

Chapter 3: His Childhood and Behavior

Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, peace be on him, had access to the best education. No one had access to such an education but him. These conditions helped him educate himself and build his character in such a way that he was among the leading generation of the Muslim Imams whom the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, trusted, and made the leaders of his community and trustees for carrying out his message. Indeed all the elements of good and virtue and perfection were embodied in the childhood and behavior of the Imam. We will briefly explain these two phenomena of the early stages of his life:

His Childhood

Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, peace be on him, grew up in the House of Prophethood and Imamate. That was the House which Allah permitted to be exalted so that His Name might be remembered in it. The Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, took care of him in the early stage of his childhood. He supplied him with some rays of his spirit, the scent of which covered the whole world. The grandson was indeed a picture of his grandfather; he was similar to him in his psychological elements and qualities.

As for the period of time in which Imam Zayn al-'Abidin lived under the wing of his grandfather, it was very short. The historians limited it in two years. It was among the critical years which Imam 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, witnessed. During these years the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, suffered from terrible crises and events. Among them was that his army which fought against the falsehood of Mu'awiya suffered defeat, mutiny, and disobedience. As a result the Imam asked Allah, the Glorified, to cause him die and to save him from that mabbish society which did not understand its objectives.

Hence 'Abd al-Rahman b. Muljim—the most wretched person of the community, the terrorist, and criminal—attacked and killed him in one of Allah's houses, where he was standing and praying to Allah. In the last hours of his life, the members of his family and his children surrounded him, including Imam Zayn al-'Abidin. Then Imam 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, entrusted the Imamate to his two sons al-Hasan and al-Husayn. In the meantime he designated his little grandson Zayn al-

'Abidin as an Imam. He recited to him the greetings of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, and to his son Imam Muhammad al-Baqir, who is the leading figure of this community and pioneer of its scientific and cultural movement.

Imam al-Hasan is the lord of the youth of Heaven and plant of sweet basil of Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, and his first grandson. He was the pioneer of thought and righteousness in Islam. He was Imam Zayn al-'Abidin's pure uncle. Hence he took care of him, treated him with kindness and affection. He planted in him his great ideals and his excellent inclinations. He accompanied him till he (Imam Zayn al-'Abidin) became a grown-up. Accordingly, he had great effect on his inner self.

Imam al-Husayn, peace be on him, is the father of the free and lord of martyrs. He was Imam Zayn al-'Abidin's father. He thought that his son's qualities were similar to those of the Prophet and of the Imam. Hence he took great care of him. He poured in him his noble abilities and values, preferred him to his sons, and accompanied him most of the time. In this respect the historians said: "When Zayn al-'Abidin became ill, Imam al-Husayn hurried to visit him and made him wish, saying: 'What do you wish, my little son?'

He (Imam Zayn al-'Abidin) answered him with the answer of those who turned to Allah in repentance and devoted themselves to Him: 'I wish I would be among those who did not suggest (anything) to their Lord. (I am satisfied) with what my Lord decides.' Imam al-Husayn admired these brilliant words which indicated great knowledge and deep faith, and then he said with admiration: 'Bravo! You are similar to Ibrahim, the friend (of Allah) when Gabriel asked him: 'Have you any need?' He (Ibrahim) replied: 'I do not suggest (anything) to my Lord, rather Allah is sufficient for me and the best Agent!¹'"

Indeed Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, peace be on him, was similar to Ibrahim, the friend of Allah, in his great faith, his turning to Allah in repentance, and his cleaving to Him.

According to his education in his childhood, Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, peace be on him, was a model for those who were proud of sublime perfection and noble moral traits.

His Behavior

As for the behavior of Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, it was similar to that of his grandfathers, who were the source of guidance to mankind. The Imam spared no effort to follow the behavior and guidance of his grandfather Imam 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him. The narrators said: "He (Imam Zayn al-'Abidin) followed his grandfather's behavior. When worship made him tired, he sighed deeply and said with regret: 'I am not strong enough to perform the worship of my grandfather, the Commander of the faithful.'"

Imam Zayn al-'Abidin carried in his inner self the spirit of his grandfather, the Commander of the faithful and the Lord of those who were cognizant of Allah. He followed his method and imitated his actions.

Now, we will talk about some aspects of this part of his life.

His Behavior in his House

Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, peace be on him, was the most merciful of all the people and the kindest of them to the members of his house. He did not distinguish himself from them, rather he was one of them. It was reported on his authority that he said: "To buy meat from the market with the dirhams which are on me for my family when they long for meat is more lovable for me than freeing a slave.²" He went out early in the morning to seek the daily bread of his family. He was asked: "Where do you go?" He replied: "I go to seek alms for my family by seeking lawful daily bread because it is (the daily bread) is alms from Allah, the Great and Almighty, for them.³" He helped his family in meeting their needs. He did not order anyone of them to carry out his personal affairs; he performed them himself, especially if it concerned the affairs of his worship; he did not ask anyone of them to perform them.

The Imam's behavior toward his household was unique; he behaved exceptionally with his family. His behavior was full of mercy, cooperation, kindness, and self-negation.

His Kindness to his Nursemaid

When Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, peace be on him, grew up, he found out that his mother died, that his nursemaid treated him kindly in order to seek nearness to Allah. As a result he treated her with great kindness to the extent that he prevented from eating with her. The people blamed him for that and asked him frequently: "You are the kindest of all the people and the best of them in taking care of your blood relatives, so why do you not eat with your mother?" He replied to them with great politeness: "I fear that I stretch out my hand for what she stretches out her hand for⁴, then I am disobedient to her.⁵"

Which humanity is similar to this humanity? Which angelic soul is this soul? It is sufficient for this Imam that he is the son of al-Husayn, who filled the world with his honor and perfection.

A Fabricated Narration

Ibn Kuthayr mentioned a fabricated report when he said that Imam Zayn al-'Abidin married his mother to one of his retainers, and he freed a slave girl and married her, so 'Abd al-Malik wrote a letter to him and blamed him in it, saying: "Certainly you have in the Apostle of Allah an excellent exemplar for him who hopes in Allah and the latter day and remembers Allah much. He (Imam Zayn al-'Abidin) freed Safiya and married her, and he married his retainer, Zayd b. Haritha to his cousin, Zaynab, daughter of Jahsh.⁶"

This narration is fabricated from the beginning to end for the following reasons:

A great number of the historians and narrators mentioned that the lady, the Imam's mother, died during

her confinement.

Imam Abu' al-Hasan al-Rida, peace be on him, mentioned that in his conversation with Sahl b. al-Qasim al-Nu'shjani when he said to him: "She (Zayn al-'Abidin's mother) died during her confinement, and one of his father's slave-wives looked after him. The people claimed that she was his mother, while she was his retainer. They claimed that he married his mother (to a retainer of his). I seek refuge in Allah from that, rather he married his nursemaid to a retainer of his." Sahl said: "All the students in Khurasan reported this on the authority of al-Rida.⁷"

The sources of this narration are fabricated. As for that the Imam freed one of his slave girls and married her, it is lawful because it agrees with the Islamic teachings.

His Behavior toward his Parents

Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, peace be on him, was the kindest of all the people to his parents because he treated them with great love and mercy and obedience. He was so kind to his father that he asked his aunt Zaynab, the heroine of Karbala', to give the sticks to lean upon and a sword to defend his father at the Battle of al-Taf. This was while he was ill to the extent that he was unable to walk, but his aunt prevented him from doing that lest the progeny of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, should be destroyed. Therefore, which kindness is similar to this kindness? Among the services which he rendered to his father, after his martyrdom, was that he settled the heavy debts his father spent on the needy and the deprived. Among his acts of kindness to his parents is his supplication for them.

His Supplication for his Parents

As for the supplication of Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, peace be on him, for his parents, it concerns one of the most brilliant rules of Islamic education. This rule aims at achieving the reform and happiness of the family, spreading love and respect among its members. It is natural for society to be righteous when the family is righteous, and when it is corrupt, the society is also corrupt. This is because it is the first cell of building and forming society. The following is the masterpiece of his supplication:

"O Allah, bless Muhammad Your servant and Your messenger and his Household, the pure, and single them out for the best of Your blessing, Your mercy, Your benedictions, and Your peace! And single out my parents, O Allah, for honor with You and blessings from You, O Most Merciful of the merciful!"

"O Allah, bless Muhammad and His Household, teach me through inspiration, knowledge of everything incumbent upon me toward them, and gather within me knowledge of all that completely! Then make me act in accordance with what You have inspired me and give me success to put into practice the knowledge You have shown to me, lest I fail to act according to something You have taught me or my limbs feel too heavy to perform that with which You have inspired me!"

These brilliant words represent the high manners and morals and respect of the Imam Zayn al-'Abidin toward his parents. He supplicated to Allah to single them out with honor and dignity and to help him perform their rights against him. Now let's listen to another masterpiece of his supplication for them.

"O Allah, bless Muhammad and His Household, as You have ennobled us through them and bless Muhammad and His Household as You have made incumbent upon us rights toward the creatures because of him.

"O Allah fill me with awe of my parents, the awe one has toward a tyrannical sovereign, and let me be devoted to them, with the devotion of a compassionate mother! Make my obedience and devotion to them more gladdening to my eyes than sleep to the drowsy and more refreshing to my breast than drink to the thirsty, so that I may prefer their inclination to my inclination, set their satisfaction before my satisfaction, make much of their devotion to me though it be little, and make little of my devotion to them though it be great." In the world of obedience and kindness to parents, there is nothing like that which the Imam has mentioned in this paragraph.

He asked Allah, the Almighty, to fill him with awe of his parents to obey them and not to disobey them and to be devoted to them with the devotion of a compassionate mother and to prefer their inclination to his inclination and to set their satisfaction to his satisfaction and to thank them for their kindness to him and to regard as little his devotion to them. It is natural that such children treat their parents in such a manner which agrees with the troubles of life and pains of old age, and which brings about the happiness of family and the prosperity of social life. Now let's continue mentioning the brilliant paragraphs of his supplication for his parents.

"O Allah lower before them my voice, make agreeable to them my words, make mild before them my temper, make tender toward them my heart, and turn me into their kind companion, their loving friend! O Allah thank them for my upbringing, reward them for honoring me, and guard them as they guarded me in my infancy! O Allah and whatever harm has touched them from me, detested thing has reached them from me, or right of theirs which has been neglected by me, allow it to alleviate their sins, raise them in their degrees, and add to their deeds! O He who changes evil deeds into manifold good deeds!"

This masterpiece represents the high education and morals of the members of the House (*ahl al-Bayt*), peace be on them. In it, the Imam has added other rights to the parents' rights he has already mentioned, they are as follows:

The son should lower his voice before his parents.

He should make his temper mild before them.

He should make his heart tender toward them.

He should ask Allah to forgive them and to be pleased with them for their kindness to him during the

days of his infancy.

He should ask Allah to reward them for whatever harm has touched them from him, detested thing has reached them from him or right of their rights which has been neglected by him. In the world of ideal education there is no morals like these morals through which man is sublime and his life is prosperous. Now, let's listen to another part of the supplication of the Imam, peace be on him.

"O Allah, whatever word through which they have transgressed against me, act through which they have been immoderate with me, right of mine which they have neglected, or obligation toward me in which they have fallen short, I grant it to them and bestow it upon them, and I beseech You to remove from them its ill consequence, for I do not accuse them concerning myself, find them slow in their devotion toward me, or dislike the way they have attended to my affairs, my Lord! They have rights against me which are more incumbent, precedence in beneficence toward me that is greater, and kindness toward me that is mightier than that I should settle accounts with justice or repay them with equivalents.

Where then, my Allah, would be their long occupation with bringing me up? Where is the hardship of their toil in taking care of me? Where is the stinting of themselves to provide me with plenty? What an idea! I can never discharge their right against me, fulfill my obligations toward them, or accomplish the duty of serving them. So bless Muhammad and his Household and help me, O Best of those whose help we seek! Give me success, O Most Guiding of those whom we beseech! Place me not among the people of disrespect to fathers and mothers on the day *when every soul will be repaid for what it has earned; they shall not be wronged.*" Indeed this 'Alid education is a breath of Allah's spirit and is a signpost for peoples and nations to raise the value of man and exalt him to the Kingdom. This pious Imam shows that it is incumbent on children to forgive their parents for whatever word through which they have transgressed against them, act through which they have been immoderate with them, right of theirs which they have neglected, or obligation toward them in which they have fallen short. They must grant it to them and bestow it upon them as a reward to them for their education, their taking care of them, and their blessing toward them. Now, let's listen to the last part of the Imam's supplication:

"O Allah, bless Muhammad, his Household, and his progeny and single out my parents for the best which You have singled out for the fathers and mothers of Your faithful servants, O Most Merciful of the merciful! O Allah, let me not forget to remember them after my ritual prayers, at every time throughout my night, and in each of the hours of my day! O Allah, bless Muhammad and his Household, forgive me through my supplication for my parents, forgive them their devotion toward me with unfailing forgiveness, be pleased with them through my intercession for them with resolute good pleasure, and make them reach through Your generosity the abodes of safety!"

O Allah, if Your forgiveness reaches them first, make them my intercessors, and if Your forgiveness reaches me first, make me their intercessors, so that we may gather together through Your gentleness in the house of Your generosity and the place of Your forgiveness and mercy! Verily You are Possessor of abounding bounty and ancient kindness, and *You are the Most Merciful of the merciful!*⁸"

In this last paragraph, Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, peace be on him, supplicated for his parents asking Allah to forgive them and to be pleased with them and to forgive him through the blessing of his supplication for them and to forgive them through their kindness to him, so which love and mercy for the parents is like this love and mercy?

His Behavior toward his Children

As for the behavior of Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, peace be on him, toward his children, it is distinguished by exalted Islamic education. He planted in his children his good inclinations and great reformatory trends, so they became among the most brilliant men of thought, knowledge, and struggle in Islam. For example, his son Imam Muhammad al-Baqir, peace be on him, is among the most famous Imams of the Muslims and the most knowledgeable of them.

He was the founder of the greatest jurisprudence school from which the great jurists and religious scholars graduated, such as Aban b. Taghlib, Zarara b. A'yun, and the like, from among those who enlightened the ideological life in Islam. As for his son 'Abd Allah al-Bahir, he was among the leading Muslim scholars with excellent qualities and high scientific position, so the people reported that on his authority.⁹

As for his son Zayd, he was among the great Muslim religious scholars, and he was a specialist in many sciences such as jurisprudence, tradition, interpretation of the Qur'an, theology, and the like. It was he who adopted the rights of the oppressed and the persecuted, and he led their movement of struggle. That was when he proclaimed his immortal revolt which spread political awareness in the Islamic society. He also took part in overthrowing the Umayyad rule.

We will mention in brief some parts of the behavior of Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, peace be on him, toward his children.

His Commandments to his Children

Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, peace be on him, supplied his children with some educational commandments which were the summary of his experiences in this life, as guidance for them. The following are some of his commandments:

He, peace be on him, recommended some of his children to follow these valuable commandments which shed light on friends, and which made it incumbent on them to refrain from making friends with those who had evil inclinations which might pollute their pure nature. The following is the text of his commandments: "My little son, beware of five persons. Do not make friends with them, do not converse with them, and do not accompany them." His son asked him: "Who are they?" He, peace be on him, replied: "Beware of making friends with a liar because he is like a mirage, making you feel that distant things are near and near things are distant. Be careful of making friends with a sinner because he would

sell you for a meal or less than that. Beware of making friends with a miser because he would desert you because of his money when you are in need of him. Guard against a fool because he may intend to benefit you but may harm you. Be cautious of making friends with the one who abandons his blood relations because I have found him cursed in the Book of Allah.[10](#)" Indeed, making friends with such people brings about destruction and loss and great harm. Such people are many in the past and in the present while good and pure friends are few!

Among his excellent commandments to his children are these great ones, which read: "My little son, be patient during a misfortune, do not interfere with rights, and do not force your friend (to do) a thing whose harm is greater than its benefit for you.[11](#)" The wise Imam recommended his son to be patient in the face of misfortunes and events that afflicted him and not to collapse before them, for that would strengthen his character. He also recommended him not to interfere with the rights of others lest they should transgress against him. Moreover, he recommended him not to force his friend to do a certain thing that might bring about harm and loss.

Among his wonderful commandments to one of his children is the following: "My little son, Allah is not satisfied with you as one for me and He enjoined you in respect of me; He is satisfied with me as one for you and He warned me from you. Know that the best of fathers is he whose love does not cause him to neglect his children, and the best of children to fathers is one whose father's shortcomings does not make him disobedient to him.[12](#)"

These commandments have the following points:

- A. Children do not harbor love and mercy for their parents as their parents do for them. So Allah, the Glorified, has stressed in more than one verse of His Glorious Book that children should treat their parents kindly and obey them.
 - B. Allah, the Exalted, has warned parents from their children whom He regarded as among the sources of discord and unhappiness for their parents.
 - C. Successful upbringing is that the parents should not go too far in showing love and mercy for their children, for that would weaken the child's character and make him unable to resist events. It is worth mentioning that educationists and psychologists have underlined this issue.
 - D. The best children are those who serve their parents and treat them kindly.
4. He singled out his son Imam al-Baqir, peace be on him, with these valuable commandments in which he warned him against making friends with a fool, saying: "My little son, beware of making friends and associating with a fool. Abandon a fool and do not converse with him because he is deficient and faultfinding whether he is present or absent. When he talks, his foolishness exposes him. When he keeps silent, his silence shows his feebleness. When he acts, he corrupts (his act). He loses (the care) when someone takes care of him. Neither his own knowledge nor the others' knowledge avails him. He

does not obey his adviser. Those who associate with him find no rest (with him). His mother and his wife wish that they would lose him. His neighbor wishes that his house would be far from him. His friend prefers loneliness to sitting with him. If he is the youngest of those who are in the assembly, he tires out those who are older than him. If he is the oldest of them, he corrupts those who are younger than him.¹³" The Imam, peace be on him, made it incumbent on his children to refrain from making friends with a fool whose defects and shortcomings he had mentioned.

5. The following are some of his wonderful commandments to his children: "Sit with the men of religion and knowledge. If you are unable (to sit with them), therefore loneliness is more sociable and safer. If you insist on sitting with people, therefore sit with the men of generosity because they are not strict in their assemblies.¹⁴"

These are some of his educational commandments to his children. In these commandments he has shown his children the best methods necessary for their behavior in this life.

His Supplication for his Children

As for his supplication for his children, it is very wonderful in showing his behavior toward them and what he hoped for them such as excellent manners and noble morals. Now, let's listen to this supplication, which is part of the greatest wealth in the Islamic education.

"O Allah, be kind to me through the survival of my children, setting them right for me and allowing me to enjoy them! My Allah, make long their lives for me, increase their terms, bring up the smallest for me, strengthen the weakest for me, rectify for me their bodies, their religious dedication, and their moral traits, make them well in their souls, their limbs, and everything that concerns me of their affairs, and pour out for me and upon my hand their provisions! Make them pious, fearing, insightful, hearing, and obedient toward You, loving and well-disposed toward Your friends, and stubbornly resistant and full of hate toward all Your enemies! Amen!"

This paragraph represents the great spirituality the Imam, peace be on him, followed to educate his children. He educated them according to the inclusive setting right and the absolute education. He prayed to Allah to be kind to him through:

- A. The survival of his children in order that he might enjoy them.
- B. Rectifying their bodies, their religious dedication, and their moral traits.
- C. Rectifying their souls through purifying them from vices and sins.
- D. Making them well in their limbs lest they should become handicap.
- E. Making abundant their provisions lest they should suffer from poverty which was among the most

dangerous disasters.

F. Making them pious, fearing, insightful, hearing, and obedient toward Him (Allah).

G. Making them loving and well-disposed toward His (Allah's) friends, and stubbornly resistant and full of hate toward all His enemies.

This kindness to children strengthens the ties of the members of family. When the child is brought up according to these high moral traits, his parents will enjoy him. Let's listen to another part of this holy supplication. "O Allah, through them strengthen my arm, straighten my burdened back, multiply my number, adorn my presence, keep alive my name, suffice me when I am away, help me in my needs, and make them loving toward me, affectionate, approaching, upright, obedient, never disobedient, disrespectful, opposed, or offenders! Help me in their education, and my devotion toward them, give me among them from Yourself male children, make that a good for me, and make them a help for me in that which I ask from You!"

Give me and my progeny refuge from the accursed Satan, for You have created us, commanded us, prohibited us, and made us desire the reward of what You have commanded, and fear its punishment! You assigned to us an enemy who schemes against us, gave him an authority over us in a way You did not give us an authority over him, allowed him to dwell in our breasts and let him run in our blood vessels; he is not heedless, though we be heedless, he does not forget, though we forget; he makes us feel secure from Your punishment and fills us with fear toward other than You. If we are about to commit an indecency, he gives us courage to do so, and if we are about to perform a righteous act, he holds us back from it. He opposes us through passions, and sets up for us doubts. If he promises us, he lies, and if he raises our hopes, he fails to fulfill them. If You do not turn his trickery away from us, he will misguide us, and if You do not protect us from his corruption, he will cause us to slip. O Allah, so defeat his authority over us through Your authority such that You hold him back from us through the frequency of our supplication to You and we leave his trickery and rise up among those preserved by You from sin!"

This wonderful paragraph has two important matters, which are:

First, the Imam asked Allah, the Glorified, to help him achieve what he hoped in respect to his pure children. He hoped that:

1. Allah would strengthen his arm through them, for a good child is strength for his father.
2. He would straighten his burdened back.
3. He would multiply their number, so that they would be a notable family before the people.
4. He would adorn his presence and keep alive his name, that was through the high standards of his children.

5. He would suffice him when he was away, that was when his children carried out his affairs.
6. He would make his children help him in his needs and not leave him alone.
7. He would make his children loving toward him, affectionate, approaching, upright, obedient, never disobedient, disrespectful, opposed, or offenders!

When children are righteous and obedient to their parents, their parents will enjoy them during the time of their old age which is the center of weakness.

Second, the Imam asked Allah, the Glorified, to protect him and his children from the evil of the accursed Satan, who is the first enemy of man; he tempts man to be disobedient to Allah through committing sins and vices. The Imam has mentioned the authority and domination of Satan over man as follows:

1. Satan tempts man to commit sins, makes easy the punishment Allah has prepared for his disobedient servants, and makes man afraid of those other than Allah, so he makes him afraid of them more than they are afraid of Allah.
2. If man is about to commit an indecency, he gives him courage to do so.
3. If man is about to perform a righteous act, he holds him back from it.
4. Satan opposes man through passions.
5. He sets up doubts for man to make him far from his Lord.

The Imam mentioned all the ways Satan uses to entice man such as lying and deception, and then he warned all the believers from the trickery of Satan. Now, lets listen to the last paragraph of this holy supplication.

“O Allah, grant me every request, accomplish for me my needs, withhold not from me Your response when You have made Yourself accountable for it to me, veil not my supplication from Yourself, when you have commanded me to make it, and be kind to me through everything that will set me right in this world and the next, in everything that I remember or forget, display or conceal, make public or keep secret! In all of this, place me through my asking You among those who set things right, those who are answered favorably when they request from You and from whom is not withheld when they put their trust in You, those who always seek refuge in You, those who profit through commerce with You, those granted sanctuary through Your might, those given lawful provision in plenty from Your plentiful bounties through Your munificence and generosity, those who reach exaltation after abasement through You, those granted sanctuary from wrong through Your justice, those released from affliction through Your mercy, those delivered from need after poverty through Your riches, those preserved from sins, slips, offenses through reverential fear toward You, those successful in goodness, right conduct, and propriety through obeying You, those walled off from sins through your power, the refrainers from every act of

disobedience toward You, the dwellers in Your neighborhood!

O Allah, give me all of that through Your granting of success and Your mercy, grant us refuge from the chastisement of burning, and to give to all the Muslims, male and female, and all the faithful, male and female, the like of what I have asked for myself and my children, in the immediate of this world and the deferred of the next! Verily You are the Near, the Responder, the All-hearing, the All-knowing, the Pardoner, the Forgiving, the Clement, the Merciful! And *give us in this world good, and in the next world good, and protect us from the chastisement of the Fire!* [15](#)"

Peace be on you, Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, you were given wisdom and sound judgment of which no one of the people was given except your children, who created the rules of eloquence in the world of Islam.

In the above-mentioned paragraph, Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, peace be on him, showed his great loyalty, his turning to Allah, his obedience, and his cleaving to Allah. He asked Allah, the Almighty, to grant him every request, to accomplish for him his needs, to withhold not from him His response when He has made Himself accountable for it to him, to veil not his supplication from Himself, when He has commanded him to make it, and to be kind to him through everything that will set him right in this world and the next. He humbly supplicated to Allah, and then he asked Him to give to all the Muslims, male and female, and all the faithful, male and female, the like of what he had asked for himself and his children, in the immediate of this world and the deferred of the next.

Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, peace be on him, brought up his children according to these manners, which represented the essence of Islam and true faith, so his children were the most pious of the children of all the Muslims in religion.

His Behavior toward his Retainers

Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, peace be on him, treated his retainers with kindness and mercy; he treated them as he treated his own children. The narrators said that he did not punish any of his retainers for the mistakes they made against him. [16](#) One day the Imam called a retainer of his twice, but the retainer did not answer him. At the third time he answered, so the Imam asked him kindly:

"Didn't you hear my voice, my little son?"

"Yes," was the reply.

"What was on your mind so that you did not answer me?" asked the Imam.

"I was safe (from any harm) from you," answered the retainer.

The Imam praised Allah and went out, saying: "Praise be to Allah, Who has caused my slave to be safe (from any harm) from me." [17](#) The Imam was happy, for he was neither rude nor tyrannical, so the people

were not afraid of him nor were they careful of him.

His Behavior toward his Neighbors

Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin, peace be on him, was the kindest of all the people to his neighbors. He treated them as he treated his family, maintained their weak and poor, visited their sick, escorted their deceased to their final resting place. He did a lot of good for them. He took water to his neighbors in the dark night, as al-Zuhri reported¹⁸ In the history of mankind, there is nothing like this kindness and charity.

His Supplication for his Neighbors

Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin, peace be on him, was not satisfied with the kindness and charity he did for his Neighbors, rather he supplicated for them. He asked Allah to grant them success, good final results, and correctness, as he prayed for himself and the members of his House. This supplication was among his tasks. He singled out his neighbors with one of his holy supplications. The following is the text of this supplication:

“O Allah, bless Muhammad and his Household and attend to me with Your best attending in my neighbors and friends who recognize our right and war against our enemies! Give (neighbors and friends) success in performing Your prescriptions and taking on the beauties of Your courtesy through acting gently with their weak, remedying their lacks, visiting their sick, guiding their seeker of right guidance, giving good counsel to their seeker of advice, attending to the one among them who returns from travel, hiding their secrets, covering their shameful things, helping their wronged, sharing kindly with them in goods, turning towards them with wealth and bestowal of bounty, and giving what is due to them before they ask!”

Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin, peace be on him, supplicated for his neighbors with this blessed supplication. He singled out with his supplication the believers and those who knew the right of the members of the House (*ahl al-Bayt*), peace be on them, whose love Allah made obligatory, and whom the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, made life-boats, security for mankind, and the ones who guided men to pleasure and obedience to Allah. In the above-mentioned supplication, the Imam asked Allah:

To grant his neighbors success in performing the sunna of Islam and to enliven its duties and teachings.

To grant his neighbors success in taking on the beauties of Allah’s courtesy, through:

(A) Acting gently with their weak and having mercy on them.

(B) Meeting the needs of their neighbors and helping them with the affairs of this world.

(C) Visiting their ill brothers.

- (D) Guiding their seeker of right guidance.
- (E) Giving good counsel to their seeker of advice.
- (F) Attending to the one among them who returns from travel.
- (G) Hiding their secrets.
- (H) Covering their shameful things.
- (I) Helping their wronged.
- (J) Sharing kindly with them in goods.
- (K) Turning towards them with wealth and bestowal of bounty.

These are among the most important issues in the social regulation aimed at spreading love, friendship, and cooperation among people, and aimed at ending all kinds of differences that corrupt social life. Now, let's listen to the last words of this holy supplication.

"Let me, O Allah, repay their evildoer with good doing, turn away from their wrongdoer with forbearance, have a good opinion of every one of them, attend to all of them with devotion, lower my eyes before them in continence, make mild my side toward them in humility, be tender toward the afflicted among them in mercy, make them happy in absence through affection, love that they continue to receive favor through good will, grant them what I grant my next of kin, and observe for them what I observe for my special friends! O Allah, bless Muhammad and his Household, provide me the like of that from them, appoint for them the fullest share of what is with them, increase them in insight toward my right and knowledge of my excellence so that they will be fortunate through me and I fortunate through them! Amen, Lord of the worlds!¹⁹"

The most important thing which the Imam wished was that he wanted to do a lot of good for his neighbors. He wanted to:

1. Repay their evildoer with good doing.
2. Turn away from their wrongdoer with forbearance, this was the behavior of his grandfather, Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, who turned away with forbearance from those who wronged him.
3. Have a good opinion of every one of them, for having a good opinion of people spreads love, friendship, and cooperation among them.
4. Attend to all of them with devotion, the weak, the poor, the enemy, and the friend.

5. Make mild his side toward them in humility.
6. Be tender toward the afflicted among them in mercy.
7. Make them happy in absence through affection and mercy.
8. Receive favor continuously.
9. Treat them kindly as he treated his next of kin.
10. Observe for them what he observed for his special friends.

These exalted morals represent the essence and reality of Islam. They aim at forming a perfect society with united feelings and firm passions.

After the Imam, peace be on him, had made public these noble feelings toward his neighbors, he wanted them to have the same feelings toward him. Then he asked Allah, the Glorified, to provide him the like of that from them, appoint for them the fullest share of what was with them, increase them in insight toward his right and knowledge of his excellence so that they would be fortunate through him and he fortunate through them.

His Behavior toward his Friends

As for the behavior of the Imam, peace be on him, with his friends, it was distinguished by high standards and great Islamic manners. The Imam, peace be on him, respected and honored those who sat with him, thus he said: “I respected and honored those who sat with me.[20](#)” One day, Nasr b. Aws al-Ta’i came to the Imam and greeted him, so the Imam returned his greeting and asked him:

“Where are you from?”

“From Tay,” replied Nasr.

“May Allah greet you! May He greet the people to whom you belong! The best people are your people!” the Imam said.

Nasr turned to the Imam and asked him: “Who are you?”

“Ali b. al-Husayn.” was the answer.

“Wasn’t he killed with his father in Iraq?” asked Nasr.

The Imam smiled at him and said: “ My little son, if he was killed, you won’t see him.[21](#)”

The historians said that Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin, peace be on him, did not allow any of his friends to transgress against those who mistreated him. One of his enemies came to him and asked him: “Do you

know how to perform the ritual prayers?" Abu' Hazim, one of the Imam's companions, tried to attack him, so the Imam held him back from doing that, saying: "Abu' Hazim, take it easy! Indeed, religious scholars should be clement and merciful!" Then the Imam kindly turned to the man and said to him: "Yes, I know how to perform them."

The man asked the Imam about the peculiarities of the prayers, and the Imam answered him, so the man became shy of the Imam, apologized to him for that, and said to him: "You have refuted everyone's proof.[22](#)" The Imam treated his friends with high moral standards. In this connection he followed his grandfather, the greatest Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, who was sent to complete the high moral standards.

His Behavior toward his Shi'ites

Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, peace be on him, wanted his Shi'ites to be an excellent example for mankind in their piety, devotion, and cleaving to religion, so he did his best to educate them with high Islamic manners. He preached to them, gave them commandments, and urged them to cling to piety and good deeds, so he, peace be on him, said to one of his Shi'ites: "Inform our Shi'ites that nothing will avail them before Allah, and that no one will obtain our intercession but through piety.[23](#)"

Indeed, refraining from what Allah has prohibited is among the most important ways that man is saved from the chastisement and punishment of Allah, and it is also among the most successful ways that leads man to obtain the intercession of the members of the House (*ahl al-Bayt*), peace be on them, which is one of Allah's forts.

A group of people came to Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, peace be on him, and told him that they belonged to his Shi'ites, so the Imam considered their faces carefully but did not see on them the marks of righteousness, so he said to them: "Where are the marks of the faces? Where are the marks of worship? Where are the marks of prostration (in prayer)? Indeed our Shi'ites are known by their worship and their shaggy hair. Worship injures the inner corners of their eyes, their foreheads, and their limbs of prostration. Their 'Abdomens are hollow, and their lips are withered. They glorify Allah when the people keep silent, and they perform the prayers when the people sleep. They are sad when the people are happy. They are known by asceticism. And Paradise distract them (from this world) [24](#)"

These qualities which the Imam, peace be on him, concern the special Shi'ites and the followers of the Imams, peace be on them, such as 'Ammar b. Yasir, Abu' Dharr, Salman al-Farisi, Maytham al-Tammar, and the like, whose souls were full of piety and righteousness, and who understood the message of Islam. As for the overwhelming majority of the Shi'ites, they are the lovers and followers of the members of the House (*ahl al-Bayt*), peace be on them. It is worth mentioning that following the Imams, peace be on them, brings about forgiveness. This can be indicated through the following tradition which has been reported on his authority. When he became ill, a group of the Companions of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, came to visit him and asked him: "Son of the Apostle of

Allah, may our souls be ransom for you, how are you?" "I am very well," replied the Imam, "I am grateful to Allah for that, and how are you?" "We are very well," they answered, "Son of the Apostle of Allah, we love you and follow you." So the Imam gave them good news of Heaven because they loved and followed the members of the House (*ahl al-Bayt*), peace be on them, saying: "Whoever loves us for Allah, Allah will make him dwell in a very shady place on the Day of Resurrection, the day when there will be no shade except His shade. Whoever loves to reward us, Allah will give him Heaven as a reward. Whoever loves us for this world, Allah will give him his livelihood from where he does not expect.²⁵"

A Fabricated Narration

Among the fabricated narrations is what Ibn 'Asakir reported when he said that a group of the Iraqis came to Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, peace be on him, who said to them: "Love us with love of Islam, and do not love us with the love of idols. You have loved us to the extent that your love has disgraced us.²⁶" This narration was fabricated to defame the Shi'a, to indicate that they went too far in loving and following the members of the House (*ahl al-Bayt*), peace be on them, and that they raised them to the level of the Almighty Creator. This narration is a baseless accusation, for the love of the Shi'a for their pure Imams, peace be on them, depends on thought, awareness, the Holy Book of Allah, and the authentic Sunna, in addition to that, there is no defect of exaggeration in such a kind of love. The most important factor in the love of the Shi'a for the Imams of the members of the House (*ahl al-Bayt*), peace be on them, is that they take the teachings of their doctrine from them and conform to what was narrated on their authority in respect to religious life. Without doubt, it is enough for someone to put into effect the jurisprudence of the members of the House (*ahl al-Bayt*), peace be on them, and to depend on it. Is there in this exaggeration and deviation from the truth?

The same narration was reported in another way in which there was no slander against the Shi'a. This narration was reported by Yahya b. Sa'eed, who said: [I was sitting with 'Ali b. al-Husayn when a number of the Kufans came to him and he said to them:] "People of Iraq, love us with the love of Islam, for I heard my father say: 'Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, said: 'O Men, do not raise me more than my right, for Allah, the Glorified, had adopted me as a servant before he adopted me as a prophet.'²⁷" There is nothing in this narration to urge us to doubt it.

His enjoining the Shi'ites to practice

Precautionary Dissimulation

Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, peace be on him, made it incumbent on his Shi'ites to conform to precautionary dissimulation because they witnessed critical conditions during the rule of the Umayyads, who spared no effort to look for the followers of the members of the House (*ahl al-Bayt*), peace be on them, and to kill them, thus the Imam enjoined his followers to practice precautionary dissimulation and to conceal their belonging to him. This order of the Imam, peace be on him, agreed with wisdom and the spirituality and

essence of Islam. In this connection, he, peace be on him, said: “Allah forgives the believer every sin and purifies him from it in here and the hereafter except two sins, namely leaving precautionary dissimulation and losing his brothers (friends).[28](#)”

Indeed precautionary dissimulation prevented the blood of the members of the House (*ahl al-Bayt*), peace be on them, from being shed during those black times when the Umayyads sought them everywhere and killed a great number of them to the extent that they (the Shi‘ites) preferred belonging to the Jews and Christians to belonging to the followers of the Household of Muhammad, may Allah bless him and his family. Those who have no awareness from among those who harbor malice against the members of the House (*ahl al-Bayt*), peace be on them, condemned the Shi‘a for precautionary dissimulation, for they did not know that it was an important Islamic measure for the Shi‘ites to save themselves from being killed. Were it not for that the Shi‘ites cleaved to precautionary dissimulation, no one would adopt the doctrine of the pure Imams.

His Asking Forgiveness for

the Shi‘ite Sinners

Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin, peace be on him, loved his Shi‘ites and followers to the extent that he supplicated for them every day, so he, peace be on him, said to Umm Farwa, daughter of al-Qasim b. Muhammad b. Abu’ Bakr: “I supplicate for the Shi‘ite sinners a hundred times a day, for we are patient toward what we know, and they are patient toward what they do not know.[29](#)” This tradition shows that the Imam was kind to his Shi‘ites, for he asked Allah, the Glorified, to forgive the Shi‘ites and to be pleased with them. Therefore which kindness is better than this kindness?

His Behavior toward his Enemies

As for the behavior of the Imam toward his enemies, those who harbored malice against him, and those who wronged him, it was distinguished by kindness to them. The historians said: “Isma‘il b. Hisham al-Makhzu‘mi, the governor of Medina, harbored malice against the members of the House (*ahl al-Bayt*), peace be on them, hurt Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin, and cursed his grandfathers on the pulpits in order to seek nearness to the rulers of Damascus. When al-Walid b. ‘Abd al-Malik became caliph, he removed Isma‘il b. Hisham al-Makhzu‘mi from office because of a previous enmity between them. He ordered him to be stood up before the people to take their rights from him. Isma‘il b. Hisham al-Makhzu‘mi was very afraid of the Imam because he transgressed against him many times and mistreated him, so he said: ‘I fear no one except ‘Ali b. al-Husayn, for he is a righteous man, so the people will listen to his words concerning me.’ As for the Imam, he asked his companions and followers not to mistreat Isma‘il, and then he hurried to him smiled at him and said to him: ‘Cousin, may Allah make you prosperous, what was done against you has displeased me and urged me to do what you love.’ Isma‘il b. Hisham was astonished to hear these words of the Imam, thus he said with admiration: ‘Allah knows better where to put His message.’[30](#)”

Now, let's carefully listen and consider to his holy supplication for his enemies, and those who wronged him: "O Allah, if any of Your servants should harm me in what You have forbidden or violated me in what You have interdicted, and if he should pass into death with my complaint or I come to have a complaint against him while he is alive, forgive him what he did to me and pardon him that through which he turned his back on me! Inquire not from him about what he committed toward me and expose him not through what he earned by me! Make my openhandedness in pardoning such servants and my contribution in charity toward them the purest charity of the charitable and the highest gift of those seeking nearness to You! Recompense me for my pardoning them with Your pardon and for my supplicating for them with Your mercy so that each one of us may gain felicity through Your bounty and each may attain deliverance through Your kindness!³¹"

Indeed, there is no one in the history of mankind similar to Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, peace be on him, except his grandfathers. In his behavior he represented a matchless world of honor, nobility, and humanity.

- [1.](#) Al-Bihar, vol. 46, p.66. Qutb al-Rawandi, al-Da'wat.
- [2.](#) Al-Bihar, vol. 46, p.67.
- [3.](#) Ibid.
- [4.](#) Shadharat al-Dhabab, vol. 1, p.105. AL-Mubrrad, al-Kamil, vol. 1, p.302.
- [5.](#) Ibn Qutayba, 'Uyyu`n al-Akhbar, vol. 3, p.97.
- [6.](#) Ibn Kuthayr, al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya, vol. 9, p.108.
- [7.](#) 'Uyyu`n Akhbar al-Rida, p.270.
- [8.](#) Al-Sahifa al-Sajjadiya, supplication no. 24.
- [9.](#) Ghayat al-Ikhtisar, p.106.
- [10.](#) Tuhaf al-'Uqu'l, p.279. Al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya, vol. 9, p.105. Wasa'il al-Shi'a.
- [11.](#) Al-Bayan wa al-Tabbyin, vol. 2, p.76. Al-'Aqd al-Farid, vol. 3, p.88.
- [12.](#) Al-'Aqd al-Farid, vol. 3, p.89.
- [13.](#) Wasa'il al-Shi'a, vol. 5, p.421.
- [14.](#) Al-Kashi, Rijal, p.419.
- [15.](#) Al-Sahifa al-Sajjadiya, supplication no. 25.
- [16.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 46, vol. 103.
- [17.](#) Tarikh Dimashq, vol. 36, p.155.
- [18.](#) Bahjat al-Abرار.
- [19.](#) Al-Sahifa al-Sajjadiya, supplication no. 26.
- [20.](#) Yousif al-Qurtubi, Bahjat al-Majalis wa 'Unis al-Majalis, vol. 1, p.46.
- [21.](#) Tarikh Dimashq, vol. 36, p.145.
- [22.](#) Bahjat al-Abرار.
- [23.](#) Al-Durr al-Nazim, p.173.
- [24.](#) Sifat al-Shi'a.
- [25.](#) Nu'r al-Abbsar, p.127.
- [26.](#) Tarikh Dimashq, vol. 36, p.157.
- [27.](#) Al-Dhurriya al-Tahira, p.29.
- [28.](#) Imam Zayn 'al-Abidin, p.202. Quoted from al-Mahasin by al-Barqi.
- [29.](#) Al-Wafi, vol. 2, p.183. 'Yyu`n al-Mu'jizat, p.76.
- [30.](#) Hayat al-Imam al-Baqir, vol. 1, p.35. Tabaqat b. Sa'd, vol. 5, p.220.
- [31.](#) Al-Sahifa al-Sajjadiya, supplication no. 39.

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