah ibn Abbas sought Imam Ali's advice, and was in disagreement with the advice given to him by the Commander of the Faithful . Imam Ali said: “It is up to you to give me your advice. But whenever my advice is in disagreement with what you think, you must obey me.” [5](#)

In another tradition we read: Ali ibn Mahzyar narrated that Imam Baqir wrote him a letter and asked him

to tell so and so to consult with him, but choose to do what they themselves think is best to do, since they are better aware of the conditions of their own town, and know how to deal with the rulers.

This is because consultation is blessed and God has ordered the Prophet in the Holy Qur'an to "consult with the people, but make a decision himself as to what is best to do, and rely on God after he makes up his mind." Then if what the advisor says is correct, you can benefit from his advice, and if it is not correct, you can hope to guide him in the straight path with God's will. When it is said seek their advice in the affairs, it is meant seek the good."⁶

Imam Ali said:

لا ظهيرَ كالمُشاورَةِ

*"There is no aid like seeking advice."*⁷

¹. Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v.8, p.427.

². Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v.8. p.427.

³. Ibid.

⁴. Ibid. p.428.

⁵. Bihar al-Anwar, v.75, p. 104.

⁶. Bihar al-Anwar, v.75, p. 104.

⁷. Ibid.

Right n. 41: The Right of Him Who Seeks Your Counsel

حق المستنصح

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ الْمُسْتَنْصَحِ فَإِنَّ حَقَّهُ أَنْ تُؤَدِّيَ إِلَيْهِ النَّصِيحَةَ عَلَى الْحَقِّ الَّذِي تَرَى لَهُ أَنَّهُ يَحْمِلُ وَتَخْرُجَ الْمَخْرَجَ الَّذِي يَلِينُ عَلَى مَسَامِعِهِ، وَتُكَلِّمَهُ مِنَ الْكَلَامِ بِمَا يُطِيقُهُ عَقْلُهُ، فَإِنَّ لِكُلِّ عَقْلٍ طَبَقَةً مِنَ الْكَلَامِ يَعْرِفُهُ وَيَجْتَنِبُهُ، وَلَيْكُنْ مَذْهَبُكَ.. الرَّحْمَةُ. وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

And the right of him who seeks your counsel is that you should give him your counsel as much as you think he can bear. And you should talk with him with such gentle words that he listens to you and you should use such words that his intellect can understand. This is because for each person's intellect there is a certain way of talking that he can comprehend and respond to. You should choose having mercy as your course of action. And there is no power but in God.

In short, Imam Sajjad states that one who seeks counsel has the right to be advised as much as he can bear to hear. Advice should be given gently to help the listener accept it. One should also be kind when giving someone some advice. Giving counsel and wishing well are among the important topics stressed in Islam. The Qur'an has stressed that the Divine Prophets are social counselors. We read in the Chapter A`raaf of the Holy Qur'an that the Prophets give advice to people:

أُبَلِّغُكُمْ رِسَالَاتِ رَبِّي وَأَنْصَحُ لَكُمْ وَأَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

“I but fulfill towards you the duties of my Lord's mission: Sincere is my advice to you, and I know from God something that ye know not.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-A`raaf 7:62]

Prophets as Advisors

The Prophet Noah said the following to his nation:

أُبَلِّغُكُمْ رِسَالَاتِ رَبِّي وَأَنْصَحُ لَكُمْ وَأَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

“I but fulfill towards you the duties of my Lord's mission: Sincere is my advice to you, and I know from God something that ye know not.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-A`raaf 7:62]

فَتَوَلَّى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يَا قَوْمِ لَقَدْ أَبْلَغْتُكُمْ رِسَالَاتِ رَبِّي وَنَصَحْتُ لَكُمْ وَلَكِنْ لَا تُحِبُّونَ النَّاصِحِينَ

So Salih left them, saying: “O my people! I did indeed convey to you the message for which I was sent by my Lord: I gave you good counsel, but ye love not good counselors!” [The Holy Qur'an, al-A`raaf 7:79]

The Qur'an says the following regarding the Prophet Shu'aib :

فَتَوَلَّى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يَا قَوْمِ لَقَدْ أَبْلَغْتُكُمْ رِسَالَاتِ رَبِّي وَنَصَحْتُ لَكُمْ فَكَيْفَ آسَىٰ عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ كَافِرِينَ

So Shu'aib left them, saying: “O my people! I did indeed convey to you the messages for which I was sent by my Lord: I gave you good counsel, but how shall I lament over a people who refuse to believe!” [The Holy Qur'an, al-A`raaf 7:93]

All the Prophets of God were advisors to their nations. All men naturally welcome being advised except those who have lost their purely divine nature. Such people did not pay any attention to the Prophets and were thus seized by a severe punishment. It is interesting to note that even Satan uses giving advice as a means of fooling people. We read in the following verse of the Holy Qur'an about Satan's

swearing to Adam and Eve that he is their sincere advisor:

وَقَاسَمَهُمَا إِنِّي لَكُمَا لَمِنَ النَّاصِحِينَ

“And he swore to them both, that he was their sincere advisor.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-A`raaf 7:21]

Thus, we should realize that our enemies might sometimes approach us as friends giving us advice in order to corrupt us. We learned that the Prophets were advisors to their nations. There are several traditions from the Immaculate Imams , which state that believers are also each other’s advisors.

Believers Advise Each Other

There is a chapter in *Usul al-Kafi* on “Believer’s Advice.” Imam Sadiq said:

يَجِبُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِ أَنْ يُنَاصِحَهُ.

“It is incumbent upon a believer to give sincere counsel to a(nother) believer.”^{[1](#)}

The late Allameh Majlisi said in his book *Mir’at al-Uqool*: “What is meant by advice is guiding them to improve their religious and worldly affairs, and training the ignorant people to fend off harm from them and bring them some benefits. If they do not accept your advice, you have shown your good intentions by advising them to do good deeds and refrain from evil acts.” The Noble Prophet of God said:

لِيُنْصَحِ الرَّجُلُ مِنْكُمْ أَخَاهُ كَنُصِيحَتِهِ لِنَفْسِهِ.

“Each of you should give sincere advice to your brethren just as you give sincere advice to yourselves.”^{[2](#)}

Advisors Are the Best of the People

Imam Sadiq quoted on the authority of God’s Prophet :

إِنَّ أَعْظَمَ النَّاسِ مَنْزِلَةً عِنْدَ اللَّهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَمْشَاهُمْ فِي أَرْضِهِ بِالنُّصِيحَةِ لَخَلْقِهِ.

“The people of the highest rank near God on the Resurrection Day are those who were the most active on His earth in counseling His creatures.”^{[3](#)}

This implies exerting efforts to advise the people and to improve their conditions. Sufyan ibn Uyaynah narrated that he heard Imam Sadiq say:

عَلَيْكُمْ بِالنُّصْحِ لِلَّهِ فِي خَلْقِهِ فَلَنْ تَلْقَاهُ لِعَمَلٍ أَفْضَلَ مِنْهُ.

“It is prescribed for you to advise the people for the sake of God. You will not find any better deed than this.”⁴

We see that advice given sincerely for God’s sake is highly valued, not advice intended to corrupt the people or out of deceit or financial expectations. There is no reward but deprivation for such advice. The Noble Prophet of Islam delivered a sermon in Mina and said:

ثَلَاثٌ لَا يَغِلُّ عَلَيْهِنَّ قَلْبُ أَمْرٍ مُسْلِمٍ: إِخْلَاصُ الْعَمَلِ لِلَّهِ وَالنَّصِيحَةُ لِأَئِمَّةِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَاللِّزُومُ لْجَمَاعَتِهِمْ.

“Three things for which a Muslim’s heart should have no malice: sincere deeds for God, sincere advice and desiring what is good for the Imams of the Muslims, and adhering to their community.”⁵

We note the importance of doing things for the sake of God, and the need of the leaders to be advised mentioned by the Prophet in this tradition.

How to Advise

We learned that advice should be given for the sake of God to be effective. It should also be as much as one being advised can accept. We cannot advise people in any way we want. We must learn how to advise, how to express our advice and how to influence the person being advised. Imam Sajjad said: “You are not free to say whatever you wish, since the Prophet of God has said:

رَحِمَ اللَّهُ عَبْدًا قَالَ خَيْرًا فَغَنِمَ أَوْ صَمَتَ فَسَلِمَ.

“May God have mercy on the servant who speaks well and benefits, or is silent and remains secure.”⁶

Imam Ali said:

إِيَّاكَ وَالْكَلامَ فِيمَا لَا تَعْرِفُ طَرِيقَتَهُ وَلَا تَعْلَمُ حَقِيقَتَهُ، فَإِنَّ قَوْلَكَ يَدُلُّ عَلَى عَقْلِكَ وَعِبَارَتُكَ تُنَبِّئُ عَنْ مَعْرِفَتِكَ.

“Refrain from speaking about what you do not know how to do, and do not know the truth about it. What you say is a sign of your intellect, and your words inform others of the degree of your knowledge and recognition.”⁷

One of the key elements in good advice is in its not being boring. Imam Ali said:

أَحْسَنُ الْكَلَامِ مَا لَا تَمِجُّهُ الْأَذَانُ وَلَا يَتَعَبُ فَهْمُهُ الْأَفْهَامُ.

“The best speech is that which the ears do not eject (through forgetfulness), and the understanding of which does not fatigue the intellect.”⁸

This has been expressed as one of the rights of him who seeks your counsel by Imam Sajjad : “And you should talk with him in such gentle words that he listens to you and you should use such words that his intellect can understand.”

The Noble Prophet also said: “We the Prophets are appointed to talk to the people according to their level of intellect.” Imam Sajjad advises us to use mercy in dealing with the people we advise, and not use force, frightening or threatening. This is because such acts have no influence on the person being advised.

Mansour Seeking Advice from Imam Sadiq

Mansour, the Abbasid caliph, attempted to invite Imam Sadiq to his court in order to claim to be a just ruler. He sent Imam Sadiq the following message: “Why do you not associate with us in our court as other people do?” He thought that the Imam would fear his might. But the Imam replied: “O’ Mansour! We have nothing of this world for which to fear you, and find nothing of the Hereafter near you to put any hopes in. What is the benefit of my associating with you?”

Mansour felt bad receiving this response and sent another message saying: “Then come associate with us to give us some advice.” Imam Sadiq sent him the following response: “O’ Mansour! Whoever seeks (the blessings) of this world would not advise you, and whoever seeks the Hereafter would not associate with you.”⁹

^{1.} Usul al-Kafi, v.2, p.208.

^{2.} Ibid.

^{3.} Ibid.

^{4.} Ibid.

^{5.} Sharh-i-Risalat al-Huquq, Ghopanchi, v.2, p.389.

^{6.} Sukhan wa Sukhanwari, p.44.

^{7.} Sharh-i-Ghurar wa Durar, v.2, p.320.

^{8.} Fehrest Mawdu’-i- Durar wa Ghurar, p.332.

^{9.} Al-Imam al-Sadiq wa al-Madhahib al-Arba’ah, v. 1, p. 108.

Right n. 42: The Right of the Counselor

حق الناصح

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ النَّاصِحِ فَأَنْ تُلِينَ لَهُ جَنَاحَكَ ثُمَّ تَشْرَأَبَ لَهُ قَلْبَكَ وَتَفْتَحَ لَهُ سَمْعَكَ حَتَّى تَفْهَمَ عَنْهُ نَصِيحَتَهُ، ثُمَّ تَنْظُرَ فِيهَا، فَإِنْ كَانَ وَفَّقَ فِيهَا لِلصَّوَابِ حَمِدْتَ اللَّهَ عَلَى ذَلِكَ وَقَبِلْتَ مِنْهُ وَعَرَفْتَ لَهُ نَصِيحَتَهُ، وَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ وَفَّقَ لَهَا فِيهَا رَحِمَتْهُ وَلَمْ تَتَّهِمْهُ وَعَلِمْتَ أَنَّهُ لَمْ يَأْلُكَ نَصْحًا إِلَّا أَنَّهُ أَخْطَأَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَكُونَ عِنْدَكَ مُسْتَحِقًّا لِلتُّهْمَةِ فَلَا تَعْبَأْ بِشَيْءٍ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ عَلَى كُلِّ حَالٍ. وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ.

And the right of your counselor is that you should treat him gently, then you should be wholeheartedly attentive to him, and open your ears for him so that you understand his counsel. And then study it deeply. And if what he presents to you is right, you should praise God for it, and accept it from him and acknowledge his favor.

But if what he presents to you does not agree with you, you should be kind to him and make no accusations against him. And you should know that he spared no efforts to provide you with the best advice, but he made a mistake. But if he deserves to be accused, then you should not pay any attention to him under any circumstances. And there is no power but in God.

In short, Imam Sajjad advises us to be humble and listen to the one who is counseling us. We should think it over, and praise God if what he says is right. We should also be grateful to him. However, if what he says is not right, we should know that he did not have any bad intentions and we should not accuse him. We should realize that he has made a mistake, and should not act upon his advice. In the previous chapter, we cited the verses of the Holy Qur'an and the traditions regarding those who seek our counsel.

In this chapter, we will mention some traditions regarding the rights of the counselor. The Commander of the Faithful said:

لِيَكُنْ أَحَبُّ النَّاسِ إِلَيْكَ الْمُشْفِقَ النَّاصِحَ.

“The most beloved person for you should be your sympathetic counselor.”¹

He also said:

مَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَنْ نَصِيحَةِ النَّاصِحِ أُحْرِقَ بِمَكِيدَةِ الْكَاشِحِ.

“One who rejects the sincere advice of a counselor will burn in the scheming of a secret enemy.”²

The Commander of the Faithful has also said:

أَمَّا بَعْدُ، فَإِنَّ مَعْصِيَةَ النَّاصِحِ الشَّفِيقِ الْعَالِمِ الْمُجَرَّبِ تُورِثُ الْحَسْرَةَ وَتُعْقِبُ النَّدَامَةَ

“Disobeying the compassionate counselor who is knowledgeable and experienced will result in remorse and regret.”³

He also said:

إِسْمَعُوا النَّصِيحَةَ مِمَّنْ أَهْدَاها إِلَيْكُمْ وَاعْقِلُوهَا عَلَى أَنْفُسِكُمْ

“Listen to the advice of those who grant you their advice, and keep it in yourselves (for future use).”⁴

He also said:

أَشْفَقُ النَّاسَ عَلَيْكَ أَعَوْنُهُمْ لَكَ عَلَى صَلَاحِ نَفْسِكَ وَأَنْصَحُهُمْ لَكَ فِي دِينِكَ

“The most compassionate people to you are those who are the most helpful to you in improving yourself, and those who most sincerely counsel you in your religion.”⁵

In another wise saying he said:

مِنْ أَكْبَرِ التَّوْفِيقِ الْأَخْذُ بِالنَّصِيحَةِ

“One of the greatest successes is to accept advice.”⁶

He also said:

مُنَاصِحُكَ مُشْفِقٌ عَلَيْكَ مُحْسِنٌ إِلَيْكَ نَاطِرٌ فِي عَوَاقِبِكَ مُسْتَدْرِكٌ فَوَارِطُكَ، فَفِي طَاعَتِهِ رِشَادُكَ وَفِي مَخَالَفَتِهِ فَسَادُكَ

“Your counselor is kind to you. He does you good. He sees the final outcome (of your actions). He recognizes your shortcomings. Your being rightly directed lies in your obedience to him, and your corruption lies in your opposing him.”⁷

At the end let us mention that the Commander of the Faithful recommends the counselor to advise in private, not in public and says:

نُصْحُكَ بَيْنَ الْمَلَأِ تَقْرِيعٌ.

“Your advising him in public is a rebuke.”⁸

- ¹. Sharh-i-Ghurar wa Durar, v.5, p.51, quoted from Ghurar al-Hikam.
- ². Sharh-i-Ghurar wa Durar, v.5, p.350,
- ³. Sharh-i-Risalat al-Huquq, Ghopanchi, v.2, p.412.
- ⁴. Sharh-i-Ghurar wa Durar, v.2, p.242.
- ⁵. Ibid. p.486.
- ⁶. Ibid. v.6, p.20.
- ⁷. Ibid. p. 139.
- ⁸. Ibid. p.172.

Right n. 43: Right of the Older One

حق الكبير

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ الْكَبِيرِ فَإِنَّ حَقَّهُ تَوْقِيرُ سِنِّهِ وَإِجْلَالُ إِسْلَامِهِ إِذَا كَانَ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْفَضْلِ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ بِتَقْدِيمِهِ فِيهِ وَتَرْكُ مُقَابَلَتِهِ عِنْدَ الْخِصَامِ وَلَا تَسْبُقُهُ إِلَى طَرِيقٍ، وَلَا تَوْمُهُ فِي طَرِيقٍ وَلَا تَسْتَجْهَلُهُ. وَإِنْ جَهَلَ عَلَيْكَ تَحَمَّلْتَ وَأَكْرَمْتَهُ بِحَقِّ إِسْلَامِهِ مَعَ سِنِّهِ فَإِنَّمَا حَقُّ السِّنِّ بِقَدْرِ الْإِسْلَامِ. وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ.

And the right of him who is older than you is that you should respect him because of his age, and honor his submission to God since he has precedence (over you) in Islam. You should refrain from confronting him in disputes and should not surpass him or walk ahead of him, and you should not consider him to be foolish. If he behaves foolishly with you, you should put up with it and honor him because of the right of his Islam and his age. This is because the right of age is in the same measure as (the right of) Islam. And there is no power but in God.

Regarding old age we read in the Qur'an:

قَالَ رَبِّ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لِي غُلَامٌ وَقَدْ بَلَغَنِيَ الْكِبَرُ

“He said: O my Lord! How shall I have a son seeing I am very old ...” [The Holy Qur'an, Al-i-Imran 3:40]

In addition, in another verse the Qur'an refers to being the biggest:

فَجَعَلَهُمْ جُودًا إِلَّا كَبِيرًا لَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِ يَرْجِعُونَ

“So he broke them to pieces, (all) but the biggest of them, that they might turn (and address themselves) to it.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Anbiyaa 21:58]

In another verse, we see the Qur'an referring to leader:

إِنَّهُ لَكَبِيرُكُمْ الَّذِي عَلَّمَكُمُ السِّحْرَ

“Surely this must be your leader who has taught you magic” [The Holy Qur'an, Taha 20:71]

In short, Imam Sajjad states that elders should be respected due to their greatness, age and being Muslim. He has admonished us against any form of harsh treatment with the elders. Next, we will review how the Qur'an looks at this issue.

Weakness in Childhood and Old Age

Our life always begins with weakness in childhood, and ends with weakness in old age. Children grow up to be strong and make progress, and attain power. Each day they move closer to their peak of youth and gain more strength. On the other hand, old people deteriorate everyday, and get weaker everyday they approach the termination of their life. In this regard, the Holy Qur'an says:

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ ضَعْفٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ ضَعْفٍ قُوَّةً ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ قُوَّةٍ ضَعْفًا وَشَيْبَةً

“It is God who created you in a state of (helpless) weakness, then gave (you) strength after weakness. Then after strength, gave (you) weakness and a hoary head ...” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Rum 30:54]

In another verse the Holy Qur'an says:

وَمَنْ نُعَمِّرْهُ نُنَكِّسْهُ فِي الْخَلْقِ أَفَلَا يَعْقِلُونَ

“If We grant long life to any, We cause him to be reversed in nature. Will they not then understand?” [The Holy Qur'an, Ya-Sin 36:68]

We lose all our physical strength and our health deteriorates as we get old. Our understanding turns into

lack of comprehension, our strong memory is converted into senility, our strength deteriorates and turns into weakness. Our perfection turns into shortcomings, our power turns into disability, and our freshness and beauty turns into wrinkles and ugliness. When we get old we not only cannot learn new things, we will also forget what we learned earlier. In this regard, the Holy Qur'an says:

وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ يَتَوَفَّاكُمْ وَمِنْكُمْ مَنْ يُرَدُّ إِلَى أَرْذَلِ الْعُمُرِ لِكَيْ لَا يَعْلَمَ بَعْدَ عِلْمٍ شَيْئًا

“It is God who creates you and takes your souls at death. And of you there are some who are sent back to a feeble age, so that they know nothing after having known (much) ...” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Nahl 16:70]

Once we get old, we have to live with all the troubles of old age.

The Old as Social Outcasts

One of the calamities for the elderly is their natural separation from the active work force in the society due to their old age and weakness. They have to retire, and stay home. A worst calamity for the elderly is for them not to find the love and respect they deserve in their family. The haughty young children might treat them with harshness or might ruthlessly cast them out of their own homes; and they will be left alone with a broken heart and no love and support. Such people will suffer a lot, and shall soon perish.

Death Due to Psychological Stress

Dr. Adolph who is a member of the American College of Surgeons stated: “When I was working as an intern in the hospital, we treated a seventy-year old lady for a broken hip bone. While I was reviewing her x-rays, I noticed that she was healing rapidly and her bones were rapidly reconstructing themselves.

I congratulated her for the very good reaction of her body to the treatment. She had improved a lot, and could walk using some canes instead of a wheel-chair. The surgeon who had operated on her told me that she had recuperated and could be released in twenty-four hours. On the same day, her daughter came to the hospital to visit her. I told her that her mother had recuperated and she could take her home the next day. She did not tell me anything and went to talk with her mother.

She told her that her husband had said that they could not take her back home anymore, and that they might be able to take her to the home for the elderly. A few hours later, I was called in to check on her. She was in a very bad state and died in less than twenty-four hours. She had recuperated from a difficult surgery on her broken hip, but could not withstand her heart being broken. Her broken heart could no longer be treated! [1](#)

Unfortunately, we cast out our elderly from our warm and sweet homes into the homes for the elderly. This form of dealing with them has added an additional burden to their already extensive amount of problems due to aging. However, Islam has expressed its educational programs and ethics under the subject of the rights of the elders.

Respect for the Elders as Viewed in Traditions

The rights of the elders are respected in Islam. Families are taught to honor and respect their elders instead of casting them out to the homes for the elderly. We will point out some of the traditions in this respect. There are several related traditions in the Chapter “Al-Isharat” in *Usul al-Kafi*. Abdullah ibn Sin'an narrated that Imam Sadiq said:

إِنَّ مِنْ إِجْلَالِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ إِجْلَالِ الشَّيْخِ الْكَبِيرِ.

“Part of reverence to God, the Exalted, the High, is to show reverence to an old man.”²

Imam Sadiq quoted on the authority of the Noble Prophet of God :

مَنْ عَرَفَ فَضْلَ كَبِيرٍ لِسِنِّهِ فَوَقَّرَهُ آمَنَهُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَزَعِ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ.

“Anyone who recognizes the high status of old people and respects them, God will save him from experiencing the might and fear of the Resurrection Day.”³

Imam Sadiq said:

ثَلَاثَةٌ لَا يَجْهَلُ حَقَّهُمْ إِلَّا مُنَافِقٌ مَعْرُوفٌ بِالنِّفَاقِ: ذُو الشَّيْبَةِ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ وَحَامِلُ الْقُرْآنِ وَالْإِمَامُ الْعَادِلُ.

“There are three whose rights none are ignorant of except a hypocrite known for his hypocrisy: an elderly (white haired) person in Islam, the bearer of the Qur'an, and the just Imam.”⁴

Ibn Sin'an narrated that Imam Sadiq told him:

مِنْ إِجْلَالِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ إِجْلَالُ الْمُؤْمِنِ ذِي الشَّيْبَةِ، وَمَنْ أَكْرَمَ مُؤْمِنًا فَبِكْرَامَةِ اللَّهِ بَدَأَ وَمَنْ اسْتَخَفَّ بِمُؤْمِنٍ ذِي شَيْبَةٍ أَرْسَلَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْهِ مَنْ يَسْتَخِفُّ بِهِ قَبْلَ مَوْتِهِ.

“Part of reverence to God, the Exalted, the High, is showing reverence to an elderly (white-haired) believer. Whoever respects a believer has begun with the respect of God, and whoever holds an elderly believer in light estimation, God will send to him one who will hold him in contempt before he dies.”⁵

God the Almighty said:

الشَّيْبُ نُورِي وَأَنَا أُسْتَحْيِي أَنْ أُعَذِّبَ نُورِي بِنَارِي.

“White hair is My light, and I am ashamed to punish My light with My Fire.”[6](#)

Ibn Abi Shu’bah narrated that the Prophet of God admonished against cutting white hair and said:

هُوَ نُورُ الْمُؤْمِنِ.

“It is the light of the believer.”[7](#)

A man from the Hozayl tribe went to see God’s Prophet and said: “O’ Prophet of God! I am old. My bones are fragile. I have lost my power, and cannot pray and fast as I should.” The Prophet said: “Repeat your words. There are no sticks or stones around which are not crying for you as a sign of mercy. How can God not have mercy upon you?”[8](#)

When it was time to punish the people of Lot, God the Almighty put it off until dawn. When the Prophet Lot asked why, Gabriel told him that God says: “There is an old man with a white beard sleeping on his back amongst these people. I have put off their punishment until he turns his face around.”

God’s Prophet said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى يَنْظُرُ فِي وَجْهِ الشَّيْخِ صَبَاحاً وَمَسَاءً فَيَقُولُ: عَبْدِي! كَبُرَ سِنَّكَ وَدَقَّ عَظْمُكَ وَرَقَّ جِلْدُكَ وَقَرُبَ أَجْلُكَ وَحَانَ قُدُومُكَ عَلَيَّ فَاسْتَحْيِي مِنِّي فَأَنَا أُسْتَحْيِي مِنْ شَيْبَتِكَ أَنْ أُعَذِّبَكَ فِي النَّارِ.

“Every morning and night, God the Exalted looks upon the face of the old man and says: O My servant! You have become old, your bones have become fragile, your skin has become delicate, your time of death is near, and the time has come for your arrival before Me. Therefore, be ashamed before Me, for I am too ashamed of your white hair to chastise you in the Fire.”

Then the Prophet cried. They asked him the reason for crying. He said:

أَبْكِي مِمَّنْ يَسْتَحْيِي اللَّهَ مِنْهُ وَهُوَ لَا يَسْتَحْيِي مِنَ اللَّهِ.

“I weep for one before whom God is ashamed, but he is not ashamed before God.”[9](#)

Imam Sadiq said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لِيُكْرِمَ أَبْنَاءَ السَّبْعِينَ وَيَسْتَحْيِي مِنْ أَبْنَاءِ الثَّمَانِينَ فَيَأْمُرُ بِأَنْ تُكْتَبَ لَهُمُ الْحَسَنَاتُ وَتَمْحَى عَنْهُمْ السَّيِّئَاتُ

*“God treats people in their seventies with honor, and is ashamed before eighty-year olds. Thus he orders that good deeds be recorded for them and their sins be wiped out.”*¹⁰

Respecting the Old Will Save You from the Penalty

God’s Prophet said:

مَنْ وَقَرَ ذَا شَيْبَةٍ لِشَيْبَتِهِ أَمَّنَهُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى مِنْ فَرْعِ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ

*“He who respects the old for their age and white hair, God, the Exalted, will safeguard him from the terror of the Day of Judgment.”*¹¹

We quoted several traditions that stressed the importance of respecting the elderly. There may be many old people in any society. The civilized world has opted to separate them from their sweet homes and cast them out into homes for the elderly. However, Islam has stressed that their white hair is a sign of due respect and a source of blessings for us. Islam instructs us to honor them now that they have approached the end of their life.

We should not oppose them, or treat them with anger and hurt their feelings. We should realize that they have become impatient due to their old age. They have lost their ability to withstand difficulties such as hunger, thirst and other things. We should also learn that God is shy of old people. They should be shy of God, too. They should not commit sins. There are some people who have gotten used to sinning. They should cleanse their souls by sincerely repenting to God, and seeking God’s forgiveness and mercy.

¹. Guftar-i-Falsafi (Buzurgsal wa Jawan), v.2, p.342, quoted from Ithbat Wujud-e-Khuda, p.250.

². Usul al-Kafi, v.2, p.658.

³. Ibid.

⁴. Usul al-Kafi, v.2, p.658.

⁵. Ibid.

⁶. Sharh-i-Risalat al-Huquq, Ghopanchi, v.2, p.445, and Safinah al-Bihar, v. 1, on white hair.

⁷. Ibid.

⁸. Ibid.

⁹. Sharh-i-Risalat al-Huquq, Ghopanchi, v.2, p.445, and Safinah al-Bihar, v. 1, on white hair.

¹⁰. Ibid.

¹¹. Ibid.

Right n. 44: The Right of the Younger One

حق الصغير

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ الصَّغِيرِ فَرَحْمَتُهُ وَتَثْقِيفُهُ وَتَعْلِيمُهُ وَالْعَفْوُ عَنْهُ وَالسِّتْرُ عَلَيْهِ وَالرِّفْقُ بِهِ وَالْمَعُونَةُ لَهُ وَالسِّتْرُ عَلَى جَرَائِرِ حَدَاتِهِ فَإِنَّهُ سَبَبٌ لِلتَّوْبَةِ وَالْمُدَارَاةُ لَهُ وَتَرْكُ مُمَاحَكَتِهِ، فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ أَدْنَى لِرُشْدِهِ.

And the right of him who is younger than you is that you have compassion on him, train and educate him, pardon him, and cover up his faults, be gentle with him and help him, cover up the guilts of his juvenility because this will make him repent; treat him with patience, and stop quarrelling with him. This will lead him to more sensible conduct.

Imam Sajjad recommends us to treat younger people with kindness, educate them, pardon them and cover up their faults. We should be patient with them and help them with their affairs. Undoubtedly being egocentric is one of the foundations of the development of children's personality. If used properly and directed well, it can lead to their prosperity.

A proper way to respond to this egocentrism is to respect the children and attend to their personality. Any child whose egocentrism is not properly recognized in the family will feel humiliated. He will have a feeling of having failed in life. He will be depressed. Such children are prone to various deviations and faults. That is why Imam Sajjad instructs us to overlook their mistakes.

The Noble Prophet has said the following regarding child-rearing:

أَكْرِمُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ وَأَحْسِنُوا آدَابَكُمْ.

“Respect your children and improve your behavior.”¹

Imam Sajjad has stressed training and educating children as one of the major duties of parents, and rights that children have incumbent upon their parents. The practices and lives of the Immaculate Imams are good examples of this.

Encouraging Children

Imam Hasan gathered his children and his brother's children once and told them:

إِنَّكُمْ صِبَاغُ الْيَوْمِ وَيُوشِكُ أَنْ تَكُونُوا كِبَارَ قَوْمٍ آخَرِينَ، فَتَعَلَّمُوا الْعِلْمَ فَمَنْ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ مِنْكُمْ أَنْ يَحْفَظَهُ فَلْيَكْتُبْهُ وَلْيَضَعْهُ فِي بَيْتِهِ.

“You are all children today, but will soon be great men in the future, so acquire knowledge. Whoever of you does not have a good memory, should write down what his teachers say and keep the notes at home for later review.”²

We see that Imam Hasan uses the children’s egotism to encourage them to study to become great men in the future. He does not resort to punishment or threatening, rather he shows them that their studies today will pave the way for their progress tomorrow. What is done by Imam Hasan is the best known method of educational guidance today. Thus if a family succeeds in encouraging their children to study by raising hopes for their future progress in them, that family can direct them to eagerly pursue knowledge. There is no need to resort to threatening them or using force and punishment.

Proper Way of Child-Rearing

One of the most fundamental conditions for the proper development of our children is freedom. The same holds true for adults. There is no hope for progress in an environment full of oppression. It is the calm atmosphere of freedom that fosters the flourishing of talents. That is why Muslim teachers do not resort to the use of force as much as possible. The Prophet of Islam who was the teacher of humanity was very kind.

Ibn Masoud narrated that once when a man went to see the Prophet , he was afraid to talk. The Prophet said: “Do not be afraid. I am not a king.”³ The Noble Prophet said:

مَنْ كَانَ عِنْدَهُ صَبِيٌّ فَلْيَتَصَابَ لَهُ.

“Whoever has a child should behave like a child with him.”⁴

Imam Ali said:

مَنْ كَانَ عِنْدَهُ وَلَدٌ صَبَا.

“Whoever has a child should play with him.”

The Noble Prophet said:

رَحِمَ اللَّهُ عَبْدًا أَعَانَ وَلَدَهُ عَلَى بَرِّهِ بِالْإِحْسَانِ إِلَيْهِ وَالتَّأَلُّفِ لَهُ وَتَعْلِيمِهِ وَتَأْدِيبِهِ.

“May God’s mercy be upon a servant (of God) who helps his child in righteousness through goodness to him and friendliness towards him, and through educating and training him.”⁵

Respecting Children

Whenever the Noble Prophet of God returned from a journey, and met the children on the way home, he stopped in respect for the children. He then asked the smaller children to come forward. He picked them up and hugged them. He put some of them on his shoulders. He instructed his companions to hug children and let them ride on their shoulders. He said children get really happy this way. The children never forget these moments. Whenever they got together, they proudly talked about how the Prophet of God hugged them, and gave them a ride on his back, or that he ordered his companions to give them rides on their backs.

Overlooking Children's Mistakes

Imam Sajjad instructs us to pardon the faults of children, and overlook their mistakes. Overlooking and pardoning some of the faults of children is one of the major moral issues that should be used in the education of children. It is sometimes more effective to overlook other people's mistakes and act as if you know nothing about them. Imam Sadiq said:

صَلَاحُ حَالِ التَّعَايُشِ وَالتَّعَاشُرِ مِثْلُ مِكْيَالِ ثَلَاثَةِ فِطْنَتِهِ وَثُلُثُهُ تَغَافُلٌ.

“Goodness of companionship and living together is a full measure, two-thirds of which is (possessing) understanding and one third of it is overlooking (the shortcomings of others).” [6](#)

The Prophet of Islam has stressed the importance of overlooking other people's mistakes as we can read in the following tradition:

الْمُؤْمِنُ نِصْفُهُ تَغَافُلٌ.

“Half of (the nature of) the believer is overlooking mistakes.” [7](#)

Of course, there are two forms of overlooking. One form is recommendable while the other form is not desirable. The form of overlooking of other people's mistakes that is recommended by the leaders of Islam is based on the intellect and is meant to make improvements. It is done with good intentions. Teachers can get good results from overlooking, if they do it at the proper time and in the proper place.

As an example, stealing money from the parents is sometimes done by some children all over the world. The instinctive desire to own develops in children sooner or later. Then they start to consider everything their own property. They may take other kids' toys, or pick some money from their father's pocket. In these conditions it is best for the father to say: “Some money has been taken from my wallet.” Then the mother should say: “Is there anyone in this house who might do such a bad thing? No, of course not.”

Then the father should apologize and say: “I am sorry. It must have fallen out of my pocket, or maybe I did not get the right change back when I was shopping.” Then the child will think over what he has done, and say to himself how good it is that no one has found out about it. Then he will decide not to do it again, since this will threaten his honor. As stressed by Imam Sajjad , this is one of the situations in which overlooking a child’s mistake is recommendable and will lead to an improvement in his behavior.

- [1.](#) Qamus Qu’ran, v.4, p. 129.
- [2.](#) Guftar-i-Falsafi (Koodak), v. 1, p.464, quoted from Bihar al-Anwar, v. 1, p. 110.
- [3.](#) Guftar-i-Falsafi (Koodak), v. 1, p.479, quoted from Bihar al-Anwar, v. 1, p. 110.
- [4.](#) Ibid. p. 130, quoted from Wasa’il al-Shi’ah, v.5, p. 126.
- [5.](#) Ibid. quoted from Mustadrak al-Wasa’il, v.2, p.262.
- [6.](#) Tuhaf al-‘Uqul, p.264.
- [7.](#) Guftar-i-Falsafi, v. 1, p.405.

Right n. 45: The Right of Him Who Asks from You

حق السائل

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ السَّائِلِ فَأَعْطَاؤُهُ إِذَا تَيَقَّنْتَ صِدْقَهُ وَقَدَّرْتَ عَلَى سَدِّ حَاجَتِهِ، وَالِدُعَاءُ لَهُ فِيمَا نَزَلَ بِهِ، وَالْمُعَاوَنَةُ لَهُ عَلَى طَلِبَتِهِ، وَإِنْ شَكَّكَتَ فِي صِدْقِهِ وَسَبَقَتْ إِلَيْهِ التُّهْمَةُ لَهُ وَلَمْ تَعِزِّمْ عَلَى ذَلِكَ لَمْ تَأْمَنْ أَنْ يَكُونَ مِنَ كَيْدِ الشَّيْطَانِ أَرَادَ أَنْ يَصُدِّكَ عَنْ حَقِّكَ وَيَحُولَ بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَ التَّقَرُّبِ إِلَى رَبِّكَ فَتَرَكْتَهُ بِسِتْرِهِ وَرَدَدْتَهُ رَدًّا جَمِيلًا. وَإِنْ غَلَبَتْ نَفْسُكَ فِي أَمْرِهِ وَأَعْطَيْتَهُ عَلَى مَا عَرَضَ فِي نَفْسِكَ مِنْهُ، فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ.

And the right of him who asks from you¹ is that you should grant him (his request) if you are certain that he is honest and you are able to fulfill his need. You should also pray to God to relieve him from what has befallen upon him, and help fulfill his needs.

But if you doubt his honesty and he has already been accused of dishonesty, but you are not convinced about this, you will not be sure whether this is one of the plots of Satan who is trying to deprive you of your fortune and cause a blockage between you and your approach to your Lord.

Then you should leave him and overlook² and should turn him down gently. But if you can overcome yourself in this respect and grant him what he has asked for despite what is presented to you regarding him, then this is due to your resolution in the conduct of affairs.

This topic is discussed along with the rights of him from whom you beg in the next chapter.

1. In the other version it continues: “is that you give to him in the measure of his need.”

2. His dishonesty.

Right n. 46: The Right of Him from Whom You Ask

حق المسؤول

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ الْمَسْئُولِ فَحَقُّهُ إِنْ أُعْطِيَ قَبْلَ مِنْهُ مَا أُعْطِيَ بِالشُّكْرِ لَهُ وَالْمَعْرِفَةِ لِفَضْلِهِ وَطَلَبَ وَجْهِ الْعُذْرِ فِي مَنْعِهِ، وَأَحْسَنَ بِهِ الظَّنَّ. وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّهُ إِنْ مَنَعَ [فَ]مَالَهُ مَنَعَ وَأَنْ لَيْسَ التَّثْرِيبُ فِي مَالِهِ، وَإِنْ كَانَ ظَالِمًا فَإِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَظَلُومٌ كَفَّارٌ.

And the right of him from whom you ask¹ is that you should accept from him whatever he grants you with gratitude and acknowledge his nobility. And you should accept his excuse if he withholds and think well of him. And you should realize that if he withholds, he is withholding his own property, and that he could not be blamed for withholding his own property. If he is doing wrong, then “..indeed man is unfair and ungrateful” (14:34).

Therefore, Imam Sajjad recommends not to deprive one who is needy from our help if we are wealthy, and to pray to God to eliminate their poverty. If we doubt their claim, we should consider the possibility of Satan’s plans to deprive us from a divine blessing. The Imam instructs us to politely tell off the beggar if we cannot help him. He also recommends us to thank those from whom we ask for something if they grant us anything, and not blame them for not giving us anything since everyone naturally likes what he owns.

When to Ask

Islam recommends us to ask in order to learn. We read in the Holy Qur’an:

فَاسْأَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

“... If ye realize this not, ask of those who possess the message.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Naḥl 16:43]

Asking is one of the means for learning. However, what Imam Sajjad is discussing is not asking to learn. Rather he is discussing the situations when we ask someone for something due to our need. Begging is

forbidden in Islam unless it becomes absolutely necessary like when one is about to die of poverty. In this situation, one can ask for something in order to save his life. In these conditions, the one being asked to help should assist the one who is asking for help. We read in the Holy Qur'an:

وَالَّذِينَ فِي أَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ مَّعْلُومٌ

لِلسَّائِلِ وَالْمَحْرُومِ

“And those in whose wealth is a recognized right for the (needy) who asks and him who is prevented (for some reason) from asking.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Ma'arij 70:24-25]

Those who ask should not be deprived from presenting their petition. The Qur'an says:

وَأَمَّا السَّائِلَ فَلَا تَنْهَرْ

“Nor repulse the petitioner (unheard).” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Dhuha 93: 10]

Is the right mentioned in the verse 70:24-25 cited above referring to the alms, the one-fifth levy or other obligatory religious rights? Or is it a different right? Some believe it to refer to a different right, since the obligatory religious rights are incumbent upon all people whether they are pious or not. If we accept this interpretation, then we can conclude that those who pray also recognize a right in their wealth for the needy and the deprived for the sake of God.

Verse 93: 10 cited above implies that we should not harshly push away those who ask us for something. This might imply those who ask us about scientific or religious issues, or those who are deprived, and ask us for financial help.²

Begging is Loathsome

Many traditions from the Immaculate Imams have expressed that begging is loathsome. Begging will cause the people to lose their trust in the beggar, and result in one's humility. A believer has honor and should not do something that causes him to lose his honor. Imam Sadiq quoted on the authority of the Noble Prophet :

إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى أَحَبُّ شَيْئًا لِنَفْسِهِ وَأَبْغَضُهُ لَخَلْقِهِ؛ أَبْغَضَ لَخَلْقِهِ الْمَسْأَلَةَ وَأَحَبَّ لِنَفْسِهِ أَنْ يُسْأَلَ، وَلَيْسَ شَيْءٌ أَحَبُّ إِلَى اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ مِنْ أَنْ يُسْأَلَ فَلَا يَسْتَحْبِي أَحَدُكُمْ أَنْ يَسْأَلَ اللَّهَ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَلَوْ شِيعَ نَعْلُهُ.

“There is something that God the Exalted the High loves for Himself, but hates for others. He hates for

people to ask from others, but He loves the people to ask from Him. Nothing is more loved by God the Exalted the High than to be asked for something. Therefore none of you should be ashamed of asking God from His Bounty, even if it be just for your shoe-lace.”³

It is obvious that one who begs from others has lost his trust in God. In another tradition he is quoted to have said:

إِيَّاكَ وَسُؤَالَ النَّاسِ فَإِنَّهُ ذُلٌّ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَفَقْرٌ تُعْجَلُونَهُ وَحِسَابٌ طَوِيلٌ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ.

“Beware of begging from people, for it is humiliation in this world, poverty that you hasten, and a prolonged Reckoning on the Resurrection Day.”⁴

In another tradition we read that Husayn ibn Abil’ala quoted on the authority of Imam Sadiq :

رَحِمَ اللَّهُ عَبْدًا عَفَّ وَتَعَفَّفَ وَكَفَّ عَنِ الْمَسْأَلَةِ فَإِنَّهُ يَتَعَجَّلُ الدُّنْيَةَ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَلَا يُغْنِي النَّاسُ عَنْهُ شَيْئًا.

“May God have mercy upon the servant who is chaste, and abstains (from what is unlawful), and refrains from asking, for it hastens baseness in this world, and people will not benefit from it at all.”⁵

Maintaining Human Nobility

In his will, the Commander of the Faithful gave the following advice to Imam Hasan regarding human nobility, and the loss of one’s honor and respect due to begging:

وَأَكْرِمَ نَفْسَكَ عَنْ كُلِّ دَنِيَّةٍ وَإِنْ سَاقَتْكَ إِلَى الرِّغَائِبِ فَإِنَّكَ لَنْ تَعْتَاضَ بِمَا تَبْذُلُ مِنْ نَفْسِكَ عِوَضًا وَلَا تَكُنْ عَبْدَ غَيْرِكَ وَقَدْ جَعَلَكَ اللَّهُ حُرًّا.

“O my son! Honor yourself and do not debase yourself even if it will help you reach your goal. You can never get back the equivalent of your lost honor if you do so. Do not be a servant of others, since God has created you to be free.”⁶

In another part of the will we read:

وَإِنْ اسْتَطَعْتَ أَنْ لَا يَكُونَ بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَ اللَّهِ ذُو نِعْمَةٍ فافعلْ، فَإِنَّكَ مُدْرِكُ قِسْمِكَ وَآخِذُ سَهْمِكَ وَإِنَّ الْيَسِيرَ مِنَ اللَّهِ سُبْحَانَهُ أَعْظَمُ وَأَكْرَمُ مِنَ الْكَثِيرِ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ وَإِنْ كَانَ كُلُّ مَنْهُ

“Try not to establish anyone between you and your God – who is the owner of the blessings. You will only get your share of the daily bread. Although all the blessings which are directed to you come from

Him, a little bit received directly from God is loftier and more respectful than a lot received from His servants.”[7](#)

We can see that the Imam advises his son not to humiliate himself since God is the Nourisher of all. Therefore, we should not beg since this will result in the loss of our honor. He also said:

السَّوَالُ يُضْعِفُ لِسَانَ الْمُتَكَلِّمِ وَيُكْسِرُ قَلْبَ الشُّجَاعِ الْبَاطِلِ وَيُوقِفُ الْحُرَّ الْعَزِيزَ مَوْقِفَ الْعَبْدِ الذَّلِيلِ وَيُذْهِبُ بِهِاءَ الْوَجْهِ وَيَمَحَقُ الرِّزْقَ.

“Begging will weaken the speaker’s tongue; it will break the heart of the brave, and place a free and powerful person in the position of a lowly slave. It will result in the loss of his honor and destroy his sustenance.”[8](#)

Avoid the Humiliation of Begging

Imam Sajjad said:

طَلَبُ الْحَوَائِجِ إِلَى النَّاسِ مَذَلَّةٌ لِلْحَيَاةِ وَمُذْهَبَةٌ لِلْحَيَاءِ وَاسْتِخْفَافٌ بِالْوَقَارِ وَهُوَ الْفَقْرُ الْحَاضِرُ.

“Seeking one’s needs from people is humiliation in this life a cause of becoming bereft of shame and taking one’s honor lightly, and it is present poverty.”[9](#)

The Imam Sadiq said:

طَلَبُ الْحَوَائِجِ إِلَى النَّاسِ اسْتِلَابٌ لِلْعِزَّةِ وَمُذْهَبَةٌ لِلْحَيَاءِ، وَالْيَأْسُ مِمَّا فِي أَيْدِي النَّاسِ عِزٌّ لِلْمُؤْمِنِ فِي دِينِهِ، وَالطَّمَعُ هُوَ الْفَقْرُ الْحَاضِرُ.

“Seeking one’s needs from the people is a deprivation of honor and a cause of becoming bereft of shame. Cutting off hope in what the people possess will cause a believer to have honor in his religion; and greed is present poverty.”[10](#)

The Noble Prophet of Islam said:

مَنْ فَتَحَ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ بَابَ مَسْأَلَةٍ فَتَحَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ سَبْعِينَ بَاباً مِنَ الْفَقْرِ لَا يَسُدُّ أَدْنَاهَا شَيْءٌ.

“Whoever opens up to himself a path of begging from the people will cause God to open up seventy paths of descension of poverty upon him in such a way that nothing can block even the narrowest of these seventy paths.”[11](#)

The Prophet of God advised Abu-Dharr:

يَا أَبَا ذَرٍّ! إِيَّاكَ وَالسُّؤَالَ فَإِنَّهُ ذُلٌّ حَاضِرٌ وَفَقْرٌ تَتَعَجَّلُهُ وَفِيهِ حِسَابٌ طَوِيلٌ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ. يَا أَبَا ذَرٍّ! لَا تَسْأَلُ بِكَفِّكَ، وَإِنْ أَتَاكَ شَيْءٌ فَاقْبَلْهُ.

“O Abu-Dharr! Beware of begging from the people since that is the present humiliation, and poverty that you hasten. There is also extensive Reckoning for it on the Resurrection Day. O Abu-Dharr! Do not beg from the people, but accept what is granted to you in any other way.”¹²

Imam Ridha said: “A man went to see the Prophet and asked the Prophet to teach him something that will not hinder his going to Heaven. The Prophet said:

لَا تَغْضَبْ وَلَا تَسْأَلِ النَّاسَ وَارْضَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا تَرْضَى لِنَفْسِكَ.

“Do not get angry and do not beg from people, and love for others what you love for yourself.”¹³

There are also several poems that support this idea in the literature.

Once when Imam Ali saw a man who was begging in Arafah. He admonished him and said: “Woe to you who beg from people (instead of asking God) for what you need on such a day.”¹⁴

The Prophet said: “Do not beg from the people.” A poor man had come there to beg from the Prophet . The Prophet repeatedly said:

مَنْ سَأَلْنَا أُعْطِينَاهُ وَمَنْ اسْتَغْنَى أَغْنَاهُ اللَّهُ.

“Whoever asks us, we will grant him, but whoever is content, God will make free of need.”¹⁵

The poor man did not ask for anything and returned home. Then his wife asked him the reason, and he told her what the Prophet had said. He then went to the desert, started to pick dried plants, and brought them back home for sale. This way he got rich after some time. He returned to the Prophet and told him what had happened. The Prophet again said: “I told you that God will make rich whoever does not beg from the people.”

So far we have discussed how begging affects one’s honor, social status, and psychological state of mind. We have also discussed how begging will make one poor. Therefore, one should not beg as much as possible. However, what should one do, and whom should he turn to if he really becomes needy?

Whom to Ask for Help

The Commander of the Faithful said:

فَوْتُ الْحَاجَةِ أَهْوَنُ مِنْ طَلِبِهَا إِلَى غَيْرِ أَهْلِهَا.

“Giving up one’s need is easier than to ask for it from the wrong person.” [16](#)

In another statement he said:

مَاءٌ وَجْهَكَ جَامِدٌ يَقْطُرُهُ السَّوَالُ، فَانْظُرْ عِنْدَ مَنْ تَقْطُرُهُ.

“Your honor is in a state of solidity. Begging will make it fall in drops. Thus be careful before whom you let it fall.” [17](#)

He also said:

لَا تَسْأَلُ مَنْ تَخَافُ مَنَعَهُ.

“Do not ask from one whose refusal you fear.” [18](#)

Imam Sadiq said:

فَوْتُ الْحَاجَةِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ طَلِبِهَا مِنْ غَيْرِ أَهْلِهَا.

“It is better to give up one’s need than to ask for it from the wrong person.” [19](#)

Imam Baqir said:

إِنَّمَا مَثَلُ الْحَاجَةِ إِلَى مَنْ أَصَابَ مَالَهُ حَدِيثًا كَمَثَلِ الدَّرْهِمِ فِي فَمِ الْأَفْعَى؛ أَنْتَ إِلَيْهِ مُحَوِّجٌ وَأَنْتَ مِنْهَا عَلَى خَطَرٍ.

“Seeking a need from one who has recently acquired wealth is like a dirham in the mouth of a viper – you are in need of it, but you are in danger from the snake.” [20](#)

A Bedouin went to see Imam Ali and said: “O Commander of the Faithful! I have three problems: pain in the body, poverty and ignorance.” Imam Ali said: “O Arab brother! Please go to a doctor for your physical illness, go to a knowledgeable man for your ignorance, and turn to the generous people for your poverty.”

Then the man said: “You are a doctor, a knowledgeable one, and a generous person.” Imam Ali ordered three-thousand Dirhams to be paid to him from state funds. Then he told him: “Use one-thousand Dirhams to treat your illness. Use another one-thousand Dirhams to treat your ignorance, and use the remaining one-thousand Dirhams to treat your poverty.”[21](#)

Begging From Imam Hasan

A beggar came to Imam Hasan , sat down, and wrote: “Nothing is left for me to be sold. It suffices for you to look at me to realize this. There is only my honor left to be sold. I found no customer better than you to sell my honor to.” Imam Hasan asked his servant: “How much money is in the house?” The servant replied: “Twelve-thousand Dirhams.” Imam Hasan told the servant: “I am shy of this man. Please give him all that money.”

Then the servant was surprised and asked: “Should I give all your money to him?” The Imam said: “Yes. Have a good opinion about God.” The servant then brought all the money to give to that man. Imam Hasan said: “Please excuse us. We could not provide any more. You came in rushing to us but you were granted a little. If you could come later, and were not in a rush, we could give you more. Take this small gift, and know that you made no deal with us. I am not the customer for your merchandise.[22](#) I cannot buy it.” [23](#)

One should realize that charity first reaches God. Thus, we should not mention our charity to the one who receives it. We notice how Imam Hasan treated the beggar with nobility. He gave him all the money that he had, and yet he apologized to him for the small gift he had given him. Thus, Imam Hasan taught his followers a great lesson.

Begging From Imam Husayn

Ibn Asakir wrote in Tarikh-i-Kabir that a beggar was walking in the alleys of Medina until he reached Imam Husayn’s house. He knocked at the door and said: “No beggar has lost hopes in your grants so far. Whoever knocked at your door did not lose hopes. You are considered the owner of generosity, and its treasure. Your noble father was the killer of the corrupt people.”

Imam Husayn was busy saying his prayers. Then he finished his prayer, came to the door and noticed the pale face of the beggar. He called Qanbar and asked: “How much money do you have?” Qanbar replied: “Two hundred Dirhams which you ordered me to give to your children.” Then Imam Husayn said: “Someone else has come who is more needy than they are. Bring the money.”

Then Qanbar brought the money. Imam Husayn granted it to the beggar and said: “Take this donation. I apologize to you. Know that I like you. If the times were different, I would have given you much more. Know that the times are changing, and we have very little of the worldly goods.” The Arab took the money, stepped back and said: “You and your family are adorned with the garment of purity and you are

blessed whenever your name is said. You are great. The knowledge of the Book, the divine revelations and the Qur'anic verses are in your house. Whoever is not associated with Imam Ali has nothing to be proud of among the people.”²⁴

- ¹. In the other version it continues: “is that you accept from him with gratitude and recognition of his bounty if he gives, and you accept his excuse if he withholds.”
- ². Tafsir-i-Namunah, v.27, p. 107.
- ³. Sharh-i-Risalat al-Huquq, Ghopanchi, v.2, p.478–479.
- ⁴. Ibid.
- ⁵. Ibid.
- ⁶. Ibid.
- ⁷. Nahjul Balaghah, Subhi Salih, letter no. 31.
- ⁸. Akhlaq wa Ta’lim wa Tarbiyat Islami, p.329, quoted from Ghurar al-Hikam, v.2, p. 141.
- ⁹. Bihar al-Anwar, v.7;8, p. 136.
- ¹⁰. Akhlaq wa Ta’lim wa Tarbiyat Islami, p.329, quoted from Jami’ al-Sa’adat, v.2, p.97.
- ¹¹. Sharh-i-Risalat al-Huquq, Ghopanchi, v.2, p.484.
- ¹². Ibid.
- ¹³. Ibid.
- ¹⁴. The rites of Hajj include circling the Ka’ba seven times and going seven times between the hillocks of Safa and Marwa, as Hagar did during her search for water. Then the pilgrims stand together in Arafah and ask God for what they wish and for His forgiveness, in what is often thought of as a preview of the Day of Judgment.
- ¹⁵. Sharh-i-Risalat al-Huquq, Ghopanchi, v.2, p.483.
- ¹⁶. Nahjul Balaghah, Subhi Salih, Hikmat 66: “To miss what one needs is easier than to beg from an inappropriate person.”
- ¹⁷. Sharh-i-Ghurar wa Durar, v.6, p.243, 264.
- ¹⁸. Ibid.
- ¹⁹. Tuhaf al-‘Uqul, p.264.
- ²⁰. Ibid. p.214.
- ²¹. Sharh-i-Risalat al-Huquq, Ghopanchi, v.2, p.504.
- ²². His honor.
- ²³. Sharh-i-Risalat al-Huquq, Ghopanchi, v.2, p.506.
- ²⁴. Sharh-i-Risalat al-Huquq, Ghopanchi, v.2, p.506.

Right n. 47: The Right of Him through whom God makes you Happy

حق من سرك الله به وعلى يديه

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ مَنْ سَرَّكَ اللَّهُ بِهِ وَعَلَى يَدَيْهِ، فَإِنْ كَانَ تَعَمَّدَهَا لَكَ حَمِدَتِ اللَّهُ أَوَّلًا ثُمَّ شَكَرْتُهُ عَلَى ذَلِكَ بِقَدْرِهِ فِي مَوْضِعِ
الْجَزَاءِ وَكَافَأْتُهُ عَلَى فَضْلِ الْإِبْتِدَاءِ وَأَرْصَدْتَ لَهُ الْمُكَافَأَةَ، وَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ تَعَمَّدَهَا حَمِدَتِ اللَّهُ وَشَكَرْتُهُ وَعَلِمْتَ أَنَّهُ مِنْهُ،
تَوَحَّدَكَ بِهَا وَأَحْبَبْتَ هَذَا إِذْ كَانَ سَبَبًا مِنْ أَسْبَابِ نِعَمِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكَ وَتَرْجُو لَهُ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ خَيْرًا، فَإِنَّ أَسْبَابَ النِّعَمِ بَرَكَةٌ
حَيْثُ مَا كَانَتْ وَإِنْ كَانَ لَمْ يَتَعَمَّدَ. وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

And the right of him through whom God makes you happy is that¹ if he intentionally made you happy, you should first praise God and then you should thank him accordingly, and reward him for initiating a nobility and be determined to return his favor. But if he made you happy unintentionally, you should praise God, thank Him, and realize that He chose you exclusively for that, and you liked it. He has been one of the means of God's blessings descending upon you. You should only wish him well since the means of descension of blessings are themselves blessings wherever they be, even if unintentionally. And there is no power but in God.

There are many different situations in life. Sometimes life is filled with failures and difficulties. At other times, it is filled with success and happiness. The difficulties may seem like storms that threaten a safe harboring. The successes may cause such an outbreak of happiness that we lose all our control. Islam and the Qur'an direct us towards prosperity, and invite us to act moderately in all situations.

We should not lose hope in God's Mercy when we are faced with difficulties. We should not think that there is no way out for us. We should not become negligent during times of happiness and forget our identity and God. We should remember God in all situations, and realize that blessings and the attention that we receive are due to God's will. It is God who makes us happy. We should also realize that difficulties are very instrumental in our progress and development. We should be moderate whether we are happy or sad. The cause of happiness varies. Sometimes we get a new position. At other times, we get rich. Sometimes another person makes us happy.

The Reward for Making Believers Happy

There is a chapter on this subject in *Usul al-Kafi*. The importance of happiness and making people happy has been outlined there. We will review a few of them here.

Abi Hamzeh al-Thumali quoted on the authority of Imam Sadiq on the authority of God's Prophet:

مَنْ سَرَّ مُؤْمِنًا فَقَدْ سَرَّنِي وَمَنْ سَرَّنِي فَقَدْ سَرَّ اللَّهَ.

*"Whoever makes a believer happy has indeed made me happy. Whoever makes me happy has made God happy."*²

This tradition shows us that one way to please the Prophet and God is to make the people happy. This can play a very important role in fostering social unity, and in eliminating hard feelings and animosities. Jabir narrated that Imam Baqir said:

تَبَسُّمُ الْمُؤْمِنِ فِي وَجْهِ الْمُؤْمِنِ حَسَنَةٌ وَصَرَفُ الْقَذَى عَنْهُ حَسَنَةٌ وَمَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بِشَيْءٍ أَحَبُّ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ إِدْخَالِ السُّرُورِ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِ.

“The smile of a believer at another believer is a good deed. Removing a speck from your brother’s eye is a good deed. No form of worshipping God is more loved by Him than making the believer happy.”³

Therefore, the best form of worshipping God is making others happy. Imam Baqir said: “In the supplications of Moses – the son of Imran – we read that God told Moses : “There are among My servants some for whom Heaven is destined and they shall have the rule there.” Then Moses asked: “O Lord! Who are those who have such a special place in Heaven?”

God said: “Those who make believers happy.” This tradition continues as follows: “If a believer who lives in a land that is ruled by an oppressive ruler migrates to a land in which pagans live, seeks asylum there and gets influenced by them; when he dies he will be told, “O My servant! I would have let you reside in Heaven if you had any place there, but Heaven is forbidden for those who set up partners with me.” The fire will be ordered to seize that man but not to torture him, and he will be fed at proper times. Then Moses asked: “Where will he be fed from?” God said: “He will be fed from wherever God wills.”⁴ We also see a similar concept in the following verse:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ

“God forgiveth not that partners should be set up with Him; but He forgiveth anything else, to whom He pleaseth ...” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Nisaa 4:48]

Therefore, we realize that those who make people happy go to Heaven and have a special rank there. In the sixth tradition in the above–mentioned chapter, we read that Imam Sadiq said:

لَا يَرَى أَحَدُكُمْ إِذَا أُدْخِلَ عَلَى مُؤْمِنٍ سُرُوراً أَنَّهُ عَلَيْهِ أُدْخِلَهُ فَقَطْ، بَلِ وَاللَّهِ عَلَيْنَا، بَلِ وَاللَّهِ عَلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ

“When one of you makes a believer happy, you should not think that you have only made him happy. No, I swear by God, you have also made us happy. No, I swear by God, you have also made God’s Prophet happy.”⁵

Therefore the Prophet and the Immaculate Imams all get happy when they see that their followers are being kind to each other and making each other happy.

Making Others Happy Will Save You

Sodayr Seyrafi quoted on the authority of Imam Sadiq : “When a believer is resurrected on Judgment Day, he might see someone ahead of him who tells him not to be afraid of what he sees, and gives him glad tidings of happiness from the Lord. Then that person always accompanies him until the Reckoning. His Reckoning will be an easy one, and he will be told to go to Heaven.

That person who always walks ahead of him will still accompany him. Then the believer will ask: “May God have Mercy upon you. You have been walking ahead of me since I was resurrected, and have given me glad tidings of God’s Mercy on me. Now please tell me who you are.” That person will say: “I am the result of your deeds making other believers happy in your life. God created me out of that happiness to give you glad tidings.”⁶ In this tradition, we see that all our deeds will somehow be manifested in the Hereafter.

Imam Sadiq’s Followers are Men of Action

Kulayni narrated that Mohammad ibn Jamhooir said: “Najashi was a farmer who was appointed as the governor of the provinces of Ahwaz and Fars. One of his agents went to see Imam Sadiq and said: I owe Najashi a lot of taxes and know that he really likes you. Can you please write a recommendation for me? Imam Sadiq wrote: “In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful. Make your brother happy in order to make God happy.”

Then the man took the letter and gave it to Najashi. Najashi waited until others left. Then he kissed the letter and asked him what he wanted. The man told Najashi that he had been taxed 10,000 Dirhams. Najashi ordered the tax not to be taken from him, and asked if he had made him happy that way. The man said yes. Then he ordered that a horse, a servant and a maid be given to him and asked if he had made him happy.

The man said yes. Then Najashi ordered the carpet he was sitting on to be given to him, too. Later on, Mohammad ibn Jamhooir told the Imam what had happened. The Imam became happy. He said: “O you became happy.” The Imam said: “Yes. I swear by God that the Prophet became happy, too.”

Making Others Happy Will Always Accompany You

Imam Sadiq said:

مَنْ أَدْخَلَ عَلَى مُؤْمِنٍ سُوراً خَلَقَ اللَّهُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ السُّورِ خَلْقاً يَلْقَاهُ عِنْدَ مَوْتِهِ فَيَقُولُ لَهُ: أَبَشِّرْ يَا وَلِيَّ اللَّهِ بِكَرَامَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانٍ، ثُمَّ لَا يَزَالُ مَعَهُ حَتَّى يَدْخُلَهُ قَبْرُهُ، فَيَقُولُ لَهُ مِثْلَ ذَلِكَ فَإِذَا بَعَثَ يَلْقَاهُ فَيَقُولُ لَهُ مِثْلَ ذَلِكَ، ثُمَّ لَا يَزَالُ مَعَهُ عِنْدَ كُلِّ هَوْلٍ يُبَشِّرُهُ وَيَقُولُ لَهُ مِثْلَ ذَلِكَ، فَيَقُولُ لَهُ: مَنْ أَنْتَ رَحِمَكَ اللَّهُ؟ فَيَقُولُ لَهُ: أَنَا السُّورُ الَّذِي أَدْخَلْتَهُ عَلَى فُلَانٍ.

“Whoever makes a believer happy, God will create from that happiness a creature who will meet him at the time of his death and say to him: ‘Rejoice, O friend of God, at the favour and pleasure of God’. He will stay with him until he enters the grave and will repeat the same words to him. When he is resurrected, he will meet him and say the same to him again. Then he will continue to be with him at every (moment of) terror, giving him glad tidings and repeating the same words. The man will say to him: ‘Who are you, may God have mercy on you’? He will answer: ‘I am the happiness you had brought to so

and so in his lifetime’.”⁷

In the last tradition in that chapter, we read that Hisham ibn Hakam quoted on the authority of Imam Sadiq :

مِنْ أَحَبِّ الْأَعْمَالِ إِلَى اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ إِدْخَالُ السُّرُورِ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِ: إِشْبَاعُ جُوعَتِهِ أَوْ تَنْفِيسُ كُرْبَتِهِ أَوْ قَضَاءُ دَيْنِهِ.

*“One of the most beloved deeds for God is making a believer happy. That includes feeding him if he is hungry, or helping fend off his calamities, or paying off his debts.”*⁸

Thus, we realize that Islam is for this world and the Hereafter. The best society is one whose members treat each other with kindness and love. The Immaculate Imams have constantly advised their followers to help each other in order to direct them towards achieving Utopia.

¹. In the other version it continues: “you first praise God, then you thank that person.”

². Usul al-Kafi, v.2, p. 188, traditions 1–2.

³. Ibid.

⁴. Usul al-Kafi, v.2, p. 188, tradition 3.

⁵. Usul al-Kafi, vol.2, tradition 6.

⁶. Ibid. pp. 190–191.

⁷. Usul al-Kafi, vol.2, pp. 191–192.

⁸. Ibid.

Right n. 48: The Right of Him Who Wrongs You

حق من ساءك

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ مَنْ سَاءَكَ الْقَضَاءُ عَلَى يَدَيْهِ بِقَوْلٍ أَوْ فِعْلٍ فَإِنْ كَانَ تَعَمَّدَهَا كَانَ الْعَفْوُ أَوْلَى بِكَ لِمَا فِيهِ لَهُ مِنَ الْقَمْعِ وَحُسْنِ الْأَدَبِ مَعَ كَثِيرِ أَمْثَالِهِ مِنَ الْخَلْقِ، فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَقُولُ [وَلَمَنْ انتَصَرَ بَعْدَ ظُلْمِهِ فَأُولَئِكَ مَا عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ سَبِيلٍ. إِنَّمَا السَّبِيلُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَظْلِمُونَ النَّاسَ وَيَبْغُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ، أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ. وَلَمَنْ صَبَرَ وَغَفَرَ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ لَمِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ] وَقَالَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ [وَإِنْ عَاقَبْتُمْ فَعَاقِبُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا عُوقِبْتُمْ بِهِ وَلَئِنْ صَبَرْتُمْ لَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لِلصَّابِرِينَ] هَذَا فِي الْعَمْدِ فَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ عَمْدًا لَمْ تَظْلِمْهُ بِتَعَمُّدِ الْإِنْتِصَارِ مِنْهُ فَتَكُونُ قَدْ كَافَأْتَهُ فِي تَعَمُّدٍ عَلَى خَطَأٍ. وَرَفِقَتْ بِهِ وَرَدَدَتْهُ بِالطَّفِّ مَا تَقْدِرُ عَلَيْهِ. وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ.

And the right of him who wrongs you¹ is to put an end to the matter by word or deed. If he did it intentionally, it is more appropriate for you to pardon him. This would eliminate bad feelings, and it is the polite way to treat most such people. Indeed God says: *“But indeed if any do help and defend themselves after a wrong (done) to them, against such there is no blame. The blame is*

only against those who oppress men with wrongdoing and insolently transgress beyond bounds throughout the land, defying right and justice: for such there will be a Penalty grievous. But indeed if any show patience and forgive, that would truly be an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs” (42:41–43).

The Almighty the High also says: “*And if ye do catch them out, catch them out no worse than they catch you out. But if ye show patience, that is indeed the best (course) for those who are patient” (16:126).*

This is so if it was intentional. But if he who wrongs you has done it unintentionally, then you should not oppress him by intentionally insisting on retaliation, lest you would be punishing him intentionally for what he has done unintentionally. You should be gentle with him and respond to him as kindly as you can. And there is no power but in God.

In short, we can say that if someone wrongs you, he has either done so intentionally or unintentionally. You should pardon him if he has done so intentionally. Hopefully he will not take advantage of your pardoning him. If he has wronged you unintentionally, it is not proper to punish him intentionally. Rather you should be kind to and gentle with him.

Invitation to Pardon

Very few people are able to totally avoid violating the rights of others whether intentionally or unintentionally. If people are urged to take revenge whenever they can do so, then there will be an escalation of harsh social encounters. Attacks for taking revenge are of an unpredictable nature and no one can control their severity. Usually they will be harsh. Even if they are measurable and controllable, they never seem to be exactly equal to compensate for the wrong that was done from the views of both parties involved.

Therefore, even if one side wants to be fair and exactly punish the other side in an amount equal to the original misdeed, the other party does not agree and will be urged to take revenge himself. Thus, the fighting will continue on and on. The only possible way to stop this chain of revenge taking is forgiving.

If we think we will realize that there is no real benefit in taking revenge, since it will only bring temporary relief for us. Yet the satisfaction we can get from pardoning the other party is much more spiritually rewarding and long-lasting. This issue has been delicately addressed in the Holy Qur'an and Islamic literature, and pardoning has been declared an important duty for Muslims. First, let us consider the Qur'anic verses that Imam Sajjad referred to.

Seeking Help from the Believers

Seeking help from other believers is one of the signs of believers. The Holy Qur'an says:

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَهُمُ الْبَغْيُ هُمْ يَنْتَصِرُونَ

“And those who, when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them, (are not cowed but) help and defend themselves.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Shura 42:39]

What we can learn from this verse is that those whose help is sought are duty-bound to help. That implies that both the believer who is being oppressed and other believers are responsible to help defend against the oppressor. This is also stated in the following verse of the Holy Qur’an:

وَإِنْ اسْتَنْصَرُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ فَعَلَيْكُمُ النَّصْرُ

“... But if they seek your aid in religion, it is your duty to help them.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Anfal 8:72]

This responsibility placed on the believer’s shoulders to help each other at times of oppression warns the oppressors. They will then know that other believers will not sit idle if a believer is oppressed. In another verse, the response to injuries is clearly stated to be an equal injury:

وَجَزَاءُ سَيِّئَةٍ سَيِّئَةٌ مِثْلُهَا فَمَنْ عَفَا وَأَصْلَحَ فَأَجْرُهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمِينَ

“The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto (in degree): but if a person forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from God: for (God) loveth not those who do wrong.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Shura 42:40]

What an oppressor does to a believer is inflicting an injury. The recompense is an equal injury and is considered a bad deed even though the original injury is a bad deed. We also read in another verse of the Holy Qur’an:

الشَّهْرُ الْحَرَامُ بِالشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ وَالْحُرُمَاتُ قِصَاصٌ فَمَنْ اعْتَدَى عَلَيْكُمْ فَاعْتَدُوا عَلَيْهِ بِمِثْلِ مَا اعْتَدَى عَلَيْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ

“The prohibited month for the prohibited month, – and so for all things prohibited, – there is the law of equality. If then anyone transgresses the prohibition against you, transgress ye likewise against him. But fear God, and know that God is with those who restrain themselves.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Baqarah 2: 194]

It is also not wrong to seek help or help defend others as we read:

وَلَمَنْ انتَصَرَ بَعْدَ ظُلْمِهِ فَأُولَئِكَ مَا عَلَيْهِمْ مِّن سَبِيلٍ

“But indeed if any do help and defend themselves after a wrong (done) to them, against such there is no cause of blame.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Shura 42:41]

Forgiving: a Better Way

Imam Sajjad cited the following verse:

وَلَمَن صَبَرَ وَغَفَرَ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ لَمِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ

“But indeed if any show patience and forgive, that would truly be an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Shura 42:43]

He also cited the following verse:

وَإِنْ عَاقَبْتُمْ فَعَاقِبُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا عُوقِبْتُمْ بِهِ وَلَئِن صَبَرْتُمْ لَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لِلصَّابِرِينَ

“And if ye do catch them out, catch them out no worse than they catch you out: But if ye show patience, that is indeed the best (course) for those who are patient.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Naḥl 16: 126]

In some traditions, it is stated that this verse was revealed in the Battle of Uhud when the Prophet of God saw the body of his noble uncle, the Blessed Hamzeh, torn into pieces. He got upset and said:

اللَّهُمَّ لَكَ الْحَمْدُ وَإِلَيْكَ الْمُشْتَكَى وَأَنْتَ الْمُسْتَعَانُ عَلَى مَا أَرَى

“O God! Praise is for you. I bring my complaint to You, and seek Your help regarding what I see.”

Then the above verse was revealed and the Prophet said: “I will be patient. I will be patient.”²

The Difference between Forgiving and Overlooking

We read the following verse in the Holy Qur’an regarding forgiving and overlooking:

وَلَا يَأْتَلِ أُولُوا الْفَضْلِ مِنْكُمْ وَالسَّعَةِ أَنْ يُؤْتُوا أُولِي الْقُرْبَى وَالْمَسَاكِينَ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلْيَعْفُوا وَلْيَصْفَحُوا أَلَا تُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

“Let not those among you who are endowed with grace and amplitude of means resolve by oath against helping their kinsmen, those in want, and those who have left their homes in God's cause: let them forgive and overlook, do you not wish that God should forgive you? For God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Nur 24:22]

The difference between simply forgiving, and forgiving and overlooking is that one who forgives and overlooks will no longer blame and remind the other person of his mistake.

Doing Good in Return for Evil

A more important stage that is beyond forgiving and overlooking is responding by doing good in return for evil. Undoubtedly this is one of the excellent manifestations of human spirit, and requires moral training and spiritual refinement. It is also the best lesson one can teach those who engage in an evil deed. Therefore, this kind of response to an evil deed is considered the best way to end animosities. We read in the following verse:

وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ

وَمَا يُلْقَاهَا إِلَّا الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَمَا يُلْقَاهَا إِلَّا ذُو حَظٍّ عَظِيمٍ

“Nor can goodness and Evil be equal. Repel (Evil) with what is better: Then will he between whom and thee was hatred become as it were thy friend and intimate! And no one will be granted such goodness except those who exercise patience and self-restraint, – none but persons of the greatest good fortune.” [The Holy Qur'an, Ha-Mim 41:34-35]

Therefore, we are reminded of the magic power of “repelling evil with what is better.” We learn that we can use this form of behavior as a means of converting our worst enemies into friends. We are also told that achieving this requires the “exercise of patience and self-restraint” which is only possible if we have faith, piety, moral and scientific nobility, patience and self-restraint against negative human tendencies.

Those who oppress always expect retaliation and revenge from the other side. They even consider themselves worthy of such retaliation due to their sub-conscience. This is the reason why responding with goodness in return for their evil deeds is like a shock to them, and it can turn them into friends instead of foes. Once, unexpectedly they are treated nicely in return for their evil behavior, their conscience is awakened and they change their opinions regarding their enemies.

Forgiving When in Power

We can only say one has forgiven another person's wrong-doing if he is in a position of power and can take revenge but quenches his anger and does not do so. However, when one who is wronged is in a weak position, and cannot take revenge, he cannot claim to have forgiven the other party.

Joseph Forgave

This point has been clarified in the Holy Qur'an in the story of the Blessed Joseph and his wrongdoing brothers. When they went to Egypt for the third time and they got to know their brother Joseph:

قَالُوا إِنَّكَ لَأَنْتَ يُوسُفُ قَالَ أَنَا يُوسُفُ وَهَذَا أَخِي قَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا إِنَّهُ مَنْ يَتَّقِ وَيَصْبِرْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

"They said: "Art thou indeed Joseph?" He said, "I am Joseph, and this is my brother. God has indeed been gracious to us (all): behold, he that is righteous and patient, – never will God suffer the reward to be lost, of those who do right." [The Holy Qur'an, Yusuf 12:90]

Then Joseph reminded them of their wrongdoings and asked them what they deserved. They acknowledged their wrong deeds and accepted that they deserved to be punished, but asked Joseph to forgive them. Joseph replied:

قَالَ لَا تَثْرِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْيَوْمَ يَعْفِرُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَهُوَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ

"He said: "This day let no reproach be (cast) on you: God will forgive you, and He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy!" [The Holy Qur'an, Yusuf 12:92]

Here Joseph is in the position of power and can punish them in any way he wishes to, but he forgives them – a true case of forgiving.

The Prophet Conquers Mecca and Forgives

The Prophet Muhammad conquered Mecca in the 8th year after his immigration to Medina. He entered the city and went to the Masjid ul-Haram (The Haram Mosque). He recited this verse:

وَقُلْ جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ إِنَّ الْبَاطِلَ كَانَ زَهُوقًا

"And say: "Truth has (now) arrived, and Falsehood perished: for Falsehood is (by its nature)

***bound to perish."* [The Holy Qur'an, Bani Israil 17:81]**

Then he ordered the idols to be destroyed and said: "There is no god but God the One and Only." Then he turned to the people of Mecca and said: "What do you say and suspect?" They said: "We say good things and have good thoughts. A noble brother, the son of a noble brother has now become victorious." Then the Prophet said: "Now I will say unto you what my brother Joseph said: "This day let no reproach be (cast) on you. God will forgive you, and He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy. I free you all. You can go."

We see that the Prophet , who was in total power and could kill them all, did not do so. He only punished a few who had committed major crimes, and forgave all others."³

Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib said:

عِنْدَ كَمَالِ الْقُدْرَةِ تَظْهَرُ فَضِيلَةُ الْعَفْوِ.

*"The nobility and true value of forgiving will be demonstrated when in total power."*⁴

This emphasizes the fact that true forgiving is limited to cases where one has the power to take revenge. One who does not have any power has no choice but to forgive. He also said:

أَحْسَنُ الْعَفْوِ مَا كَانَ عَنْ قُدْرَةٍ.

*"The best form of forgiving is one rooted in power."*⁵

He also said in *Nahjul Balaghah*:

إِذَا قَدَرْتَ عَلَى عَدُوِّكَ فَاجْعَلِ الْعَفْوَ عَنْهُ شُكْرًا لِلْقُدْرَةِ عَلَيْهِ.

*"Once you overcome your enemy, make your forgiveness of him a way of being grateful to God for your victory over him."*⁶

The noble spirit of free men deems it proper to forgive others and abandon taking revenge when they are in total power, thereby changing their enemies from within.

¹ In the other version it continues: "is that you pardon him. But if you that your pardon will harm him, you should defend yourself. God says: 'Whosoever defends himself after he has been wronged – against him there is no way'". [Shura., 42:41]

² Tafsir-i-Namunah, v. 11, p.457.

³ Tarikh Payambar-i-Islam, p.324.

⁴ Sharh Ghurar wa Durar, v.4, p.324.

⁵ Ibid. v.2, p.435.

⁶ Nahjul Balaghah, Subhi Salih, Hikmat no. 11.

Right n. 49: The Right of People of Your Creed

حق أهل ملتك

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ أَهْلِ مِلَّتِكَ عَامَّةً فَإِضْمَارُ السَّلَامَةِ وَنَشْرُ جَنَاحِ الرَّحْمَةِ وَالرِّفْقِ بِمُسِيئِهِمْ وَتَأْلُفُهُمْ وَاسْتِصْلَاحُهُمْ وَشُكْرُ مُحْسِنِهِمْ إِلَى نَفْسِهِ وَإِلَيْكَ، فَإِنَّ إِحْسَانَهُ إِلَى نَفْسِهِ إِحْسَانُهُ إِلَيْكَ إِذَا كَفَّ عَنْكَ أَذَاهُ وَكَفَاكَ مَثْوَنَتَهُ وَحَبَسَ عَنْكَ نَفْسَهُ فَعَمَّهُمْ جَمِيعًا بِدَعْوَتِكَ وَانصَرُّهُمْ جَمِيعًا بِنُصْرَتِكَ وَأَنْزَلْتَهُمْ جَمِيعًا مِنْكَ مَنَازِلَهُمْ، كَبِيرَهُمْ بِمَنْزِلَةِ الْوَالِدِ وَصَغِيرَهُمْ بِمَنْزِلَةِ الْوَلَدِ وَأَوْسَطَهُمْ بِمَنْزِلَةِ الْأَخِ. فَمَنْ أَتَاكَ تَعَاهَدْتَهُ بِلُطْفٍ وَرَحْمَةٍ. وَصِلْ أَخَاكَ بِمَا يَجِبُ لِلْأَخِ عَلَى أَخِيهِ.

And the right of the people of your creed is that you should have their welfare at heart, be merciful and gentle to their wrongdoers, treat them with friendliness and desire their well-being, and thank those of them who do good to themselves and to you.¹

Their goodness to themselves is goodness to you because they have refrained from troubling you, spared you their burden, and restrained themselves from you. So include them all in your supplication, and help them all with your aid. And you should respect each one of them as he deserves: their old men hold the position of your fathers, and their young ones hold the position of your children, and their youths hold the position of your brothers. You should gently and compassionately care for those of them who come to you. And you should treat your brethren as brothers deserve to be treated.

Here the phrase “people of your creed” stands for nation, and it usually refers to people of the same belief. It is similar to religion that God has sent down to people through Prophets. The only difference is that nation is only ascribed to a Prophet not to God or the individuals. We do not say God’s nation or so and so’s nation. However, religion is ascribed to God, a Prophet, or an individual. We see such instances in the words of the Prophet Joseph in the Holy Qur’an as “the ways of a people”:

إِنِّي تَرَكْتُ مِلَّةَ قَوْمٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ وَاتَّبَعْتُ مِلَّةَ آبَائِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ

“I have (I assure you) abandoned the ways of a people that believe not in God and that (even) deny the Hereafter. And I follow the ways of my fathers, – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” [The Holy Qur’an, Yusuf 12:37-38]

In another verse we read:

مَا سَمِعْنَا بِهَذَا فِي الْمِلَّةِ الْآخِرَةِ إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا اخْتِلَاقٌ

“We never heard (the like) of this among the people of these later days. This is nothing but a made-up tale!” [The Holy Qur’an, Sad 38:7]

It has also been referred to the idol-worshippers:

قَدْ افْتَرَيْنَا عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا إِنْ عُدْنَا فِي مِلَّتِكُمْ بَعْدَ إِذْ نَجَّانَا اللَّهُ مِنْهَا

“We should indeed invent a lie against God if we returned to your ways after God hath rescued us therefrom...” [The Holy Qur’an, al-A`raaf 7:89]

In this chapter, we shall discuss Imam Sajjad’s expression of the rights of the people who have the same religion, or the nation of Islam.

Islam and the Society

Islam considers man as a social creature whose development is subject to social development. We can easily understand this in the way God addresses groups of people in the Qur’an. In the following verse, God addresses the people to follow the straight path:

وَأَنَّ هَذَا صِرَاطِي مُسْتَقِيمًا فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ذَلِكُمْ وَصَّاكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

“Verily this is My way, leading straight. Follow it. Follow not (other) paths. They will scatter you about from His (great) Path. Thus doth He command you that ye may be righteous.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Anam 6: 153]

In another verse, God invites the people who were enemies before to be united as brothers:

وَاَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا

“And hold fast, all together, by the Rope which God (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves, and remember with gratitude God’s favor on you for ye were enemies and He joined your hearts in love, so that by His Grace, ye become brethren ...” [The Holy Qur’an, Al-i-Imran 3: 103]

Others are surprised about this event. John Davenport, the well-known British scholar wrote:

“Muhammad who was a simple Arab was able to unite the small, hungry and naked tribes which were all scattered about into a disciplined and united nation by introducing to them such new ethics and characteristics that did not exist in other nations. He could overthrow the Constantinople Empire and the

Persian kingdom in less than thirty years. He conquered Syria, Iraq, and Egypt, and extended his rule from the Atlantic Ocean to the Caspian Sea and the Jaxartes River.”²

The late Indian politician and scholar Nehru wrote:

“The history of the Arabs and the way they rapidly expanded out into Africa, Asia and Europe, and created a great and an excellent civilization is one of the wonders of human history. The force and the thoughts that awakened the Arabs and filled them with power and self-confidence was due to Islam. This religion was started by a new Prophet called Muhammad who was born in Mecca around the year 570 A.D.”³

These were just two instances that we cited. There are many other writings by the world’s most famous scholars confessing to the great developments due to the appearance of the Muslim nation that would make up a large volume if compiled together.

In the following verse, Muslims are invited to be united:

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ تَفَرَّقُوا وَاخْتَلَفُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ وَأُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

“Be not like those who are divided amongst themselves and fall into disputations after receiving clear signs. For them is a dreadful Penalty.” [The Holy Qur’an, Ali-I-Imran 3: 105]

Here Muslims are asked to avoid the disputes that the nations following Judaism or Christianity pursued before. The Qur’an advises the Muslims to avoid disputes that would lead to their loss of grandeur. The Holy Qur’an says:

وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَا تَنَازَعُوا فَتَفْشَلُوا وَتَذْهَبَ رِيحُكُمْ وَاصْبِرُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ

“And obey God and His Apostle, and fall into no disputes lest ye lose heart and your power depart; and be patient and persevering for God is with those who patiently persevere.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Anfal 8:46]

In this verse, the role of leadership and obeying the orders of our leaders is clarified. We should avoid any disputes in order to maintain our power. In this way, we should all persevere with patience.

Brotherhood as a Slogan for Muslims

The Qur’an has admonished us against disputes, and has invited Muslim societies to brotherhood:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

“The Believers are but a single Brotherhood. So make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers; and fear God, that ye may receive Mercy.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Hujurat 39: 10]

Man is a social creature. Undoubtedly in each society, individuals pursue their own interests. This is why there are social disputes. How should we behave in order to avoid social disputes? There are moral recommendations in Islam which when followed will guarantee this. There are two chapters in *Usul al-Kafi* on moderation and friendliness. We will review some of the traditions in these chapters here. Ali ibn Ibrahim quoted on the authority of Imam Sadiq on the authority of God’s Prophet :

ثَلَاثٌ مَنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ فِيهِ لَمْ يَتِمَّ لَهُ عَمَلٌ؛ وَرَعٌ يَحْجِزُهُ عَنِ مَعَاصِي اللَّهِ وَخُلُقٌ يَدَارِي بِهِ النَّاسَ وَحِلْمٌ يَرُدُّ بِهِ جَهْلَ الْجَاهِلِ.

“There are three characteristics which if anyone lacks his deeds will not be perfect: 1) piety to prevent him from disobedience to God 2) being good natured with people, 3) forbearance that wards off the ignorance of an ignorant person.”^{[4](#)}

In another tradition Muhammad ibn Yahya quoted on the authority of Husayn ibn al-Hasan on the authority of Imam Baqir : “Gabriel descended to the Prophet and said:

يَا مُحَمَّدُ! رَبُّكَ يُقَرِّبُكَ السَّلَامَ وَيَقُولُ لَكَ: دَارِ خَلْقِي.

“O Muhammad! Your Lord greets you and says: Be affable with My creatures.”^{[5](#)}

In another tradition Imam Sadiq quoted on the authority of the Noble Prophet :

أَمَرَنِي رَبِّي بِمُدَارَاةِ النَّاسِ كَمَا أَمَرَنِي بِأَدَاءِ الْفَرَائِضِ.

“My Lord has ordered me to be affable with people just as He ordered me to perform the obligatory deeds.”^{[6](#)}

The Effects of Treating People with Gentleness

Allameh Majlisi has defined gentleness as: “mildness, kindness, and avoiding harshness in actions and speech when dealing with people in all circumstances.”^{[7](#)} Imam Baqir said:

إِنَّ لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ قُفْلًا وَقُفْلُ الْإِيمَانِ الرَّفْقُ.

“Everything has a lock (a safeguard) and the lock of faith is gentleness”.^{[8](#)}

In this tradition, faith has been expressed as a precious jewel, which must be safeguarded, and the heart is its vault. Gentleness is expressed as the lock that can securely protect faith in our heart. It does not let Satan enter our heart and rule our faith. If this lock is opened and gentleness is abandoned, harshness, quarrelling and corruption will ensue.

Imam Baqir quoted on the authority of the Noble Prophet of Islam :

لَوْ كَانَ الرَّفْقُ خَلْقًا يُرَى مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ شَيْئًا أَحْسَنَ مِنْهُ

“If gentleness was a creature that could be seen, God would not have created anything better than it.”⁹

Imam Baqir said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ رَفِيقٌ يُحِبُّ الرَّفْقَ، وَيُعْطِي عَلَى الرَّفْقِ مَا لَا يُعْطِي عَلَى الْعُنْفِ

“God, the Exalted, the High, is gentle and loves gentleness. He grants for gentleness what he does not grant for harshness.”¹⁰

Imam Sadiq quoted on the authority of the Noble Prophet :

الرَّفْقُ يُمْنٌ وَالْخَرَقُ شُؤْمٌ

“Gentleness is auspiciousness, while harshness is inauspiciousness.”¹¹

Therefore we can better understand what Imam Sajjad means when he says “and treat their wrongdoers with patience, and treat them with friendliness, and seek their welfare, and thank those of them who do good to you and to themselves ... and you should respect each one of them as he deserves: their old men hold the position of your fathers, and their children hold the position of your children, and their youths hold the position of your brothers ...”

These rights of others have already been discussed in the previous chapters. He finally instructs us by saying that: “...You should gently and compassionately care for those of them who come to you. And you should treat your brother as a brother deserves to be treated.” This stresses the importance of the people of the same belief. We should treat them as we treat our brothers. We should seek God’s help in so doing.

¹. In the other version it continues: ”And keeping harm away from them. You should love for them what you love for yourself and dislike for them what you dislike for yourself. Their old men stand in the place of your father, their youth in the place of your brothers, their old women in the place of your mother, and their young ones in the place of your children.”

². Uzr-e-Taqsir bi Pishgah-i-Muhammad wa Qur’an, translation by Sayyid Ghulam Rida Sa’idi, p.77.

- [3.](#) A Look at World History, translation by Mahmood Tafazzoli, v. 1, p.290.
- [4.](#) Usul al-Kafi, v.2, p. 116.
- [5.](#) Usul al-Kafi, v.2, p. 116.
- [6.](#) Ibid.
- [7.](#) Mir'at al-'Uqul, v.8, p.233.
- [8.](#) Usul al-Kafi, v.2, p. 118.
- [9.](#) Ibid. p. 120.
- [10.](#) Usul al-Kafi, v.2, p. 116.
- [11.](#) Ibid.

Right n. 50: The Right of Those Under the Protection of Islam

حق أهل الذمة

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ أَهْلِ الذِّمَّةِ فَالْحُكْمُ فِيهِمْ أَنْ تَقْبَلَ مِنْهُمْ مَا قَبِلَ اللَّهُ، وَتَفِي بِمَا جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ مِنْ ذِمَّتِهِ وَعَهْدِهِ وَتَكْلُفُهُمْ إِلَيْهِ فِيمَا طَلَبُوا مِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَأُجْبِرُوا عَلَيْهِ وَتَحْكُمَ فِيهِمْ بِمَا حَكَّمَ اللَّهُ بِهِ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ فِيمَا جَرَى بَيْنَكَ [وَبَيْنَهُمْ] مِنْ مُعَامَلَةٍ وَلْيَكُنْ بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَ ظُلْمِهِمْ مِنْ رِعَايَةِ ذِمَّةِ اللَّهِ وَالْوَفَاءِ بِعَهْدِهِ وَعَهْدِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ – صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ – حَائِلٌ فَإِنَّهُ بَلَّغَنَا أَنَّهُ قَالَ «مَنْ ظَلَمَ مُعَاهِدًا كُنْتُ خَصْمَهُ» فَاتَّقِ اللَّهَ. وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ.

And the right of those under the protection of Islam is that you should accept from them what God has accepted from them, and fulfill what God has established for them under His protection and covenant, and entrust them to Him in what they are required to carry out, and are obliged to do.

And you should judge among them with the judgments of God that He commanded for you regarding the conditions of dealing with them, and do not wrong them as long as they honor God's covenant and fulfill their pledge. And the pledge of the Prophet, may God's peace be upon him and his household, is a barrier¹ since it is reported that he said: "I am the adversary of whoever oppresses one who has a treaty." Therefore, fear God. And there is no power but in God.

The Arabic word 'Dhimma' means a pledge or a covenant. It has appeared in the following verses, for example:

كَيْفَ وَإِنْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَيْكُمْ لَا يَرْقُبُوا فِيكُمْ إِلَّا وَلَا ذِمَّةً يُرْضُونَكُمْ بِأَفْوَهِهِمْ وَتَأْبَى قُلُوبُهُمْ وَأَكْثَرُهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ

“How (can there be such a league), seeing that if they get an advantage over you, they respect not in you the ties either of kinship or of covenant? With (fair words from) their mouth they entice you, but their hearts are averse from you; and most of them are rebellious and wicked.”
[The Holy Qur’an, al-Tawbah 9:8]

لَا يَرْقُبُونَ فِي مُؤْمِنٍ إِلَّا وَلَا ذِمَّةً وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُعْتَدُونَ

“In a believer they respect not the ties either of kinship or of covenant! It is they who have transgressed all bounds. [The Holy Qur’an, al-Tawbah 9: 10]

“Those under the protection of Islam” refers to the Jews and the Christians who live under the rule of an Islamic government and have a covenant with the Muslims. There are two references to this in the Holy Qur’an.² We read in *Nahjul Balaghah* the following regarding the various social classes: “And there are people amongst them who pay taxes and tribute.”³

The people of the Book are the non-Muslims who adhere to one of the Divine Books that are mentioned in the Qur’an. These people are considered to be under the protection of Islam. They must pay taxes to the state in order to benefit from the support of the government while living in an Islamic country. Then the Islamic government protects their lives and their property using this revenue.

According to Islamic jurisprudence, the people of the Book who live under the protection of Islam can rely on their own religious jurisprudents regarding their divine affairs, and can go to Muslim judges regarding their personal or economic affairs. The Muslim judge will judge between them according to Islamic principles. In such cases, the people of the Book under the protection of Islam can rely on their own religious authorities, too.⁴

Our Duties towards the People of the Book

It was stated that Jews and Christians who live in an Islamic country are under the protection of Islam. Now let us see that based on the Qur’an, what duties we have towards the people of the Book. Consider the following verse in this regard:

قَاتِلُوا الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَلَا يُحَرِّمُونَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَلَا يَدِينُونَ دِينَ الْحَقِّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ حَتَّى يُعْطُوا الْجِزْيَةَ عَنْ يَدٍ وَهُمْ صَاغِرُونَ

Fight those who believe not in God nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which has been forbidden by God and His Apostle, nor acknowledge the Religion of Truth, (even if they are) of the people of the Book, until they pay the Jizya⁵ with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Tawbah 9:29]

We see that Islam has established an in-between law for them – something between that for Muslims and Infidels. This is because the people of the Book who follow the principles of a divine Holy Book are somewhat similar to Muslims, but in some respects, they are close to the infidels.

It is for this reason that we are not permitted to kill them. However, we are only allowed to accommodate them in the Muslim society if they agree to peacefully live with Muslims, respect the Muslims, and do not rebel against the Muslims.

Poll-tax

Poll-tax is a form of tax that is taken from non-Muslims who live under the protection of Islam. They pay this tax so that the Islamic government can protect their lives and their property.⁶ Some people believe that the origin of the Arabic word used for poll-tax is derived from ancient Persia.

At that time, a certain type of tax was levied to strengthen the army. Others believe it to be a purely Arabic word that refers to tax taken to provide security for religious minorities.⁷ In chapter seven we referred to the text of the covenant between Khalid ibn Walid and Salvaba, the elder of the Christians regarding the imposition of tax in return for being under the protection of Islam.

Pre-Islamic Poll-Tax

Some believe that the first instance of poll-tax is related to the Sasanian king Anushiravan. It is certainly known that Anushiravan was the first ruler to levy taxes on the nation. He charged taxes to all non-governmental workers between the age of twenty and fifty. He charged 4, 6, 8 or 12 Dirhams per person. It is known that the philosophy behind this tax was to collect money in order to defend the country and its independence. To accomplish these objectives some personally participate in the defense activities, while others support them through paying annual taxes.

The age of tax payers being between twenty and fifty years implies that it was levied only on those who could carry weapons and participate in the defense activities, but did not do so because of their engagement in a job. Muslims do not have to pay such taxes because all Muslims are required to participate in a holy war when needed, but non-Muslims are not obliged to participate in a holy war; but they must pay taxes. The other reason supporting this idea is the exemption of the children, women, old men and the blind men from religious minorities. Therefore we realize that this form of tax is a form of financial assistance provided by the people of the Book in return for the protection that the Muslims offer them to safeguard their lives and property.⁸

Therefore, those who consider this form of tax as payment to a conqueror have not paid attention to the real meaning behind it. They should realize that the people of the Book receive full protection under an Islamic government by paying this tax. In addition, they become totally exempt from having to participate in defense activities or engaging in holy wars. In the verses cited above we read: "... until they pay the

Jizya with willing submission and feel themselves subdued.” This implies that the payment of this tax is a sign of their submission to Islam and the Holy Qur’an. In other words, it implies their readiness to peacefully live as a religious minority among the ruling majority.⁹

The Jurisprudence Ruling on Poll-Tax

The first questions on the jurisprudence ruling on poll-tax is on who should pay this tax. Then it deals with how much they should be charged and the conditions for that. In Shara’i al-Islam by Muhaqqiq we read: “Take it from those who confess to their religion being the Jews, the Christians and those who are thought to follow the Holy Book being the Magians.”¹⁰ The Commander of the Faithful said: “The Magians are attached to the Jews and the Christians, and are treated the same regarding the poll-tax and the blood compensation issues since they have had a Divine Book in the past.”¹¹

There are traditions which state that the Prophet of the Magians was named “Damast” and their book was called ‘Jamast’ which was recorded on twelve thousand cow skins. These were all burnt.

The poll-tax cannot be taken from those other than the people of the Book. The Qur’an says the following regarding the Pagans:

فَاَقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُمُوهُمْ

“Then fight and slay the Pagans wherever ye find them.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Tawbah 9:5]

The case of the idol-worshippers is also clear. Therefore, the poll-tax can only be taken from these three groups of religious people if they adhere to the conditions of the covenant. There is no distinction between the Persians or the Arabs in this regard. No taxes can be charged to children or the mentally ill.

The Amount of Poll-Tax

What is known from the companions¹² is that there is no fixed amount for this tax. The amount is based on the opinion of the leader, and the financial ability of the tax-payers to pay it. What we understand from Islamic history is that it is set to be a very small amount, sometimes about one Dirham, or what the tax-payer can pay.

The Conditions of the Poll-Tax

There are six conditions for the poll-tax as follows:

- 1 – They should accept the payment of this tax.
- 2 – They should not do anything that violates the conditions of submission and security such as deciding

to engage in war with the Muslims.

3 – They should not hurt the Muslims, financially harm them, or sexually harass the Muslims. If any of them vilifies the Prophet , he would be killed.

4 – They should not publicly engage in the Islamically forbidden acts such as drinking wine, eating pork, or marrying those who are forbidden to marry. The covenant is violated if any such deeds are done.

5 – They should not build any synagogues in Muslim lands, ring the synagogue bell, or build their houses to be taller than the houses of the Muslims.

6 – They should be subject to the decrees of Islam.

The jurists have expressed these six conditions for the poll-tax. These have been discussed in detail in books on Islamic jurisprudence. We only made a few remarks to clarify the rights of the people under the protection of Islam as expressed by Imam Sajjad . Now let us see the moral and humane aspects of the rights of the people under the protection of Islam.

The Responsibilities of the Muslims

In a sermon to the people of the Kufa, Imam Ali said:

وَلَقَدْ بَلَغَنِي أَنَّ الرَّجُلَ مِنْهُمْ كَانَ يَدْخُلُ عَلَى الْمَرْأَةِ الْمُسْلِمَةِ وَالْأُخْرَى الْمُعَاهِدَةَ فَيَنْتَزِعُ حِجْلَهَا وَقُلْبَهَا وَقَلَائِدَهَا وَرُعَائَهَا مَا تَمْتَنِعُ مِنْهُ إِلَّا بِالاسْتِرجَاعِ وَالِاسْتِرحَامِ ثُمَّ انْصَرَفُوا وَافْرِينَ مَا نَالَ رَجُلًا مِنْهُمْ كَلِمٌ وَلَا أُرِيقَ لَهُمْ دَمٌ، فَلَوْ أَنَّ امْرَأَةً مُسْلِمًا مَاتَ مِنْ بَعْدِ هَذَا أَسَفًا مَا كَانَ بِهِ مَلُومًا بَلْ كَانَ بِهِ عِنْدِي جَدِيرًا.

*"I have been informed that their men (soldiers from the army of Mu`awiyah) would enter the house of the Muslim woman, and the woman under the protection of Islam, snatching their anklets, bracelets, necklaces and earrings. She could not put up any resistance to them but to recite the verse of: **'We are from God and to Him shall we return' (2: 156)**, and to ask them for mercy. Then they would leave laden with wealth, with not a man among them suffering a cut or their blood being shed. If a Muslim would die in grief after this, he would not be blameworthy; in fact, in my opinion, it would be worthy of him."*¹³

When we see how much the leader of the Muslims gets upset when a person under the protection of Islam is oppressed, then we realize how important it is to respect these rights. When Imam Ali saw an old Christian man who was begging, he asked who he was. When they told him that he was a Christian, he said: "You used him when he was young, but have abandoned him in these conditions now that he is old and unable to work?"¹⁴ Then Imam Ali issued an order for the state to support him financially.

Respecting the Covenant

One of the main moral issues regarding the people under the protection of Islam is respecting their covenant as expressed by Imam Sajjad . God has said the following in the Holy Qur'an:

وَأَوْفُوا بِالْعَهْدِ إِنَّ الْعَهْدَ كَانَ مَسْئُولًا

“And fulfill (every) engagement, for (every) engagement will be enquired into (On the Day of Reckoning).” [The Holy Qur'an, Bani Israil 17:34]

He has also said:

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمَانَاتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ

“Those who faithfully observe their trusts and their covenants.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Mu'minun 23:8]

Respecting the covenant is stressed in these two verses of the Holy Qur'an. This is considered one of the salient characteristics of believers. One will be held responsible for this and questioned about it in the Hereafter. We can also recognize the importance of this issue from traditions from the Noble Prophet and the Immaculate Imams .

Ali ibn Ibrahim narrated that he heard Imam Sadiq say:

عِدَّةُ الْمُؤْمِنِ أَخَاهُ نَذْرٌ لَا كَفَّارَةَ لَهُ.

“The believer's promise to his brother is a vow that has no expiation.”¹⁵

One must honor a promise just as one honors a vow. The Noble Prophet said:

مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلْيُفِ بِوَعْدِهِ.

“Whoever believes in God and the Resurrection Day should honor his promise.”¹⁶

He also said:

أَقْرَبُكُمْ مِنِّي غَدًا فِي الْمَوْقِفِ أَصْدَقُكُمْ فِي الْحَدِيثِ وَأَدَاكُمْ لِلْأَمَانَةِ وَأَوْفَاكُمْ بِالْعَهْدِ وَأَحْسَنُكُمْ خُلُقًا وَأَقْرَبُكُمْ مِنَ النَّاسِ

“The nearest of you to me tomorrow, at the station (in the Hereafter), will be the most truthful of you in speech, the best of you in delivering the deposits entrusted to you, the most faithful of you in promise, the best of you in nature, and the nearest of you to people.”¹⁷

Be it a Muslim or a Pagan

The Prophet of God said:

ثَلَاثٌ لَمْ يَجْعَلِ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى فِيهِنَّ رُحْصَةً: أَدَاءُ الْأَمَانَةِ إِلَى الْبَرِّ وَالْفَاجِرِ، وَالْوَفَاءُ بِالْعَهْدِ لِلْبَرِّ وَالْفَاجِرِ، وَبِرُّ الْوَالِدَيْنِ بَرِّينَ
كَانَا أَوْ فَاجِرَيْنِ.

“There are three things in which God, the Exalted, has not given any concession:

1 – Delivering the deposit entrusted to you, whether to the virtuous or the evildoer.

2 – Fulfilling the promise, whether to the virtuous or the evildoer.

3 – Goodness to parents, whether they are virtuous or evildoers.”¹⁸

What is understood from the verses and the traditions is the meaning of Imam Sajjad's recommendations regarding the rights of the people under the protection of Islam. Therefore, anyone who honors these rights has indeed honored the rights of God and His Prophet . Anyone who does not honor these rights has oppressed the people who have a covenant with him. The Prophet has said that he will be the adversary of such people in the Hereafter. The Holy Qur'an instructs us not to mistreat those opponents of Islam who do not mistreat us. Consider the following verse of the Holy Qur'an:

لَا يَنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُمْ مِّن دِيَارِكُمْ أَن تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ
الْمُقْسِطِينَ

إِنَّمَا يَنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ قَاتَلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَأَخْرَجُوكُم مِّن دِيَارِكُمْ وَظَاهَرُوا عَلَىٰ إِخْرَاجِكُمْ أَن تَوَلَّوْهُمْ وَمَن يَتَوَلَّهُمْ
فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ

“God forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for (your) Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: for God loveth those who are just. God only forbids you with regard to those who fight you for (your) Faith, and drive you out of your homes, and support (others) in driving you out, from turning to them (for friendship and protection). It is such a turn to them (in these circumstances), that do wrong.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Mumtahana 60:8-9]

The Holy Qur'an invites the people of the Book to be in harmony with the Muslims on ideological issues, and admonishes them against disunion as we can read in the following verse:

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا
مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَقُولُوا اشْهَدُوا بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ

Say: “O’ People of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you that we worship none but God; that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, Lords and patrons other than God.” If then they turn back, say ye: “Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to God’s Will).” [The Holy Qur’an, Al-i-Imran 3:64]

- [1.](#) Protecting them.
- [2.](#) Qamus al-Qur’an, v.3, p.24.
- [3.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, letter no.53.
- [4.](#) International Private Rights, p. 108.
- [5.](#) Tribute, a poll-tax levied on those who did not accept Islam, but were willing to live under the protection of Islam, and were thus tacitly willing to submit to its ideals being enforced in the Muslim state.
- [6.](#) Mufradat, Raghib, Article on Poll-tax.
- [7.](#) Tafsir-i-Namunah, v.7, p.356.
- [8.](#) Tafsir-i-Namunah, v.7, p.356.
- [9.](#) Ibid. p.355.
- [10.](#) Shara’i al-Islam, Muhaqqiq, Book on Jihad, Chapter on Poll-tax.
- [11.](#) Jawahir al-Kalim, v.21, p.229.
- [12.](#) Of the Prophet .
- [13.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, sermon no.27.
- [14.](#) Wasa’il al-Shi’ah, v. 11, p.49.
- [15.](#) Usul al-Kafi, v.2, p.364.
- [16.](#) Ibid.
- [17.](#) Tarikh Ya’qubi, v.2, p.392.
- [18.](#) Ibid.

Concluding Remarks by Imam Sajjad

At the end Imam Sajjad’s concluding remarks in The Treatise on Rights are presented as follows:

فَهَذِهِ خَمْسُونَ حَقًّا مُحِيطًا بِكَ لَا تَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا فِي حَالٍ مِنَ الْأَحْوَالِ، يَجِبُ عَلَيْكَ رِعَايَتُهَا وَالْعَمَلُ فِي تَأْدِيتِهَا وَالِاسْتِعَانَةُ
بِاللَّهِ جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُهُ عَلَى ذَلِكَ. وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

“These are the fifty rights that surround you and you cannot evade under any circumstances. It is incumbent upon you to observe them and exert all efforts to fulfill them. You should seek God the Majestic’s help in this respect. And there is no power or strength but in God. And all praise is due to God the Lord of the Worlds.”

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/a-divine-perspective-on-rights-a-commentary-of-imam-sajjads-treatise-of-rights>

Links

- [1] <https://www.al-islam.org/organization/ansariyan-publications-qum>
- [2] <https://www.al-islam.org/printpdf/book/export/html/19698>
- [3] <https://www.al-islam.org/printepub/book/export/html/19698>
- [4] <https://www.al-islam.org/printmobi/book/export/html/19698>
- [5] <https://www.al-islam.org/person/dr-ali-peiravi>
- [6] <https://www.al-islam.org/person/lisa-zaynab-morgan>
- [7] <https://www.al-islam.org/tags/dua-supplication>
- [8] <https://www.al-islam.org/tags/sahifah-sajjadiyyah>
- [9] <https://www.al-islam.org/person/imam-ali-zayn-al-abidin>
- [10] <mailto:peiravi@netscape.net>