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33) The Delicate Tasks of a Man towards His Friend

احمِلْ نَفْسَكَ مِنْ أَخِيكَ عِنْدَ صَرْمِهِ عَلَى الصَّلَةِ وَعِنْدَ صُدُودِهِ عَلَى اللَّطْفِ وَالْمُقَارَبَةِ وَعِنْدَ جُمُودِهِ عَلَى الْبَدَلِ وَعِنْدَ تَبَاعُدِهِ عَلَى الدُّنُورِ وَعِنْدَ شِدَّتِهِ عَلَى اللَّيْنِ وَعِنْدَ جُرْمِهِ عَلَى الْعُذْرِ حَتَّى كَأَنَّكَ لَهُ عَبْدٌ وَكَأَنَّهُ نُو نِعْمَةٍ عَلَيْكَ وَإِيَّاكَ أَنْ تَضَعَ ذَلِكَ فِي غَيْرِ مَوْضِعِهِ أَوْ أَنْ تَفْعَلَهُ بِغَيْرِ أَهْلِهِ لَا تَتَّخِذَنَّ عَدُوَّ صَدِيقِكَ صَدِيقًا فَتُعَادِي صَدِيقَكَ وَامْحِضْ أَخَاكَ النَّصِيحَةَ حَسَنَةً أَوْ قَبِيحَةً وَتَجَرَّعَ الْغَيْظَ فَاِنِّي لَمْ أَرْ جُرْعَةً أَحَلَى مِنْهَا عَاقِبَةً وَلَا أَلَذَّ مَغْبَةً وَلَنْ لِمَنْ غَالَطَكَ فَإِنَّهُ يُوشِكُ أَنْ يَلِينَنَّ لَكَ

وَحُذِّ عَلَى عَدُوِّكَ بِالْفَضْلِ فَإِنَّهُ أَحَلَى الظَّفَرَيْنِ وَإِنْ أَرَدْتَ قَطِيعَةَ أَخِيكَ فَاسْتَبِقْ لَهُ مِنْ نَفْسِكَ بَقِيَّةً يَرْجِعُ إِلَيْهَا إِنْ بَدَأَ لَهُ ذَلِكَ يَوْمًا مَّا. وَمَنْ ظَنَّ بِكَ خَيْرًا فَصَدِّقْ ظَنَّهُ وَلَا تُضَيِّعَنَّ حَقَّ أَخِيكَ اتِّكَالًا عَلَى مَا بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ فَإِنَّهُ لَيْسَ لَكَ بِأَخٍ مَنْ أَضَعْتَ حَقَّهُ. وَلَا يَكُنْ أَهْلُكَ أَشَقَى الْخَلْقِ بِكَ وَلَا تَرْغَبَنَّ فِيَمَنْ زَهَدَ عَنْكَ وَلَا يَكُونَنَّ أَخُوكَ عَلَى قَطِيعَتِكَ أَقْوَى مِنْكَ عَلَى صِلَتِهِ وَلَا يَكُونَنَّ عَلَى الْإِسَاءَةِ أَقْوَى مِنْكَ عَلَى الْإِحْسَانِ وَلَا يَكْبُرَنَّ عَلَيْكَ ظُلْمٌ مَنْ ظَلَمَكَ فَإِنَّهُ يَسْعَى فِي مَضْرَبَتِهِ " وَنَفْعِكَ وَلَيْسَ جَزَاءُ مَنْ سَرَكَ أَنْ تَسُوَّهُ

“Against the unfriendly behavior of your brother, do the following: when he severs his relationship with you, you (continue to) establish relations with him. When he turns away from you, you show kindness and draw close to him. When he is stingy, be generous towards him; when he moves away, you come near to him. When he is harsh, you be gentle towards him. When he commits an offense, forgive him. Treat him so until it is as if you are his slave and he is your benefactor. But take care not to do this where it is inappropriate or to one who is not worthy of it. Never take the enemy of your friend as your friend, for in this way you will incur the hostility of your friend. Be sincere in your advice to your brother whether this advice is good or ugly (in his opinion). Swallow your anger, for I have not seen a draught sweeter in outcome than it, or with a more pleasant result. Be gentle to one who treats you harshly: he will soon be gentle towards you.

Treat your enemy with favours, because it is the sweeter of the two victories (i.e. revenge or the bestowal of favours). If you wish to sever relations with your brother, leave some room for him to return to your friendship if he wishes to someday. If one has a good opinion of you, confirm his opinion of you. Never neglect your brother's right by relying on the friendship that is between you and him, because one whose rights you neglect is not your brother. Do not let your family be the most wretched of people because of you. Do not desire (the friendship of) one who shuns you.

Your brother should not be more powerful in severing relations with you than you are in establishing relations with him, and he should not be stronger in ill-treatment of you than you are in doing good to him. Do not consider as great the wrong-doing of one who wrongs you because he is harming himself and benefiting you. The reward of one who makes you happy is not that you should offend him”.

Commentary

Imam ‘Ali (as), in this letter, mentions some of the delicate tasks of a man towards his friend. We will refer to some of these points below:

The Role Of Friendship And The Tasks Imposed By It

Although some of these points have already been dealt with sporadically in this book, a compact summary of them is in order here.

As we know, a man needs a genuine friend and companion for the following reasons:

1. Man is a sociable creature by nature. He may not carry on living without a companion.

Thus, Raghib, under the item "insan" (man) writes:

"Man is called (man) because he is created in such a way that he can not continue his life without others.

Thus, it is said that man is sociable by nature. This is because he may not solve his problems without others' cooperation"¹

2. One of the ways a man's personality takes form is his association with his fellow-creatures. This is because, due to his trait of forming habits, he learns from others. It is said,

المَرءُ عَلَى دِينِ خَلِيلِهِ وَقَرِينِهِ"702"

"A person follows the religion of his intimate friend and companion”.

3. A man has needs which he can not satisfy single-handedly. A friend can help him out of his difficulties. Imam ‘Ali (as) has said in this respect:

"عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْإِخْوَانِ فَإِنَّهُمْ عُدَّةٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ"

*"Do not forget to have brethren and good friends; they are a provision (for you) in this world and in the Hereafter."*²

However, firstly in selecting friends we should take care. The person might turn out to be a thief. Imam 'Ali (as) has said in this respect:

"لَا تَصْحَبِ الشَّرِيرَ فَإِنَّ طَبْعَكَ يَسْرِقُ مِنْ طَبْعِهِ شَرًّا وَأَنْتَ لَا تَعْلَمُ"

"Do not take a bad person as your friend because your nature steals evil from his nature while you are unaware."

In another occasion, Imam 'Ali (as) has said:

مَنْ اتَّخَذَ أَخًا مِنْ غَيْرِ اخْتِبَارِ الْجَاهِ الْإِضْطِرَارِ إِلَى مُرَافَقَةِ الْأَشْرَارِ "704"

"A person who takes a brother (as a friend) without putting him to the test, will be compelled to be friends with evil people."

Secondly, when we purposefully select a person as a friend, we will know the limits of friendship. Finding a friend is easy, keeping him is much harder.

"أَعْجَزُ النَّاسِ مَنْ عَجَزَ عَنِ اكْتِسَابِ الْإِخْوَانِ، وَأَعْجَزُ مِنْهُ مَنْ ضَيَّعَ مَنْ ظَفَرَ بِهِ مِنْهُمْ"

*"The weakest person is the one who cannot find a friend and still weaker than such a person is the one who loses his friend."*³

The Rights And Limits Of Friendship In Imam 'Ali's Words

In books on ethics there are discussion on the rights and limits of friendship in detail. There are even some books written on this issue.⁴ But in the following section we will describe these rights as Imam 'Ali (as) perceives them.

1. Protecting The Bond Of Friendship

One of the rights of friendship is the protection of the bond of friendship. Imam 'Ali (as) in this respect says:

"مِنْ كَرَمِ الْمَرْءِ بُكَاءُهُ عَلَى مَا مَضَى مِنْ زَمَانِهِ وَحَبِينُهُ إِلَى أَوْطَانِهِ وَحِفْظُ قَدِيمِ إِخْوَانِهِ"

"Among the nobilities of man is his weeping over the days of his life (that he has passed negligently), his yearning for his homeland and keeping his old friends".⁵

Imam 'Ali (as) reports from the Prophet (S) that he considered thirty rights for a Muslim's bond of friendship.⁶

Now what should one do if his partner sold this valuable item for nothing? Should he stay indifferent towards the other person's indignation, or should he do his best to establish his friendship once again? In books of traditions there are many cases on friendship. We will discuss two of them here:

a) The great Prophet (S) has said:

"أَيُّمَا مُسْلِمِينَ تَهَاجَرَا فَمَكْنَا ثَلَاثًا لَا يَصْطَلِحَانِ إِلَّا كَانَا خَارَجِينَ مِنَ الْإِسْلَامِ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ بَيْنَهُمَا وَلَايَةٌ فَأَيُّهُمَا سَبَقَ إِلَى كَلَامِ أَخِيهِ كَانَ السَّابِقَ إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ يَوْمَ الْحِسَابِ"

"If two Muslims cut off relations with each other and remain so for three days without reconciliation, they are both out of Islam and there is no friendship between them. Whichever of them precedes in speaking to his brother will precede him in entering Paradise on the Day of Reckoning".⁷

b) Imam Sadiq (as) has stated:

"لَا يَفْتَرِقُ رَجُلَانِ عَلَى الْهَجْرَانِ إِلَّا اسْتَوْجَبَ أَحَدُهُمَا الْبِرَاءَةَ وَاللَّعْنَةَ وَرُبَّمَا اسْتَحَقَّ ذَلِكَ كِلَاهُمَا فَقَالَ لَهُ مُعْتَبٌ: جَعَلَنِي اللَّهُ فِدَاكَ هَذَا الظَّالِمُ فَمَا بَالُ الْمَظْلُومِ؟ قَالَ لِأَنَّهُ لَا يَدْعُو أَخَاهُ إِلَى صِلَتِهِ وَلَا يَتَغَامَسُ لَهُ عَنْ كَلَامِهِ، سَمِعْتُ أَبِي يَقُولُ: إِذَا تَنَازَعَ اثْنَانِ فَعَاَزَ أَحَدُهُمَا الْآخَرَ فَلْيَرْجِعِ الْمَظْلُومُ إِلَى صَاحِبِهِ حَتَّى يَقُولَ لِصَاحِبِهِ: أَيُّ أَخِي أَنَا الظَّالِمُ حَتَّى يَقْطَعَ الْهَجْرَانَ بَيْنَهُ وَيَبِينَ صَاحِبَهُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى حَكَمَ عَدْلٍ يَأْخُذُ لِلْمَظْلُومِ مِنَ الظَّالِمِ"

"Two people do not separate and cut off relations with each other except that one of them, and perhaps both, deserves Allah's chastisement". Mu'tab, one of Imam's companions asked him: "The one who is tyrant deserves this punishment. What about the oppressed one; what is his fault"? Imam (as) answered: "He is guilty because he did not invite his friend to establish the friendship bond once again and he did not ignore his speech. I heard from my father who said: If two persons quarrel and one is victorious, the defeated one should go to the other and tell him: "Brother, I am the oppressor". In this way, they can make peace. Allah is the just Judge. He will punish the oppressor"⁸

It is because of this point that Imam 'Ali (as), in his erudite letter, commands us to:

"احْمِلْ نَفْسَكَ مِنْ أَخِيكَ عِنْدَ صَرَمِهِ عَلَى الصِّلَةِ وَعِنْدَ صُدُودِهِ عَلَى اللُّطْفِ وَالْمُقَارَبَةِ"

"When your brother severs his relationship with you, you make yourself establish relations with him.

When he turns away from you, you show kindness and draw near to him”.

2. Be Generous Although He Is A Miser

One of the factors which weaken our friendship is being parsimonious and stingy. On the contrary, generosity causes people to gather around the generous person. As it is emphasized in the Islamic traditions, one of the duties of people is to show generosity towards their friend.

In order for this objective to materialize, Islam orders the believers to engage in doing good and be benevolent; some examples of these orders are presented below:

Imam ‘Ali (as) at his death gave this recommendation:

"عَلَيْكُمْ بِالتَّوَّاصِلِ وَالتَّبَاذُلِ وَإِيَّاكُمْ وَالتَّدَابُرِ وَالتَّقَاطُعِ"

*"Strengthen the bonds of friendship and give generously to each other. Avoid turning your back and severing relations (with your brothers)."*⁹

Somebody asked Imam Sadiq (as) about a believer's tasks towards other believers. Imam Sadiq (as) enumerated seven rights:

"أَيْسَرُ حَقٍّ مِنْهَا أَنْ تُحِبَّ لَهُ مَا تُحِبُّ لِنَفْسِكَ وَتَكْرَهُ لَهُ مَا تَكْرَهُ لِنَفْسِكَ وَالْحَقُّ الثَّانِي أَنْ تَمْشِيَ فِي حَاجَتِهِ وَتَبْغِي...رِضَاهُ وَلَا تُخَالِفَ قَوْلَهُ وَالْحَقُّ الثَّلَاثُ أَنْ تَصِلَهُ بِنَفْسِكَ وَمَالِكَ وَيَدِكَ وَرِجْلِكَ وَلِسَانِكَ"

"The simplest right is to love for him what you love for yourself and to dislike for him what you dislike for yourself. The second right is to provide him with his needs, to seek to satisfy him and not contradict him. The third right is to strengthen your bond with him through yourself, your wealth, your hand, your foot and your tongue.."

Imam Sadiq (as) reports the Prophet (S) to have said:

"لِلْمُؤْمِنِ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِ سَبْعَةٌ حُقُوقٌ وَاجِبَةٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ عَلَيْهِ: الْإِجْلَالُ لَهُ فِي عَيْنِهِ وَالْوِدَّ لَهُ فِي صَدْرِهِ وَالْمُؤَاسَاةُ لَهُ فِي مَالِهِ وَإِنْ يُحْرِمَ غَيْبَتَهُ وَإِنْ يَعُودَهُ فِي مَرَضِهِ وَإِنْ يُشَيِّعَ جَنَازَتَهُ وَإِنْ لَا يَقُولَ فِيهِ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهِ إِلَّا خَيْرًا"

*"A believer has seven duties made incumbent on him by God towards another believer: To respect him in his presence; to love him in his heart; to help him with his possessions; to forbid speaking ill of him in his absence; to visit him when he is sick; to take part in his funeral service; and to speak only good about him after his death."*¹⁰

Among the advice the Prophet (S) gave Imam ‘Ali (as) on his death was:

"ثَلَاثٌ لَا تُطِيقُهَا هَذِهِ الْأُمَّةُ: الْمُوَاسَاةُ لِلْأَخِ فِي مَالِهِ وَإِنصَافُ النَّاسِ مِنْ نَفْسِهِ وَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ عَلَى كُلِّ حَالٍ"

"There are three things which this Ummah is unable to carry out: helping one's brother in faith with his wealth; doing justice to people; and remembering God in every condition." [11](#)

With regards to the above issues what should a man do when friendship is not observed by some, when others are parsimonious, when they remain miser? Should he retaliate and do the same thing or should he go to the other extreme and do benevolence?

To solve this dilemma, Imam 'Ali (as) emphasizes that we should confront such cases with benevolence and generosity:

When he is stingy, be generous towards him:

"وَعِنْدَ جُمُودِهِ عَلَى الْبَدَلِ"

Concerning this issue, Imam 'Ali (as) has said:

"عَوِّدُوا بِالْفَضْلِ عَلَى مَنْ حَرَمَكُم"

"Habituate yourself to be bountiful to those who have deprived you." [12](#)

3. When He Moves Away From You, Come Near To Him

Sometimes there are some factors which make a man offended and he tries to stay away from the offender. In such cases the oppressed one should use kindness and generosity towards the offender and alleviate the situation.

In the Islamic traditions, the following technical terms are used to explain the situations: "Tazaver" meaning the increase of kindness, "birr", doing good things to others; "Silah", the establishment of relations, "ta'attuf", showing emotions and care for others; "Tawaddud", showing friendship. Through these techniques we can easily bridge the differences. We will refer to some of these issues here:

Kulayb al-Asadi says: I heard Imam Husayn (as) saying:

"سَمِعْتُ أَبَا عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ يَقُولُ: تَوَاصَلُوا وَتَبَارَكُوا وَتَرَاحَمُوا وَكُونُوا إِخْوَةً بَرَّةً كَمَا أَمَرَكَ اللَّهُ"

"Establish relations with each other, do good to each other, have mercy on each other and be righteous brothers, as Allah has commanded you." [13](#)

Shu'ayb Aqarqui says: I heard Imam Sadiq (as) telling his followers:

"اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَكُونُوا إِخْوَةً بَرَّةً مُتَحَابِّينَ فِي اللَّهِ مُتَوَاصِلِينَ مُتَرَاجِمِينَ تَزَاوَرُوا وَتَلَاقُوا وَتَذَاكُرُوا أَمْرَنَا وَأَحْيُوهُ"

"Fear Allah and be righteous brothers who love one another for the sake of Allah, establish relations with one other and have mercy on one another. Visit and meet one another and remind each other of our affair and revive it." [14](#)

The great Prophet (S) has stated:

"الزِّيَارَةُ تُنْبِتُ الْمَوَدَّةَ"

"Visiting each other causes love to grow." [15](#)

Imam Sadiq (as), enumerating the rights of others on a genuine believer, emphasizes:

"(فَإِنْ كَانَ عَلَيْكَ عَاتِبًا فَلَا تُفَارِقْهُ حَتَّى تَسْأَلَ سَمِيحَتَهُ (تَسْلِلْ سَخِيمَتَهُ))"

"If he is annoyed with you, do not part from him until you apologize to him (gently remove his rancor)" [16](#)

It is for this reason that Imam 'Ali (as) writes in his letter:

"وَعِنْدَ تَبَاعُدِهِ عَلَى الدُّنُو"

"When he moves away, you come near to him."

4. When He Is Harsh, You Be Gentle Towards Him

Some people are severe by nature and some show harsh treatment when placed under certain conditions. In both cases, the most fundamental principle to observe is a mild and easy-going attitude, especially if the other person is a friend.

The Holy Qur'an in commission to call people to God's religion, orders Moses and his brother to talk calmly and use kind techniques and behaviors since this method is more effective than severe and harsh methods and will not force the listener to adopt the escape mechanism. The listener might refer to his own nature and be influenced by the preacher:

"أَذْهَبَا إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَى فَقُولَا لَهُ قَوْلًا لَيِّنًا لَعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَى"

"Go both to Fir'awn, surely he has become inordinate; then speak to him a gentle word; haply he may mind or fear". [17](#)

Imam 'Ali (as) both in this letter and in Nahj al-Balaghah emphasize on this moral principle. In other Hikam of Nahj al-Balaghah where he enumerates the specific traits of the believers, he continues:

"سَهْلُ الْخَلِيقَةِ لَيِّنُ الْعَرِيكَةِ، نَفْسُهُ أَصْلَبُ مِنَ الصَّلَدِ وَهُوَ أَدْلُ مِنَ الْعَبْدِ"

"(A believer is of) easy disposition, gentle in temperament; he is stronger than stone, but more humble than a slave." [18](#)

In the sermon about the qualities of the God-fearing ones addressed to his companion Hammam, Imam 'Ali (as) says:

"وَحَزَمًا فِي لَيْنٍ"

"A believer is both prudent and lenient." [19](#)

Elsewhere he says:

"لَيِّنًا قَوْلُهُ"

"A believer's speech is gentle." [20](#)

In this letter, Imam 'Ali (as) says:

"وَعِنْدَ شِدَّتِهِ عَلَى الْلَّيِّنِ"

"When he is harsh, you be gentle towards him".

Still in another occasion he invites people to be soft, telling them the philosophy of being cool and quiet:

"وَلِنْ لِمَنْ غَالَطَكَ فَإِنَّهُ يُوشِكُ أَنْ يَلِينَنَّ لَكَ"

"Be gentle to one who treats you harshly: he will soon be gentle towards you."

Of course, according to the first principle, treating severity with temperate manners, is ethical. However, such pacific manners are criticized by some harsh and impolite individuals. This causes their

haughtiness to swell, they say. In such cases we have to perform the same harsh manners. The Great Qur'an describes the manners of believers towards infidels in the following manner,

"مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ"

"Muhammad is the Apostle of Allah, and those with him are firm of heart against the unbelievers, compassionate among themselves."[21](#)

5. When He Commits Sins And Offenses, Accept His Excuses

Due to his different instincts, and because of the freedoms and free choices that man has, he will go astray if God's blessings do not assist him.

After committing sins, man may become aware of the nasty nature of what he has done and may want to apologize to God and to people. Now if his excuses are not accepted, he might get exasperated and bold and get himself involved in more crimes. Or he may get disappointed and hopeless. Thus, in Islam, Allah both accepts apologies and considers the despair from asking for pardons a great sin and orders people to follow suit.

The great Prophet (S) has stated:

"مَنْ أَقَالَ مُسْلِماً عَثْرَتَهُ أَقَالَ اللَّهُ عَثْرَتَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ"

The Guidelines Of The Leaders Of Religion In This Respect

Imam Sadiq (as) has said,

"الْغَضَبُ مِفْتَاحُ كُلِّ شَرٍّ"

How To Control And Cure Anger

It was said that anger is necessary for the defense of one's life, wife, personal and social rights. But control and cure, especially when it goes beyond the rational limits, have always been the focus of the attention of the Islamic religion and faith. The techniques these scholars have suggested are:

a) Change your body posture: If you are standing, sit down; if you are sitting, lie down, splash water on your face; eat something; discuss on a new topic and the like. The great Prophet (S) says:

إِنَّ الْغَضَبَ جَمْرَةٌ تَتَوَقَّدُ فِي الْقَلْبِ أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى انْتِفَاحِ أَوْدَاجِهِ وَحُمْرَةِ عَيْنِهِ فَإِذَا وَجَدَ أَحَدُكُمْ مِنْ ذَلِكَ شَيْئًا فَإِنْ كَانَ قَائِمًا فَلْيَجْلِسْ وَإِنْ كَانَ جَالِسًا فَلْيَنِمْ فَإِنْ لَمْ يَزَلْ ذَلِكَ فَلْيَتَوَضَّأْ بِالْمَاءِ الْبَارِدِ وَلْيَغْتَسِلْ فَإِنَّ النَّارَ لَا يُطْفِئُهَا إِلَّا الْمَاءُ

"Anger is a piece of fire which is kindled in man's heart. Can't you see how your veins are swollen and your eyes are red? If one of you experiences something of that, then sit down if you are standing, or lie down if you are sitting. If you are still angry, then wash your face or carry out ablution with cold water, and bathe, for fire is only extinguished with water."[22](#)

b) Restrain your anger. The Holy Qur'an mentions the restraint of anger, pardoning people and spending benevolently as the traits of the believers:

"وَالْكَاطِمِينَ الْغَيْظَ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ"

"[Those who spend benevolently in ease as well as in straitness], and those who restrain their anger and pardon men; and Allah loves the doers of good to others"[23](#)

As you notice, the Holy Qur'an first orders us to restrain our anger, secondly, to wash our hearts through pardoning and thirdly to engage in spending benevolently.

Imam 'Ali (as) has said:

"احْتَرِسُوا مِنْ سُورَةِ الْغَضَبِ وَاَعِدُوا لَهُ مَا تُجَاهِدُونَهُ بِهِ مِنَ الْكَيْفِ وَالْحِلْمِ"

"Guard yourselves against the outburst of anger. Prepare restraint and forbearance for it by which you struggle against it".[24](#)

Imam 'Ali (as) has also said,

"رَدُّ الْغَضَبِ بِالْحِلْمِ ثَمَرَةُ الْعِلْمِ"

"Repelling anger through forbearance is the fruit of knowledge."[25](#)

The Prophet (S) has said:

"مَا مِنْ جُرْعَةٍ أَحَبُّ إِلَى اللَّهِ تَعَالَى مِنْ جُرْعَةِ غَيْظٍ يَكْظِمُهَا عَبْدٌ وَمَا كَظَمَهَا عَبْدٌ إِلَّا مَلَأَ اللَّهُ جَوْفَهُ إِيمَانًا"

"There is no draught more loved by God than the draught of anger which the servant swallows. A servant does not restrain his anger but that Allah fills him with faith."[26](#)

Imam Baqir (as) has said:

"مَنْ كَظَمَ غَيْظاً وَهُوَ يَقْدِرُ عَلَى امْضَائِهِ حَشَا لِلَّهِ قَلْبُهُ أَمْنًا وَإِيمَانًا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ"

"On the Day of Judgment, God will fill with faith and tranquility the heart of one who restrains his anger although he is able to express it." [27](#)

It is for this reason that Imam (as) in his letter commands us:

"وَتَجَرَّعَ الْغَيْظَ فَإِنِّي لَمْ أَرَ جُرْعَةً أَحْلَى مِنْهَا عَاقِبَةً وَلَا الذُّمَّ مَعْبَةً"

"Swallow your anger, for I have not seen a draught sweeter in outcome than it, or with a more pleasant result."

10. Do Good To Your Enemy

Since doing good connects two individuals and the receiver of beneficence feels in debt to the doer of good as Imam 'Ali (as) mentions

"الْإِنْسَانُ عَبْدٌ لِالْإِحْسَانِ"

"Man is a slave to benevolence" [28](#)

Therefore, in Islam, doing good and beneficence is emphasized as a general principle:

"إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ" [731](#)

"Surely Allah enjoins the doing of justice and the doing of good to others".

Even in case of divorce, when all emotional relations break, God orders the husband to pay all the alimony to her.

"وَلَا تَنْسُوا الْفَضْلَ بَيْنَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ" [732](#)

"And do not neglect the giving of free gifts between you; surely Allah sees what you do."

The principle of beneficence is emphasized in Islam for both friends and foes alike. Imam 'Ali (as) says in this regard:

"الاحسانُ الى المُسيئِ احسنُ الفضلِ"

"Doing good to evildoers is the best kind of benevolence." [29](#)

Imam 'Ali (as) has also said,

"الاحسانُ الى المُسيئِ ليُصلِحَ المُسيءَ حتى لو كان عدُوًّا"

"Doing good to an evildoer makes him good even if he is your enemy." [30](#)

He has also stated:

"احسنِ الى المُسيئِ تملكُه"

"Do good to one who has done wrong, and you will dominate him." [31](#)

It is for this reason that Imam 'Ali (as), in his letter, emphasizes that:

"خُذْ على عدوكَ بِالْفَضْلِ فَإِنَّهُ احلَى الظفرينِ"

"Treat your enemy favourably, because it is the sweeter of the two victories (i.e. revenge or the bestowal of favours)

It is obvious that we could dominate our enemy through force. But this kind of victory lacks the sweetness gained through doing benevolence to our enemy. [32](#) There is an old maxim "There exists a pleasantness in pardoning which does not exist in taking revenge."

11. If You Wish To Dissociate From A Friend, Do Not Destroy All The Bridges

As the ocean water is always in fluctuation, sometimes calm and sometimes turbulent, friendship is at times warm and sometimes cool. Sometimes relations exits and at other times they are cut. We should not go to extremes either at establishing relations telling our friend all our secrets or at the time of disconnection, destroying all bridges.

Imam Reza (as) narrates from Imam 'Ali (as) that he said:

"احبب حبيبك هوناً ما فعسى ان يكونَ بغيضك يوماً ما وابغض بغيضك هوناً ما فعسى ان يكونَ حبيبك يوماً ما"

"Love your friend moderately since he might someday be your enemy. And show moderate animosity

towards your enemy since one day he might turn out to be your friend"[33](#)

Imam Sadiq (as) told some of his followers:

"لا تُطْلِعَ صَدِيقَكَ مِنْ سِرِّكَ إِلَّا عَلَى مَا لَوْ اطَّلَعَ عَلَيْهِ عَدُوكَ لَمْ يَضُرَّكَ فَإِنَّ الصَّدِيقَ قَدْ يَكُونُ عَدُوَّكَ يَوْمًا مَا"

"Do not tell your friend all your secrets except for those secrets which if your enemy knew, would not harm you, for your friend may someday be your enemy."[34](#)

Imam 'Ali (as) emphasizes in this letter:

"وَإِنْ أَرَدْتَ قَطِيعَةَ أَخِيكَ فَاسْتَبِقْ لَهُ مِنْ نَفْسِكَ بَقِيَّةً يَرْجِعُ إِلَيْهَا إِنْ بَدَأَ لَهُ ذَلِكَ يَوْمًا مَا"

"If you wish to sever relations with your brother, leave some room for him to return to your friendship if he wishes to someday."

Sa'di, the Persian writer and poet, writes in the eighth chapter of his book Gulistan: "Do not let your friend know all your secrets because you are not aware that he might one day turn into an enemy. Do not exert any blow you can upon your enemy since he might become your friend someday."

12. Confirm People's Good Opinion Of You

If rightfulness dominates a community and crimes are not experienced in such a society, it is necessary for people to have a good opinion of each another. Imam 'Ali (as) says regarding this issue:

ضَعِ امْرَأَتَكَ عَلَى أَحْسَنِهِ حَتَّى يَأْتِيكَ مَا يَغْلِبُكَ مِنْهُ وَلَا تَظُنَّنْ بِكَلِمَةٍ خَرَجْتَ مِنْ أَخِيكَ سُوءًا وَأَنْتَ تَجِدُ لَهَا فِي
"الْخَيْرِ مَحْمَلًا"

"Regard your brother's affair in the most favorable way until you hear of something that overcomes your good opinion of him. Never think evil of any word uttered by your brother when you can take it as good."[35](#)

But if corruption reigns in a community and individuals commit sins and wrong-doing, a bad opinion of others would be inevitable. Thus, Imam 'Ali (as) in his Nahj al-Balaghah, considers optimism in such conditions as self-deception:

إِذَا اسْتَوْلَى الصَّلَاحُ عَلَى الزَّمَانِ وَاهْلِهِ ثُمَّ اسَاءَ رَجُلٌ الظَّنَّ بِرَجُلٍ لَمْ تَظْهَرِ مِنْهُ حَوْبَةٌ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ وَإِذَا اسْتَوْلَى الْفَسَادُ
"عَلَى الزَّمَانِ وَاهْلِهِ وَاحْسَنَ رَجُلٌ الظَّنَّ بِرَجُلٍ فَقَدْ غَرَّرَ"

"If, at a time when goodness is prevalent among people, a person has an evil opinion of one from whom no sin has been seen, he has wronged him. And if, at a time when corruption is prevalent among people, a person has a good opinion of another, he has deluded himself." [36](#)

Thus, we should avoid performing any act which causes people to become suspicious of us: acts such as keeping company with ill-educated people; frequenting places where accusing people prevails, and doing actions which arise people's suspicion. In this respect the great Prophet (S) has stated:

"اتَّقُوا مَوَاضِعَ التُّهْمِ"

"Avoid frequenting places that are suspect." [37](#)

Imam 'Ali (as) has also said,

"مَنْ عَرَّضَ نَفْسَهُ لِلتُّهْمَةِ فَلَا يَلُومَنَّ مَنْ اسَاءَ بِهِ الظَّنَّ"

"One who exposes himself to suspicion should not blame others for having a bad opinion of him" [38](#)

The Emphasis Of Leaders Of Religion

In our Islamic traditions, fortunately all the above issues are dealt with:

The great Prophet (S) has said:

"أَوْلَى النَّاسِ بِالتُّهْمَةِ مَنْ جَالَسَ أَهْلَ التُّهْمَةِ"

"The one most deserving of being an object of suspicion is one who sits in the company of people who are suspect." [39](#)

Imam 'Ali (as) has said in this respect:

"مَنْ وَقَفَ نَفْسَهُ مَوْقِفَ التُّهْمَةِ فَلَا يَلُومَنَّ مَنْ اسَاءَ بِهِ الظَّنَّ"

"He who places himself in a position that is suspect should not blame one who has a bad opinion of him." [40](#)

Imam 'Ali (as) has said as well,

"وَمَنْ دَخَلَ مَدَاخِلَ السُّوءِ اتُّهِمَ"

"One who enters places of ill-repute will be suspect." [41](#)

The great Prophet (S) one day was talking with his wife Safiyah when one of his companions passed by that place. The Prophet (S) called him saying:

يَا فُلَانُ هَذِهِ زَوْجَتِي صَفِيَّةٌ

"O man, this is my wife, Safiyah".

The man said, "O Messenger of Allah, do we have to think otherwise?" The Prophet (S) replied, "Satan flows in man's body like blood. I feared it might get into your mind." [42](#)

Imam as-Sadiq (as) has stated his opinion regarding this issue:

اتَّقُوا مَوَاضِعَ الرَّيْبِ وَلَا يَقِفَنَّ أَحَدُكُمْ مَعَ أُمِّهِ فِي الطَّرِيقِ فَإِنَّهُ لَيْسَ كُلُّ أَحَدٍ يَعْرِفُهَا"747

"Avoid situations of doubt. Never stop on a way with your mother when people do not know you are her son."

The reason why Imam Zayn al-Abidin (as) in the prayer called Makarim al-Akhlaq asks God:

وَمِنْ ظَنِّ أَهْلِ الصَّلَاحِ الثَّقَةِ

"(Replace for me) the suspicion of the people of righteousness with trust." [43](#)

The reason for this worship was that at the time of this Imam (as) suspicion and lack of confidence reigned the time because of the prevalent corruption. At such a time it is prudent to consider the actions of others as acts of corruption unless the opposite is found to be true. Therefore Imam Zayn al-Abidin (as) invokes God to help others to find out the truth about him. [44](#)

But Imam 'Ali (as) writes in his letter:

وَمَنْ ظَنَّ بِكَ خَيْرًا فَصَدِّقْ ظَنَّهُ

"If one has a good opinion of you, confirm his opinion of you".

This statement of Imam 'Ali's applies to that case when man lives in conditions where people think of him as good and he has to act in such a way not to betray them. He has, then, to continue to receive that good opinion from them. For instance, if people think he is a generous man, he should act

accordingly.[45](#)

13. A Close Friendship Should Not Result In The Deprivation Of Rights Of The Friend

A close friendship should not result in a person depriving his friend of his rights. He should not lose his respect. For instance, a close friend of ours enters a gathering and everyone, except us, stands up in respect. Another example, a close friend introduces everyone to a dignitary but does not care to use the right words to introduce his friend. This act of his will leave a negative impression in his friend's mind. He will either cut his relations with him or become hostile to him. There is a maxim which says:

"إِضَاعَةُ الْحُقُوقِ دَاعِيَةُ الْعُقُوقِ"

"Neglecting rights causes the severance of relationships."[46](#)

It is for this reason that Imam 'Ali (as) writes in his letter:

"وَلَا تُضَيِّعَنَّ حَقَّ أَخِيكَ اتِّكَالًا عَلَى مَا بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ فَإِنَّهُ لَيْسَ بِأَخٍ مَنْ اضْطَعَتْ حَقَّهُ"

"Never neglect your brother's right by relying on the friendship that is between you and him, because one whose rights you neglect is not your brother."

14. Do Favors To Your Household And Tribe

Sometimes due to too much engagements, or because of his confidence in family relations, or because he has got a social status, a man might think that he no longer needs his family or relatives and might forget their rights. This act of his is hazardous both here and in the hereafter.

On the disadvantages of this breaking off ties of relationship there are some traditions to the effect that those who break off ties are deprived of paradise:

The Holy Prophet (S) has said:

"ثَلَاثَةٌ لَا يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ: مُدْمِنٌ خَمْرٍ وَمُؤْمِنٌ سِحْرٍ وَقَاطِعٌ رَحِمٍ"

"There are three groups who will not enter paradise: A chronic wine-drinker, a believer in witchcraft and one who severs the ties of kinship."[47](#)

The Prophet (S) has said:

"... أَخْبَرَنِي جَبْرَائِيلُ أَنَّ رِيحَ الْجَنَّةِ تُوجَدُ مِنْ مَسِيرَةِ الْفِ عَامٍ مَا يَجِدُهَا عَاقٌ وَلَا قَاطِعٌ رَحِمٍ وَلَا شَيْخٌ زَانٍ"

"Gabriel has informed me that the fragrance of paradise can be experienced from the distance of a thousand years, but a person whose parents are not satisfied with him or one who breaks off ties of relationship or an old man who indulges in adultery will not experience it...."[48](#)

Ala' Ibn Fadl says he heard Imam Sadiq (as) saying:

الرَّحِمُ مُعَلَّقَةٌ بِالْعَرْشِ تَقُولُ اللَّهُمَّ صِلْ مَنْ وَصَلَنِي وَاقْطَعْ مَنْ قَطَعَنِي وَهِيَ رَحِمُ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَرَحِمُ كُلِّ مُؤْمِنٍ وَهُوَ قَوْلُ " (اللَّهُ وَالَّذِينَ يَصِلُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ وَيَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ وَيَخَافُونَ سُوءَ الْحِسَابِ

'The womb (i.e.ties of relationship) is fastened to the Divine Throne (in the Highest Heaven). It says: O God, establish relations with one who establishes relations with me, and sever relations with one who severs relations with me. This is the tie of relationship belonging to Aal Muhammad [Muhammad's Household] and that of every believer. It is the statement of Allah: "And those who join that which Allah has forbidden to be joined and have awe of their Lord and fear the evil reckoning".'[49](#)

Its worldly disadvantage is that the breaking off ties of relationship shortens one's life and might end in sudden death and deprives a person of his relative's help in time of distress.

It is for this reason that Imam 'Ali (as) has said:

يا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّهُ لَا يَسْتَعْنِي الرَّجُلُ وَإِنْ كَانَ ذَا مَالٍ عَنِ عِتْرَتِهِ وَدِفَاعِهِمْ عَنْهُ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ وَالسِّنْتِهِمْ وَهُمْ أَعْظَمُ النَّاسِ حِيطَةً مِنْ وَرَائِهِ وَأَلْمَهُمْ لِشَعْنِهِ وَأَعْطَفَهُمْ عَلَيْهِ عِنْدَ نَازِلَةٍ إِذَا نَزَلَتْ بِهِ وَلِسَانُ الصِّدْقِ يَجْعَلُهُ لِلْمَرْءِ فِي النَّاسِ خَيْرٌ لَهُ مِنَ الْمَالِ يَرْتُهُ غَيْرُهُ، أَلَا لَا يَعْدِلَنَّ أَحَدُكُمْ عَنِ الْقَرَابَةِ يَرَى بِهَا الْخِصَاصَةَ أَنْ يَسُدَّهَا بِالَّذِي لَا يَزِيدُهُ إِنْ أَمْسَكَهُ وَلَا يَنْقُصُهُ إِنْ أَهْلَكَهُ وَمَنْ يَقْبِضُ يَدَهُ عَنِ عَشِيرَتِهِ فَاثْمًا تَقْبِضُ مِنْهُ عَنْهُمْ يَدٌ وَاحِدَةٌ وَتَقْبِضُ مِنْهُمْ عَنْهُ أَيْدٍ كَثِيرَةٌ وَمَنْ تَلَّنَ حَاشِيَتَهُ يَسْتَدِمُ مِنْ قَوْمِهِ الْمَوَدَّةَ

"O people! No man, however rich he may be, is free of need of his relatives and their defence of him with their hands and tongues. They are the greatest of people in protection behind him, the best ones to consolidate his affairs, and the kindest to him in any trial that befalls him.

A good name which God gives a person among people is better for him than (his) wealth which someone else will inherit.

Indeed, none of you should turn away from meeting the needs of relatives whom you see in poverty with that which will neither increase if you withhold it nor decrease if you spend it (on them). He who refrains from giving his relatives has withheld only one (helping) hand from them, while (their) many hands have been withheld from him. He who is gentle to his dependants will continually receive the love of his people".[50](#)

It is for this reason that Imam 'Ali (as) writes in this letter:

"... وَلَا يَكُنْ أَهْلَكَ أَشَقَى الْخَلْقِ بِكَ"

"Do not let your family be the most wretched of people because of you".

You should not deprive your family of your generosity and kindness since at critical times they will come to your help. If you spare them just a little help, they will in difficult times give you much assistance since you are one, but they are many.

Imam 'Ali (as) at the end of his letter writes:

"وَأَكْرَمَ عَشِيرَتِكَ فَإِنَّهُمْ جَنَاحَكَ الَّذِي بِهِ تَطِيرُ وَأَصْلَكَ الَّذِي إِلَيْهِ تَصِيرُ وَيَدَكَ الَّتِي بِهَا تَصُولُ"

"Love your kinsfolk since they are your wings with which you fly, your root to which you will return, and your hand with which you assault".

15. Do Not Show Affection To One Who Does Not Wish To Be Your Friend

Friendship, as we know, depends on mutual relations. Thus, it does not exist if one of the partners is unwilling to associate. Rather, it is humiliation on the part of the one who is eager to have a relationship with the other. Imam 'Ali (as), in Nahj al-Balaghah, has said:

"زُهْدُكَ فِي رَاغِبٍ فِيكَ نُقْصَانٌ حَظٌّ وَرَغْبَتُكَ فِي زَاهِدٍ فِيكَ ذُلٌّ نَفْسٍ"

"Your shunning one who inclines towards you is a decrease in your share, and your inclining towards one who shuns you is a cause of your humiliation."[51](#)

It is for this reason that Imam 'Ali (as) has ordered us in his letter:

"وَلَا تَرْغَبَنَّ فِيمَنْ زَهَدَ عَنْكَ"

"Do not desire (the friendship of) one who shuns you".

A poet says in this connection:

It is good for love to be mutual,

Or else affection is a heck on the neck.

Of course this is when the relationship has not yet been created. Otherwise, we have to establish our relations with our relatives and friends. Imam 'Ali (as) said he had seen the following on one of the swords of the Prophet (S):

"صِلْ مَنْ قَطَعَكَ وَقُلِ الْحَقَّ وَلَوْ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ وَاحْسِنِ إِلَى مَنْ أَسَاءَ إِلَيْكَ"

"Establish relations with one who has cut off his relation with you, tell the truth even if it is against yourself, and do good to one who has done you wrong."[52](#)

16. Be Stronger In Establishing Relations And Doing Good Than Others Are In Cutting Relations And Doing Wrong

In keeping the ties of relation and doing favors to those friends who do not care for friendship, Imam 'Ali (as) emphasizes the following points: If others, due to their mental status, cut off with you and even hurt you, you should avoid retaliating. You should show that you are stronger in keeping relations than them in cutting off relations. This is because their cutting off relations is based on non-divine stimuli and this can easily be done by any non-aligned individual. But keeping up ties of relation with those who have hurt us is only done by God's sincerely obedient believers. These people both have good manners and are obedient to God. They have also controlled their self that incites to evil and desire to please God. You should also tread the same path as the true believers. The great Prophet (S), in the face of Quraysh's animosity uttered the following:

"لَا تَثْرِيْبَ عَلَيْكُمْ الْيَوْمَ فَادْهَبُوا أَنْتُمْ الطُّلُقَاءُ"

"You are not blamed, today. Go! You are free" and he forgave them. He even adopted Abu Sufyan's house as a "secure place". In the distribution of booties in the holy war of Hawazin, Imam 'Ali (as) gave preference to newly-converted Muslims over Muhajirin and Ansar.[53](#) You, too, in establishing ties of friendship, should be stronger than them:

"وَلَا يَكُونَنَّ أَحْوَكَ عَلَى مُقَاتِعَتِكَ أَقْوَى مِنْكَ عَلَى صِلَتِهِ وَلَا يَكُونَنَّ عَلَى الْإِسَاءَةِ أَقْوَى مِنْكَ عَلَى الْإِحْسَانِ"

"Your brother should not be more powerful in severing relations with you than you are in establishing relations with him, and he should not be stronger in ill-treatment of you than you are in doing good to him".

Abdullah Ibn Talha says: I heard from Imam Sadiq (as) who said: A man came up to the Prophet (S) and said: I have some relatives who do me wrong even if I am kind to them. I have decided to cut off relations with them. The Prophet (S) answered:

"أَذْنُ يَرْفُضُكُمْ اللَّهُ جَمِيعاً قَالَ وَكَيْفَ اصْنَعُ؟ قَالَ: تُعْطِي مَنْ حَرَمَكَ وَتَصِلُ مَنْ قَطَعَكَ وَتَعْفُو عَمَّنْ ظَلَمَكَ فَإِذَا فَعَلْتَ ذَلِكَ كَانَ اللَّهُ عَزَّوَجَلَّ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ ظَهيراً"

"Then Allah will forsake all of you". He said: "What should I do"? The Prophet (S) said: "Give the one who has deprived you; establish relations with the one who has cut off ties with you and forgive the one who has wronged you. If you do so, God will be your aid against them."⁵⁴

17. An Unjust Person Does Himself Wrong

A person who has been subject to injustice is naturally unhappy because of the injustice inflicted upon him. But if he looks at the issue with the Islamic world-view, he will find that the oppressed one is more successful⁵⁵ than the oppressor; the oppressor is the loser because at the God's court: firstly; God is after oppressors and watches their activities and will not leave unpunished their behavior;⁵⁶ Secondly, one of the ways to punish the oppressors is to calculate their good acts in favor of the oppressed. Furthermore the sins of the oppressed ones will be on the list of the sins of the oppressed.⁵⁷ Furthermore, patience in the face of an injustice which is unavoidable for the oppressed ones will bring them rewards.

Thus, although the oppressors are superficially triumphant, it is in fact the oppressed ones who are the true winners. This is because the unjust ones will both suffer the punishments for what they have done wrong and give their good deeds to these sufferers. The oppressed ones, moreover, will be of a higher rank in the eyes of the Divine. Thus, the fate of an oppressor is worse than that of the oppressed.

On the basis of this issue, Imam 'Ali (as) writes in his letter:

"وَلَا يَكْبُرَنَّ عَلَيْكَ ظُلْمٌ مَن ظَلَمَكَ فَإِنَّهُ يَسْعَى فِي مَضْرَبَتِهِ وَنَفْعِكَ"

"Do not consider as great the wrong-doing of one who wrongs you because he is harming himself and benefiting you."

It is also on the basis of such observations that Imam 'Ali (as) has said:

"إِيَّاكَ وَالظُّلْمَ فَإِنَّهُ يَزُولُ عَمَّنْ تَظْلِمُهُ وَيَبْقَى عَلَيْكَ"

"Beware of injustice, because it will pass away from the one whom you have wronged, but its consequences will remain with you."⁵⁸

18. You Should Not Mistreat One Who Has Made You Happy

One general principle observed among all human communities is: "Goodness is the reward for being good." We should not answer the goodness of others with evil-doing. Regarding this, the Holy Qur'an asks:

هَلْ جَزَاءُ الْإِحْسَانِ إِلَّا الْإِحْسَانُ"764

"Is the reward of goodness aught but goodness?"

The Holy Qur'an asks the clean nature and faultless conscience of human beings for an answer. The answer is definitely negative. Naturally, the reward of evil is evil. The Holy Qur'an, in Surah Yunus, says:

وَالَّذِينَ كَسَبُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ جَزَاءُ سَيِّئَةٍ مِثْلَهَا"765

"And as for those who have earned evil, the punishment of an evil is the like of it."

It is also emphasized in Surah al-Shura:

وَجَزَاءُ سَيِّئَةٍ سَيِّئَةٌ مِثْلُهَا"766

"And the recompense of evil is punishment like it."

Thus the reward of goodness is goodness and the punishment of badness is definitely badness. Except for those cases when, due to the principle of manhood, the reward of goodness is more goodness or the case where badness is forgiven as a whole.

Imam Sadiq (as) in this regard says:

آيَةٌ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ مُسْجَلَةٌ، قُلْتُ وَمَا هِيَ؟ قَالَ قَوْلُ اللَّهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ: "هَلْ جَزَاءُ الْإِحْسَانِ إِلَّا الْإِحْسَانُ" جَرَتْ فِي الْكَافِرِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِ وَالْبَرِّ وَالْفَاجِرِ، وَمَنْ صَنَعَ إِلَيْهِ مَعْرُوفٌ فَعَلَيْهِ أَنْ يُكَافِيَ بِهِ وَلَيْسَ الْمُكَافَأَةُ أَنْ تَصْنَعَ كَمَا صَنَعَ حَتَّى تَرْتَبِيَ "فَإِنْ صَنَعْتَ كَمَا صَنَعَ كَانَ لَهُ الْفَضْلُ بِالْإِبْتِدَاءِ"

'There is a verse which is applicable to all'. I asked which verse it was. He answered: 'It is God's statement: "Is the reward of goodness aught but goodness"? It is valid for the unbeliever and the believer, the good-doer and the evil-doer. Anybody who receives kindness should recompense it; and recompense is not to be done equal to it but rather in an increased measure; because if you do as he has done to you, then he has the superiority since he initiated it.' [59](#)

The Holy Qur'an commands the reward for badness to be badness, especially in the issue of retaliation, but it emphasizes that forgiveness is better:

فَمَنْ عَفِيَ لَهُ مِنْ أُخِيهِ شَيْءٌ فَاتَّبِعْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَأَدِّءْ إِلَيْهِ بِالْإِحْسَانِ"768

"But if any remission is made to any one by his aggrieved brother, then prosecution for the bloodwit should be made according to usage, and payment should be made to him in a good manner."

Thus, Imam 'Ali (as) in his letter refers to this general principle of "Goodness is the reward for goodness" when he says:

"وَلَيْسَ جَزَاءُ مَنْ سَرَّكَ أَنْ تَسُوَّهُ"

1. . Raghib's Mufradat, the item of "one".
2. . Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, vol.2, p.62.
3. . Bihar, vol.74, p.278.
4. . An example is the book called Masadiq al-Ikhwan by Sheikh Saduq.
5. . Bihar, vol.74, p.264.
6. . Bihar, vol.74, p.264.
7. . Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2 PP 344-345 Bab al-Hijra.
8. . Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2 PP 344-345 Bab al-Hijra.
9. . Nahj al-Balaghah.
10. . Bihar, vol.74, p.222.
11. . Bihar, vol.72, p.395.
12. . Bihar, vol.74, p.411.
13. . Bihar, vol.74, p.399.
14. . Op. cit, p.401.
15. . Op. cit, p.355.
16. . Al-Kafi, vol 2, p. 170.
17. . Qur'an 20:43.
18. . Nahj al-Balaghah, Hikmah 333.
19. . Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon 193.
20. . Op. cit.
21. . Qur'an 48:29.
22. . Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda', vol.5, p.307.
23. . Qur'an 3: 134.
24. . Ghurar al-Hikam.
25. . Op. cit.
26. . Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda', vol.5, pp.301-309.
27. . Op. cit.
28. . Ghurar al-Hikam.
29. . Ghurar al-Hikam.
30. . Ghurar al-Hikam.
31. . Op.cit.
32. . Ibn Maytham's Commentary on Nahj al-Balaghah, vol.5, p.55.
33. . Bihar, vol.74, p. 177.
34. . Op. cit.
35. . Usul al-Kafi, vol.2, p.362.
36. . Nahj al-Balaghah, Hikmah 114.
37. . Jami' al-Sa'adat, vol. 1, p.283.

- [38.](#) . Jami' al-Sa'adat, vol. 1, p.283.
- [39.](#) . Bihar, vol.75, p.90.
- [40.](#) . Op. cit.
- [41.](#) . Nahj al-Balaghah, Hikmah 249.
- [42.](#) . Jami' al-Sa'adat, vol. 1, p.383.
- [43.](#) . Al-Sahifah al-Sajjadiyah, supplication 20: Makarim al-Akhlaq.
- [44.](#) . Refer to Seyyid Alikhan's commentary on Al-Sahifah al-Sajjadiyah, vol. 1, pp.320-322.
- [45.](#) . Ibn Maytham's commentary on Nahj al-Balaghah, vol.5, p.56.
- [46.](#) . Ibn Abi al-Hadid's commentary on Nahj al-Balaghah, vol. 16, p. 110.
- [47.](#) . Bihar, vol.74, pp.90-96-98.
- [48.](#) . Op. cit.
- [49.](#) . Qur'an 13:21.
- [50.](#) . Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon 23. Similar to this statement can be seen from Imam 'Ali (as) in the book Usul al-Kafi, vol.2, p. 154.
- [51.](#) . Nahj al-Balaghah, Hikmah 451.
- [52.](#) . Bihar, vol. 74 P 157.
- [53.](#) . Islam's histories related to the eighth year of Islamic Era.
- [54.](#) . Bihar, vol.74, p. 100.
- [55.](#) . Bihar, vol.74, p. 100.
- [56.](#) . Nahj al-Balaghah Letter 53; Nahj al-Balaghah Hikmah 176.
- [57.](#) . Nihayah Ibn Athir, vol.2, p.55
- [58.](#) . Ghurar al-Hikam.
- [59.](#) . Nur al-Thaqalayn, vol.5, p. 199 – Tafsir Namunah, vol.23, p. 171.

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