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Lesson 6: Ashamedness and Chastity

Ashamedness

The Noble Qur'an set forth several models of the righteous woman and indicated their behavior and characteristics, among which is ashamedness. The Most High God says,

“And when he arrived at the water of Madyan [Midian], he found there a group of men watering [their flocks], and beside them he found two women who were keeping back [their flocks]. He said, “What is the matter with you?” They said, “We cannot water [our flocks] until the shepherds take [their flocks]. And our father is a very old man.” So he watered [their flocks] for them, then he turned back to shade, and said, “My Lord! Truly, I am in need of whatever good that You bestow on me!” Then there came to him one of the two women, walking shyly. She said, “Verily, my father calls you that he may reward you for having watered [our flocks] for us.” So when he came to him and narrated the story, he said, “Fear you not. You have escaped from the people who are Zalimun [polytheists, disbelievers, and wrong doers].” (The Qur'an, Al-Qasas, 28:23–25)

These verses relate the story of Prophet Musa's (God's peace bestowed upon him and upon our Prophet and his Household) meeting with the two daughters of Prophet Shou'aib (God's peace bestowed upon him and upon our Prophet and his Household). Also, these verses manifest clearly the ashamedness of these two righteous women in two points.

The first point is: “... They said, “We cannot water [our flocks] until the shepherds take [their flocks]...” They refused to get in among the men, thus preferring to wait till the place would be unoccupied. This has a crystal like association to ashamedness and to the refusal of being with marriageable men at the same place.

The second one is: “Then there came to him one of the two women, walking shyly...” Here is a clear statement of the ashamedness by which the daughter of Prophet Shou'aib (God's prayers and peace bestowed upon him and upon our prophet and his Household) was characterized.

Importance of Ashamedness

It is ascribed to God's prophet (God's prayers and peace bestowed upon him and his Household) that he said, "Ashamedness and faith fall in one category; once one of them is lost, the other one follows with it."¹

It is ascribed to Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (God's peace bestowed upon him) that he said, "He who has no ashamedness has no faith."²

These narratives show the intricate association of faith to ashamedness to the extent that faith cannot be fulfilled without ashamedness! This means that the lack of ashamedness will be reflected on the conduct of the human being in this life, thus leading it far away from the conduct of the religiously committed believer. Also, since the conduct and the deeds of the human being will be reflected on the hereafter, then non ashamedness in this life will be reflected as a clear loss in the hereafter.

It is ascribed to God's prophet (God's prayers and peace bestowed upon him and his Household) that he said, "He who has no ashamedness in this life is not going to be admitted to Heaven."³

Ashamedness is demanded from the human being in general, but it is demanded from the woman by all means. It is ascribed to God's prophet (God's prayers and peace bestowed upon him and his Household) that he said, "God divided ashamedness into ten parts, thus putting nine parts in the woman and one part in the man."⁴

Being Ashamed of Whom?

1– Ashamed of The Most High God: Someone said to The Prophet (God's prayers and peace bestowed upon him and his Household) "Give me a recommendation." He (God's prayers and peace bestowed upon him and his Household) said, "Be ashamed of God as you are ashamed of a righteous man in your nation."⁵

2– Ashamed of The Prophet (God's prayers and peace bestowed upon him and his Household) and the Imams (God's peace bestowed upon them): It is ascribed to Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (God's peace bestowed upon him) that he said, "The deeds of the people are shown before your Prophet every Thursday evening. Let everyone of you be ashamed of showing before his/her Prophet an abominated deed."⁶ It is related by Ya'coub ibn Sou'aib, "I asked Abu Abdullah (God's peace bestowed upon him) about the Saying of The Most High God:

"And say [O Muhammad], Do deeds! Allah will see your deeds, and [so will His Messenger and the believers]." (The Qur'an, At-Tawba, 9: 105)

He (God's peace bestowed upon him) answered, 'They [the believers] are the Imams (God's peace bestowed upon them).'⁷

3- Ashamed of the Angels: It is ascribed to God's prophet (God's prayers and peace bestowed upon him and his Household) that he said, "Let everyone be ashamed of the two angels who are with him as he is ashamed of two righteous men from his neighbors and who are with him day and night." [8](#)

4- Ashamed of the People: It is ascribed to Imam Ali (God's peace bestowed upon him) that he said, "He who is not ashamed of the people is not ashamed of The Most Glorified God." [9](#)

5- Ashamed of the Self: It is ascribed to Imam Ali (God's peace bestowed upon him) that he said, "The best ashamedness is your ashamedness of yourself." [10](#)

Being Ashamed of What?

It is ascribed to God's prophet (God's prayers and peace bestowed upon him and his Household) that he said, "Ashamedness is all the religion." [11](#) Moreover, it is ascribed to Imam Ali (God's peace bestowed upon him) that he said, "Ashamedness keeps the human being away from the performance of abominated deeds." [12](#) It is also ascribed to him (God's peace bestowed upon him) that he said, "Ashamedness is the key for every good." [13](#)

The whole of these narratives indicates that the human being must be ashamed of committing sins; he/she must be ashamed of abandoning the duties and of performing the forbiddances. He/she must be so because he/she who is ashamed of The Most High God cannot, knowing that He is watching him, disobey Him. In addition, he/she who is ashamed of The Prophet (God's prayers and peace bestowed upon him and his Household) cannot, knowing that his/her sin is going to be shown before The Prophet (God's prayers and peace bestowed upon him and his Household), commit sins.

Verily! Ashamedness is all the religion! And what is attached to it is the whole of the religion. With the increase of ashamedness, the religiousness increases. It is ascribed to Imam Ali (God's peace bestowed upon him) that he said, "As much as ashamedness is, as much as chastity is." [14](#)

In addition to all of this, there are certain issues which we are going to refer to as terms related to ashamedness.

1- Ashamedness in Secrecy

It is related that when God's prophet (God's prayers and peace bestowed upon him and his Household) saw a man washing before the people who were watching him, he (God's prayers and peace bestowed upon him and his Household) said, "O people! God likes from His servants the ashamedness and secrecy. Let whomever washing to hide from the people, for ashamedness is the adornment of Islam." [15](#)

2- Ashamedness in Looking

The Most High God says,

“Tell the believing men to lower their gaze [from looking at forbidden things.]” (The Qur’an, An-Nur, 24:31)

3- Ashamedness in the Saying

It is ascribed to God’s prophet (God’s prayers and peace bestowed upon him and his Household) that he said, “God forbade that the Heaven be admitted by every obscene, filthy, and shameless person who cares neither for what he said nor for what it was said about him.”^{[16](#)}

Chastity

The Meaning of Chastity

Chastity is a psychological characteristic in the human being.

It can be noticed through its impacts on the human being. Some narratives state that these impacts are:

– Abstinence from the desire: It is ascribed to Imam Ali ibn Abi Taleb (God’s peace bestowed upon him) that he said, “Abstinence from the desire is chastity.”^{[17](#)}

– Asceticism: It is also ascribed to Imam Ali (God’s peace bestowed upon him) that he said, “Chastity is asceticism.”^{[18](#)}

–Protection of the soul and the abstinence from everything mean: It is also ascribed to Imam Ali (God’s peace bestowed upon him) that he said, “Chastity protects the soul and abstains it from the low things.”^{[19](#)}

All of these are regarded to be the impacts of the chastity which in turn indicate it.

Chastity from What?

The things which are related to chastity are many. Here we refer to some of them.

1- Abstinence from Disclosing the Financial Need: The Most High God says,

“[Charity is] for the poor who in Allah’s Cause are restricted [from travel] and cannot move about in the land [for trade or work]. The one who knows them not thinks that they are rich because of their modesty.” (The Qur’an, Al-Baqarah, 2:273)

It is ascribed to Imam Ali (God’s peace bestowed upon him) that he said, “Chastity is the adornment of poverty.”^{[20](#)}

2- Chastity as Regards Insistence on the Veil: The Most High God says,

“And as for women past child bearing who do not expect wed lock, it is no sin on them if they discard their [outer] clothing in such a way as not to show their adornment. But to refrain [i.e. not to discard their outer clothing] is better for them. And Allah is All Hearer All Knower.” (The Qur’an, An-Nur, 24:60)

3– Abstinence from the Desire: The Most High God says,

“And let those who find not the financial means for marriage keep them chaste, until Allah enriches from His Bounty.” (The Qur’an, An-Nur, 24:33)

Opposites of Ashamedness and Chastity

1– Imitation of the Men: We previously mentioned that there are certain issues which are adequate to the man and other issues which are adequate to the woman. Islam stresses the necessity for each one to abide to what adequates to him/her, so that the woman will not perform what is adequate to the man and what opposes the ashamedness and chastity because what reforms one of them may corrupt the other one.

The Noblest Prophet (God’s prayers and peace bestowed upon him and his Household) highly emphasized this to the extent that he cursed the woman who turns away from what suits her in order to imitate the men. It is ascribed to him (God’s prayers and peace bestowed upon him and his Household) that he said, “God cursed the woman who imitates the man, and God cursed the man who imitates the woman.”^{[21](#)}

It is related in the narrative ascribed to Imam Al-Baqir (God’s peace bestowed upon him) that he said, “The woman is not permitted to imitate the men because God’s prophet (God’s prayers and peace bestowed upon him and his Household) cursed the men who imitate the women and cursed the women who imitate the men.”^{[22](#)}

Imitation takes many forms, and it includes whatever contradicts the nature of the woman but suits that of the man. The clearest form is that of clothes imitation, such that the woman wears the clothes of the man and the man wears the clothes of the woman.

2– Imitation of the West: Alienation and loss of identity represent the most dangerous disease to which the human being may be exposed. It is so because it is the disease which destroys the entity and the personality and the privacy. It is, in fact, a breakdown for all the values which are prevailing in the society and a loss of the base on which the human being establishes his/her society. Then, a society without fixed standards and clear bases is an underdeveloped one to the utmost extents; in fact, it is a pest which survives on the scrupulousness of the other societies.

It is originally unnatural that the human being loses his/her identity. What if the identity [that may be lost] is Islam? And what if these values are the divine values and the firm bond after which no guidance can

be achieved and rather than which no good can be found? How can the human being, in order to adhere to the traditions and customs which have proved their failure and degradation and which have afflicted the societies with the crises on the level of the security and the moral values, forsake his/her guidance:

“This is the Book [the Qur’an] whereof there is no doubt, a guidance to those who are Al-Mouttaqun [the pious and the righteous persons who fear Allah much (abstain from all kinds of sins and evil deeds which He has forbidden) and love Allah much (perform all kinds of good deeds which He has ordained.)]” (The Qur’an, Al-Baqarah, 2:2)

Due to the danger of the loss of the identity, Islam refuses the imitation of the others even in the most trivial things, even on the level of the form only, in addition to the content. It is ascribed to God’s prophet (God’s prayers and peace bestowed upon him and his Household) that he said, “Change the hoariness and imitate not the Jews and the Christians.”[23](#)

It is also ascribed to God’s prophet (God’s prayers and peace bestowed upon him and his Household) that he said, “Trim the fingers, and imitate not the Jews.”[24](#) It is also ascribed to him (God’s prayers and peace bestowed upon him and his Household) in a third narrative that he said, “Sweep your yards, and imitate not the Jews.”[25](#)

Then consider how much he (God’s prayers and peace bestowed upon him and his Household) stresses the necessity of educating the society not to imitate the others. The danger lying in this imitation is the loss of the identity as is realized from the following narrative ascribed to The Prince of the Believers Imam Ali ibn Abi Taleb (God’s peace bestowed upon him). He (God’s peace bestowed upon him) was asked about the discourse of The Prophet (God’s prayers and peace bestowed upon him and his Household): “Change the hoariness, and imitate not the Jews.” He (God’s peace bestowed upon him) answered, “He said that at a time the religion was still narrow-ranged. Now its range being widened, then everybody is given the choice to do what he wants.”[26](#)

This signifies that the problem does not lie in the change of the hoariness [i.e. the color of the hair] or not, but in the imitation of the Jews. Once imitation takes place, turn away from it even if it takes place in things which there is no objection to in themselves.

His Eminence Imam Al-Khamene’i (May God lengthen his presence among us) says, “The greatest cultural attack is that they [the attackers] have, throughout the long years, taught the brain and its creeds that we are incapable [by ourselves] and thus we must follow after the west and Europe. This is the cultural invasion. They do not allow us even to trust our capabilities.”

This is with respect to the non-forbidden issues. Then what about the imitation that has to do with the religiously forbidden issues which contradict Islam and its doctrine and which are from the great sins which deprive the human being of his/her religious commitment and make him/her lose the hereafter and thus testify the Saying of The Most High God:

“By Al-Asr [the time]. Verily! Man is in loss. Except those who do righteous good deeds and recommend one another to the truth and recommend one another to patience!” (The Noble Qur’an, Al-Asr, 103: 1–3)

In this frame, we must differentiate between making benefit of the knowledge and imitating. Knowledge is the quarry of the believer wherever it is, and as it is ascribed to Imam Ali (God’s peace bestowed upon him) that he said, “Knowledge is the goal of the believer.”[27](#)

Yet, acquisition of knowledge does not mean imitation as Imam Ali Al-Khamene’i (May God lengthen his presence among us) testifies in his saying, “The Europeans have uncountable wrong deeds and abominable conduct. Why should we learn these deeds from them? . . . We are Muslims, and we must remain Muslims. They have more knowledge than we have. Well, let us go and learn their knowledge. But why should we learn the customs, culture, conduct, and etiquettes of the social relations from them? What a wrong talk is this! Why should we imitate them in their clothes, conduct, etiquettes of the social relations, talk, and even accent? This is a lack of self-confidence and a feeling with meanness. Why should I feel meanness? I am proud of my language! I am proud of my culture! And I am proud of my home and country and history! Why then should I imitate them?”

Summary

Ashamedness is demanded from the human being in general, but it is demanded from the woman by all means. The religiously committed person must be ashamed of:

- 1– The Most High God
- 2– The Prophet) God’s prayers and peace bestowed upon him and his Household (and The Imams ((God’s peace bestowed upon them(
- 3– The angels i.e. those who record the good and bad deeds performed by the human being
- 4– The people
- 5– The self

The narratives indicate that the human being must be ashamed of committing sins. He/she must be so because he/she who is ashamed of The Most High God cannot, knowing that He is looking at him, disobey Him. In addition, he/she who is ashamed of The Prophet (God’s prayers and peace bestowed upon him and his Household) cannot, knowing that his/her deed is going to be shown before The Prophet (God’s prayers and peace bestowed upon him and his Household), commit sins.

Chastity leads the human being to abandon the sins and to draw close to The Most High God, and it makes the conduct of the human being be dedicated to obey The Most High God.

From the impacts of chastity are:

- 1– Abstinence from the desire
- 2– Asceticism in this life and abstinence from its luxuries

The issues which are related to chastity are: abstinence from disclosing the financial need, chastity as regards insistence on the veil, abstinence from the desire, and abstinence from eating what is forbidden.

From the opposites of chastity are the imitation of the men and the imitation of the West.

Comprehension Questions

- 1–What must the human being be ashamed of?
- 2– To what extent does ashamedness influence the societies?
- 3– What is chastity? What are the issues related to it?
- 4– What are the impacts of chastity?
- 5– What are the opposites of chastity?

For Reading: From the Attitudes of Sayyida Zeinab

The eloquent inheritance which Sayyida Zeinab (God's peace bestowed upon her) bequeathed to us in addition to her attitudes which the history has immortalized deserve to be engraved in the hearts of all of the people who want to adopt the attitude of the truth and virtuousness.

We are going to mention a part of her speech with which she addressed the people of Al-Kufa and which left a great imprint in their hearts.

Basher ibn Kha'zeem Al-Asadi relates, "On that day, I looked at Zeinab Bint Ali (God's peace bestowed upon her) and saw no fear. And God sent the words from her as if they were branching from the tongue of The Prince of the Believers Imam Ali ibn Abi Taleb (God's peace bestowed upon him). She made a sign for the people, thus asking them to be silent; so the breaths drew back, and the bells stopped ringing. Then, she (God's peace bestowed upon her) said,

"Praise be to God. And God's prayers be bestowed upon my father Muhammad and upon his virtuous good Household."

"O People of Kufa! O People of deceit and betrayal! Are you crying? May your tears stop not and may your cry ease not! You are like the woman who undoes the thread which she has spun after it has become strong, by taking your oaths a means of deception among yourselves. You are characterized by

none but by boastfulness, being stained by evils, detest, adulation, betrayal of the enemies: you are like a dead animal which is laid in a grave.”

“Evil is what your souls have offered you: God’s wrath fell upon you and you are going to be immortalized in the torture. Are you crying and weeping? By God! Cry a lot, and laugh a little, for you will never be able to wash the shame and disgrace you did. How can you wash your killing of the descendant of The Concluding Prophecy, the spring of the message, the master of the youths of Heaven, the shelter for your confusion, the refuge for your crisis, the light for your aim, and the leading person for your religious norm?”

“Verily! Evil is the burden you are carrying! Away with you! And woe to you! Your attempt was frustrated. Your hands were broken down. The bargain was lost. You were afflicted with a wrath from God. And you were stricken by disgrace and shame!”

“O People of Al-Kufa! Are you aware what a son for God’s prophecy you did kill? What a daughter for him you did uncover? What a blood for him you did shed? What a sacredness for him you did violate? Your deed was cunning, ignominious, tremendous, violent, and as much disgraceful as the whole earth and the whole sky are huge!”

“Wonder not if the sky rains blood. And the torture of the hereafter is going to be much more disgraceful, and you are not going to be helped. Be not comfortable because you are granted a delay. Hastiness does not drive Him [The Most High God]. And it is not feared that the revenge be missed. And your God is in wait for you!”

- [1.](#) Wasa’il Al-Shi’a [The Means of the Shiite], Part Eight, p.517
- [2.](#) Al-Kafi [The Sufficient], Part Two, p.106
- [3.](#) Kanz Al-Ommal [The Treasure of the Workers], Part Three, p.125
- [4.](#) Kanz Al-Ommal, Part Three, p.27
- [5.](#) Bihar Al-Anwar [The Seas of Lights], Part Sixty Eight, p.336
- [6.](#) Bihar Al-Anwar, Part Twenty three, p.344
- [7.](#) Moustadrak Safeenat Al-Bihar [Making Up for the Ship of the Seas], Part Seven, p.165
- [8.](#) Kanz Al-Ommal [The Treasure of the Workers], Part Three, p.118
- [9.](#) Mizan Al-Hikmah [The Standard of Sagacity], Part One, p.718
- [10.](#) Mizan Al-Hikmah, Part One, p.719
- [11.](#) Mizan Al-Hikmah, Part One, p.717
- [12.](#) Oyoum Al-Hekam Wa Al-Mawaez [The Prime Adages and Advices], p.28
- [13.](#) Oyoum AL-Hekam Wa Al-Mawaez, p.33
- [14.](#) Oyoum Al-Hekam Wa Al-Mawaez, p.327
- [15.](#) Moustadrak Al-Wasa’il [Making Up for the Means], Part One, p.488
- [16.](#) Bihar Al-Anwar [The Seas of Lights], Part Seventy Six, p.112
- [17.](#) Moustadrak Al-Wasa’il [Making Up for the Means], Part Eleven, p.263
- [18.](#) Mizan Al-Hikmah [The Standard of Sagacity], Part Three, p.2006
- [19.](#) Oyoum Al-Hekam Wa Al-Mawaez [The Prime Adages and Advices], p.21
- [20.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah [The Path of Eloquence], Part Four, Page 15, Aphorism 68
- [21.](#) Al-Kafi [The Sufficient], Sheikh Al-Koulayni, Part Five, p.552

- [22.](#) Bihar Al-Anwar [The Seas of Lights], Part Fourteen, p. 163
 - [23.](#) Wasa'il Al-Shi'a Al-Islameeya [The Means of the Islamic Shiite], Al-Hurr Al-Amili, Part One, p.40
 - [24.](#) Moustadrak Al-Wasa'il, Al-Mirza Al-Nouri, Part One, p.414
 - [25.](#) Makarem Al-Akhlaq [The Loftiest Morals], Sheikh Al-Tabarsi, p. 127
 - [26.](#) Nahjul Balaghah/ Speeches of Imam Ali ibn Abi Taleb (God's peace bestowed upon him), Part Four, p.5
 - [27.](#) Bihar Al-Anwar [The Seas of Lights], Part One, p. 168
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