

Right n. 40: The Right of Him Whose Advice You Seek

حق المشير

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ الْمَشِيرِ عَلَيْكَ فَلَا تَتَّهَمُهُ فِيمَا لَا يُوَافِقُكَ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ رَأْيِهِ إِذَا أَشَارَ عَلَيْكَ فَإِنَّمَا هِيَ الْآرَاءُ وَتَصَرُّفُ النَّاسِ فِيهَا وَاخْتِلَافُهُمْ. فَكُنْ عَلَيْهِ فِي رَأْيِهِ بِالْخِيَارِ إِذَا اتَّهَمْتَ رَأْيَهُ، فَأَمَّا تُّهْمَتُهُ فَلَا تَجُوزُ لَكَ إِذَا كَانَ عِنْدَكَ مِمَّنْ يَسْتَحِقُّ الْمَشَاوَرَةَ. وَلَا تَدَعِ شُكْرَهُ عَلَى مَا بَدَأَ لَكَ مِنْ إِشْخَاصِ رَأْيِهِ وَحُسْنِ وَجْهِ مَشُورَتِهِ، فَإِذَا وَافَقَكَ حَمِدْتَ اللَّهَ وَقَبَلْتَ ذَلِكَ مِنْ أُخِيكَ بِالشُّكْرِ وَالْإِرْصَادِ بِالْمُكَافَأَةِ فِي مِثْلِهَا إِنْ فَزَعَ إِلَيْكَ. وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

And the right of him whose advice you seek is that you should not accuse him when he gives you advice that does not conform to your own opinion. It is quite natural that opinions are divergent and people have various views about their affairs in which they disagree. You are free not to accept his advice if you doubt it.

However, you are not permitted to accuse him of providing you with ill advice as long as you consider him to be of those worthy of consultation. Do not stop thanking him for the thoughts and the good advice he has given you. And if it was appropriate for you, you should thank God for it, accept it from your brother with gratitude, and be ready to act similarly for him should one day he seek your advice. And there is no power but in God.

Imam Sajjad advises us not to accuse the one whose advice we seek, if what they suggest does not agree with our own opinion. If his advice is in agreement with our own opinion, then we should thank God and be grateful to the person who advised us.

An Advisor's Honesty and Trustworthiness

In the previous discussions, we described whose advice we should seek. We also expressed the expected qualities of a good advisor using traditions. There is a chapter in Wasa'il al-Shah in this respect.

This is the first tradition in that chapter: Imam Sadiq said: "A man went to see the Commander of the Faithful and said: "I have come to seek your advice and that of Hasan, Husayn and Abdullah ibn Ja'far about marriage." The Blessed Imam Ali said:

المُسْتَشَارُ مُؤْتَمَنٌ.

"One whose advice is sought is a confidant". [1](#)

Then he told the man his viewpoints.

In the second tradition, we read that Imam Sadiq said:

مَنْ اسْتَشَارَ أَخَاهُ فَلَمْ يَنْصَحْهُ مَحْضَ الرَّأْيِ سَلَبَهُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ رَأْيَهُ.

"One whose brother seeks counsel from him and he does not counsel him with sincerity, God will deprive him of his soundness in judgment." [2](#)

Two important points have been mentioned in these two traditions. First off all, one whose advice is sought is trustworthy. Therefore, he will never cheat one. Therefore, one who seeks advice should never accuse the one whose advice he seeks. He should not be suspicious of him, as Imam Sajjad has said. Secondly, the one whose advice is sought should sincerely express whatever he thinks. Should he hesitate to do so, God will take away his effective point of view, since he has not been grateful for the blessing of being asked for advice.

Seeking the Advice of Those Lower in Rank

An interesting point about seeking advice is that we can even seek the advice of those who are lower in rank than we are. We do not necessarily have to seek the advice of those in a higher position than we are. There is a chapter in Wasa'il al-Shah in this regard. In the second tradition in this chapter, we read: Fuzayl ibn Yasar said that Imam Sadiq sought his advice on some issue.

Fuzayl asked the Imam how could such a lowly person like himself give advice to such a person like the Imam? The Imam replied: "Whenever I seek your advice." [3](#) In the third tradition of this chapter we read: "Hasan ibn Jahm narrated that he was with Imam Ridha when the Imam remembered his noble father

and said: “His intellect was extremely superior to the intellect of the people of his time, and sometimes he used to seek the advice of one of his black slaves.” Then he was asked: “Can you seek the advice of such people?” Then Imam Ridha replied: “In fact, God the Blessed and the High expresses facts when they talk, and on many occasions my father used to act upon their advice regarding the garden.”^{[4](#)}

Imam Ali’s Viewpoints on Advisor

The compiler of *Nahjul Balaghah*, who is Sayyid Razi, narrated that once Abdullah ibn Abbas sought Imam Ali’s advice, and was in disagreement with the advice given to him by the Commander of the Faithful . Imam Ali said: “It is up to you to give me your advice. But whenever my advice is in disagreement with what you think, you must obey me.”^{[5](#)}

In another tradition we read: Ali ibn Mahzyar narrated that Imam Baqir wrote him a letter and asked him to tell so and so to consult with him, but choose to do what they themselves think is best to do, since they are better aware of the conditions of their own town, and know how to deal with the rulers.

This is because consultation is blessed and God has ordered the Prophet in the Holy Qur’an to “consult with the people, but make a decision himself as to what is best to do, and rely on God after he makes up his mind.” Then if what the advisor says is correct, you can benefit from his advice, and if it is not correct, you can hope to guide him in the straight path with God’s will. When it is said seek their advice in the affairs, it is meant seek the good.”^{[6](#)}

Imam Ali said:

لا ظهيرَ كالمُشاورَةِ

“There is no aid like seeking advice.”^{[7](#)}

^{[1](#)}. Wasa’il al-Shi’ah, v.8, p.427.

^{[2](#)}. Wasa’il al-Shi’ah, v.8, p.427.

^{[3](#)}. Ibid.

^{[4](#)}. Ibid. p.428.

^{[5](#)}. Bihar al-Anwar, v.75, p. 104.

^{[6](#)}. Bihar al-Anwar, v.75, p. 104.

^{[7](#)}. Ibid.

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