

28) The Perilous Road to Domsday

واعلم أنّ أَمَامَكَ طَرِيقاً ذَا مَسَافَةٍ بَعِيدَةٍ وَمَشَقَّةٍ شَدِيدَةٍ وَأَنَّهُ لَا غِنَى بِكَ فِيهِ عَن حُسْنِ الْإِرْتِيَادِ وَقَدْرِ بَلَاغِكَ مِنَ الزَّادِ
مَعَ خِفَّةِ الظَّهْرِ فَلَا تَحْمِلَنَّ عَلَى ظَهْرِكَ فَوْقَ طَاقَتِكَ فَيَكُونَ ثِقْلٌ ذَلِكَ وَبِالْأَعْيُنِ، وَإِذَا وَجَدْتَ مِن أَهْلِ الْفَاقَةِ مَن يَحْمِلُ
لَكَ زَادَكَ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ فَيُؤَافِيكَ بِهِ غَدًا حَيْثُ تَحْتَاجُ إِلَيْهِ فَاعْتَنِمُهُ وَحَمَلُهُ أَيَّاهُ وَأَكْثَرَ مِن تَزْوِيدِهِ وَأَنْتَ قَادِرٌ عَلَيْهِ
فَلَعَلَّكَ تَطْلُبُهُ فَلَا تَجِدُهُ. وَاعْتَنِمِ مَن اسْتَقْرَضَكَ فِي حَالِ غِنَاكَ لِيَجْعَلَ قَضَائَهُ لَكَ فِي يَوْمِ عُسْرَتِكَ.

واعلم أنّ أَمَامَكَ عَقَبَةٌ كَثُوداً الْمُخْفِ فِيهَا أَحْسَنُ حَالاً مِنَ الْمُثْقَلِ وَالْمُبْتَطِئِ عَلَيْهَا أَقْبَحُ أَمراً مِنَ الْمُسْرِعِ وَإِنَّ مَهْبَطَهَا
بِكَ لَا مَحَالَةَ إِمَّا عَلَى جَنَّةٍ أَوْ عَلَى نَارٍ فَارْتَدْ لِنَفْسِكَ قَبْلَ نُزُولِكَ وَوَطِئِ الْمَنْزِلَ قَبْلَ حُلُولِكَ فَلَيْسَ بَعْدَ الْمَوْتِ مُسْتَعْتَبٌ
"وَلَا إِلَى الدُّنْيَا مُنْصَرَفٌ"

"Know that there is, ahead of you, a road of great distance and severe hardship, and that in it you will need to make a proper search, collect provisions as much as you can, and have a light load (of sins). Do not burden your back beyond your strength such that the weight of that has evil consequences for you

And if you find a needy person to carry your provisions for you to the Day of Judgment, and deliver it to you tomorrow when you will be in need of it, then avail yourself of him and make him carry it. Continue to supply him with provisions (for yourself) as far as you are able, for you may seek him later and not find him. Avail yourself of one who asks you for a loan while you are in a state of affluence, so that his repayment of it to you will be on the day of your hardship.

Know that before you is a mountain road, difficult to ascend. The light-burdened one on it will be in a better condition than the heavy-burdened one, and the slow-moving one on it will be in a worse state than the fast-moving one. Its place of descent with you will undoubtedly be in Paradise or in the Fire. Thus, search (for provisions) for yourself before your descent, and prepare the station before your arrival, for after death there is no seeking of (God's) favour or any return to this world."

Commentary

In this section of the letter, Imam 'Ali (as) talks about the perilous road to Doomsday, and the hardships which exist there. He says no excuses are accepted and a return to the world is impossible. Whatever we are able to do, we should do here. Imam 'Ali (as) has invited his son and all of his other spiritual sons to prepare provisions for Doomsday.

The following points in Imam 'Ali's letter are worth considering:

A. Sufficient Provisions And Light-Load Of Possessions

In this difficult and long road two things are essential: First, enough provisions which can help us there and which includes piety and good deeds. Imam "Ali (as) has said:

خَيْرُ الزَّادِ التَّقْوَى

"The best kind of provision is God-wariness."

And secondly, the light load of possessions in this world. We would suffer a lot in that long, tedious journey of ours. We will be destroyed if the load is too heavy.

B. Be Aware Of The Significance Of Those Who Carry Your Provisions On The Way Or Pay You Back What They Owe You On Difficult Days

In emphasizing our struggles to prepare the provisions, Imam 'Ali (as) uses two beautiful similes and metaphors:

Firstly: In this long and tiring way if you can find somebody to be able to carry some of your provisions to your destination, you are lucky. Be aware that when you help the needy today, in fact you have put your provisions for the next world over their shoulders to deliver them to you in the next world. You might not be lucky enough to have a chance like this tomorrow:

Secondly: There are people who are ready to borrow from you when you are rich, to give it back to you when you are poor. Make the best of this situation. Be aware that to give away your wealth to the needy for God's sake is to lend to God. ¹ This is easy for you today to perform such a good act.

However, on Doomsday, when it is the time of hardship, despair and misery, the result is of significant consequences:

C. In Hard To Cross Roads, The Light – Loaded Travelers Are More At Ease

Imam 'Ali (as) talks about hard-to-cross roads in the direction of Resurrection Day. These are

mentioned in the books on traditions.² Naturally, those who are light-loaded in sins pass both speedily and easily but the heavy-loaded sinners either fall or stumble on the way.

D. The End Point For Everyone Is Either Paradise Or Hell

Imam ‘Ali (as) points out that the end point for all is either Paradise or Hell. We should make every thing ready before departure. After death there is no return.

¹ . “If you set apart for Allah a goodly portion, He will double it for you and forgive you; and Allah is the Multiplier of rewards, Forbearing”. [Qur’an 64: 17]

² . Refer to Bihar, vol.5, pp.7– 8.

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