

9. Ali's Discourses on Other Topics

- About Prophet Muhammad (s)
- About Other Prophets
- Imam Ali (p) about Himself
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- About the Scripture, the Qur'an
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[About Prophet Muhammad \(s\)](#)

[Introduction](#)

Much has been written about Prophet Muhammad (s), the last Prophet of God. Imam Ali (p) is uniquely positioned to expound on the personality of the prophet due to his close relationship to him. He was not only the cousin but also the son-in-law of the Prophet (s). Imam Ali (p) was also raised by the Prophet and was his companion and confidant. As such, Imam Ali (p) assumed the role of the Prophet's protector

and faithful bodyguard. In addition to being constantly in the Prophet's presence, Ali (p) was privy to the divine knowledge revealed to the Prophet (s).

God Chooses His Prophets

From his (Adam's) progeny, God chose prophets and took their pledge for his revelation and for carrying His message as a trust. However, people perverted the trust (message) after having received it. Satan turned people away from the truth of God and distracted them from His worship. God sent His Messengers (Prophets who also brought divine books) and a series of prophets to humankind to fulfill the pledge (worship only God Almighty), to remind them about His bounties, to exhort them to God's way, to teach them virtues, and to show them the signs of His Omnipotence. Examples of His signs of Omnipotence are the sky that is raised over them, the earth that is placed beneath them, their means of livelihood, the ailments, old age and infirmity, their mishaps that betake them, and, finally, death (that ends the worldly existence).

God never allowed His creation to remain without a Prophet sent by Him, or a book (message) sent down by Him. These Messengers were such that they did not deter (in proclaiming the message) despite strong forces that opposed them. The prophets and messengers designated their successors according to divine command.

(Sermon 1)

About the Prophethood of Muhammad (s)

Finally, God sent Muhammad (s) as His Prophet, in fulfillment of His promise and concluding the line of prophethood. His character was matchless and his ancestry was honorable. The people of the earth at his time were divided into different groups; their aims and their ways were diverse. They joined other gods with God (polytheism). Through Muhammad, God guided them out of sin and ignorance.

(Sermon 1)

His Invocation of Blessings on Prophet Muhammad (s)

O my God, O the Creator and Sustainer of the heavens and the earth, send ever-increasing blessings and favors on Muhammad, Your servant and Your prophet, the last and the final prophet of God. He proclaimed truth and repulsed the forces of wrong, and defeated the forces of misguidance. He bore the burden (of prophethood), submitting to Your commands, and fulfilled Your Will with steadfastness and determination. He received and acknowledged your revelations, preserved Your testament, took the lead in spreading Your commands, and lighted the path for the seekers of truth that were groping in the darkness (of ignorance).

He is Your envoy, bearing the truth, and Your Messenger to humankind. O my God, grant him an exalted place in the shade (of Your Mercy), and award him ever-increasing blessings and bounties.

O my God, for his carrying out your mandate faithfully, grant perfection to his light. My God, bestow on us Your blessings, increase bounties, satisfy our needs and desires, remove difficulties, grant us ease of living, peace of mind, and the gift of an honorable stay (in this life).

(Sermon 71)

About His Mission

God sent the Prophet (s) when the mission of other prophets had concluded earlier and people were in slumber (of heedlessness) for a long time. Evil was raising its head, peace was disrupted, and flames of wars were lit while the world was full of open deceitfulness, and there was hopelessness.

By God, whatever the Prophet told them, I am here telling you the same, and whatever you hear today is not different from what your elders that passed away had heard. Their eyes were opened for them and their hearts were guided. You are being given the same (message) at this time.

By God, you have not been told anything that they were not told, and you have not been given anything that they were denied. Certainly you have been afflicted by a calamity (trial), so do not let the deceitful people deceive you.

(Sermon 88)

Eulogy of Prophet Muhammad (s)

God sent His prophets successively. They were born of distinguished and chaste lineage. Whenever a prophet died, the next prophet stood up for the cause of the religion of God, until the divine mandate reached Muhammad (s). God brought him out from the same honorable lineage that He brought other prophets.

He is the leader (Imam) of all God-conscious people and a light for those who seek guidance. He is a lamp whose flame is bright. His conduct was upright, his speech (argument) was decisive, and his decision was just. May God shower His Mercy on him.

(Sermon 93)

The Prophet's Low Regard for the Material World

He treated the vanities of the world disdainfully and had low regard for material things. He removed his heart from worldly desires. He conveyed God's plea (against committing sins), warned people (against Divine chastisement), and beckoned them towards Paradise and its good tidings.

(Sermon 108)

He Was the Final Prophet

God deputized the Prophet after a gap of many years after the previous prophets. There was anticipation

among the people (of a prophet to come). With him, God concluded the series of prophets sent and concluded His messages.

(Sermon 132)

The Prophet Came to Dissuade People from Idol Worship

God deputed Muhammad (p) so that he may dissuade His people from the worship of idols and guide them towards the worship of God Almighty. God sent him with His message, the Qur'an, which He taught and explained so that the people may know their sustainer. Through His Book (Qur'an), God revealed (something of) Himself, so that the people would believe in Him even without having seen Him.

(Sermon 146)

Muhammad (s) is an Example to Follow

Certainly you should follow your Prophet, the pure and the chaste. He is an example to emulate.¹ The most beloved person before God is he who walks in his (Prophet's) footsteps. He enjoyed but little of this world's bounties. He ate less and did not fill his stomach. The world's bounties were offered to him, but he refused them. He disliked what God disliked, and he regarded as lowly what God regarded lowly.

He repaired his own shoes and patched his clothes with his hands. He would ride his animal unsaddled. He detached his heart from this world's attractions and blotted them out from his thoughts. He preferred that the world's allurements should remain away from his eyes, so that he should not regard this world a place of extended stay.

Certainly, God made Muhammad (s) a conveyor of tidings of Paradise and Warner of His retribution. How great is God's blessing that He sent to us the Prophet, a leader whose example we (aspire to) follow.

(Sermon 159)

A Bright Light and a Clear Argument

God deputed the Prophet with a bright light, a clear argument, an open path (of righteousness), and a guiding Book (Qur'an). He descended from a noble ancestry, his reputation stood high, and his message spread everywhere. God sent him with a strong plea and a convincing treatise. Through him, God disclosed the ways (of truth) that were forsaken and destroyed the innovations that were introduced. Through him, God explained and clarified His commands.

(Sermon 160)

The Prophet Brought Honor to the People

Then, God, the Glorified, deputed Muhammad (s) with truth at a time when the destruction of the world seemed near and when its brightness was turning into gloom. The world had become full of trouble for

its inhabitants, and its decay had drawn near. God sent him for conveying His message and (a means of) honor for his people, heralding a period of bloom for them, and he was a source of dignity for his supporters and helpers.

(Sermon 197)

[Through the Prophet, God United the People of Arabia](#)

God deputized the Prophet with a light, chose him in preference to others, giving him the highest accord. Through him, God united those who were divided, subdued the powerful. He overcame surmounting difficulties and thereby removed widespread misguidance.

(Sermon 212)

[The Noble Lineage of the Prophet \(s\)](#)

I stand witness that God is just. God chose the line of descent for the Prophet, and no evildoer belonged in his ancestry.² God, the Glorified, has granted virtue to those who deserve it, guided them to the truth, and protected them from deviation.

Know that, certainly, those creatures of God who safeguard His knowledge, protect what He desires to be protected, they make divine springs of blessings flow (for the benefit of people). They meet each other with friendliness and affection. They drink water from cups (of knowledge and God-consciousness) that quench the thirst, and they return from the watering places fully satiated. Misgiving does not affect them and backbiting does not appeal to them. God has bestowed them with good manners. They were chosen, just as seeds are selected by keeping some and discarding others. This selection has distinguished them above others and has purified them (the souls).

(Sermon 213)

[About Other Prophets](#)

[Introduction](#)

A prophet of God, according to Islamic belief, is an individual deputed by God to represent Him to humanity. He is selected, educated, and trained by God, so that he will deliver God's messages and commands faithfully and truthfully. A Prophet's piety, morals, integrity, and truthfulness are beyond question, and his chastity and conduct are impeccable. Any behavior less than that would make one assume that God made an error in His judgment. There are many named prophets in the Qur'an, but there were many more unnamed prophets sent to humankind. The Arabic names of the prophets given in the Qur'an are different from the Biblical names in the English language.³ As a Caliph, successor, and confidant to the Prophet Muhammad (s), Imam Ali (p) taught and reinforced reverence and respect for all the earlier prophets of God.

God Chooses His Prophets

God never allowed His creation to remain without a Prophet of His, or without a Book sent down from Him, or without a binding argument or a plea. These Messengers did not feel overwhelmed by the large number of their opponents or worried by the small number of their supporters. They would name their successors to carry on the message.

(Sermon 1)

About Prophet Moses (p)

I will relate to you concerning Prophet Moses, who conversed with God Almighty. He said:

“O God! I need whatever good You may grant me.” (Qur’an 28:24)

By God, he asked only for bread to eat, because he was eating the herbs of the earth, and the greenness of the herbs could be seen from his skin.

(Sermon 159)

About Prophet David (p)

I can give you another example, that of Prophet David (p). He was the reciter of the Psalms. He made baskets from palm leaves with his own hands and would ask his companions if they would buy them. He used to eat barley bread purchased from his earnings.

(Sermon 159)

About Prophet Jesus (p)

I will tell you about Jesus, the son of Mary. He used a stone for his pillow, put on coarse clothes, ate simple food, and preferred to go hungry. His lamp at night was the moon. His covering during the winter was just the expanse of earth. His fruits were those that grow naturally in the wilderness that are eaten by cattle. He had no wife to comfort him, nor a son, nor wealth to distract him, nor did he have greed (for worldly things). His two feet were the sole means of his transportation, and his two hands were his servants.

(Sermon 159)

About the Deniers of the Prophets of God

Praise be to God, the Exalted and Most High, who chose His Prophets in preference to the rest of His creation. The rejecters and deniers of His prophets deserve His wrath.

(Sermon 191)

Moses (p), son of Imran (Amran), went to Pharaoh along with his brother Aaron, wearing (coarse)

clothes of wool and holding sticks in their hands, guaranteeing Pharaoh his throne and honor if only he submitted to God. However, Pharaoh said to his people, “Do you not wonder at these two men guaranteeing me the continuity of my honor and the retention of my country, although you see their poverty and lowliness? Why do they not have gold bangles on their wrists?” Pharaoh felt proud of his wealth and looked down upon the (coarse) woolen clothes of Moses (p).[4](#)

If God had desired for His prophets, He would have granted them treasures of gold and surrounded them with beautiful gardens. If He had done so, then there would have been no trial for the people, nor any recompense (in the next world). However, God, the Glorified, sends them as ordinary-looking people, appearing contemptible to the eyes of the disbelievers.

If the Prophets possessed authority and honor, then it would be very easy for people to believe in them and they would acknowledge them out of fear. Therefore, God decided that people should follow His prophets, acknowledge His books, remain humble to Him, and obey His commands with sincerity, without an iota of other motives (i.e., fear and greed).

(Sermon 191)

Imam Ali (p) About Himself

Introduction

Much has been written about Imam Ali (p) by Muslim and non-Muslim scholars and historians. *Ibn Abil Hadid*,[5](#) the well-known Egyptian commentator of the book “*Nahjul Balagha*,” states:

“Ali had a personality in which opposing characteristics had so gathered themselves that it was difficult to believe that such a combination could manifest itself in a human being. He was the bravest man and the boldest warrior that history could cite, and while such brave persons are hard-hearted, cruel, and bloodthirsty, instead, Ali was kind, sympathetic, responsive, and a warm-hearted person. These are the qualities of the God-fearing. He was friendly with the rich, the poor, the educated, and the ignorant alike. He had a tender spot in his heart for every downtrodden, crippled, widowed, and orphaned person.”

Presented in this chapter are excerpts of the Imam’s sayings and guidance to the Muslims clarifying his position on many issues.

Imam Ali (p) Explains His Position

O God! I am the first who leaned (towards Thee) and who heard and responded (to the call to submission). No one preceded me in offering (ritual) prayers except the Prophet (s).

The Scope of His Knowledge

One of the Imam’s companions said to him: “O Amir-ul-Mu’mineen, you have been given knowledge of

hidden things.” Whereupon, Imam Ali laughed and said to the man:

“O brother, this is not knowledge of hidden things. This knowledge I have acquired from the Prophet. As regards the knowledge of hidden things, that means knowledge of the Day of Judgment and the things covered by God as stated in the following verse:

‘Verily, God is He with Whom is the knowledge of the Hour’ (Qur’an 31:34).

“Therefore, God alone knows what is there in the wombs, whether male or female, ugly or handsome, generous or miserly, mischievous or pious, and who will be doomed to Hell and who will be in the company of the Prophets in Paradise. This is the knowledge of the hidden things, which is not known to anyone save God. God transmitted all other knowledge to the Prophet Muhammad (s), who then passed it to me. He prayed to God that my bosom may retain this knowledge.”

(Sermon 127)

His Prophecy about the Future

Certainly a time will come after I leave, when nothing will be more disliked than virtue, and nothing more liked than vice.

(Sermon 146)

About His Knowledge

By God, I can tell every one of you where you have come from, or where you have to go. I can tell you about your affairs, but I fear lest you abandon the Messenger of God in my favor. I shall certainly convey these things to the selected ones, who will remain safe from being misguided. By God, Who deputed the Prophet with truth and distinguished him over all creation, I do not speak save the truth.

(Sermon 174)

O people! Ask me before you lose me, because certainly I am even more acquainted with the paths of the heavens than the paths of the earth.

(Sermon 188)

About His Status and His Contributions to Islam

Certainly if God were to allow anyone to indulge in pride, He would have allowed it to his selected prophets and vicegerents. However, God, the Sublime, disliked vanity for them and preferred humility for them. Therefore, they remained humble. God tried them with hunger, afflicted them with difficulty, tested them with fear, and upset them with troubles. Therefore, do not regard wealth and progeny as the criterion for God’s pleasure and displeasure. You are not aware of the mischief and trials that wealth and power bring. God, the Glorified, the Sublime, has said:

“What! Do they think that (by) what We aid them with of wealth and children, We are hastening unto them the good things? Nay! They perceive not”⁶ (Qur’an 23:55–56).

Certainly God, the Glorified, tries His subjects, who are vain, by making His beloved subjects appear lowly to them.

God, the Glorified, if He wished, He could open for His Prophets treasures and mines of gold and plant gardens for them. If He had done so, then there would have been no trial, nor recompense, nor any good tidings (to the people for their obedience).

God, the Glorified, decided that people should follow His prophets, acknowledge His books, remain humble before Him, obey His command, and accept His obedience without an iota of any other motive except sincerity.

God tries His creatures through difficulties and expects them to worship Him even in hardship. He causes them distresses in order to remove vanity from their hearts, and then He opens the door of His favors and forgiveness.

Satan felt proud because of his origin from fire and taunted Adam about his origin from clay. In the same way, the rich feel vain because of their riches, as (God) said:

“And said they: ‘We are more (than you) in wealth and in children, and we shall not be chastised!’” (Qur’an 34:35).

In case you cannot avoid vanity, then take pride in performing good acts, like helping a neighbor, the fulfillment of contracts, extending generosity to others, keeping away from bloodshed, doing justice to people, and suppressing anger. You should also keep in mind what happened to the people before you, and be careful that you do not make the same mistakes.

Think about the condition of people from among the believers who passed away long ago. The Pharaohs took them as slaves. They inflicted on them the worst punishments and bitter sufferings. They remained in this state of ruinous disgrace and severe subjugation. They found no method for escape and no protection. God, the Glorified, knowing that they were enduring troubles in His love and bearing distresses for His sake, provided them escape from their distress and trials. He changed their disgrace into honor and fear into safety. Consequently, they became rulers, kings, and leaders, and God’s favors over them were beyond their expectations.

See what happened to them towards the end, when divisions overtook them and their unity was fractured. There were differences in what they said and what was actually in their hearts. They broke into groups and were scattered. They fought among themselves. Then God took away from them the apparel of His honor and deprived them of their prosperity. Their stories have remained among you for those who may take lesson.

Beware! You let go the obedience and you have again reverted to the manners of the Bedouin Arabs, breaking into different parties after having been united.

Beware! Surely God has commanded me to fight those who revolt or who break the pledge or create trouble on the earth. As regards the pledge breakers, I have fought them; as regards to the deviators from the truth, I have waged war against them; and as regards to those who have rebelled and gone out of the faith, I have disgraced them.

Even in my young age, I had subdued (famous warriors). Certainly you know my close kinship and special relationship with the Prophet of God. He found no untruth in my speech nor weakness in my actions.

I used to follow him like a young camel following its mother. Every day he would show me some of his high traits and command me to follow them. Every year he used to go in seclusion to the *cave of Hira*,⁷ where I was with him alone. In those days, Islam did not exist in any house except that of the Prophet of God and Khadijah (His wife), while I was the third person after these two to be blessed with Islam. I used to watch the effulgence of Divine revelations and messages as they descended upon the Prophet.

When the revelation descended on the Prophet of God, I heard the moan of Satan. I asked, “O Prophet of God, what is this moan?” and he replied, “This is Satan, who has lost all hope of being worshipped. O Ali, you see all that I see and you hear all that I hear, except that you are not a Prophet, but you are a vicegerent and you are surely on (the path of) virtue.”

Certainly I belong to the group of people who care not for the reproach of anyone in matters concerning God. Their countenance is the countenance of the truthful, and their speech is the speech of the virtuous. They are wakeful during the nights (in devotion to God) and are beacons (of guidance) in the day. They hold fast to (teachings of) the Qur’an and revive the traditions of God and of His Prophet. They do not boast nor indulge in self-conceit, nor misappropriate, nor create mischief. Their hearts are in Paradise while their bodies (on earth) are busy (in good acts).

(Sermon 191)

His Reliance upon God

Surely God has provided a strong protective shield over me. When my time to depart comes, it (the shield) will be removed from me, and death will overtake me.

(Sermon 61)

About His Forbearance

I lived as a good neighbor to you and tried my best to look after you, and I freed you from the snare of humility and the fetters of oppression. I closed my eyes to many misdeeds that you committed.

(Sermon 158)

His Austere Lifestyle and Abstinence from the World's Allurements

By God, I have been sewing so many patches on my shirt that now I feel embarrassed of it.

(Sermon 159)

O world! Do not try to snare me, for I am above your temptations, and I carefully avoid pitfalls. Where are those people whom you had tempted with pleasures and enjoyments? Where are those groups whom you had allured with pomp and glory? They are now in their graves under tons of earth.

O world! Had you been a person or a being with life and limbs, I would have punished you under the laws of the Lord. Because, you have tempted (and misguided) millions of individuals from the true path of humanity, you have given them false hopes, brought about their destruction, caused the decline and fall of nations, and allured them with power and pleasures.

O world, Woe to the man who, with misplaced confidence, steps on your slippery surface; you made it to appear as a firm foothold, for he will certainly slip (get misguided); woe to the man who is tempted to ride the waves of false hopes and (unrealistic) expectations raised by you, for he will surely sink.

Whoever avoids your trap, your temptations, your snares, and your allurements, he will find the straight path to safety and salvation. Whoever rejects you, he does not care for the consequences of his action, even though he may find himself in difficulties. The life of this world with its pleasures and afflictions is like a day that will soon pass away. Leave me alone, you cannot catch me unawares in order to plunge me into disgrace and humiliation.

I swear by God, barring Destiny over which I have no control, that I shall exert self-control so that I shall be contented and happy, even if I have one piece of bread with a pinch of salt, and that I will keep my heart free from desire for power, pleasure, and glory.

(Letter 45)

When a Man Offered Him a Gift

A man came and offered me a flask full of honey, but I was disinclined to accept it. I asked him whether it was a reward or charity, for these are forbidden to us, the members of the Prophet's family. He said it was a gift. Then I said, "Have you come to seduce me away from the religion of God?" [i.e., Imam could sense that the person's motive was to ask for some undue favor in return].

By God, even if I am given all the domain of the (seven) heavens, with all that exists under the skies, in order that I may disobey God to the extent of snatching one grain of barley from an ant, I would not do it. For me, all the (riches of the) world are (worth) less than the leaf in the mouth of a locust that it is chewing. What has Ali to do with bounties that will pass away, and from the evil (consequences) of mistakes, and from Him we seek succor.

(Sermon 222)

[His Sermon Shortly Before His Death](#)

O people! Everyone has to meet death; life is leading everyone to it. The knowledge of the time of death is hidden. I testify that I do not believe in a partner for God, and I do not disregard the teachings of Muhammad (s). Therefore, (I advise you) to be attached to these two pillars and keep lighted these two lamps. If you stay undivided, no evil will come to you. Each one of you has to bear your own burden. God is Merciful. Faith is straightforward. The leader (Prophet) is the holder of knowledge. Yesterday I was with you, today I have become the object of a lesson for you, and tomorrow I shall leave you. May God forgive you and me?

I was your neighbor and gave you company, but shortly you will find me lifeless. The stillness of my limbs may provide you counsel, because it is a more effective counsel than an eloquent speech. I am departing from you like one who is eager to meet (God). Tomorrow, you will look back at my services, then my inner side (valuable and sincere services) will come to your attention, and you will realize that better after another individual takes my place.

(Sermon 148)

[Advice to His Family Before Dying](#)

My advice to you is that you should not consider anyone as equal to the Lord; be firm in your belief that there is One and only One God. Do not waste the knowledge given to you by the Prophet (s), and do not forego or lose his teachings (traditions). Keep these two pillars of Islam aloft. If you act according to my advice, then you cannot be blamed for corrupting the religion.

Until yesterday, I was your leader; today I am only an object from whom you can take lesson and warnings, and tomorrow I shall part company with you. If I survive this wound, I shall be at liberty to decide how to deal with the man who attempted to kill me. If I die, then my worldly life will end. If I forgive my assassin, it will be to gain the blessings of God for forgiving him, who has harmed me. It will be a good deed if you also forgive him. Do you not desire to be forgiven by the Lord? As far as death by martyrdom is concerned, I always anticipated and desired it, and I now welcome it like a very thirsty person who finds water. I am a seeker who finds what he was seeking (i.e., martyrdom). The pious people will receive the best from God.

(Letter 23)

[A Statement of the Prophet \(s\) to Imam Ali \(p\)](#)

“O Ali, no faithful Muslim will ever be your enemy and no hypocrite will ever be your friend.”

[About the Family of Muhammad \(s\)](#)

Introduction

The family of Prophet Muhammad (s) is blessed with an exalted and honored position in Islam. His daughter, Fatima (p), his cousin and son-in-Law, Ali (p), and his grandsons, Hasan and Husain (pp), were not only very special to him, but also blessed and purified from all sins and faults. There are several verses in the Qur'an in their praise. The designated Imams from his family were the spiritual leaders of the Muslims. Their God-consciousness was unmatched, and their knowledge of the Qur'an was next only to that of the Prophet (s).

About the (Chosen) Members of the Family of the Prophet

They are the trustees of God's secrets, shelter for His affairs, source of knowledge about Him, center of His wisdom, valleys for His books, and (lofty) mountains of His religion. With them, God straightened the bend in religion's back and removed the trembling in its limbs.

(Sermon 2)

Beware! The example of the descendants of Muhammad (s) is like that of stars in the sky. When one star sets, another one rises. Therefore, you are in a position that God's blessings on you have been perfected.

(Sermon 99)

We (the chosen members) are the tree of prophethood, the resting place of the (Divine) Message, descending place of angels, the mines of knowledge, and the source of wisdom. Our supporters and lovers await mercy while our enemy awaits wrath (of God).

(Sermon 108)

About the Descendants of the Prophet (s)

The chosen members of his family are the reins of righteousness, ensigns of faith, and tongues of truth. You should accord to them the same high position that you accord to the Qur'an, and come to them (for quenching the thirst for guidance) as the thirsty camels approach the water spring.

(Sermon 86)

To Follow in the Footsteps of the Family of the Prophet (s)

Look up to the members of the Prophet's family. Adhere to the direction they guide you. Follow their footsteps, because they would never let you go astray. If they sit down, you sit down, and if they rise up, you rise up. Do not try to precede them, as you would thereby go astray, and do not lag behind them, as you would thereby be ruined.

(Sermon 96)

About the Greatness of the Members of the Prophet's Family

By God, I have knowledge of the conveyance of messages and fulfillment of the promises. We, the people of the House (of the Prophet), possess the doors of wisdom and light of governance. The path of religion is one and its highway is straight. He who stood away from it went astray.

(Sermon 119)

Prophet's Family Members Endowed with Knowledge

Where are those who falsely claimed that they were deeply versed in knowledge! God had raised us in position and kept them down, bestowed upon us knowledge but deprived them of it. With us, the blindness (of misguidance) is to be changed into brightness of guidance. Surely the Imams (divinely appointed leaders) will be from the Quresh tribe.

Imam Ali (p) Responding to Those Who Challenged His Status and Authority

Where are the hearts dedicated and devoted to the obedience of God? They are all crowding towards worldly vanities and quarrelling over unlawful issues. They have turned their faces away from Paradise. God called them, but they turned away. When Satan called them, they responded.

(Sermon 143)

They Speak the Truth and are Treasurers of God

He who has an intelligent mind looks to his goal. He knows his low road as well as his high road.

They (the opponents of the Prophet's family) have entered the oceans of disturbance and have taken to innovations instead of the Sunnah (the Prophet's teachings and practices). While the believers are subdued, the misguided and the falsifiers are vocal. We are the near ones (to God), treasure holders and doors (to the teachings of the Prophet). Houses are not entered save through the doors. Whoever enters from other than the door is called a thief. (The implied meaning here is that to receive true knowledge, approach the chosen members of the family of the Prophet).

They are the treasurers of God. When they speak, they speak the truth, but when they keep silent, no one else speaks for them (i.e., no one has anything better to say).

(Sermon 153)

About the Knowledge of the Family of the Prophet

They are "life" for knowledge and "death" for ignorance. Their forbearance tells you about their knowledge, and their silence indicates their wisdom. Neither do they go against what is right, nor do they differ (among themselves) about it. They are the pillars of faith and its protectors. With them, truth has returned to its proper place and wrong has been uprooted. They have understood the religion, not by

mere hearsay or from relaters. The relaters of knowledge are many, but only a few understand it.

(Sermon 237)

We, the chosen from the family of the Holy Prophet, hold such a central and pivotal position in religion that those who are seeking an understanding of principles and practice of the religion will have to come to us for help (and guidance).

(A Saying)

[The Knower of the Rights of the Prophet and His Family](#)

Any one of you who dies (a natural death), while he/she has knowledge of the rights of God and the rights of His Prophet and the rights of the (chosen) members of his family will die the death of a martyr (in the service of God). His/her reward is incumbent upon God.

(Sermon 189)

[About Islam](#)

[Introduction](#)

The Arabic word *Islam* means peace and submission. In the religious sense, in principle, it is professing that there is no god but God, and Muhammad (s) is the Messenger of God. In a practical sense, it is submission to the Will of God. For a Muslim, it requires belief in one God, belief in all the previous prophets of God, following the teachings of Muhammad (s), and obeying the commands (laws) contained in the Qur'an. In this chapter, Imam Ali (p) presents his perspective regarding his religious beliefs, his strong faith in God, and his belief in the prophethood of Muhammad (s).

[He Defines Islam](#)

I shall define Islam for you in a way that nobody has done before me.

Islam means obedience to God. Obedience to God means having sincere faith in Him. Such a faith means to believe in His Power. Belief in His Power means recognizing and accepting His Majesty. Acceptance of His Majesty means fulfilling the obligations laid down. The fulfillment of obligations means actions. (Therefore, Islam does not mean mere faith, but it is faith accompanied with action).

(His saying)

[He Explains the Merits of Islam](#)

Praise be to God who established Islam and made it easy for those who approach it and gave strength to it against anyone who tries to overpower it. Therefore, God made it (a source of) peace for him who attaches to it, safety for him who enters it, argument for him who speaks about it, witness for him who fights (in defense) with its help. He made it a (source of) light for him who seeks light from it, a means of

understanding for him who supports it, a source of sagacity for him who strives, and a sign (of guidance) for him who is receptive.

He made it a lesson for him who seeks advice, a means of salvation for him who testifies, a source of confidence for him who trusts, a surety for him who relies, and a shield for him who endures.

It is the brightest of all the paths and clearest of all passages. It has bright highways, burning lamps, prestigious fields of activity, and high objectives. It is sought after earnestly. Its observers are honorable, the testimony (to oneness of God) is its way, and good deeds are its high points.

(Sermon 105)

Addressing the Misguided Followers of Islam

God is bounteous to you, for you have acquired a position where even your servants are honored and your neighbors are treated well. However, now you see pledges to God being broken, but you do not feel enraged, although you fret and frown on the breaking of the traditions of your ancestors. You have preferred the company of deviators and delegated your affairs in their hands. They have doubts in what they do and they act in pursuit of their (selfish) desires. God will gather you all on a day (Day of Reckoning) that would be hard on the wrongdoers.

(Sermon 105)

Means of Seeking Nearness to God

The best means to seek nearness to God is to believe in Him (His Oneness) and His Prophet and fight to defend His cause, for it is the highest pinnacle of faith. It is to believe in His (God's) purity and justice; to establish (ritual) prayers, for they are the foundation of the community; to pay the poor-due (Islamic charity or *Zakaat*), for it is an obligation; to fast for one month in the month of Ramadan, for it is a shield against chastisement; to perform Hajj (Pilgrimage) to the House of God (K 'aba), for it drives away poverty and washes away sins.

Also, to have regard for kinship, for it increases wealth and increases the length of life (as a reward from God); to give alms secretly, for it covers shortcomings; to give alms openly, for it protects against a bad death, and to be of benefit (to people), for it protects from falling into disgrace.

Keep God in remembrance, for it is the best remembrance, and desire for that which He has promised to the pious people, for His promise is the truest promise. Adopt the way of the Prophet, for that is the most distinguished way. Follow the teaching and practice of the Prophet, for it is the most honorable of all practices.

Learn the Qur'an, for it is the fairest of discourses, and understand it thoroughly, for it is the best for blossoming of hearts. Seek cure with its light, for it is cure for (the ailments of) hearts. Recite it beautifully, for it is the most beautiful narration.

Certainly a scholar who acts not according to his knowledge is like the off-headed ignorant who does not find relief from his ignorance. On the learned, the plea of God is greater, grief incumbent, and he is more blameworthy before God for his faults.

(Sermon 109)

God Chose Islam (Submission to God)

God Chose Islam⁸ (Submission to God)

This Islam is the religion that God has chosen for Himself, developed it before His eyes, preferred it as the best among His creations and established its pillars on His love. He has given honor to it above other creeds. He has humbled its enemies and frustrated its opponents by giving His support. He has smashed the pillars of misguidance with it. He has quenched the thirst of the thirsty from its cisterns.

He made Islam such that its constituent parts cannot break up: Its links cannot separate. Its structure cannot fall. Its columns cannot decay, and it cannot be uprooted. In addition, its time does not end: Its laws do not expire. Its paths do not become narrow. Its ease does not change into difficulty. Its clarity is not affected by gloom. Its straightness does not become crooked. Its vast paths have no narrowness. Its lamp cannot be put out, and its sweetness does not change to bitterness.

Its foundation is strong and built on truthfulness. Its streams are ever full. Its lamps remain ever lighted, and its beacons help travelers seeking guidance. God has granted Islam His highest pleasure: Made it the pinnacle of His pillars and the path to His obedience. Therefore, you should honor it and follow it. Fulfill its obligations and accord it the position it deserves.

Then, God, the Glorified, deputed Muhammad (s) with the message of truth, at a time when the brightness of civilization was turning into gloom. The world had become troublesome for its inhabitants, and its decay had approached near. God made him responsible for conveying His message and made it (a means of) honor for his people, a source of dignity for its supporters, and an honor for his helpers.

(Sermon 197)

About the Qur'an

(Known as "Koran" in the West)

Introduction

The divinely revealed scripture to Prophet Muhammad (s) is unique among all scriptures. The Angel Gabriel brought the messages from God to Muhammad (s). The revelations continued over a period of twenty-three years. Muhammad repeated the messages (verses or chapter) to his disciples, who memorized them. The revelations were also inscribed on parchments. Nonetheless, generation after generation, Muslims continue to memorize the entire scripture word for word. The written word of God in

Arabic in the Qur'an is exactly same as it was memorized and inscribed from the time it was revealed to the Prophet. Therefore, the authenticity of the scripture as the original word of God is preserved beyond any doubt. Not only the language of the revelation is alive and current, but also the message is as relevant today as it was 1,400 years ago. In this chapter, Imam Ali (p) expounds on some of the spiritual aspects of the Qur'an.⁹

The Contents of the Qur'an

The Prophet (s) left for you the Book (Qur'an), which clarifies the permitted and the prohibited by God, the obligatory and the discretionary. It contains topics that are general as well as particular; it has lessons and illustrations, and long and short verses. There are verses whose knowledge is obligatory. (Sermon 1)

God Says in the Qur'an

"We have not neglected anything in the Book (Qur'an)." (Qur'an 6:38)

The Qur'an is Free of any Discrepancies

*"And if it had been from any other than God, they would surely have found in it much discrepancy." (Qur'an 4:82)*¹⁰

(Sermon 18)

The Apparent and the Hidden in the Qur'an

Certainly, the outside of the Qur'an (exoteric) is wonderful, and its inside is deep (in meaning). Its wonders will never end, its amazements will never exhaust, and its intricacies cannot be comprehended, except through itself.

The Qur'an, a Fair Discourse

Learn the Qur'an, for it is the fairest of discourses, and (strive to) understand it thoroughly, for it is the best for blossoming of hearts. Seek cure with its light, for it is the cure for (the diseases of) the hearts. Recite it in a beautiful manner, for it is the most beautiful of all narrations.

(Sermon 109)

Qur'an is a "House with Sturdy Pillars"

The Book of God is among you. It speaks and its tongue does not falter. It is a house, whose supports do not crumble and a power whose helpers cannot be routed.

(Sermon 132)

[Qur'an is a "Lamp"](#)

Its wonders are inexhaustible and its subtleties are unending. It is a light (of guidance) for the darkness (of ignorance). (The doors of) virtue cannot be opened save with its keys, nor can gloom be dispelled save with its light. God has protected its inaccessible points (from enemies) and allowed grazing (to its followers) in its pastures. It contains the remedy (for the ailment of misguidance) for the seeker.

(Sermon 151)

[Qur'an is a "Strong Rope"](#)

The Qur'an is a strong rope, a clear light, a cure, a quencher for thirst (for knowledge), a protector and deliverer (from calamities). Therefore, I advise you to adhere to it. There is no crookedness in it. Hearing its repeated recitation does not fatigue the ears. Quoting the Qur'an is expounding the truth.

(Sermon 155)

[Qur'an Contains Knowledge of the Future](#)

The Prophet came with a Book (Qur'an) testifying to the (older) Scriptures. It contains knowledge of what is to come about in the future, the stories of the past, cure for your (spiritual and moral) ills, and regulations for all the situations that you might face.

(Sermon 157)

[Qur'an is an Advisor](#)

The Qur'an is an advisor, a leader that never deceives, and a narrator that never speaks a lie. No one will sit (listen or recite) beside this Qur'an but that when he rises up, he will achieve either guidance or healing of (spiritual) blindness. You should know that no one will need any other guidance after (receiving guidance from) the Qur'an. Therefore, seek cure from it for your ailments, and seek its assistance in your distress. It contains a cure for the worst of the diseases, including the unbelief (in God), hypocrisy, rebellion (against God), and misguidance (from the true Path). Pray to God through its recitation and turn to God with its help. There is nothing like the Qur'an, through which one should turn to God, the Sublime.

Know that the Qur'an is an (effective) intercessor¹¹ and its intercession will be accepted (on the Day of Reckoning). Therefore, you should be among the adherents and followers of the Qur'an.

Make it your guide for seeking God. Follow its advice and do not rely on your own views beyond what is in the Qur'an.

God, the Glorified, has not counseled anyone with the likes of this Qur'an, for it is the strong rope (support) of God and His trustworthy means. It contains the blossoming of the heart and springs of knowledge. For the heart, there is no other purifier better than the Qur'an.

(Sermon 175)

Qur'an is Proof of God

The Qur'an orders as well as refrains, and it remains silent as well as speaks. It is the proof of God for His creation. He has perfected its effulgence and has perfected His religion through it. He deputed the Prophet to convey to the people all His commands through it.

(Sermon 182)

Qur'an is the Quencher of Thirst for the Seeker of Knowledge

Then God sent to the Prophet (s) the Book (Qur'an) as a lamp whose flame cannot be extinguished, a light whose brightness does not diminish, a sea whose depth cannot be fathomed, a way that does not mislead, and a ray of light that does not dim. It is a discriminator (of good from evil) whose arguments cannot not be belittled, a clarifier whose foundation cannot be shaken, a cure which leaves no trace of the disease, a book of honor whose supporters cannot be overcome, and a truth whose helpers are not abandoned. It is the mine of belief, the source of knowledge, the courtyard of justice, the foundation stone of Islam, the valleys and the plains of truth, the spring whose water is inexhaustible, the goal that the travelers striving towards it do not get lost, and the signpost that no seeker fails to see.

God has made it a quencher of the thirst of the learned, a blooming for the hearts of religious jurists, a highway for the ways of the righteous, a cure after which no ailment remains, a brightness with which no darkness remains, a rope whose grip is strong, a fortress that is invulnerable. It honors him who loves it, a place of peace for him who enters it, a guide for him who follows it, a success for him who argues with its help, a witness against him who rebukes it. It is a shield for him who arms himself (against misguidance), a source of knowledge for him who listens to it carefully, a worthy narration for him who recites it, and a conclusive verdict for him who gives out judgment (according to it).

(Sermon 197)

K'aba (the House of God) and the Hajj Pilgrimage

Introduction

The K'aba is the symbolic House of God on earth, situated in Mecca (in present-day Saudi Arabia). It is approximately a fifty-foot-by-fifty-foot-by-fifty-foot cubicle, originally built by the first man on Earth, the Prophet Adam (p), according to Divine instructions for the worship of God Almighty. It was rebuilt by the Prophet Abraham (p), father of the three monotheistic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—with the help of his son Ishmael (p). It was rebuilt again in the time of Muhammad (s), the last prophet of God. Muslims are required to perform the pilgrimage to the K'aba once in their lifetime as an obligatory duty. This takes place in the twelfth month of the Muslim calendar, the month of *Dhul Hijjah*. Millions of believers from around the world perform the pilgrimage (Hajj) every year.

Imam Ali (p) here reminds the pilgrims that visiting this place during Hajj should be purely for the pleasure of God and devoid of worldly motives. Moreover, he notes that hardships encountered during the journey are a test of faith.

God's Divine Plan with Regard to His House, the K'aba

God, the Glorified, had made His sacred house (K'aba) in the most rugged part of the earth, in a narrow valley between rough mountains (in the city of Mecca). At that time, the arid desert and scanty water resources allowed neither camels nor horses nor cows nor sheep to prosper.

Then He commanded the Prophet Adam and his sons to attend to it. In this way, it became the focus of their journeys. Since that time, human beings have hastened towards it from distant lands, traveling through waterless deserts, deep and low-lying valleys, and scattered islands. They arrive in humility, reciting the slogan of having reached the audience of God Almighty, hurrying on foot with disheveled appearance and dust-covered faces. They are required to stay unshaven during the rituals as a means of trial. God has made it a condition to His mercy and an approach to His Paradise.

If God, the Glorified, had placed His sacred House and His great signs among lush plantations, streams of water, soft and level plains, abundance of trees, a flourishing population, and laden orchards, then the amount of spiritual recompense to the pilgrims would have decreased because of the lightness of the trial. If the House were built with green emeralds and red rubies, then this would have lessened the doubts in people's minds (i.e., they would be readily attracted toward it), and it would have decreased Satan's evil influence on the hearts (i.e., in discouraging people from journeying to the house of God). However, God tries His subjects by means of various difficulties, and wants them to worship Him despite hardships and distresses. He wishes to remove vanity from their hearts, to induce humility in their spirits, and thereby open the doors of His favors, bounties, and forgiveness.

(Sermon 191)

Imam Ali's Saying about Hajj (Pilgrimage)

God has made obligatory upon you the pilgrimage (Hajj) to His sacred house (K'aba), which is the direction towards which people turn their faces (while performing ritual worship) and proceed towards it (K'aba) like the beasts or pigeons that go towards the water spring¹² (to quench thirst). God, the Glorified, made it a sign of their submission to His Greatness and their acknowledgement of His Exalted status. He chose (humankind) from among His creation, so that, on listening to His call, they would respond to it, and would honor His command. They thus responded and resembled His angels who surround the Divine Throne (located in the higher Heaven), securing all the benefits of performing His worship, and hastening towards His promised forgiveness. God, the Glorified, made it (His sacred house) an emblem for Islam and an object of respect for those who turn to it. He made obligatory its pilgrimage and laid down its claim, for which He held you responsible to discharge. Thus, God, the Glorified, said:

“And pilgrimage to the house is incumbent upon humankind for the sake of God, (upon) everyone who is able to undertake the journey to it; and whoever disbelieves (in it), then surely God is Self-Sufficient, above any need of the worlds.” (Qur’an 3:96)

(Sermon 1)

Islamic Ritual Prayers (Salaat)

Introduction

The ritual prayer in Islam is called *Salaat* in Arabic. It is an obligation that is required to be performed five times a day and is one of the “Pillars” of Islam. In this Chapter, by employing rich analogies, Imam Ali (p) emphatically and eloquently illuminates the importance of *Salaat*.

Pledge yourself with Salaat (ritual prayers) and remain steady on it. Offer (optional) prayers as much as possible (in addition to the obligatory prayers) and seek nearness (to God) through them. It is (ordained) upon the believers as a timed ordinance.

Have you not heard the reply of the people of Hell when they were asked:

“What hath brought you into the hell?’ They shall say: ‘We were not of those who prayed (to God).’ ” (Qur’an 74:42–43)

Certainly prayer sheds sins like the shedding of leaves (from trees in fall). The Messenger of God has likened it to a warm bath, easily accessible to a person who bathes in it five times a day. (He asked,) Will then any dirt remain on him?

This obligation is well recognized by those believers whom neither wealth nor children can turn away from it. God, the Glorified, says:

“Men whom neither merchandise nor any sale diverts from the remembrance of God, and constancy in prayer and paying the charity (Zakat).”¹³ (Qur’an 24:7)

Even after receiving assurance of Paradise, the Messenger of God (s) used to exert himself to perform prayers, because of the command of God, the Glorified:

“And enjoin prayer on thy followers, and adhere thou steadily unto it.” (Qur’an 20:32)

The Prophet used to enjoin prayers on his followers and he himself exerted considerably in them.

(Sermon 198)

About Satan

Introduction

Satan, Jinn by origin, is a very interesting character. The Qur'an has many references to him. His proper name in Arabic is *Iblees* (*Lucifer in English*), but he is more commonly known as *Shaytaan*. When he disobeyed God by refusing to prostrate himself before the Prophet Adam while all the angels prostrated themselves. God asked Satan why he refused to prostrate himself. Satan said that he was superior to Adam because he was created from fire, whereas Adam was created from lowly clay.

God called him vain and rejected him (from God's favor). He left Paradise promising that he would seduce and make humans go astray from the Right Path (i.e., the way of obedience to God). God responded by saying that those who follow Satan will be punished along with the accursed *Jinn*. Thus, Satan afflicts humans by causing them to feel vain and superior to others. This includes a feeling of superiority in respect to wealth, race, color, family heritage, country of origin, language, ethnicity, etc. In this manner, Satan recruits humankind to his flock and shepherds them to doom and punishment.

In this chapter, Imam Ali (p) points out various types of traps and tools of deception that Satan uses to misguide people and ruin their Hereafter.

A Warning against Satan

I enjoin upon you to be God-conscious, for He has left no excuse against what He has warned and has exhausted arguments (of guidance) about the (right) path that He has shown. He has warned you of the enemy (Satan) that sneaks into hearts and stealthily prompts, and thereby misguides, bringing about destruction. He makes (false) promises and practices deception. He presents evil and sin in attractive shapes and appearances and makes major transgressions (against God) appear minor.

(Sermon 82)

Satan Promised to Lead People Astray

Therefore, you should fear lest Satan infect you with his disease, or lead you astray through his call, because, by my life, he has put the arrow (of deception) in the bow for you, has stretched the bow strongly, and has aimed it at you from a nearby position. As stated in the Qur'an, this is what Satan promised to God,

“He said: ‘My Lord! Because Thou hast left me to stray, certainly will I adorn unto them (the humankind) the path of error, and certainly will I cause them all to go astray’ ” (Qur'an 15:39).

He (Satan) had said so, only by conjecture about the future that was unknown to him. However, the sons of vanity, the brothers of haughtiness, and the knights of pride and intolerance proved him to be true, so much so that when disobedient persons bowed before him (Satan) and his sway gathered strength, he

gained full control (over his victims) using the forces under his command.

(Sermon 191)

About Divisiveness

Introduction

Maintaining peace, harmony, and unity in the community has been greatly emphasized in Islam, in the Qur'an, and in the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (s). If a person helps make peace between two parties or makes up with an estranged relative or friend, then he earns the pleasure of God and a reward greater than many acts of worship. Imam Ali (p) showed a great amount of magnanimity and self-sacrifice as a ruler by forgiving his adversaries in order to maintain harmony and to avoid discord in the community.

About Division in the Community

Certainly God did not punish any unruly tyrant in this world except after allowing him time and opportunity (for amends). The sufferings and misfortunes that have befallen you or that you have witnessed are enough for you to derive lessons. Not every man with a good heart is necessarily intelligent; not every ear listens, and not every eye sees (the truth).

I wonder about the faults of the groups who have introduced innovations in their religion, who do not follow the example of their Prophet nor emulate his successor. They do not believe in the unseen and do not abstain from evil. They are guided by their doubts and fall victim to their passions. They consider it good whatever they fancy, and consider it evil whatever they fancy. In dealing with complex issues, they make their own opinions (i.e., do not consult those with knowledge). They act as if each one of them is the Leader (Imam). Whatever they decide, they imagine it to be from a reliable source.

(Sermon 87)

When Facing a Rebellion

There is no doubt that God sent down the Prophet as a guide with an eloquent Book. No one faces ruin except of one's own accord. Certainly only dubious innovations cause ruin. In God's authority lies the safety of your affairs. Therefore, obey Him in a sincere manner. By God, if you do not obey Him, He will take away the authority from you and bestow it upon another people.

These people dislike authority. If they succeed (in gaining power) despite their faulty views, the governmental system will be shattered. They strive (for power) out of jealousy against the leader, while God has bestowed His blessings and authority on him. Therefore, they intend to revert to the era of ignorance (i.e., the pre-Islamic period), whereas it is obligatory on me, for your sake, to abide by the Book of God (the Qur'an) and the teachings of the Prophet of God and to uphold his (the Prophet's)

traditions (i.e., proclamations and actions).

(Sermon 168)

About Faith, Disbelief, and Doubt

Introduction

Imam Ali (p) had great insight into religion and the matters of faith. This was, in part, due to his closeness to the Prophet Muhammad (s), from whom he received knowledge and guidance. In this chapter, Imam Ali (p) shares his unique perspective on the subjects of faith (*Imaan*), disbelief (*Kufr*), and the causes of doubt and wavering of belief. [14](#)

Four Causes of Loss of Belief in God Are

- Hankering after whims
- Passion to dispute every argument
- Deviation from truth
- Dissension (contentious disagreement)

Whoever hankers after whims does not incline towards truth. Whoever keeps on disputing every argument despite his ignorance will always remain blind to truth. Whoever deviates from truth because of ignorance will always mistake good for evil and evil for good, and he will remain intoxicated with misguidance. Whoever makes a breach (with God and His Messenger), his path becomes difficult, his affairs will become complicated, and his way to salvation will be uncertain.

Doubt

Similarly, doubt has also four aspects:

- ☞ Absurd reasoning
- ☞ Fear
- ☞ Vacillation
- ☞ Hesitation

(It leads to) easy surrender to infidelity, because one who has accustomed himself to unreasonable and absurd discussions will never see the light of truth and will always live in the darkness of ignorance. One who is afraid to face facts (of life, of death, and the life after death) will always turn away from the ultimate reality. One who allows doubts and uncertainties to vacillate him will always be under the control

of Satan, and one who surrenders himself to infidelity earns damnation in both worlds (this life and the Hereafter).

When Imam Ali was asked about Faith in Religion, He Replied:

The structure of faith: It is supported by four pillars:

- ☞ Endurance
- ☞ Conviction
- ☞ Justice
- ☞ Struggle

Endurance

It is composed of four attributes: eagerness, fear, God-consciousness, and anticipation (of death). Therefore, whoever is eager for Paradise will ignore temptations; whoever fears the fire of Hell will abstain from sins; whoever practices God-consciousness will easily bear the difficulties of life; and whoever anticipates death will hasten towards good deeds.

Conviction

It has also four aspects:

- ☞ To guard oneself against infatuations of sin
- ☞ To search for explanation of truth through knowledge
- ☞ To gain lessons from instructive things
- ☞ To follow the precedent set by the people of previous generations

Whoever wants to guard himself against vices and sins will have to search for the true causes of infatuation, the true ways of combating them, and to find those true ways, to search with the help of knowledge.

Whoever is fully acquainted with various branches of knowledge will take lessons from life, and whoever tries to take lessons from life will engage in studying the causes for the rise and fall of previous civilizations.

Justice

It also has four aspects:

- ☞ Depth of understanding
- ☞ Profoundness of knowledge
- ☞ Fairness of judgment
- ☞ Clearness of mind

Whoever tries his best to understand a problem will have to study it. Whoever has the practice of studying the subject he is to deal with will develop a clear mind and will always come to correct decisions. Whoever tries to achieve all this will have to develop ample patience and forbearance, and whoever does this has done justice to the cause of religion and has led a life of good repute and fame.

Struggle (jihad)

It is divided into four branches:

- ☞ To persuade people to be obedient to God
- ☞ To dissuade them from sin and vice
- ☞ To struggle (in the cause of God) sincerely and firmly on all occasions
- ☞ To detest the corrupt ones

Whoever persuades people to obey the orders of God provides strength to the believers. Whoever dissuades them from vices and sins humiliates the unbelievers. Whoever struggles persistently, he discharges all his obligations. He who detests the corrupt individuals for the sake of God, then God will take revenge on his enemies and he will earn God's good pleasure on the Day of Judgment.

When Asked about Patience, he said:

Patience is of two kinds: patience over what causes you hurt, and patience against what you covet.

(Saying 31)

Miscellaneous Topics

Introduction

Imam Ali (p) lived an extremely simple life, even as the ruler of the vast Islamic empire. He explains the reason for his lifestyle of extreme austerity, which does not imply being reclusive. Rather, it was a lifestyle whereby he avoided luxuries. He wore simple and inexpensive clothes, yet provided better clothes for his servants. He also ate meager food, yet provided better food to his servants. The reasons for these actions are explained in this chapter.

About a Learned Person

The learned is the one who knows his worth. It is enough (reason) for a man to be (regarded) ignorant if he knows not his worth. Certainly the most disliked person with God is he whom God has left (alone) to his (selfish) self. He has gone astray from the right path and wanders about misguided. If he is called towards the worldly attractions, he is quick to respond, but if he is called to the bounties of the next world, he is not enthusiastic.

(Sermon 102)

About the Responsibilities of an Imam and Advice to Follow Him

O people, secure light from the lamps (of guidance) of the preacher who practices what he preaches, and draw water from the spring which has been cleansed of impurities (i.e., a teacher who is purified of sins and worldly ambitions).

O creatures of God, do not rely on your ignorance; do not be obedient to your desires. Be God-conscious, and do not place your complaints before him who cannot redress your grievance.

Certainly there is no obligation on the Imam except the responsibility laid down on him by God, namely, to convey warnings, to exert in giving good advice, to revive the teachings of the Prophet (s), to enforce the religious law, and to issue the (fair) shares (of Charity) to the deserving. So hasten towards knowledge before it is too late, and before you lose touch with the teacher. Hold back others from the unlawful and abstain from it yourself, because you have been commanded to first abstain yourself before preaching to others.

(Sermon 104)

Certainly the (Divinely appointed) Imams are the vicegerents of God over His creatures, and they teach the people about God (and His commands).

(Sermon 151)

Those Who Will Go Astray

With regard to me, two categories of persons will be ruined (go astray), namely, the one who loves me too much and the love takes him away from what is right, and the other who hates me much and the hatred takes him away from rightfulness. The best person with regard to me is he who takes the middle course. So be with the person who takes the middle course, and be with the majority (be united) because God's hand (i.e., protection) is on those who stay united. Beware of division, because a person isolated from the group is (prey) to Satan just as the isolated sheep from the flock is (prey) to the wolf.

(Sermon 126)

On Asceticism

[A man complained to Imam Ali (p) about his brother and said, “He wears a (coarse) woolen coat and has cut himself away from the world.” Imam Ali said, “Present him to me.” When the man came, the Imam said as follows:]

O enemy of yourself! Certainly the evil one (Satan) has misguided you. Do you have no pity for your wife and your children? Do you believe that if you use those things which God has made lawful for you, He will dislike you? You are too unimportant for God to do so.”

The man said: “O leader of the believers, you also put on coarse dress and eat meager food.” Imam Ali replied, “Woe to you, I am not like you. Certainly God the Sublime has made it obligatory on true leaders that they should maintain themselves at the level of poor people so that the poor (subjects) do not bemoan over their poverty.”

(Sermon 208)

- [1.](#) “Indeed, there is for you, in the messenger of God (Muhammad), an excellent pattern of conduct” (Qur’an 33:21).
- [2.](#) Prophet Muhammad’s lineage is traced as follows: Prophet Abraham, Prophet Ishmael, Kedar, Abdul-Muttalib, Abdullah, and then Muhammad. (Peace be upon them all.)
- [3.](#) Please refer to the appendix for details.
- [4.](#) Pharaoh said to his people, “Nay, am I not better than this fellow (Moses), who is contemptible, scarcely capable of speaking distinctly? Why have no bracelets of gold been put upon him?” (Qur’an Chapter 43:52, 53)
- [5.](#) Ibn Abil Hadid has written an extensive commentary covering several volumes on Imam Ali’s book Nahjul Balagha. It is in the Arabic language.
- [6.](#) Meaning, wealth, and offspring are a trial and may corrupt a person and cause him/her to fall into temptations.
- [7.](#) In the cave on top of mountain near Mecca where the Prophet (s) received his first revelation brought by Angel Gabriel.
- [8.](#) In the Qur’an, the Prophet Abraham is referred to as Muslim, i.e., he submitted to the Will of God. .
- [9.](#) For more information on the topic of the Qur’an, please visit www.islamquery.com [1].
- [10.](#) This refers to the revelations that came over a span of twenty–three years of the ministry of Prophet Muhammad (s). There is no contradiction in the messages, despite such a long period of revelations. This itself is a proof that Qur’an is a Divine revelation. If it were a “man–made” book, as alleged by the opponents, then contradictions would be unavoidable.
- [11.](#) This term implies that on the Day of Judgment, those who recited the Qur’an, pondered over its meaning, and obeyed its commandments will receive forgiveness and due rewards.
- [12.](#) The implied meaning is that people go on Hajj pilgrimage to the House of God to quench their thirst for seeking nearness to God (spiritual thirst).
- [13.](#) The Islamic charity (Zakat) is laid down along with ritual prayers as a sacrifice and obligation to be carried out by the Muslims. Whoever pays the Zakat by way of purifying his soul (and monies), it serves as a purifier for him and a protection and shield against fire (of Hell). No one, therefore, should miss it or have regrets. Whoever pays it without the intention of purifying his heart is ill informed of the teachings of the Prophet (s). He may forfeit the reward for it. His act is compromised and may need atonement.
- [14.](#) These are excerpts from his sayings. For explanation, please refer to the section of abbreviations in the beginning of this book.

<https://www.al-islam.org/what-true-success-excerpts-peak-eloquence-nahjul-balagha/9-alis-discourses-other-topics#comment-0>

Links

[1] <http://www.islamquery.com>