

Inner Knowledge

المعرفة¹ Inner Knowledge

The Importance of Inner Knowledge

قيمة المعرفة

.. رسول الله (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ): أَفْضَلُكُمْ إِيمَانًا أَفْضَلُكُمْ مَعْرِفَةً¹

1— The Prophet (S) said, ‘The ones from among you with the best faith are the ones with the best inner knowledge.’[Jami’a al-Akhbar, p. 36, no. 18]

.. الإمام علي (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ): الْعِلْمُ أَوَّلُ دَلِيلٍ، وَالْمَعْرِفَةُ آخِرُ نَهَايَةٍ²

2— Imam Ali (a.s.) said, ‘Knowledge is the first proof whereas inner knowledge is the last step in the conclusion.’[Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 2061]

.. الإمام علي (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ): الْمَعْرِفَةُ نُورُ الْقَلْبِ³

3— Imam Ali (a.s.) said, ‘Inner knowledge is the light of the heart.’[Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 538]

.. الإمام الحسين (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ): دِرَاسَةُ الْعِلْمِ لِقَاحُ الْمَعْرِفَةِ⁴

4— Imam al-Husayn (a.s.) said, ‘The acquisition of knowledge is the seed for [the growth of] inner knowledge.’[Bihar al-Anwar, v. 78, p. 128, no. 11]

- الإمام الصادق (عليه السلام): لا يقبل الله عملاً إلا بمعرفة، ولا معرفة إلا بعمل، فمن عرف دلتته المعرفة على العمل، ومن لم يعمل فلا معرفة له.

5— Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) said, ‘Allah does not accept any act without inner knowledge [i.e. awareness of what one is doing], and inner knowledge only comes through prior action. So whoever knows intrinsically, his knowledge will lead him to action, and whoever does not act does not have any inner knowledge.’[al-Kafi, v. 1, p. 44, no. 2]

Impediments to Inner Knowledge

موانع المعرفة

- رسول الله (صلي الله عليه وآله): نور الحكمة الجوع، والتباعد من الله الشبع، والقربة إلى الله حب المساكين والدنو منهم، لا تشبعوا فيطفا نور المعرفة من قلوبكم.

6— The Prophet (S) said, ‘The light of inner knowledge is brought about by hunger whereas distance from Allah is caused by satiety. Proximity to Allah is brought about by loving the poor and drawing near to them, so do not eat to your fill lest the light of inner knowledge be extinguished from your hearts.’[Bihar al-Anwar, v. 70, p. 71, no. 20]

The Inner Knowledge of the Self

معرفة النفس

.. الإمام علي (عليه السلام): معرفة النفس أنفع المعارف

7— Imam Ali (a.s.) said, ‘The inner knowledge of the self is the most beneficial of all such knowledge.’[Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 9865]

.. الإمام علي (عليه السلام): نال الفوز الأكبر من ظفر بمعرفة النفس

8— Imam Ali (a.s.) said, ‘The one who attains knowledge of his own self has obtained the greatest victory indeed.’[Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 9965]

!- الإمامُ عليٌّ (عليه السّلامُ): كَيْفَ يَعْرِفُ غَيْرَهُ مَنْ يَجْهَلُ نَفْسَهُ؟9

9– Imam Ali (a.s.) said, ‘How can one who is ignorant of his own self expect to know others?’[Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 6998]

.. الإمامُ عليٌّ (عليه السّلامُ): مَنْ عَرَفَ نَفْسَهُ جَاهَدَهَا ، مَنْ جَهِلَ نَفْسَهُ أَهْمَلَهَا10

10– Imam Ali (a.s.) said, ‘He who gains inner knowledge of his self combats it, and he who remains ignorant of his self, neglects it.’[Ghurar al-Hikam, nos. 7855–7856]

- الإمامُ عليٌّ (عليه السّلامُ): مَنْ عَرَفَ اللَّهَ تَوَحَّدَ ، مَنْ عَرَفَ نَفْسَهُ تَجَرَّدَ ، مَنْ عَرَفَ الدُّنْيَا تَزَهَّدَ ، مَنْ عَرَفَ النَّاسَ تَفَرَّدَ .

11– Imam Ali (a.s.) said, ‘He who attains inner knowledge of Allah leads a life of unity [reflecting Allah’s Divine Unity]; he who attains inner knowledge of his self strips himself [of all that hinders its progress]; he who attains inner knowledge about this world abstains from it; and he who attains inner knowledge about people prefers solitude.’[Ghurar al-Hikam, nos. 7829–7832]

.. الإمامُ عليٌّ (عليه السّلامُ): أَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ مَعْرِفَةً لِنَفْسِهِ أَخَوْفُهُمْ لِرَبِّهِ12

12– Imam Ali (a.s.) said, ‘The person who knows his self the best is he who fears his Lord the most.’[Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 3126]

.. الإمامُ عليٌّ (عليه السّلامُ): مَنْ عَرَفَ نَفْسَهُ عَرَفَ رَبَّهُ13

13– Imam Ali (a.s.) said, ‘He who attains inner knowledge of his self attains inner knowledge of his Lord.’[Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 7946]

.. الإمامُ عليٌّ (عليه السّلامُ): يَنْبَغِي لِمَنْ عِلِمَ شَرَفَ نَفْسِهِ أَنْ يُنْزِلَهَا عَنْ دَنَاءَةِ الدُّنْيَا14

14– Imam Ali (a.s.) said, ‘It befits one who knows the dignity of his own self to deem it too great for the vileness of this world.’[Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 1093]

.. الإمامُ عليٌّ (عليه السّلامُ): يَنْبَغِي لِمَنْ عَرَفَ نَفْسَهُ أَنْ يَلْزِمَ الْقَنَاعَةَ وَالْعِفَّةَ15

15– Imam Ali (a.s.) said, ‘It befits one who knows the dignity of his own self to adhere to temperance and self-restraint.’[Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 10927]

.. الإمام علي (عليه السلام): يَنْبَغِي لِمَنْ عَرَفَ نَفْسَهُ أَنْ لَا يُفَارِقَهُ الْحُزْنُ وَالْحَذَرُ¹⁶

16– Imam Ali (a.s.) said, ‘It befits one who knows the dignity of his own self to never allow a sorrowful and self-cautious state to leave him.’[Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 10937]

- الإمام زين العابدين (عليه السلام) - في الدعاء -: واجعلنا من الذين عَرَفُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ ، وأيقنوا بِمُسْتَقَرِّهِمْ ، فكانت أعمارهم في طاعتك تَفْنَى.

17– Imam Zayn al-Abidin (a.s.) said in one of his supplications, ‘Make us from among those who have attained inner knowledge of their selves and are convinced of their true abode, such that they spend their whole lives in Your obedience.’[Bihar al-Anwar, v. 94, p. 128, no. 19]

.. الإمام الباقر (عليه السلام) - في وصيَّته لِجَابِرِ الْجَعْفِيِّ -: لَا مَعْرِفَةَ كَمَعْرِفَتِكَ بِنَفْسِكَ¹⁸

18– Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) said in his advice to Jabir al-Ju’afi, ‘There is no inner knowledge like your inner knowledge of your own self.’[Tuhaf al-’Uqul, no. 286]

¹ The Arabic ‘ma’arifa’ denotes inner knowledge discerned and understood by the heart, often referring to intrinsic knowledge of higher truths, of the soul, and of Allah, which fuels one to perform good deeds and leads one closer to Allah. This is in contrast to the Arabic ‘Ailm which denotes acquired and learned knowledge in any field, which may or may not lead to action or proximity to Allah (ed.)