

Lesson 16

6–9–10 The Open School Class: Explanation of Forty *Ahadith* Text: Jalali, Sayyid Muhammad Husayn. Sharh al–Arba’in al–Nabawwiyah. Arabic edition 1987, pages 454–459.

Summary

Looking at the concepts of *bir* and *ihsan*, one can conclude that both relate to obeying God (the All–Mighty). Piety or righteousness are usually used to define *bir*, but one can associate *bir* with dealing with people in a good manner. Also, *ihsan* means virtue or to do beautiful things which includes not retaliating if someone does something wrong to you (*e.g.*, if someone is mean to you, be kind to him). Dealing with people in a good manner and not retaliating helps to establish happiness in life. The wise **Qur’an (5:2)** states, *inter alia*, “

Cooperate in piety and Godwariness, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression.”

Imam Ja’far as–Sadiq (peace be upon him and his family) said that *bir and ihsan cause prosperity*. (Jalali, pages 454–455). For example, when I was a child and became angry at my parents for not buying me a toy while shopping, I would run and go hide somewhere in the store. My parents would fervently look for me, and I would cause them great heartache.

I would make their life miserable at that moment. Now just imagine if adults acted like that towards each other. Meaning, they do not deal with each other nicely and they treat each other with aggression. They would be so stressed and not at ease. From a physical point of view, people may get high blood pressure and other health problems, which would lead to the shortening of one’s life. This is not prosperity. Accordingly, *bir* and *ihsan* can make one’s life longer (by the grace of Allah, the All–Merciful) because one may not get as irritated or nervous throughout life. Now, this does not apply only to the home or family life. If you are just and good with your neighbors, they are more likely to be just and good with you.

If a first community is just and good with a second community, the second community will probably be just and good with the first community. If nation A is just and good with nation B, then nation B will

probably be just and good with nation A. This is only natural. Do good for yourself in this life (and the hereafter) by being good to others. The **Qur'an (17:7)** states, *inter alia*,

“If you do good, you will do good to your [own] souls, and if you do evil, it will be [evil] for them.”

Furthermore, the **Qur'an (28:77)** states, *inter alia*,

“Be good [to others] just as Allah has been good to you.”

The **Qur'an (31:22)** also states, *inter alia*,

“Whoever surrenders his heart to Allah and is virtuous, has certainly held fast to the firmest handle.”

The **Qur'an 77 (27:89)** states,

“Whoever brings virtue shall receive [a reward] better than it; and they shall be secure from terror on that day.”

Additionally, the **Qur'an (6:160)** states, *inter alia*,

“Whoever brings virtue shall receive ten times its like.”

The **Qur'an (3:92)** also states, *inter alia*,

“You will never attain piety until you spend out of what you hold dear.”

So be good with others and give real charity. We may give away things that we no longer want or like (such as old clothes), but how many times do we give, in charity, things we hold to be more valuable (such as brand new clothes)? I knew a man that attended a celebratory meeting. In this meeting the man received some food, which was his favorite food. He could not stop talking about this food; he really loved it. He decided to take it home to enjoy it with his family. On his way home he met a beggar on the street. Now, this beggar was always on this particular corner and the man could have just given him some money (as he sometimes did).

No, this man gave him all the food (not just a little bit). This man who loved this certain food (which he received as a celebratory gift) truly showed charity because I know he really wanted to take that food home (he talked about it all day before he ran into the beggar). Additionally, there are six points to act on to help achieve prosperity. (Jalali, page 456). The points are 1) believe in Allah (the All-Mighty), 2) give money in His cause, 3) pray, 4) pay *zakat*, 5) if you promise, keep it, and 6) be patient.

In regards to promises, you do not have to make a promise, but if you make one, make sure you follow through. This applies to everything and everyone. For example, if your child is not behaving and you promise her some chocolate to calm down, make sure you give her chocolate if she calms down.

Someone I know told me that when he was a child, he would call his own mother a liar if she forgot to fulfill her promise. Children know a lot, and we should encourage good behavior and set examples by fulfilling our promises.

Furthermore, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said that *helping a Muslim is more important than fasting one month*. He also said that *all people are the children of Allah, and if you want to be close to Allah, help the children of Allah*. Imam Musa (peace be upon him and his family) said *whoever helps a believer really is helping the Prophet and the Ahlul Bayt (People of the House)*.

Sometimes we focus on ritual acts of worship (which are good), but we then forget about helping others. We should engage in helpful acts, large and small. When I was young, I saw Muslims praying and saw some of those same Muslims trying to get ahead in a line and not opening or holding doors for others (and this really bothered me).

Since I was a child, I think simple acts of help (like holding the door open for someone) are very important and need to be stressed more in our community. When I see anyone (not just a Muslim) performing acts of kindness and help, I truly feel something warm within. By doing small acts of help, we can build up a strong nature of helping, in general, within ourselves. We cannot live in a society and be isolated. We must be part of a brotherhood and sisterhood. Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him and his family) names seven points as a base for any relationship.

They are 1) *love for him* (your brother or sister) *what you love for yourself and hate for him what you hate for yourself* (meaning, be fair and considerate), 2) *do not make him angry*, 3) *help him* (however, do not interfere where you should not), 4) *you should be a mirror for him* (meaning, if he is doing something wrong or harmful, let him know in a kind way. Be a true brother and friend), 5) *you should not be full while he is hungry* (or thirsty or needy), 6) *if you have a helper, let your helper help him, and 7) if he asks you for help, be there to help him* (you do not have to burden yourself to a great degree, but help as much as you can. For example, if he needs help, you can tell him that you have work but you will stop by after work.). (Jalali, pages 458–459).

If we can act on these points, it will be good for us, individually and as a community.

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