

Breaking the Idols of Desire (Foolishness)

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SHARES

Sub Title:

Author(s):

[Maytham Al-Makkabi](#) [2]

Publisher(s):

[Zakatul Ilm Publications](#) [3]

This text examines the struggle between human desires and the pursuit of moral and spiritual perfection through the teachings of the Qur'an and the Ahl al-Bayt ('a). It explains how unchecked desires become inner idols that distance a person from Allah, while intellect, repentance, and self-purification guide the soul back to its natural disposition (fitrah).

The book highlights the importance of developing virtuous character, understanding the role of taqwa, and recognising the ongoing battle within the soul between truth and falsehood. It presents practical reflections on Islamic ethics and spirituality, encouraging believers to cultivate sincere obedience and seek closeness to Allah through moral growth.

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Introduction

I praise Allah The Exalted, who has granted me the ability, the time, and the mercy of knowledge from His Exalted self to be able to strike the keys of letters and convey this small and humble book, and I ask Allah to bless His Prophet, The Seal of The Prophets, and The Ahl al-Bayt ('a) who are the Role Models and guides He has blessed us with in His Religion.

I, the low and needy servant who is called Shaykh Maytham Al Makkabi, say:

First, I have prepared these pages and taught most of them in a series of lectures called “**Breaking The**

Idols of Desire.” I have added to them, and edited them, and spent some time over the years adjusting them when I was able, and arrived at them. Yet I must note that the translate–interpretations of the Noble Verses of The Holy Qur’an and The Narrations are only trans–interpretations, and they may not be always perfect to reach the depth of the pure and beautiful Arabic language and the deep meanings contained in it. Also, I must note that I have not vigorously checked all the narrations, however I have tried to rely on those said to be sound by some others, hence your own investigation as scholars can be held.

I would like to ask Allah to bless my teachers and family for all their efforts with me and the time they have taken, which is all due to the blessings and mercy of Allah, The Exalted. And to forgive me of my shortcomings towards Allah, myself and my family, and my teachers through the years.

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Chapter 1: The Importance of Morality in Social and Individual Perfection

Social State

When we examine the society around us in this contemporary world, in this vast global society, we find that people commit many actions that are not morally sound; that is they perform many actions which are ugly (*qabih*) to the intellect. Over here, we can ponder on the occurrence of many shameless deeds, irrational and selfish acts, and sayings that are articulated by motivations driven by low and vanishing desires that place humanity in the field of the low and vanishing, not the lofty and aligned purpose.

As an example in the twentieth century, we find that an estimate of over one hundred million people were killed in wars according to *The New York Times*. In fact, many wars were historically fought in the aim of conquest, temporal rule, the tyranny of tyrants, or some quick gain. For what was it worth? A short span of a lifetime? A mere sack of sand that one views as if it were gold or a mountain of gold that is worth less than the equal weight of grains of sand gathered by the insane. Truly, this is a testimony of only one instance of the wrong that has occurred in our contemporary world. In fact, there are many instances, many examples, many variations of wrongs that occur. On a daily basis, one may review the situation of the world and see for himself the many crimes and immorality which stain human history in front of our very eyes.

When we considered the cure to these social maladies, we can say intellect is the compasses whose

qibla (direction of prayer) is paradise, so if one adheres and follows authentic intellect, they can reach success, yet even this intellect many scarcely understood. To prove this, we can note that sometimes things are viewed as intellectual but they are only possibilities, or not even intellectual but rather mere personal opinion and whims. Therefore, on this basis it becomes important to understand what really is intellect, how can we become more developed intellectually and what is the aim of intellect.

Therefore, we must underline the occurrence that we may face on any given day in this contemporary world, that mere personal opinion is viewed as logical fact, and such personal opinion is held in opposition to real intellectual truth and directives. And temporal desire driven motives fuel personal opinion and they become by some viewed as firm standings rather than the reality of the situation and the outcome.

One of the major factors in this occurrence is our state within ourselves, that is when the children of Prophet Adam (‘a) lack the purity in their selves and sincerity within themselves in their very most inner reality, the reality will become very obscured to them, hence they may find it difficult to distinguish between right and wrong, truth and falsehood, good and bad. At this point many atrocities occur on the wrong choice of corrupt souls steeped in prevention and negligence to their very innate abilities and nature, and many incorrect judgments take place and they mix up what things are priority with what is not. What is correct and sound in their life with what is unsound and unstable.

Hence, they wander aimlessly for a mere short lived vanishing pleasure in the abode of temporality to which we shall leave, like cattle seeking mere blades of grass to fill their stomachs. The goals of humanity now become a vanishing thing, high virtues become unused and neglected, and intellect is covered with the blanket of sins and corruption, while they are as if they think they are in daytime yet they are deep in the darkness of night.

In part of this noble *ayat* (verse) of the Holy Qur’an, we can contemplate on this fact:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا ۖ مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ وَإِذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ سُوءًا فَلَا مَرَدَّ لَهُ ۚ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ وَالٍ...

“... Indeed Allah does not change a people’s lot, unless they change what is in their souls. And when Allah wishes to visit ill on a people, there is nothing that can avert it, and they have no protector besides Him” (13: 11)¹

In fact, the gift of intellect is having a major role in the solution to our problems, however many people, if not most people, have incomplete intellects. That is they have obtained to levels permissible and allowed to them by the Almighty, but they have not reached the completion. They may have reached levels of actuality like the actuality of the average ability of common intellectualism. Yet the lofty completion is found in human role models who have been chosen by Allah the Exalted for the guidance of humanity, and our living proof is Imam az-Zaman (‘aj).

Now we must return our sights back to our very own societies, no matter where we are, or whether this is in the present or the future. Let us ponder upon our own social atmosphere. Let us consider deeply the people who surround us, their acts, words, gestures, cultures, and beliefs. As we stated, we can note that many of the fruits we get from people are those of ugly (*qabih*) deeds and sayings.

Then when we look at some people from one angle, we can see they lack service to God (Allah the Exalted), while another group from another angle lack compassion toward the needy people and the oppressed, and yet another is drowned in racism, fanaticism, bias, undue hatred, violence, and crime, and much more. However, these are things that spring and emerge from people which are bad and ugly (*qabih*) due to different factors, even if they are words like profanity, abuse, backbiting, or slander. Or if they are actions like stealing, adultery, and much more.

Therefore, this was our point to bring to attention to this occurrence in our era, that when we examine societies around the globe in our contemporary age, we can note that people are doing some deeds or sayings which are ugly (*qabih*), bad or indecent in various levels and to various degrees due to various factors.

Soulish State

Now, when we consider and observe the human soul, we find that it is born pure with a nature that inclines toward perfection called the intrinsic inclination, the *fitra*. Yet these ugly, immoral deeds are imperfections and in fact an impurity of the actions and sayings, a deficiency that indicates to us that the souls of many people have dived into the polluted, murky waters of immorality and vice, hence they are sick, and carry many maladies inside them. Although they may appear healthy externally in their appearances, another story is revealed according to their actions and sayings.

This sickness is not a bodily sickness, although psychological sickness can impact and influence the bodily health, wellbeing and welfare of mankind.

This sickness is a virus that has been spreading through the actions, sayings and thoughts of people for many ages, for thousands of years and in fact, it is appearing very much in our times. People have disregarded the vaccine and medication for these maladies, they have given up hope of swallowing the pill of servitude, due to their own lack of foresight and intense or persistent submission to vain temporal desires and the shallow worshipping of their own ideas and desire-driven whims in opposition to monotheism, servitude, and intrinsic inclination.

In fact, these vices and incorrect ideas have become idols in the human soul, by which people turn to worshipping them instead of Allah the Exalted.

أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنْ اتَّخَذَ إِلَٰهَهُ هَوَاهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ وَخَتَمَ عَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَجَعَلَ عَلَىٰ بَصَرِهِ غِشَاوَةً فَمَنْ يَهْدِيهِ
مِنْ بَعْدِ ٱللَّهِ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ

“Have you then considered him who takes his low desire for his god, and Allah has made him err having knowledge and has set a seal upon his ear and his heart and put a covering upon his eye. Who can then guide him after Allah? Will you not then be mindful?” (45:23)[2](#)

What is translated as being mindful in this above verse of the Holy Qur'an is the word ‘*Tadhakkarun*,’ which is from the root word *Dhal Khaf Ra (Dhakara)* and is on the verb form (V), hence this verb form has been trans-interpreted in various ways such as to receive admonition, to take heed, to remember, hence a discussion on what is this remembrance, reminder can be placed in another work InshaAllah.

We seek protection in Allah the only True Refuge for all those seekers of shelter, so that we are not of those whose hearts are sealed due to our own crimes, and deeds. In fact it should be understood that the reason this person is left in this sealed state is because of what they have done to themselves, that is because of their own state and affairs.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَسْتَحْيِي أَنْ يَضْرِبَ مَثَلًا مَّا بَعُوضَةً فَمَا فَوْقَهَا فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا فَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَيَقُولُونَ مَاذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِهَذَا مَثَلًا يُضِلُّ بِهِ كَثِيرًا وَيَهْدِي بِهِ كَثِيرًا وَمَا يُضِلُّ بِهِ إِلَّا الْفَاسِقِينَ

"Indeed Allah is not ashamed to draw a parable whether it is that of a gnat or something above it. As for those who have faith, they know it is the truth from their Lord; and as for the faithless, they say, ‘What did Allah mean by this parable?’ Thereby He leads many astray, and thereby He guides many; and He leads no one astray thereby except the transgressors." (2:26)[3](#)

وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ ۚ قُلْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُضِلُّ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي إِلَيْهِ مَنْ أُنَابَ

“And those who disbelieve say: Why is not a sign sent down upon him by his Lord? Say: Surely Allah makes him who will go astray, and guides to Himself those who turn (to Him).” (13:27)[4](#)

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

"Corruption has appeared in the land and the sea on account of what the hands of men have wrought, that He may make them taste a part of that which they have done, so that they may return." (30:41)[5](#)

So ponder deeply how the transgression, misuse of freewill, and the wrong choices have consequences and results, hence we must be careful to make the best choices, and turn ourselves toward the direction of The Most Holy, The Most High.

When we examine the societies around us, we see that they do these ugly deeds and sayings, however, these sayings and deeds are manufactured upon the assembly line of something inside them, that is this

corruption and these ugly things are radiating, emanating or manifesting from something that is inside the very person themselves. This thing is generally the virus of immorality, and it is a parasite scented with a type internal idolatry that manifests external symptoms and side effects, just like a person infected with a specific germ will show symptoms. Sometimes quiet, hidden unless they express it or it becomes apparent like a light headache, or maybe they will develop a fever, throat pain, or may even vomit or worse.

Therefore, this sickness is internal; it is within the souls of people. Hence, we must start by administering a treatment in that very soul to help remove this sickness, that treatment is called moral and belief development

وَالْعَصْرِ

"I swear by the time." (103:1)

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ

"Most surely man is in loss." (103:2)

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ

"Except those who believe and do good, and enjoin on each other truth, and enjoin on each other patience." (103:3)⁶

¹. Based on Trans-Interpretation of Qarai.^{۴۴}

². Quran, 45:32, Trans-interpretation by: Shakir^{۴۴}

³. Trans-interpretation by: Shakir^{۴۴}

⁴. Trans-interpretation by: Shakir^{۴۴}

⁵. Trans-interpretation by: Shakir^{۴۴}

⁶. Trans-interpretation by: Shakir.^{۴۴}

Chapter 2: Perfection is for Ma'rifah

Bani Adam (The Children of Adam) by their inner nature have a desire to know things, to incline towards absolute perfection, and to hope in Allah the Exalted. It is ingrained and embedded in their very self. Hence humans seek to know things, and the most important and the highest of all knowledge is the *ma'rifat Allah*, the recognition, awareness of Allah the Exalted. Such an experience and such an awareness, such a meeting can be achieved through purity of the soul and most certainly by the Mercy of Allah the Exalted.

Since humans in their nature seek to know things which can be observed from infancy, it unveils to us that humans have some type of inclination for knowing, and they seek to fulfil this need. This need indicates to us that they are in prevention, deficiency, and simple ignorance about many things.

The human being also inclines towards perfection and seeks absolute perfection, which should lead him or her to Allah the Exalted. Thus it is clear that the sons and daughters of Adam are needy in regards to knowing. and if lack of knowledge is an imperfection according to human nature, in turn it is a perfection to “know.” However, it should not be forgotten that any awareness is only dependent on and allowed by Allah the Exalted and He is the Only All Knower Absolutely.

So it is never accurate to say any dependent creature is all-knowing when they only know to the extent which Allah allows, and it is a dependency on Him (SwT) because all that creation thinks it has in relation to Allah is belonging to Allah, even mankind in the very origin of his or her existence is needy and depending on Allah absolutely. Therefore, His allowance that any creation knows a thing is only what Allah bestows, and that in turn is something owned by Allah Exclusively.

It should also be understood that Allah will always know more than his creation because there is no all-knower absolutely except for Him (SwT), and there is no similar to Him (SwT). Therefore, since humans seek knowing and perfection in their nature, the highest perfection of knowing is the awareness and recognition of Allah the Exalted (that is the *ma'rifat Allah*.) Because He, the Exalted, is the Absolute Perfect Being, hence knowledge about the Absolute Perfect Being is also the most perfect thing a human can aim to know. Therefore, we can say that humans seek to know Allah in their nature.

Hence, to reach the state of being a perfect human knower, one must reach the highest levels of his aim, and such a journey should innately lead us directly to Allah the Exalted. Therefore, to achieve real success and reach into higher actualizations and potentials of the innate pursuit, we must know Allah. However, this knowing is not like knowing created things, as He, the Exalted, is not limited, created, or confined to created boundaries. Hence, the understanding that can be reached in our “freeing” thoughts, “awe” striking thoughts, reality, realisation, and experience. However, this topic is not placed here in detail.

Over here, the development of some good virtues is only an element in reaching into this sphere, and in achieving that success, but not the end. Therefore, if a person develops themselves morally only for the good qualities of the soul, they have only achieved the good qualities and not the most perfect felicity and success. In fact, one requires good qualities and obedience (in actions and sayings) as well as correct beliefs.

Shaykh Sadooq narrates in his *Kamal Al Deen Vol 2* from Abu Muhammad Husayn Ibn Ahmad Al-Mukattib, from Abu Ali Ibn Hammam, from Shaykh Al Amri (r.a.) had dictated to him and commanded him to recite it, and it is the supplication in the Ghaybat of Al-Qa'im ('aj). But before we discuss the content of this supplication let us investigate the chain of narrators of this dua.

First: Abu Muhammad Husayn Ibn Ahmed Mukattib – He was of the teachers of Shaykh Sadooq,

Second: Abu Ali Ibn Hammam – He is Muhammad Ibn Abi Bakr Hammam Ibn Suhayl Al-Katib Aleskafi. Shaykh Najashi states, 'He is shaykh of our companions and he has a great residence.'

Third: Shaykh Al Amri. He is the deputy of Imam Zaman ('aj) during the minor occultation.

This dua begins with this extracted section, which is the only part I shall present here of this much more lengthy supplication.

اللَّهُمَّ عَرِّفْنِي نَفْسَكَ

فَإِنَّكَ إِنْ لَمْ تُعَرِّفْنِي نَفْسَكَ لَمْ أَعْرِفْكَ رَسُولَكَ- اللَّهُمَّ عَرِّفْنِي رَسُولَكَ

فَإِنَّكَ إِنْ لَمْ تُعَرِّفْنِي رَسُولَكَ لَمْ أَعْرِفْ حُجَّتَكَ

فَإِنَّكَ إِنْ لَمْ تُعَرِّفْنِي حُجَّتَكَ ضَلَلْتُ عَنْ دِينِي^[4]...

A trans-interpretation can be stated as:

“O Allah, introduce Yourself to me. For if you do not introduce Yourself to me, I will not recognize Your Prophet (S). O Allah, make me recognize Your Prophet (S) – because if I do not recognize Your Prophet (S), I will not recognize Your Proof (Hujjat). O Allah, make me recognize Your Proof – For if you do not make me recognize Your Proof, I will deviate from my religion”

We must understand that we have been introduced to Allah (SwT) and must seek to know Him, the Exalted, which is a knowing not like knowing anything created. Without knowing Allah, being aware of

Allah, recognizing Allah, one would not know His Prophet, and if one will not know His Prophet, they will not know the Hujjat, and if they do not know the Hujjat, they will deviate from the religion. Therefore, this is a serious issue, on the importance of knowing Allah so ponder deeply respected readers.

In fact, Allah, The Exalted, has introduced Himself to us initially, and we have an initial awareness of him in our very nature that pushes us to serve Him, thank Him, and strive towards more awareness of Him. This initial innate knowledge or intrinsic inclination is what can be called *ma'rifat al fitri*. However, when we take up the abode in this world of potentiality and actuality, it's like we are covered with a cloak. That cloak gets stains on it due to certain factors like sin and incorrect beliefs, and the light of our *fitra*, which directs toward Him and motivates us to develop ourselves so we can experience realization of His Exalted Being and Awareness of Him, gets covered up and buried in the sand of sins and corruption, false beliefs, and things that are far away from the reality.

We may consider ourselves like a traveller. Such a traveller cannot go to any given destination without knowing of that destination or the aim of his or her travelling, hence he knows where he is travelling toward and has an aim. Therefore, it makes sense that we had to have been made aware initially.

However, this cloak of initial awareness gets stained with the rust of sins and influences, and we cover up the light embedded in us, embedded in our nature. We forget all about Him, The Exalted (SwT), and become unmindful (*ghafil*) about what is in us. We lose sight of the aim and purpose of life, which is to achieve His (SwT) Mercy. Within that, the peak is to achieve the highest Mercy of knowing Him. It should be clear that practically, one seeks His Mercy by succeeding in the test and servitude and doing good, hence, it is a belief and righteous deeds.

As for the spiritual, *liqa' Allah* (meeting Allah) is a Mercy to a believer and lover, a meeting with the Beloved, the ultimate aim of the seekers. A meeting here is the aim of true '*urafa* and it is the most beautiful goal of following an authentic Islamic lifestyle.

It is very important that we walk a real Islamic line, after all, the meaning of Islam is surrender, and submission to Allah the Exalted, of our entire contingent existence. Therefore, the Islamic line is to live Islam and all that is in it for Allah the Exalted, not that He needs it, but we need it and our sincerity in all of it toward Him, our love all of it toward Him, and hence we love for His sake and obedience all of it toward Him the Exalted, so that we obey and do within His obedience.

In this effort, we must develop moral qualities and work in the field of self-purification if we want to achieve lofty levels of Mercy. As we said, in our view, the most lofty mercy is to know Allah the Exalted. There are other aims that people do such as to gain paradise or to avoid hellfire which are acceptable, and people should not be deterred from these aims, hence it is good to seek the mercy of Allah in such a manner as well. However, the aim of the '*arif* (knower) is only for love of Allah and knowing of Allah.

Tawbah (Repentance)

Tawbah (repentance) is a great blessing that Allah, The Exalted, has opened for humanity, and by it, is He has opened the vast road toward Him. As the path of the religion has ease in it, *tawbah* gives space for the change and development, correcting of oneself, standing up from the slips and falls, and then walking the straight line toward Him the Exalted.

Concerning *Tawbah*, Allah The Exalted states in the Holy Qur'an;

أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا ۖ تَوْبُوا ۖ إِلَى اللَّهِ تَوْبَةً نَّصُوحًا ۚ عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَن يُكَفِّرَ عَنْكُم سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَيُدْخِلَكُم جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ۚ يَوْمَ لَا يُخْزَىٰ اللَّهُ النَّبِيَّ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا ۚ مَعَهُ ۚ نُورُهُمْ يَسْعَىٰ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَبِأَيْمَانِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا أَتْمِمْ لَنَا نُورَنَا وَآغْفِرْ لَنَا ۖ إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

“O you who believe! Turn to Allah a sincere turning; maybe your Lord will remove from you your evil and cause you to enter gardens beneath which rivers flow, on the day on which Allah will not abase the Prophet and those who believe with him; their light shall run on before them and on their right hands; they shall say: Our Lord! make perfect for us our light, and grant us protection, surely Thou hast power over all things.” (66:8)¹

We must be sure to note that Allah has allowed the door of *tawbah* to be opened for all those who slip and fall and realize their mistakes, regret their faults, and want to mend their actions or sayings. Hence, *tawbah* has some conditions which must be fulfilled for it to be a valid *tawbah*.

Two hadith on this topic are narrated by Shaykh Kulayni in his *Al Kafi*, by the narrators below:

مَدُّ بْنُ يَحْيَىٰ عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدَ بْنِ عِيسَىٰ عَنِ الْحَسَنِ بْنِ مَحْبُوبٍ عَنْ مُعَاوِيَةَ بْنِ وَهَبٍ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ أَبَا عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) يَقُولُ إِذَا تَابَ الْعَبْدُ تَوْبَةً نَّصُوحًا أَحَبَّهُ اللَّهُ فَسَتَرَ عَلَيْهِ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ فَقُلْتُ وَكَيْفَ يَسْتُرُ عَلَيْهِ قَالَ يُنْسِي مَلَكَهُ مَا كَتَبَا عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الذُّنُوبِ وَيُوجِي إِلَى جَوَارِحِهِ اِكْتُمِي عَلَيْهِ ذُنُوبَهُ وَيُوجِي إِلَى بَقَاعِ الْأَرْضِ اِكْتُمِي مَا كَانَ يَعْمَلُ عَلَيْكَ مِنَ الذُّنُوبِ فَيَلْقَى اللَّهَ حِينَ يَلْقَاهُ وَلَيْسَ شَيْءٌ يَشْهَدُ عَلَيْهِ بِشَيْءٍ مِنَ الذُّنُوبِ.

Muhammad Ibn Yahya has narrated from Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn 'Isa, from al-Hassan Ibn Mahbub, from Mu'awiyah Ibn Wahab, who has said the following: “I heard Abu Abd Allah (‘a) saying, ‘When a servant (of Allah) repents in the form of the repentance of *Nasuh*, Allah then loves him, covers and protects him in this world and in the next life.’ I then asked, ‘How will He cover him?’ The Imam said, ‘He will make the two angels forget what they have written against him. He will inspire the parts of his body to hide his sins and the places of earth to hide the sins that he had committed thereat. Allah will meet him while there will be nothing to testify anything against him.”

عَلِيُّ بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنْ ابْنِ أَبِي عُمَيْرٍ عَنْ أَبِي أَيُّوبَ عَنْ أَبِي بَصِيرٍ قَالَ قُلْتُ لِأَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا تَوْبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَوْبَةً نَصُوحًا قَالَ هُوَ الذَّنْبُ الَّذِي لَا يَعُودُ فِيهِ أَبَدًا قُلْتُ وَأَيْنَا لَمْ يَعُدْ فَقَالَ يَا أَبَا مُحَمَّدٍ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ مَنْ عِبَادِهِ الْمُفْتَنَ التَّوَابَ.

Ali Ibn Ibrahim has narrated from his father from Ibn Abu ‘Umayr, from Abu Ayyub, from Abu Basir, who has said the following: “Once I asked Abu ‘Abd Allah (‘a) about the words of Allah, the Most Majestic, the Most Holy, **‘Believers, turn to Allah in repentance, “In a Nasuh manner” (66:8).** The Imam said, ‘It is the sin that one never repeats.’ I then asked, ‘Who among us does not repeat?’ The Imam said, ‘O Abu Muhammad, of His servants Allah loves those who are put to trial and the ones who repent very often.’”

Imam Zain al–Abidin (‘a) said: “My God! You are He who has opened a door to Your pardon and named it 'repentance', for You said, **‘Repent to God with unswerving (sincere) repentance’ (66:8).** What is the excuse for him who remains heedless of entering the door after its opening?”²

¹. Trans–interpretation by: Shakir.❏❏

². Al–Sahih al–Kamilah, The Whispered Prayer of the Repenters.❏❏

[1] [1]

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Chapter 3: Morality and Spirituality

As for the word *Akhlaq*, it is the plural of *khulq*. Now the word “*khalq*” is said to be related to external creation while the word “*khulq*” is the internal creation. In fact, Ragheb Esfahani indicates that the word “*Akhlaq*” is what is gained by mankind from the morality (*fadhilat*) in his creation, therefore this is what is behind this word's usage for moral qualities of the soul.

We find in The Noble Qur’an the saying of The Exalted Allah about the Noble Messenger of Allah (S):

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ

“And indeed, you are of a great moral character.” (68:4)¹

Shaykh Tabarsi in his *Majma Al Bayan* states that it is said that *A’zhema Al Akhlaq* is the gathering of *Makarem Akhlaq* in him (S). Hence He can be viewed as having the most honourable and noble level of

morality.

Besides the fact that one can become a moral human being, and the benefits of being moral from various aspects, *al-Akhlaq* is also a necessary element in Islamic *Irfan*. In fact, Islam calls us to develop moral traits called “*Akhlaq*.” Islam invites us to be ethical, moral (*akhlaqi*),

As in Islam, developing moral qualities like *taqwa* (safe-guarding against sins and transgressions), *ubudiyyah* (obedience and servitude), *hilm* (forbearance), and many more qualities are viewed as positive prescriptions on the line of a real Islamic lifestyle, which is both seen in the sayings and actions of the Masoomeen (‘a), and prescribed by Islam.

However, certain specific qualities alone is something that can in many cases be adopted by anyone, whereas Islamic *Irfan* has certain conditions to practise it; a path that must be walked and travelled. Also, it has conditions for the validity of its results, that is to judge its experience is based on the criteria of *shari’* and *aqil* (revealed religion and authentic and firm intellect).

Irfan is more vast than *Akhlaq* hence it includes *Akhlaq*, as the science of ‘*Irfan*’ pertains to elevating the soul to perfection to the point of having high levels of *marifah* of Allah (realization), high levels *liqa’* of Allah, and the height of servitude to Allah, and nearness to Him (SwT). Whereas *Akhlaq* pertains to establishing and developing good moral qualities and demolishing and removing bad qualities from the soul.

When we considered Islamic ‘*Irfan*’ we can list four elements of ‘*Irfan*’. They are as follows;

- 1: Theoretical knowledge of Allah and the soul
- 2: Maintaining the religious rituals like prayer, *dua*, *dhikr*, abstaining from sin, doing the *wajib*, and keeping far from doing *haram*, and even doing the *mustahabaat* (recommended acts).
- 3: Staying away from *dunya* love, as *dunya* love is a barrier between a person and knowing Allah (SwT).
- 4: *Akhlaq* is a *mutahirat* (purifier) of oneself from vices and is the adornment of your soul by the gems of virtues.

When we consider these elements, we see that ‘*Irfan*’ has elements which I emphasize on the importance of having correct beliefs, and to be religious and practising to be able to succeed in this effort. Whereas *Akhlaq* is more narrow, more specific, more confined to moral qualities themselves, and the removal of bad qualities.

Another difference between the science of *Akhlaq* and ‘*Irfan*’ is that *Akhlaq* is more random and scattered in its methodology of self-development or moral clean up, whereas ‘*Irfan*’ has a certain methodology and manner by which one is to traverse.

To explain this, you may imagine there is an untidy room. *Akhlaq* is like the method that says we may start from any spot, any mess in that room. So if a person faces anger issues they may begin with uprooting of the condemnable anger, or if a person faces unrestrained *shahwa* (lust and appetites), they may start with that vice to remove it. Whereas *'Irfan* will say that a person must begin at the doorway, or at a specific spot in our untidy room.

Like *yaqdhah* (wakefulness), a person must wake up from their deep sleep of heedlessness, where they are asleep to the hereafter, and the lofty aim of creation. One is heedless to their situation and state and condition, and must wake up to the real situation and destination. We may call to mind the mentioned story of Fudhayl Ibn Ayaz here, or any of the various stories of the awakening of the sleepy souls to the reality of the state and condition.

This *yaqdhah* (wakefulness) is an inner revolution, an awakening to one's state and condition to the destination, and an awakening to His Existence. It is possible that we considered this awakening as having many different and various levels which we can traverse to reach the lofty awakening.

This can occur in many methods, such as one remembering the bounties of Allah, some near death experience, or remembering death. Awakening the heart by other means can be done as well. In practical *'Irfan*, this topic can be discussed in detail on what practical steps one can take to wake up.

Imagine we are on a ship and a storm causes us to be shipwrecked, as if we clung to a plank in the sea in that moment of severe crisis with fingers slipping away. We, in the very depth of our soul, will call out with a hopeful voice to be saved by One who Has Power over all things. That hope is a hope that proves Allah (SwT) exists.

As we noted, one must practise development of moral qualities as part of an *'Irfanic* journey. Therefore, *Akhlaq* is a necessary step in spiritual wayfaring, similarly, taking up the reins of *takhleef* (responsibility) and immersing ourselves in *ubudiyyah* (obedience and servitude).

Akhlaq can be defined as the science which shows us how to develop good moral qualities or attributes in the soul, and how to remove the bad qualities of the soul. These good qualities are fixed (*malaka*) in the soul itself, which causes easier actions and sayings in accordance with a particular good quality. These are titled as virtuous. As for the vices, they are those bad qualities in the soul which are established in a way that they cause easy sayings and actions in accordance with the particular vice.

¹. Trans-interpretation by: Sahih International.🔒🔒

Chapter 4: The Soul a Battle Ground

Within the souls of the children of Adam, there is a raging battle between good and bad, between lofty purpose and low aims, between *shaytani* influence and pure guidance to Allah, the Exalted.

This raging battle is occurring at every moment that one has the opportunity and ability to make a choice between right and wrong, or between submission to Allah (SwT) or to the low base desires, or whenever the soul is faced with acting for the true lofty aim of creation or the low temporal goal of the *dunya*-driven desire.

Here, let's consider *dunya* as whatever takes one away from Allah. It is that which we place in where Allah belongs; in our hearts, love, and intention. Working, marriage, children, and spending are all potentially good things as long as they are not put in the place of Allah in your heart. Hence, if one performs these things within the love of Allah and servitude to Allah, it will become a beautiful manifestation and expression of love for Allah (SwT). Also, one is not disobeying Allah with those things if they use them as a means to obey Allah (SwT). Hence, one must develop correct conduct where Allah is the first aim in all his or her intentions, so that they act in love and obedience and fear of Allah, the Exalted.

In fact, the soul's success within the Will and Support of Allah in this raging battle is having its requirement on achievements in the process of self-purification. In this regard, let's ponder on these noble *ayaat* (verses) of the Holy Qur'an from Surah Ash-Shams;

وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا

“By the soul and Him who fashioned it” (91:7)

أَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا

“And inspired it with its fujur and its taqwa:” (91:8)

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا

“One who purifies it is felicitous,” (91:9)

وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا

“And one who betrays it fails.” (91: 10)

Ragheb Esfahani indicates that the word *al-fujur* is the splitting of the covering of the religion, and the one who performs the *fujur* is called *al-fajer*. This person is doing *fujur* in his life in the sense of sins, and such a person says ‘tomorrow I will repent,’ then he doesn’t do it; this is one who does *fujoor*.

Let us consider some of the noble *ayaat* of the Holy Qur’an which use the word *al-fujjar*,

وَأِنَّ الْفُجَّارَ لَفِي جَحِيمٍ

“And most surely the Fujjar are in burning fire” (82: 14)

كَأَلَّا إِنَّ كِتَابَ الْفُجَّارِ لَفِي سِجِّينٍ

“Nay! most surely the record of the Fujjar is in the Sijjin.” (83: 7)

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا بَاطِلًا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ ظَنُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ۚ ۚ فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ۚ مِنَ النَّارِ

“And We did not create the heaven and the earth and what is between them in vain; that is the opinion of those who disbelieve, and woe to those who disbelieve on account of the fire.” (38: 27)

أَمْ نَجْعَلُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا ۚ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ كَالْمُفْسِدِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَمْ نَجْعَلُ الْمُتَّقِينَ كَالْفُجَّارِ

“Shall We treat those who believe and do good like the mischief-makers in the earth? Or shall We make those who guard (against evil) like the wicked?” (38: 28)

كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا ۚ ءَايَاتِهِ ۚ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُو ۚ لُؤْلَآءِ ۚ الْأَلْبَابِ

“(It is) a Book We have revealed to you abounding in good that they may ponder over its verses, and that those endowed with understanding may be mindful.” (38: 29)

It is important to understand what *taqwa* is. *Taqwa* is a kind of self-restraint with God-consciousness. Ragheb Esafahani indicates that the word *WA QA YA (Al-Waqiya)* is protecting the thing from what harms it, and the word *al-taqwa* is making the self (*nafs*) in *waqiya* from what it is fearing. *Taqwa* is the quality of those who protect themselves from all that is wrong and sinful. One is God-conscious, hence they have a self-restraint or safeguarding against what is opposed to Allah the Exalted.

Such a “*muttaqi*” person is one who avoids the forbidden things and makes full efforts to perform the obligations that Allah has commanded. Such a person's aim is to be obedient and not disobedient. To be submissive to Allah and not submissive to evil and sins and low temporal forbidden desires.

We can observe the word *al-muttaqeen* (those who are people of *taqwa*) in the following *ayaat* of the noble Qur'an;

بَلَىٰ مَنْ أَوْفَىٰ بِعَهْدِهِ ۖ وَاتَّقَىٰ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ

“Yea, whoever fulfils his promise and guards (against evil) – then surely Allah loves those who guard (*muttaqeen*)” (3:76)

Tabarsi indicates in his *Majmal Al-Bayyan* that this *fujuraha* and *taqwaha* mentioned in surah *Ash-Shams* is the path of knowing the *fujur* and *taqwa*, and its abstaining or refraining in *fujur*. So over here, one refrains from the *fujur* and knows of its path, and knows the aim in *taqwa*.

It is said that Ibn Abbas, Mujahid, and Qatada indicate in some narration that it is knowing obedience and disobedience for doing obedience and warning of disobedience, gaining good and keeping away from evil.

One of the contemporary *Tafsir* states that the meaning is the path which leads to *fujur* in thought and deeds, and the path which leads to *taqwa* in comprehension and movement.

That is, we know the path to *taqwa* and the path to *fujur*, we have to take up our *ikhtiyar* (choice between doing this or that) and implement it in the lofty direction, an awareness of Allah the Exalted, and in submission to Him (SwT)

In philosophical ethics, moralists note that human beings have in them certain potentials (faculties). Such faculties must be built into virtues (moral qualities) and pulled out from the sinkholes of vice. They must be used in a correct manner and made into fixed qualities: what we termed as virtues, which here are the balanced functions of those faculties. Otherwise, they will be off balance and consequently a vice.

Briefly, the Four Faculties mentioned by them are as follows;

First: The Faculty of passion and appetites called *Al-Quwwat Ash-Shawiyyah*. With this faculty, humans enjoy the blessings related to carnal desires, such as sex, food, and drink. When this is balanced correctly, it becomes chastity and moderation. Over here, one stays away from all that is forbidden and inclines to the things that are in obedience to Allah in this sphere.

Second: The Faculty of *Al-Quwwat Al-Ghadhabiyyah* (Anger). With this blessing, humanity protects from danger, and this, when balanced, becomes the virtue of courage as opposed to cowardice and

irascibility.

Third: The Faculty of *Aqliyyah* (Intellect). With this ability, humans intellectualise and gain practical wisdom as a virtue, and can ascend toward true felicity.

Fourth: The Faculty of *Wahmiyyah* (Imagination). With this, humans plan and imagine things. Hence, if misused, it can cause much damage, and if used correctly and for good, it can result in justice and righteous deeds.

The method to regulate these areas is by continuous action until one positions them in the balanced position and fixes the virtues as established moral qualities that bring us closer to Allah the Exalted.

Therefore, we can say that the children of Adam have the ability to desire a thing or react to a situation in a certain manner, and this is where they are tested. In this battleground of the soul. Will they turn to the right or to the left, will they fail or succeed, will they act in accordance with religion and intellect, or will they act in accordance with illicit desire and ignorance? In fact, my brothers and sisters, this is where *shaytan* whispers, this is where he adorns the act of sin.

زَيْنَ لِلنَّاسِ حُبُّ الشَّهَوَاتِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ وَالْبَنِينَ وَالْقَنَاطِيرِ الْمُقَنْطَرَةِ مِنَ الذَّهَبِ وَالْفِضَّةِ وَالْخَيْلِ الْمُسَوَّمَةِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ
وَالْحَرِّثِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۗ وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ ۙ حُسْنُ الْمَبَٰثِ

“The love of [worldly] allures, including women and children, accumulated piles of gold and silver, horses of mark, livestock, and farms has been made to seem decorous to mankind. Those are the wares of the life of this world, but the goodness of one’s ultimate destination lies near Allah” (3: 14).

That is, according to Allamah Tabatabai, Allah has ingrained in human nature the love for these fair and beautiful things so that the world can obtain completion and perfection. Without these inclinations, the human race would cease to continue, and through them, the decree of Allah is enforced

قُلْ أُوتِيتُكُمْ بِخَيْرٍ مِّنْ ذَٰلِكُمْ ۚ لِلَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا ۙ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَأَزْوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ
وَرِضْوَانٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ ۙ بِالْعِبَادِ

“Say, ‘Shall I inform you of something better than that? For those who are Godfearing there will be gardens near their Lord, with streams running in them, to remain in them [forever], and chaste mates, and Allah’s pleasure.’ And Allah watches His servants” (3: 15).

So what is the role of *shaytan* in our sinful deeds? In fact, the *shayateen* (la) adorn the act of the sin, he adorns the transgression, and hence the human soul decides to listen or turn away, to fail or succeed, to use these good inclinations and good things towards the obedience to Allah, or to use it in disobedience

to the Master of All creation, the One to whom all shall return. At that point, he or she either acquires accountability for punishment in the hereafter by failing the test, or accountability for the good toward the lofty aim and lofty reward.

Let us ponder on the noble *ayaat* of the Qur'an narrating to us what Iblis (Ia) stated when being cast out for his disobedience.

قَالَ رَبِّ بِمَا أَغْوَيْتَنِي لَأُزَيِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ

“He said, ‘My Lord! As You have consigned me to perversity, I will surely glamorize [evil] for them on the earth, and I will surely pervert them,” (15:39)

إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمْ الْمُخْلِصِينَ

“All except Your dedicated servants among them.” (15:40)

He stated that he will adorn for the children of Adam in the earth and cause them all to be like him: *“Ughweyannahum.”* That is just like he is *Ghawen*, his aim is to make the children of Adam *Ghawen*.

Let us investigate this word *ghawen*. Here, he used the phrase *“aghwaytani,”* which means ‘you have left me to stray.’ That is thrown into the abyss of abominable, into the places of deviation and astray, and distanced from the Mercy of Allah the Exalted. Due to your own crime, and hence among the *ghaween*.

Allah the Exalted responds:

قَالَ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ عَلَيَّ مُسْتَقِيمٌ

“He said, ‘This is the path [leading] straight to Me.” (15:41)

إِنَّ عِبَادِي لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانٌ إِلَّا مَنْ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْغَاوِينَ

“Indeed, as for My servants, you do not have any authority over them, except the perverse who follow you,” (15:42)

Al-Ghaween (وَيَغَاوُونَ) here is the plural noun of the verb that was mentioned in the previous verse, *“aghwaytani”* (نِيَّيَوُغَاً). It is also used in "I will mislead them" (هُمْ نَائِيُغَاً). These derivatives come from the triliteral root of ي و غ . This word with it's different variations between nouns and verbs occurs within the Holy Qur'an 22 times. Ragheb Esfahani states that the word *Ghawa* (غَوَى): *Al Ghayy* (يَغَاِل) is an

ignorance from corrupt belief.

Such *ghaween* people are astray in their own ignorance. Due to the corrupt beliefs they had, the rottenness of their inside has been a cause in their own ruin, and now they are amongst those whom they have joined, known as *al-ghaween*.

وَأُزْلِفَتِ الْجَنَّةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ

“And paradise will be brought near for the Muttaqen,” (26:90)

وَبُرِزَتِ الْجَحِيمُ لِلْغَاوِينَ

“And hell will be brought into view for the perverse,” (26:91)

وَقِيلَ لَهُمْ أَإِنَّ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْبُدُونَ

“And they shall be told: ‘Where is that which you used to worship’ (26:92)

مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ هَلْ يَنْصُرُونَكُمْ أَوْ يَنْتَصِرُونَ

“Besides Allah? Do they help you, or do they help each other?” (26:93)

فَكُفُّوا ۖ فِيهَا هُمْ وَالْغَاوُونَ

“Then they will be cast into it on their faces – they and the perverse,” (26:94)

وَجُنُودُ إِبْلِيسَ أَجْمَعُونَ

“And the hosts of Iblis all together” (26:95)

[1] [1]

SHARES

Chapter 5: How to Develop Moral Qualities

There are two ways to develop moral qualities or dispositions that I shall mention; however, we must highlight the need for beseeching Allah (SwT) for His allowance and help, for if there is any success, it is by the Mercy and Will of Allah. Hence, we must use our determination and motivation to turn toward, beseech, and seek help from the Master of all creation, the Only True Refuge and the Merciful Bestower.

First: Birth inclinations (some may title it as genetics) – that is, some people are born naturally balanced and inclined to moral qualities, like one born naturally good-tempered. Here, one must maintain this inclination and balance.

Second: *Ada* (repetition) and practice. Just like exercise strengthens the muscles in the body and makes them strong, so does practice and repetition form habits. Once those habits are established, one will form qualities that become like second nature. For example, when one learns how to ride a bike, they practise until it becomes like second nature to ride a bike. Therefore, if one wants to develop the virtue of generosity, they can begin to oppose the vice of miserliness and stinginess, developing it into a habit that will turn into a moral quality.

Humanity's real success is requiring purification of the soul, and its real failure is to decline to the lowest degree lower than the animals. That is mankind can be better than the angels or worse than the beast, depending on what he or she decides to do with their gifts and blessings; will they misuse them? Or will they use them correctly?

‘Abd Allah Ibn Sinan said, ‘I asked Aba ‘Abd Allah, Ja’far Ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq (السلام عليه), I (narrator) said: “Are the angels better (*afdhal*) or the children of Adam? So he (السلام عليه) said that Amir al-Mu’minin, ‘Ali Ibn Abi Talib (السلام عليه) said: “Verily, Allah (جلّ وعزّ) has composed in angels ‘*aqil* (intellect) and no desire, and he composed in beasts desire and no intellect, and he composed in the children of Adam both (‘*aqil* and desire). So whoever (lets) ‘*aqil* overcome his desires, he will be better than the angels, and whoever (lets) his desires overcome his ‘*aqil*, he is will be worse than the beasts”^{[1](#)}

In fact, we are in a struggle against evil influences in our hearts such as satanic whispers (*waswasa*), the adornment of sins when we approach them, the calling of the unruly *nafs* that has not been disciplined or reigned in, the social factors such as bad friends, media, and unislamic culture.

All these can be said to be amongst the many influences, internal and external, that the human soul is in a struggle against. This can be considered as the battleground of the human soul in which the intellectual human must win. This is the constant battle against the tyranny of corruption and evil, and sin and transgression to the *madhlum* soul (the oppressed soul).

One form of oppression we do is when we commit sins, we oppress ourselves. So we must rise up, plant our feet firmly, and push forward. Therefore, we must be cognizant that this battle is waged in our hearts, in ourselves; it is waged day and night, and there are enemies that are ready to ambush at any moment in corners we did not expect.

Therefore, we must develop intellect (*al-'aql*) by seeking it from Allah the Exalted, and correctly using the already bestowed gifts of intellectual abilities and the authentic line of religion. Hence, we must make the choices with our free will in accordance with what Allah wants from us, in accordance with *taqwa* of Allah (safeguarding from sins and evil) and *ubudiyyah* (servitude and obedience).

In Islamic *fiqh*, we have in the chapter of *Al-Mutahirat* (The Purifiers) something called "*istihalah*": when something that is *najis* gets changed into something different, rendering it pure (*tahir*), like *najis* wood into ashes.

Imagine that we take a wooden log that has become *mutanajis* (impure) to kindle a fire. We place it in the fire and light it, and the fire begins to slowly burn the wood, spreading to all its parts. So much so that the entire essence of the wooden log becomes ashes.

If we serve Allah, and obey Allah, develop *khulq* in yearning for Allah the Exalted, inshaAllah the divine breeze of His Mercy will blow onto us, and we will even appear as something much better than we once were. We will be like *istihalah* has occurred to us in a sense. However, we must use our *ikhtiyar* (ability to make choices) to make the right choices and remember that if we get kicked down, injured or anything else in this struggle in our hearts, we must stand up. We must rise up and push forward. In the end, there is no strength nor power except that it exclusively belongs to Allah (SwT).

Another important point to keep in mind is that, we must adhere to the *Thaqalayn* (two weighty things – Qur'an and Ahl al-Bayt – 'a) and take movement in moral action. We must polish the soul with knowledge and adorn it with morality and servitude to Allah.

We must remove the parasites of ignorance (*jahliyyah*) from our thoughts, and become those whose thoughts are in harmony with, their actions in line with, and their sayings surrendering to the submission to Allah the Exalted. This is the direction of *'aql* (intellect).

Let's ponder on this authentic narration which Shaykh Kulayni (r.a.) chose as the very first hadith to start the entire hadith collection, *Al-Kafi*.

أَخْبَرَنَا أَبُو جَعْفَرٍ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ يَعْقُوبَ قَالَ حَدَّثَنِي عِدَّةٌ مِنْ أَصْحَابِنَا مِنْهُمْ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ يَحْيَى الْعَطَّارُ عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ
عَنِ الْحَسَنِ بْنِ مَحْبُوبٍ عَنِ الْعَلَاءِ بْنِ رَزِينَ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ مُسْلِمٍ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) قَالَ لَمَّا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ الْعَقْلَ
اسْتَنْطَقَهُ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ أَقْبِلْ فَأَقْبَلَ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ أَدْبِرْ فَأَدْبَرَ ثُمَّ قَالَ وَ عِزَّتِي وَجَلَالِي مَا خَلَقْتُ خَلْقًا هُوَ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِنْكَ وَلَا
أَكْمَأَتَكَ إِلَّا فِيمَنْ أُحِبُّ أَمَا إِنِّي إِيَّاكَ أَمَرُ وَإِيَّاكَ أَنْهَى وَإِيَّاكَ أَعَاقِبُ وَإِيَّاكَ أَثِيبُ.

Abu Ja'far Muhammad Ibn Ya'qub has narrated from a number of our people, of whom one is Muhammad Ibn Yahya al-'Attar, who narrated from Ahmad Ibn Muhammad, from Hassan Ibn Mahbub, from 'Ala' Ibn Razin, from Muhammad Ibn Muslim, from Abu Ja'far ('a), who has said the following: "When Allah, God, created Intelligence He made it speak and then He said to it, 'Come forward'. It came forward. He then said, "Go back." It went back. Then Allah said, "I swear by My Honour and Glory that I have not created any creature more beloved to Me than you. I will not perfect you in anyone except those whom I love. I, however, will command only you to do things and prohibit only you from doing certain things. I will grant blessings (rewards) to you only and will subject only you to punishments."

This 'aq/ obeyed Allah, it recognised Allah and His Authority. So if any such person comes and claims that intellect directs to disobey Allah or to disbelieve in Allah, that is far from the reality of what intellect is. These hadith attest to this fact, and we should not overlook what Ahl al-Bayt ('a) told us about intellect and ponder deeply upon it.

Following the path of Ahl al-Bayt ('a) will make us true human beings, better than the angels. So we must pick up with our *ikhtiyar* (ability to make choices) and use what level of intellect Allah (SwT) has bestowed upon us needy creatures, and seek to get more light shone upon us. We must seek to reach higher horizons of intellect, and the source of that bestowment is Allah the Exalted.

Therefore, we must act sincerely in accordance with moral directions found in an authentic Islamic lifestyle, where every movement and thought, every action and saying is upon the pure line of Islamic thoughts, sayings, and actions. Such development of actions, sayings, and thoughts, God willing, will rest us at the high levels of His Vast Mercy (SwT), and the highest of that is knowing Allah and being close to Him (SwT). We therefore must follow this *deen al-haq* (authentic religion) and be fixed upon it. And we can plead;

يَا اللَّهُ يَا رَحْمَنُ يَا رَحِيمُ يَا مُقَلِّبَ الْقُلُوبِ ثَبِّتْ قَلْبِي عَلَى دِينِكَ

“O Allah! O All-beneficent! O All-merciful! O Turner of hearts! (Please) make my heart firm on Your religion.”²

¹. Source: al-Saduq, 'Ilal al-Shara'i (Najaf: Manshurat al-Maktabah al-Haydariyyah, 1385/1966), vol. 1, ch. 6, pg. 4 – 5, hadeeth # 1. [🔗](#)

². Dua al-Ghareek. [🔗](#)

Chapter 6: Breaking The Idols of Jahl

In regards to the word *al-'aql*, Ragheb Esfahani indicates it is said for a *quwwat* (faculty, potential) in the human that is prepared for accepting the knowledge. And for knowledge which benefits mankind by that faculty of intellect.

The intellect is a gem, which we must use in its full potential and develop it toward its true completion, seeking it from Allah the Exalted, and being thankful for the blessings of it which He has allowed for us. In fact, Islam is intellectual, and the Islamic man must be intellectual.

The word *'aql* (intellect) is used in different usages, such as it is a *quwwah* faculty or energy by which the soul derives meanings that produce an idea and explains that very idea. Here, when the *'aql* is with sense perception, it derives meanings. Another usage of the word *'aql* is to signify axioms (*'ilm al-badehi*), essential thoughts, and common sense. Such as two opposites cannot exist as one same thing, existence and non-existence cannot be the same thing.

Yet another usage of the word *'aql* is used to describe experimental knowledge, knowledge learned through experiences, like a mason understands how to build a wall from experience much better than someone who only studied how to build a wall on paper. Over here, the human observes and has practical experiments and draws from it and is influenced by it, resulting in uncovering the hidden secrets of things.

And lastly, the word *'aql* is used to refer to the practical intellect. This is when the human being uses his intellect and applies and implements it through contemplation and experiment. He is able to know right from wrong, good from bad, hence here if the *aqel* (one who is intellectual) fails to do what is right and happens to do what is wrong, he is considered as foolish (*jahe*l).

Therefore, *'aql* is a faculty in the human soul that impacts human life, and it is possible in all these spheres. Such an intellect is a gift from Allah the Exalted, and is a proof between mankind and Allah the Exalted.

We should note that the word *jahl* can be ignorance, and according to the science of logic. *Jahl* is of two types, the first of which is called *jahl baseet* (simple ignorance). This is when a person doesn't know something and knows they do not know it. The second type is called *jahl murakab*. This is when we don't know something but we think we know something. Besides this, *jahl* can be used to signify a kind of foolishness that is the opposite to *aqil* (Intellect), hence it is in meaning here opposed to intellect. In fact, it is an enemy of intellect. Therefore, this chapter shall discuss several important features of *jahl* that must be broken.

Iman

Belief or *Iman* is not just a mere conception of an idea, as some will say "I believe this," nor is it an irrational leap like Kirkegaard had suggested, nor is it something that should be preceded by actions without any foundation in intellectualism as is suggested in Christianity. No, rather belief first should be founded upon the intellectual basis. And second, belief itself is when those beliefs have entered the heart of a person. That heart has wrapped around those beliefs and they are consumed within the heart, hence such a person will produce actions, sayings and thoughts that are the thoughts, actions and sayings of believers.

The opposite of belief must be shattered in one's heart, that is, in their soul they must take the wrecking ball to the house of disbelief, from the most apparent to the most hidden, and tear down the disbelief from the fertile ground of the human soul.

What one must understand about Allah the Exalted, is that He Exists and all things need Him. He is not needy, He is not limited, He is the Exalted. Then one must understand about the human situation, how we are created with a soul, and a body that has tendencies and inclinations, that we have rational abilities, that we are at average levels of it, that we have *ikhtiyar* (ability to make choices between good or bad). One must understand the role of divinely sent books and the Prophets, the need for Prophethood and Imamate, and the Return (the Day of Accountability and Judgment).

However, in the areas of belief system, one should be careful and must establish the correct beliefs in accordance with a trustworthy handhold of true, reliable and authentic Islamic evidence. These will never be irrational; however, we have to be careful when we arrive at two possible acceptable things, and seek the authentic line in it. In this way, intellectual proofs are foundations to our belief system and religious evidence, and they reaffirm, clarify and enlighten us on what direction to take. Therefore, we require Prophethood, books and Imams for human salvation. As authentic revelation takes the hand of reason where it cannot tread alone, and tells it to sit wherever it must sit.

Tasdiq (Affirmation)

Over here, one gives attestation to their belief. In the science of logic, it is that they make a judgment on whether a *tasawur* (concept) is true or false. We can say that this *tasdiq* is a step in which you believe entirely and attest to it being the case.

We must be those sorts of thinkers who affirm if something is true or false when one is faced with a proposition that one does not know of its reality; they must research, think, contemplate and seek the reality of the situation and hence make a judgment upon it. In fact, in the science of *Ilmu Kalaam* scholars will say there is no *Taqlid* in this section, rather one must search and gain a correct understanding in the belief system. *Taqlid* is something we find in the sphere of *fiqh* (jurisprudence) for the layman.

However, this no *Taqlid* in belief system doesn't mean we cannot contemplate the reasons presented by scholars. However, we must be open to finding the reality of the situation, the correct view, and never be so biased that we would end up rejecting the actual revelation of Allah the Exalted. In that case, we would not be following the correct path of intellectualism as intellectual direction will not reject Allah (SwT), or the real reality of the issues, no matter how many glimmery possibilities may be up against it. Hence, one's beliefs must be proved, and we have to make a affirmation on them (*tasdiq*) that it is true. That affirmation should be backed by proof that will save our necks on the day of judgment.

Also, another way we can view *tasdiq* is as an outward attestation. Hence, here one has the inner beliefs that appear in their actions; one believes in Allah and His Prophet, and hence they show their belief not to be a show off. No, rather they leave the marks and traces of the perfume of belief.

'Ilm

We must break ignorance by the seeking of knowledge which is of high merit in Islam, in fact the progression of sciences and civilization is well observed amongst Muslim civilizations, and its effects onto the world can be studied and examined in their proper places. However, those sciences are not the highest science which is about Allah (SwT), and we must seek knowledge toward the necessities for reaching the lofty felicity.

Islam encourages us to utilize that innate inclination to knowing, and encourages us the seeking of knowledge; that is, we must seek knowledge that is required for us in our belief system and our dos and don'ts, also understanding that we don't know everything, humbly appreciating the gifts of knowing that Allah the Exalted has bestowed upon us, breaking every window of compound ignorance, and seeking to fill the void of the needs in simple ignorance.

Oftentimes, many of the disputes on matters that arise amongst people are in fact due to ignorance. If we understood the situation and researched, we may grow into a more correct affirmation, or at least our understanding and view about the situation becomes stronger. Take as example how much dispute occurs over things like moon sightings, while in reality, experts have studied the resources very well to reach a conclusion they felt satisfactory to tell those who do their *Taqlid*.

Thinking

Tafakkur is a process from the known to the unknown. It is a movement of the mind. We should contemplate, we should think very deeply about the realities of our thoughts, and the outcomes and factors of our actions and sayings. We should contemplate on the Signs and Blessings of Allah the Exalted. Contemplation is very important to our spiritual and moral, as well as belief development.

When people do not think, they incur a big loss in their judgments and conclusions, and their self-wakefulness. The believers must be thinkers; they must examine themselves and the things people say

to weigh if it is satisfactory to save them on the day of judgment, setting aside all cultural attachment, and all desire or emotionally driven excitements, and all mere personal opinions. In Islam, we are encouraged to think and contemplate.

لَوْ أَنزَلْنَا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ عَلَى جَبَلٍ لَّرَأَيْنَاهُ خَشِعًا مُّتَصَدِّعًا مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَلُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

Had We sent down this Qur'an on a mountain, you would certainly have seen it falling down, splitting asunder because of the fear of Allah, and We set forth these parables to men that they may reflect. (59:21)¹

مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ يَحْيَى عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ بْنِ عِيسَى عَنْ مُعَمَّرِ بْنِ خَلَادٍ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ أَبَا الْحَسَنِ الرِّضَا (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) يَقُولُ
لَيْسَ الْعِبَادَةُ كَثْرَةُ الصَّلَاةِ وَالصَّوْمِ إِنَّمَا الْعِبَادَةُ التَّفَكُّرُ فِي أَمْرِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ

Muhammad Ibn Yahya has narrated from Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn 'Isa, from Mu'ammarr Ibn Khallad, who has said the following: "I heard Abu al-Hassan al-Ridha' ('a) saying, 'A great deal of prayer and fasting only are not (everything in) worship. Worship is only in thinking about the affairs of Allah, the Most Majestic, the Most Holy.'"

Hope and Fear

عَلِيُّ بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنْ ابْنِ أَبِي عُمَيْرٍ عَنْ بَعْضِ أَصْحَابِهِ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) قَالَ كَانَ أَبِي (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) يَقُولُ إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ مِنْ عَبْدٍ مُّؤْمِنٍ إِلَّا وَفِي قَلْبِهِ نُورَانِ نُورٌ خَفِيفٌ وَنُورٌ رَّجَاءٌ لَوْ وُزِنَ هَذَا لَمْ يَزِدْ عَلَى هَذَا وَلَوْ وُزِنَ هَذَا لَمْ يَزِدْ عَلَى هَذَا

Ali Ibn Ibrahim has narrated from his father, from Ibn Abu 'Umayr, from certain individuals of his people, from Abu 'Abd Allah ('a), who has said the following: "My father would say, 'In the heart of every believing servant (of Allah) there are two lights. There is the light of fear and the light of hope. On being weighed, no one of these lights weighs differently from the other.'"

This narration is narrated by the well-known Ibn Abi Umayr, who is one of the *ashabu ijma* (companions of *ijma*). Another view on the implication of his status in the science of *rijal* is that we can accept those on the type of the hadith that indicate in his wording that they are from reliable channels, hence, this view is more critical of the narrations by Ibn Abi Umayr than the first view.

Anyhow, this narration presents to us the conception of two lights in the human being: one of fear and one of hope, which is a topic that we can benefit from reflecting on.

Light is what makes things apparent, illuminated. Imagine as if you were driving in a dark night through

country roads, far from city lights, street lights, buildings and cars, just you driving in the depth of darkness. The manner by which you are lighting up your road and by which you see the signs is by the means of a light. When it shines upon an object, it becomes apparent to you that there is a road ahead of you, a turn or a stop sign.

Therefore, perhaps we can consider light in this way, as something which will light up our dark path so we can walk it, that we can take the path to our salvation and felicity. Light, in fact, can be considered as guidance, and hence, here we will settle for our glimpses at light from the aspect of lighting up our path, as a means to felicity, and not dive into other topics concerning the usage of the word light.

This narration mentions that there are two lights in the believer, that of fear and that of hope, which are two terms, and we must consider their positive and negative aspects.

When we consider the term fear (*kawf*) in Islamic resources, we can mention two types of fear. The first type is false and wrong fears. Like a child scared of a dark room, or the false fears of telling a family member that what they are doing is a sin, or the false fear of praying in public when the prayer time is elapsing. These types of fears we must uproot from our hearts and regulate all fears in accord to rationality and religious directives.

The second type is a good fear, that is a fear of the Punishment of Allah, the withdrawal of His Mercy upon us. Therefore, fear of Allah is a good fear, and such should be cultivated to function as a guard upon the gates of our deeds and sayings.

When we consider hope, we can also mention two types of hope: The first is long far-fetched hope. This is when one has hopes in other Allah, and one's hopes are in other than the hereafter goals. They, in fact, forget the hereafter with such long hopes. Such things should not be the hopes of the believers; we should have hope in Allah and hope in attaining His Mercy. Yes, we can work in this world as if we will be here forever, yet as if at the same time we will die tomorrow. This type of balance is something a believer should achieve as an inner state.

The second type of hopes are hope in Allah's Mercy, hope in obedience, love and yearning for Allah. Any hope in Allah and for the sake of Allah, in His mercy and His forgiveness yet not thinking one is absolved of His punishment so that they are free to disobey with no account, yet knowing the door is there for you to turn to Allah, and seek His Mercy. Hence, one must have a balance of hope mixed with fear, and with these two lights a believer can traverse the path in these dark nights of corruption, sin and forgetfulness.

Therefore, the believer must have a balance between hope and fear which influences all his or her actions and sayings, so that he or she may walk upon the Islamic line in all their movements throughout this temporary abode.

[1] [1]

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Chapter 7: Conclusion

Therefore, as we have examined the importance of spiritual and moral development and glanced at the situation of humanity in our time, to realize that there are many maladies and sicknesses of the soul presently spreading, continuously mutating. whether that be in actions, sayings or thoughts.

Such social maladies actually have their roots found within the human soul, that is, those qualities known as immoral qualities (those bad qualities that take a person away from obedience and nearness to Allah).

After this, we discussed the importance in the usage of true intellect in seeking the cure to our problems, as Allah the Exalted has placed this for us, and has assigned the authentic religion and firm *'aq'* for our guidance.

After this, it was discussed lightly on the purification of the soul, and how the soul is a battleground, having certain abilities and faculties that must be cleaned and balanced and used correctly. Although these words are small and much more can be said on these topics. It was also stated how to develop moral qualities (good qualities that are bringing us closer to Allah, that are in his obedience and seeking His (SwT) love and mercy). Some factors have been mentioned as well that can help to demolish ignorance and foolishness from ourselves.

At this point, I shall end this book by asking the Great and Exalted Allah, to whom I could never thank enough for all the blessings and care He has had on me, even though I'm such a worthless and low servant, and in need of His forgiveness.

O Allah, please forgive us of our sins, our mistakes, safeguard us, keep us firm on Your religion and allow us to be amongst gem of your scholars that remind of You before the reappearance of Your Imam Al-Hujjat Al-Qa'im Al Mahdi ('aj).

Completed on 6th of Jumada-I 1443

Fi Aman Allah

Shaykh Maytham Al-Makkabi

[1] [1]

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