

Right n. 25: The Right of the Brother

حق الأخ

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ أَخِيكَ فَتَعَلَّمْ أَنَّهُ يَدُكَ الَّتِي تَبْسُطُهَا، وَظَهْرُكَ الَّذِي تَلْتَجِي إِلَيْهِ، وَعِزُّكَ الَّذِي تَعْتَمِدُ عَلَيْهِ، وَقُوَّتُكَ الَّتِي تَصُولُ بِهَا، فَلَا تَتَّخِذْهُ سِلَاحًا عَلَى مَعْصِيَةِ اللَّهِ وَلَا عُدَّةً لِلظُّلْمِ بِحَقِّ اللَّهِ، وَلَا تَدْعُ نُصْرَتَهُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ وَمَعُونَتِهِ عَلَى عَدُوِّهِ وَالْحَوْلَ بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ شَيْطَانِهِ وَتَأْدِيبِ النَّصِيحَةِ إِلَيْهِ وَالْإِقْبَالَ عَلَيْهِ فِي اللَّهِ فَإِنْ انْقَادَ لِرَبِّهِ وَأَحْسَنَ الْإِجَابَةَ لَهُ وَإِلَّا فَلْيَكُنْ مِنَ اللَّهِ أَثَرٌ عِنْدَكَ وَأَكْرَمَ عَلَيْكَ مِنْهُ.

And the right of your brother is that you should know that he is your hand that you extend, and your back to whom you seek refuge, and your power upon whom you rely, and your might with which you compete. Take him not as a weapon with which to disobey God, nor as a means with which to violate God's rights.

And do not neglect to help him against his own self and support him against his enemy, and intervene between him and his devils, and give him good counsel, and associate with him for God's sake. Then if he obeys his Lord and is responsible towards Him properly it is fine. Else God should be more preferable and more honorable to you than he is. [1](#)

Imam Sajjad has pointed out the following three points regarding one's brother:

- 1) A brother is one's helping hand. He is our supporter and he makes us stronger. We should not use this power in order to commit sins.
- 2) We should be his assistant and support him against his enemies.
- 3) We should release him from the captivity of Satan and direct his attention towards God. If he does not accept, we should follow God's decrees and not obey our brother.

Forms of Brotherhood in Islam

Brotherhood is one of the most important issues in Islam. There are two forms of brotherhood. One is a blood relationship – that is being born of the same parents. This is the closest kind of relationship that results in either one inheriting from the other. This is considered the second level of those who inherit from us according to Islamic jurisprudence. There are certain decrees in this regard.

The second form of brotherhood is through common belief. It is the form of brotherhood that has related all the Muslims together. It has become the source of unity of all the Muslims in the world. The Arabic word for brother is “Akh”. Its real meaning is brother, friend or companion. It really refers to two people who have the same mother, father or both. It is also used for someone who has been breast-fed by one’s mother. In a more general sense, it is also used for one’s partner in industry or trade, one who is from the same tribe or one having the same beliefs. There are several instances in the Holy Qur’an when this word is used to refer to real brothers or believing brothers like in Chapters Yusuf and Nisaa.²

The Importance of Islamic Brotherhood

The Holy Qur’an says:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

“The Believers are but a single Brotherhood: So make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers; and fear God, that ye may receive Mercy.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Hujurat 49: 10]

This verse expresses one of the most important slogans of Islam. Islam has put such a strong bond between the Muslims and has made them so close that it has called them brothers. Thus, Islam considers all Muslims to belong to one family. This is completely felt during the religious and political ceremonies of the pilgrimage of the Ka’ba. All the people who attend these ceremonies feel to be brothers to each other even though some have come from the West, and others have come from the East. Let us consider what the Prophet has said in this regard:

المُسْلِمُ أَخُو الْمُسْلِمِ لَا يَظْلِمُهُ وَلَا يَخْذُلُهُ وَلَا يُسَلِّمُهُ

“A Muslim is the brother of other Muslims. He never oppresses them. He never abandons them. He never leaves them alone in the face of calamities.”³

In another tradition, the Prophet said:

مَثَلُ الْأَخَوَيْنِ مَثَلُ الْيَدَيْنِ تَغْسِلُ إِحْدَاهُمَا الْأُخْرَى.

“Two believing brothers are like two hands each washing the other.”⁴

The Prophet’s representation of two Muslims as the hands of the same body is a beautiful similitude showing that all Muslims belong to the same nation, and each Muslim is one of the hands of that nation.

A Believer: Brother of Other Believers

Imam Sadiq said:

المُؤْمِنُ أَخُو الْمُؤْمِنِ؛ عَيْنُهُ وَدَلِيلُهُ لَا يَخُونُهُ وَلَا يَظْلِمُهُ وَلَا يَغْشَاهُ وَلَا يَعْدُهُ عِدَّةً فَيُخْلِفُهُ.

“A believer is the brother of other believers. He acts as their eyes and as their guide. He will never cheat or oppress them. He will never deceive them or act against his promises to them.”⁵

In another tradition we read: Abi Basir narrated that he heard Imam Sadiq say:

المُؤْمِنُ أَخُو الْمُؤْمِنِ كَالْجَسَدِ الْوَاحِدِ إِنْ اشْتَكَى شَيْئاً مِنْهُ وَجِدَ أَلَمَ ذَلِكَ فِي سَائِرِ جَسَدِهِ، وَأَرْوَاحُهُمَا مِنْ رُوحٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَإِنَّ رُوحَ الْمُؤْمِنِ لِأَشَدَّ اتِّصَالاً بِرُوحِ اللَّهِ مِنْ اتِّصَالِ شُعَاعِ الشَّمْسِ بِهَا.

“A believer is the brother of other believers. They are all parts of the same body. If one part hurts, other parts will feel the pain. Their souls are also derived from One Spirit. A believer’s soul is so strongly attached to God’s Spirit that it is like the attachment of the sun’s rays to the sun.”⁶

Brotherhood: the Greatest Blessing

The importance of the blessing of brotherhood is stressed in the Holy Qur’an as we read in the following verse:

وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا وَكُنْتُمْ عَلَىٰ شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِنَ النَّارِ فَأَنْقَذَكُمْ مِنْهَا كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ

“And hold fast, all together, by the rope which God (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves; and remember with gratitude God’s favor on you; for ye were enemies and He joined your hearts in love, so that by His Grace, ye became brethren; and ye were on the brink of the pit of Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus doth God make His Signs clear to you: That ye may be guided.” [The Holy Qur’an, Al-i-Imran 3: 103]

This verse was revealed about the two large tribes of Oas and Khazraj that had deeply-rooted animosities with each other. Once the Prophet entered Medina, he settled their affairs and made them brothers one to another. However, at times they forgot this brotherhood and fighting broke out between them. However, the Prophet would immediately resolve their differences.

The Prophet instructed the Muslims to express their love and friendship to each other since it has a very important influence on the continuation of brotherhood. He said: “When one of you likes another one he should let him know about it.” [7](#)

[The Reward of Visiting Believing Brothers](#)

There is a chapter on visiting believing brothers in *Usul al-Kafi* in which there are many traditions pointing out the reward of visiting our believing brothers. We shall only cite a few of them here. Imam Sadiq said:

مَنْ زَارَ أَخَاهُ فِي اللَّهِ، قَالَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: إِيَّايَ زُرْتَ وَتَوَابُكَ عَلَيَّ وَكَسْتُ أَرْضِي لَكَ ثَوَاباً دُونَ الْجَنَّةِ.

“God the Exalted the High will say to whoever visits his brother for the sake of God: O My servant! It was Me that You visited, and your reward is incumbent on Me. I will not be pleased with a reward of anything less than Heaven for you.” [8](#)

In another tradition we read that Abi Hamzeh quoted on the authority of Imam Baqir :

إِنَّ الْعَبْدَ الْمُسْلِمَ إِذَا خَرَجَ مِنْ بَيْتِهِ زَائِراً أَخَاهُ لِلَّهِ لَا لِغَيْرِهِ التَّمَّاسَ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ وَرَغْبَةً فِي مَا عِنْدَهُ وَكَلَّ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ بِهِ سَبْعِينَ أَلْفَ مَلَكٍ يُنَادُونَهُ مِنْ خَلْفِهِ إِلَى أَنْ يَرْجِعَ إِلَى مَنْزِلِهِ: أَلَا طَيْبَتْ وَطَأْبَتْ لَكَ الْجَنَّةُ.

“When the Muslim leaves his house to visit his brother for the sake of God alone, seeking God’s pleasure and hoping for his reward, God the Exalted the High will appoint seventy thousand angels who will keep calling out behind him until he returns home: Blessed you are, and may Heaven be pleasant for you.” [9](#)

Thus, we see that with such beautiful instructions, Islam has guaranteed the unity of Muslims and has prepared a lovely life for the believers.

[Brotherhood as Viewed by Imam Ali](#)

Imam Ali said:

الإخوانُ صِنْفَانِ: أخوانُ النَّقَّةِ وأخوانُ المُكَاشِرَةِ. فأما أخوانُ النَّقَّةِ فهُمُ الكَفُّ والجَنَاحُ والأهْلُ والمَالُ، فإذا كُنْتَ مِنْ

أَخِيكَ عَلَى حَدِّ التَّقَةِ فَا بُذِلَ لَهُ مَالُكَ وَبَدَنُكَ وَصَافٍ مَن صَافَاهُ وَعَادٍ مَن عَادَاهُ وَكَتْمٌ سِرَّهُ وَعَيْبُهُ وَأَظْهَرٌ مِنْهُ الْحَسَنُ،
وَاعْلَمَ أَيُّهَا السَّائِلُ أَنَّهُمْ أَقَلُّ مِنَ الْكَبْرِيتِ الْأَحْمَرِ. وَأَمَّا أَخْوَانُ الْمُكَاشَرَةِ فَإِنَّكَ تُصِيبُ لَدَّتَكَ مِنْهُمْ فَلَا تَقْطَعَنَّ ذَلِكَ مِنْهُمْ
وَلَا تَطْلُبَنَّ مَا وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ مِنْ ضَمِيرِهِمْ وَأُبْذِلْ لَهُمْ مَا بَدَلُوا لَكَ مِنْ طَلَاقَةِ الْوَجْهِ وَحَلَاوَةِ اللِّسَانِ

“There are two groups of brothers: real brothers and superficial brothers. Real brothers are like your hands, wings, relatives or property. Once you find such brothers, you can help them; give them from what you own; be friendly with their friends and be the enemy of their enemies; hide their secrets; cover up their faults, and reveal their good points. Beware that they are very rare. However, use your superficial brothers. Do not stop your friendship and your associations with them. However do not expect any more than this from them. When they treat you kindly and talk nicely with you, respond with gentle treatment and nice words.”¹⁰

Here Imam Ali clearly outlines our duties to our real friends as well as our superficial friends. He has set the limits of our encounters with them, and the degree to which we must help them, and benefit from their assistance.

Being Fair with Brothers

Imam Ali said:

مَعَ الْإِنصَافِ تَدْوِمُ الْأَخُوَّةُ.

“Brotherhood lasts by being fair.”¹¹

When Muhammad reached the age of seven he asked his wet-nurse Halimah: “O Mother! Where are my brothers?” She said: “They have taken the sheep that God has blessed us with to the fields.” He said: “O Mother! You have not been fair with us.” His mother asked: “Why?” He said: “Is it fair for me to sit in the shade of the tent and drink milk, while my brothers are out there in the heat of the desert?”¹² God’s Prophet said:

سَيِّدُ الْأَعْمَالِ ثَلَاثَةٌ: إِنْصَافُ النَّفْسِ مِنْ نَفْسِكَ وَمُؤَاسَاةُ الْإِخِ فِي اللَّهِ وَذِكْرُكَ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى فِي كُلِّ حَالٍ

“Three acts are the master of all deeds: being fair, helping our brothers for the sake of God, and remembering God the High in all circumstances.”¹³

Brotherhood as Viewed by Imam Sadiq

Imam Sadiq said:

الإخوانُ ثلاثةٌ: فواحدٌ كالغذاءِ الَّذي يُحتاجُ إليه في كُلِّ وقتٍ، والثاني في معنى الداءِ وهو الأحمقُ والثالثُ في معنى الدواءِ وهو اللبيبُ.

*“Brothers are of three kinds. The first kind is like nourishment that we always need; the second is like a disease, and they are the foolish ones. The third kind is like the remedy, and they are the intelligent ones.”*¹⁴

At last, we shall present the thirty rights of brotherhood as expressed by the Noble Prophet . This is perhaps one of the most complete traditions on the rights of brotherhood.

The Prophet's Views on Rights of Brotherhood

God's Prophet said:

لِلْمُسْلِمِ عَلَى أَخِيهِ ثَلَاثُونَ حَقًّا لَا بَرَاءَةَ لَهُ مِنْهَا إِلَّا بِالْأَدَاءِ أَوْ الْعَفْوِ: يَغْفِرُ زَلَّتَهُ وَيَرْحَمَ عِبْرَتَهُ وَيَسْتُرُ عَوْرَتَهُ وَيُقْبِلُ عَثْرَتَهُ وَيَقْبَلُ مَعْدِرَتَهُ وَيُرُدُّ غِيْبَتَهُ وَيُدِيمُ نَصِيحَتَهُ وَيَحْفَظُ خَلَّتَهُ وَيَرعى ذِمَّتَهُ وَيَعُودُ مَرَضَهُ وَيَشْهَدُ مَيْتَهُ وَيَجِيبُ دَعْوَتَهُ وَيَقْبَلُ هَدِيَّتَهُ وَيُكَافِي صِلَتَهُ وَيَشْكُرُ نِعْمَتَهُ وَيَحْسِنُ نُصْرَتَهُ وَيَحْفَظُ خَلِيلَتَهُ وَيَقْضِي حَاجَتَهُ وَيَشْفَعُ مَسْأَلَتَهُ وَيُسَمِّتُ عَطْسَتَهُ وَيُرْشِدُ ضَالَّتَهُ وَيُرَدِّدُ سَلَامَهُ وَيُطَيِّبُ كَلَامَهُ وَيُبْرِئُ إِنْعَامَهُ وَيُصَدِّقُ أَقْسَامَهُ وَيُؤَالِي وَلِيَّهُ وَلَا يَعَادِيهِ وَيَنْصُرُهُ ظَالِمًا وَمَظْلُومًا: فَأَمَّا نُصْرَتُهُ ظَالِمًا فَيُرَدُّهُ عَنْ ظُلْمِهِ وَأَمَّا نُصْرَتُهُ مَظْلُومًا فَيُعِينُهُ عَلَى أَخْذِ حَقِّهِ وَلَا يُسَلِّمُهُ وَلَا يَخْذُلُهُ وَيُحِبُّ لَهُ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ مَا يَحِبُّ لِنَفْسِهِ وَيَكْرَهُ لَهُ مِنَ الشَّرِّ مَا يَكْرَهُ لِنَفْسِهِ.

“There are thirty rights for each Muslim incumbent upon his believing brother. He cannot be relieved from them unless he honors them or is forgiven by his brother. They are as follows:

- 1 He must forgive his brother's faults.
- 2 He must be kind to his brother during hard times.
- 3 He must hide his brother's secrets.
- 4 He must compensate for his brother's faults.
- 5 He must accept his brother's apologies.
- 6 He must defend his brother against those who gossip behind his back.
- 7 He must always advise his brother.
- 8 He must safeguard his brother's friendship.
- 9 He must honor his brother's covenant.

10 *He must visit him when his brother gets ill.*

11 *He must attend his brother's funeral procession.*

12 *He must accept his brother's invitations.*

13 *He must accept his brother's gifts.*

14 *He must return his brother's favors.*

15 *He must be grateful for his brother's blessings.*

16 *He must try to help his brother.*

17 *He must guard his brother's honor.*

18 *He must fulfill his brother's needs.*

19 *He must intercede on behalf of his brother.*

20 *He must say "God bless you" when his brother sneezes.*

21 *He must guide his brother's lost ones.*

22 *He must respond to his brother's greetings.*

23 *He must welcome his brother's words.*

24 *He must welcome his brother's kindness.*

25 *He must accept his brother's swearing.*

26 *He must like his brother's friends.*

27 *He must not treat his brother with animosity.*

28 *He must help his brother whether he is an oppressor or an oppressed one.* [15](#)

29 *He should not leave his brother alone in the face of calamities.*

30 *He must like for his brother whatever he likes for himself, and dislike for him whatever he dislikes for himself.*

[1.](#) In the other version it continues with: 'And there is no power but in God'.

[2.](#) Qamus Qur'an, v. 1, pp.37-38.

[3.](#) Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, v.3, p.332.

[4.](#) Ibid.

- [5.](#) Usul al-Kafi, v.3, p. 166.
- [6.](#) Usul al-Kafi, v.3, p. 166.
- [7.](#) Al-Mahajjah al-Bayda, v.3, p.331.
- [8.](#) Usul al-Kafi, Chapter on Visiting believing brothers.
- [9.](#) Ibid. p.177.
- [10.](#) Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, v.2, p.61.
- [11.](#) Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, v.2, p.308.
- [12.](#) Al-Hadith, v. 1, p.285.
- [13.](#) Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, v.2, p.308.
- [14.](#) Tuhaf al-'Uqul, p.239.
- [15.](#) Helping an oppressor means to prevent him from acts of oppression, but helping an oppressed one means helping him to get back what is rightfully his.

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