

Responsibility 71: Being Cautious Around Others

Observing taqiyyah (dissimulation)¹ is another responsibility for those of true faith during the period of occultation.

A true believer must practice dissimulation in the face of the enemies of the faith, the deniers, hypocrites, disbelievers – and in summary, in the presence of anyone who is not worthy of hearing the truth!

Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) has said:

التَّقِيَّةُ تُرْسُ الْمُؤْمِنِ وَالتَّقِيَّةُ حِرْزُ الْمُؤْمِنِ وَ لَا إِيمَانَ لِمَنْ لَا تَقِيَّةَ لَهُ

“Dissimulation (taqiyyah) is the shield of the believer, dissimulation is the safeguard of the believer, and the person who does not observe dissimulation has no faith.”²

Just as was mentioned, we must observe dissimulation (taqiyyah) while in the presence of disbelievers, hypocrites, objectors, deniers of the truth and anyone who displays any type of animosity and opposition to the truth.

In addition to these groups of people, we must also practice dissimulation in the presence of those whose understanding of the faith is weak. These may be people who, even though they possess true faith, are still not able to handle or safeguard the secrets (of the Ahlul Bayt) and keep them hidden from others and thus, we must observe dissimulation even when around such people.

In addition, we must also observe taqiyyah while in the company of people who do not have inclinations for the truth, would not benefit from such information or would harm them because they cannot bear to hear it.

However, what do we do in regards those whose mental state we are unaware of? What do we do in

regards to those about whom we are not aware if they can acknowledge and accept such truths?

Since we do not know if such people would safeguard the teachings or if they would expose them to others not worthy of hearing such things, we are told that there is no need to practice taqiyyah around them and can convey the teachings to them.

However with that said, we must be careful to expose the truths to them piece by piece, and if we see that they are accepting of them and are able to safeguard the secrets, then we can continue.

Taqiyyah is not to be used in regards to those who are: confused and full of doubt, misguided or have gone astray from the faith, those who have fallen into error in regards to affairs of the life of this world or the next life, those who are ignorant of the truths of the faith but have the ability to accept the truth (if told to them) and are able to keep secrets from other people who are not worthy of such knowledge.

Thus in regards to such individuals, we must not observe taqiyyah and it makes no difference if they are ignorant or just misled or plagued with confusion and doubt or whether they are people of faith, disbelief, hypocrisy or willful disobedience.

Rather, it is sufficient that these people are those who are not willfully opposed to the truths and that they have the ability within them to accept, bear, safeguard and hide the truths from those who are not worthy of such truths being told to them and that there is a possibility that knowing these things will be of spiritual benefit to them.

The complete discussion concerning taqiyyah, how it works and under what conditions it is applicable has been mentioned in its own relevant place in the sources of Islam and those interested in learning more about this issue are advised to refer to the various Islamic resources.

Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) has said:

إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ مِنْ أَحْتِمَالِ أَمْرِنَا التَّصَدِيقُ لَهُ وَالْقَبُولُ فَقَطْ مِنْ أَحْتِمَالِ أَمْرِنَا سَنَرُهُ وَصِيَانَتُهُ مِنْ غَيْرِ أَهْلِهِ. فَاقْرَأْهُمْ
السَّلَامَ وَقُلْ لَهُمْ: رَحِمَ اللَّهُ عَبْدًا اجْتَرَّ مَوَدَّةَ النَّاسِ إِلَى نَفْسِهِ، حَدَّثُوهُمْ بِمَا يَعْرِفُونَ وَاسْتُرُوا عَنْهُمْ مَا يُنْكِرُونَ. ثُمَّ قَالَ
: [٤] وَاللَّهِ مَا النَّاصِبُ لَنَا حَرْبًا بِأَشَدِّ عَلَيْنَا مَوْوَنَةً مِنَ النَّاطِقِ عَلَيْنَا بِمَا نَكْرَهُ

“To undertake our affair is not only to believe it and accept only rather, it means to conceal and protect it against those who are not worthy of knowing about it. Thus, you must greet them and say: ‘May Allah have mercy upon the servant who tries to acquire the people’s love for him.’

Speak with them about subjects which they are familiar with, but conceal from them the matters which they deny. The Imam then added: ‘By Allah (I swear): He who wages war against us is not worse than him who reports from us matters that we detest (to publicize).’³

In a tradition from the Commander of the Faithful ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (as) it has been stated that:

إِنَّ حَدِيثَنَا صَعْبٌ مُسْتَصْعَبٌ خَشِينٌ مَخْشُوشٌ، فَانْبِذُوا إِلَى النَّاسِ نَبْذًا، فَمَنْ عَرَفَ فَزِيدُوهُ، وَ مَنْ أَنْكَرَ فَأَمْسِكُوا، لَا يَحْتَمِلُهُ إِلَّا ثَلَاثٌ: مَلَكٌ مُقَرَّبٌ، أَوْ نَبِيٌّ مُرْسَلٌ، أَوْ عَبْدٌ مُؤْمِنٌ إِمْتَحَنَ اللَّهُ قَلْبَهُ لِلْإِيمَانِ

“Verily, our traditions are difficult, hard to understand (properly), uneasy to pass, and alarming; therefore present a little of it to the people. If one realizes it, then you may give him more; but if he denies it, then stop. None can bear it except three (groups of people): (1) An archangel, (2) a Prophet who is sent with a Divine Message, or (3) a believing man whom Almighty Allah has tried his heart’s competence for faith.”⁴

¹. The definition of taqiyyah is to hide one’s true beliefs and teachings which one follows due to a fear of the oppression of others and the fear of them putting extra pressure on a person.

². al-Kafi, vol. 2, pg. 221, sec. ‘Taqiyyah,’ no. 23

³. al-Kafi, vol. 2, pg. 222, sec. ‘al-Kitman,’ no. 5

⁴. BaSair al-Darajat, pg. 21, no. 5

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