

## Right n. 9: The Right of the Private Part

حق الفرّج

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ فَرْجِكَ فَحِفْظُهُ مِمَّا لَا يَحِلُّ لَكَ وَالِاسْتِعَانَةُ عَلَيْهِ بِغَضِّ الْبَصَرِ - فَإِنَّهُ مِنْ أَعْوَانِ الْأَعْوَانِ - وَكَثْرَةُ ذِكْرِ الْمَوْتِ وَالتَّهْدُدُ لِنَفْسِكَ بِاللَّهِ وَالتَّخْوِيفُ لَهَا بِهِ، وَبِاللَّهِ الْعِصْمَةُ وَالتَّأْيِيدُ وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِهِ.

**And the right of your private part is that you should protect it from everything that is unlawful for you and help it by lowering your eyes – this is certainly the best way to help it. And you should also remember death often, and threaten yourself with God and try to make yourself fear God. <sup>1</sup> Preservation from sin and receiving help in so doing are possible by God’s help. There is no strength or power but in Him.**

What Imam Sajjad means by “protecting your private parts” is covering it from other people’s eyes. Consider the following verse:

وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ

**“And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty.”**  
[The Holy Qur’an, al-Nur 24:31]

Imam Sadiq said:

كُلُّ آيَةٍ فِي الْقُرْآنِ فِي ذِكْرِ الْفُرُوجِ فَهِيَ مِنَ الزَّانَا إِلَّا هَذِهِ الْآيَةُ فَإِنَّهَا مِنَ النَّظَرِ.

*“Every verse in the Qur’an in which the private parts are mentioned is with regard to protecting it from fornication, except for this (above) verse in which it means to protect the private parts from being seen.”<sup>2</sup>*

## Sexual Instincts

Sexual instincts are among the major forces in man to derive pleasure in life. These strong instincts attract men and women towards each other. The love they have for each other makes them work hard to unite with one another. That is why sex and marriage have always been a hot topic of discussion in all religious or scientific gatherings. There have been many theories related to this issue. Some of these theories are extremist while others are normal.

## Extremist Theory

Those who believe in sexual freedom including the followers of Freud have adopted an extremist theory. Freud whose ideas are based on sex has extended out of the domain of influence of sexual instincts to affect many other natural instincts that are in reality very independent of sex. He considers this instinct to be the main foundation of human culture and civilization. Freud thinks that seeking sexual pleasure and fulfillment is not limited to adulthood and exists throughout our lifetime. He considers a baby's sucking of the mother's breast to be sexually motivated and pleasing.

Freud bases his psychological theories on sexual failures. He thinks that when sexual desires are not fulfilled due to social restrictions, they are forced into the subconscious where they lend themselves to severe stress and psychological illnesses. Freud believes that all the various forms of psychological problems are rooted in the sexual instinct.

Thus, a psychoanalyst must become very aware of the person's experiences in order to treat him. Freud's opponents disagree with his idea that sexual instincts are the root of all psychological illnesses. Freud's mistake lies in his considering unusual sexual emotions to be the source of nervous or psychological illnesses. He fails to consider the person's social, economical or material environment. For example, when a simple worker has psychological problems due to lack of income, poverty and hunger, his illness is not rooted in sex. To treat him we must provide him with better work opportunities, not satiate him sexually!<sup>3</sup>

## The Church and the Other Extreme

The followers of the Church, some religions, some philosophers and some teachers of ethics have considered sex to be an animal act and have called it filthy. By going to the other extreme, they have totally abandoned sex. Saint Jerome always used to say: "Let us chop off the tree of marriage by celibacy." In the Church, we see great scholars like Paules who was one of the heads of the Church. He never married and advised all men and women not to marry.

In his first treatise addressed to Qarantian we read: "About what you wrote to me, it is better for men not to touch women. However, in order to avoid fornication, each man should have his own wife, and each

woman should have her own husband. The husband must fulfill his wife's rights. The wife should fulfill the husband's rights. I wish all men were like me, but each person has a divinely given gift. Some are this way. Others are that way. Thus, I tell those who are single and the widowed women, that it is best for them to remain like me. But if they cannot restrain themselves, it is better for them to marry since it is better to marry than burn in the Fire of Hell.”<sup>4</sup>

## Islam Takes the Balanced View

Islam condemns both extremist views. The Commander of the Faithful has considered going to either extreme to be out of ignorance. He said:

لَا يُرَى الْجَاهِلُ إِلَّا مُفْرَطًا أَوْ مُفْرَطًا

*“The ignorant one will only be seen either exceeding the bounds or falling short.”*

Taking a moderate stance regarding sexual instincts is liked by God and is according to the nature of our creation. In the moderate method, sexual instincts are neither let loose, nor are they totally abandoned. The law and social ethics support the fulfillment of this natural instinct in a moderate degree, and the means for its proper fulfillment are provided. In the method that is supported by God's Prophets, people are instructed that God has encouraged the people to get married. On the other hand, any form of sexual deviation or being loose is seriously fought with, and human societies are advised against these things.

## Islam and Marriage

The Almighty God has expressed one of the main characteristics of believing men or women in the following verse:

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأُزْوَاجِهِمْ حَافِظُونَ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُومِينَ فَمَنْ ابْتَغَىٰ وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْعَادُونَ

***“Who abstain from sex, except with those joined to them in the marriage bond, or (the captives) whom their right hands possess, – for (in their case) they are free from blame: But those whose desires exceed those limits are transgressors.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Muminun 23:5-7]***

Islam has ordered its followers to get married since sexual instincts are the most difficult to control. Islam has ordered us to make love with our legal wives or our slaves. This implies both permanent and temporary wives. There is also a mention of the misconception by the Christians who considered any sexual contact to be wrong, and went so far that the Catholic priests and the nuns did not marry all their

life long and considered marriage to be contrary to their spiritual position. The Noble Prophet of Islam has paid attention to sexual instincts in his teachings and has instructed his followers not to follow celibacy. God's Prophet said:

مَنْ أَحَبَّ فِطْرَتِي فَلَيْسَتْ بَسُنَّتِي، وَمَنْ سُنَّتِي النَّكَاحُ.

*“Whoever likes my nature should follow my traditions. One of my traditions is marriage.”<sup>5</sup>*

## Marriage and Immunity from Sin

God's Prophet said:

يَا مَعْشَرَ الشَّبَابِ! مَنْ اسْتَطَاعَ مِنْكُمُ الْبَاهُ فَلْيَتَزَوَّجْ، فَإِنَّهُ أَغْضُ لِلْبَصْرِ وَأَحْسَنُ لِلْفَرْجِ، وَمَنْ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ مِنْكُمُ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ  
الصَّوْمَ فَإِنَّ لَهُ وَجَاءً.

*“O young people! Any of you who have the means to marry should do so since this is the best way to protect your eyes from corrupt and treacherous looks, and to guard the private parts from sin and immodesty. Whoever does not have the means to marry should fast continually since fasting can reduce lust.”<sup>6</sup>*

## Marriage as the Firm Foundation of Life

Islam encourages its followers to establish a family and considers the family to be the most beautiful thing in the sight of God. The Noble Prophet of God said:

مَا بُنِيَ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ بِنَاءٌ أَحَبُّ إِلَى اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَأَعَزُّ مِنَ التَّزْوِيجِ.

*“There is no establishment in Islam dearer to God the Almighty than marriage.”<sup>7</sup>*

Therefore, we must speed up the establishment of marriage. Imam Sadiq narrated that once the Prophet climbed up on the pulpit and after praising God said:

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ! إِنَّ جِبْرَائِيلَ أَتَانِي عَنِ اللَّطِيفِ الْخَبِيرِ فَقَالَ: إِنَّ الْأَبْكَارَ بِمَنْزِلَةِ النَّمْرِ عَلَى الشَّجَرِ: إِذَا أَدْرَكَ ثَمْرَهُ فَلَمْ يُجْتَنَى  
أَفْسَدَتْهُ الشَّمْسُ وَنَثَرَتْهُ الرِّيحُ، وَكَذَلِكَ الْأَبْكَارُ: إِذَا أَدْرَكَنَّ مَا يُدْرِكُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَيْسَ لَهُنَّ دَوَاءٌ إِلَّا الْبُعُولَةَ وَإِلَّا لَمْ يُؤْمَنْ  
عَلَيْهِنَّ الْفَسَادُ، فَإِنَّهُنَّ بِشَرِّ

*“O people! Gabriel came to me from the threshold of God and said: Virgin girls are like the fruits on a*

tree. When they ripen, they should be plucked. Else, they will be spoiled due to exposure to the rays of the sun, and they will be scattered about due to the blowing of the wind. When girls mature and feel sexual inclinations, there is no remedy for them but a husband. If they do not get married, they are not secure from corruption since they are human (and are not immune from making mistakes).”

## Marriage Provides a Garment

The Holy Qur’an has considered the chastity of men and women and has said:

هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَهُنَّ

**“They are your garments and ye are their garments.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Baqarah 2: 187]**

Our garments cover up our sex organs and protect us against many bad conditions such as heat, cold and bad weather. Marriage will help us stay clean and pure. The Noble Prophet said:

مَنْ أَحَبَّ أَنْ يَلْقَى اللَّهَ طَاهِراً وَمُطَهَّراً فَلْيَتَعَفَّفْ بِزَوْجَةٍ

*“Whoever likes to meet God in a pure and purified state should protect his chastity by means of marriage.”<sup>8</sup>*

## The Prophet Disapproved of Abandoning Marriage

Those who have the means to get married and establish a family in order to save the Muslims from committing sins should do so. Islam blames those who do not do so for various reasons. Consider the following case for example. A man called Akkaf went to see God’s Prophet . The Prophet asked: “Are you married?” He said: “O’ Prophet of God! No.” Then the Prophet asked: “Are you healthy and wealthy?” He said: “Yes.” Then the Prophet said:

وَبِحَاكَ يَا عَكَافُ! تَزَوَّجْ تَزَوَّجْ فَإِنَّكَ مِنَ الْخَاطِئِينَ، تَزَوَّجْ وَإِلَّا فَأَنْتَ مِنَ الْمُذْنِبِينَ، تَزَوَّجْ وَإِلَّا فَأَنْتَ مِنْ رُهْبَانِ النَّصَارَى، تَزَوَّجْ وَإِلَّا فَأَنْتَ مِنْ إِخْوَانِ الشَّيَاطِينِ

*“Woe be to you, Akkaf! Marry, marry, for now you are of the wrongdoers! Marry, else you will be among the sinners! Marry, else you will be of the Christian monks! Marry, else you will be among the brothers of Satan!”<sup>9</sup>*

In another tradition, we read that Imam Ridha narrated that a woman told Imam Baqir : “I am a Mutabattil.” Imam Baqir asked: “What do you mean by that?” She said: “I intend to never get married.”

Imam Baqir asked: “Why?” She said: “In order to attain nobility.” Then Imam Baqir said: “Forget it. If there was any nobility in not getting married, the Blessed Fatima Zahra was more suitable to have recognized this nobility, and there is no one who can supercede her in nobility.”<sup>10</sup> From these traditions, we realize that the leaders in Islam have advised men and women against celibacy so that they remain chaste.

## Islam and Avoiding Women

A few of the companions of the Noble Prophet of God decided to avoid having sexual intercourse with their wives, eating breakfast and sleeping at night. Um Salmah realized this and told this to the Prophet . The Prophet went to them and asked:

أَتَرْغَبُونَ عَنِ النِّسَاءِ؟ إِنِّي أَتِي النِّسَاءَ وَأَكُلُ بِالنَّهَارِ وَأَنَا مُمٌ بِاللَّيْلِ، فَمَنْ رَغَبَ عَن سُنَّتِي فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي

*“Do you abstain from (going to) your wives? I go to my wives, eat in the daytime and sleep at night. Whoever forsakes my tradition is not from me.”<sup>11</sup>*

## Adultery is a Major Sin

Those who do not establish a family may commit adultery and fall into disaster. The Holy Qur’an considers adultery to be an evil deed and says:

وَلَا تَقْرُبُوا الزَّوْجَىٰ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً وَسَاءَ سَبِيلًا

***“Nor come nigh to adultery: for it is a shameful (deed) and an evil, opening the road (to other evils).” [The Holy Qur’an, Bani Israil 17:32]***

This short verse stresses three important points:

- 1) The verse does not state: “Do not commit adultery.” Rather it says do not even approach this wicked deed. This verse shows that although adultery is a very bad deed, there are some other deeds that might ultimately lead to it. Acts like flirting, looking, nudity, not wearing the veil, reading dirty books, viewing pornography, and going to centers of corruption or being in a private place with another person of the opposite sex are all preparatory actions which might lead to adultery.
- 2) This verse clearly expresses the extreme degree of wickedness of adultery.
- 3) This verse states that adultery will also pave the way for other forms of corruption in the society.

## The Philosophy behind Forbidding Adultery

1) The first problem with adultery is that it will lead to social disorder. The relationship of the father and children will become unclear. This clear father-child relationship will provide life-long support for the children. Adultery will eliminate this order. Let us think for one moment that adultery is permitted in the whole world and marriage is abolished. In such a world, none of the children born will be supported. There is also no love for these children – the love that is so critical in the raising of people who will not be criminals later. Then the whole world will turn into a big zoo where all forms of violence prevail.

2) Adultery is also a cause of the personal and social struggles between those who run the centers of corruption. The detailed account of what goes on in massage parlors and sex homes shows that many other crimes are committed where adultery is practiced.

3) It has been proven by theory and in practice that adultery leads to many contagious sexually transmitted diseases (STD's) many of which are life-threatening. [12](#)

4) Adultery is usually followed by abortion since the women who commit adultery never like to keep the baby. They even think it will be an obstacle to their future practice of adultery.

5) We should not forget that the purpose behind marriage is not satiating our sexual instincts. Rather cooperating in the establishment of a joint life, the achievement of peace of mind, having a companion, raising children and cooperation in many social affairs are also major goals in marriage. These are not possible unless men and women are dedicated to each other through marriage and adultery is forbidden.

## Moving Statistics

First, let us look at the statistics related to sexually transmitted diseases (STD) in the United States.

### STD Statistics

One in five people in the United States has an STD [13](#). Two-thirds of all STDs occur in people 25 years of age or younger. One in four new STD infections occur in teenagers. Cervical cancer in women is linked to HPV. [14](#) Hepatitis is 100 times more infectious than HIV. [15](#) Two-thirds of Hepatitis B (HBV) [16](#) infections are transmitted sexually. HBV is linked to chronic liver disease, including cirrhosis and liver cancer. STDs, other than HIV, cost about \$8 billion each year to diagnose and treat.

One in five Americans have genital herpes, yet at least 80 percent of those with herpes are unaware they have it. At least one in four Americans will contract an STD at some point in their lives. HPV is the most common STD in the United States. More than 5 million people are infected with HPV each year. Less than half of adults aged 18 to 44 have ever been tested for an STD other than HIV/AIDS. At least

15 percent of all infertile American women are infertile because of tubal damage caused by pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), which is the result of an untreated STD. Next let us look at the world statistics on abortion.

## World-Wide Abortion Statistics

Currently 54 countries allow abortion, which is about 61 percent of the world's population<sup>17</sup>. According to the pro-abortion Center for Reproductive Law and Policy in New York, 97 countries that constitute about 39 percent of the population, have abortion laws that make it illegal. The Alan Guttmacher Institute reports approximately **22** million legal abortions were reported in 1987. It is estimated that between four and nine million were not reported, totaling **26-31** million legal abortions in 1987 alone. There were a total of **10-22** million "clandestine" abortions, bringing the total worldwide figure to **36** and **53** million abortions.

## The Effects of Adultery in This World and the Hereafter

So far, we discussed the philosophy behind forbidden adultery and its wicked effects and a brief account of the relevant statistics in the West. Now we shall point out some of the traditions regarding the punishment of adultery in this world and the Hereafter. Imam Ali narrated that he heard God's Prophet say:

في الرِّثَا سِتُّ خِصَالٍ؛ ثَلَاثٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَثَلَاثٌ فِي الآخِرَةِ. فَأَمَّا اللُّوَاطِي فِي الدُّنْيَا فَيَبْذَهُبُ بِنُورِ الْوَجْهِ وَيَقْطَعُ الرِّزْقَ وَيُسْرِعُ الْفَنَاءَ. وَأَمَّا اللُّوَاطِي فِي الآخِرَةِ فَعَضَبُ الرَّبِّ وَسُوءُ الْحِسَابِ وَالِدُخُولِ (أَوْ الْخُلُودِ) فِي النَّارِ.

*“There are six bad effects of adultery. Three of them are in this world and the other three are in the Hereafter. The effects of adultery in this world are as follows:*

- 1 – Adultery takes away one's sincerity and divine illumination.*
- 2 – Adultery stops the arrival of one's share of daily bread.*
- 3 – Adultery speeds up man's destruction.*

*The three effects of adultery in the Hereafter are as follows:*

- 1 – Adultery will raise the anger of the Lord.*
- 2 – Adultery will make the Reckoning difficult,*
- 3 – Adultery will result in entry (or remaining forever) in the Fire of Hell.”*

## Adultery Brings Poverty and Destruction

God's Prophet said:

الزَّيْنَةُ يُورِثُ الْفَقْرَ وَيَدْعُ الدِّيَارَ بِالْقَعِ.

*“Adultery causes poverty and turns habitations into wasteland.”<sup>18</sup>*

These are the evil results of adultery. Adultery will also cause sudden death. Imam Baqir narrated that it is written in Imam Ali’s book that God’s Prophet said:

إِذَا كَثُرَ الزَّيْنَةُ مِنْ بَعْدِي كَثُرَ مَوْتُ الْفَجَاءَةِ.

*“When adultery becomes widespread after me, there will be frequent occurrences of sudden deaths.”<sup>19</sup>*

## The Final Punishment for Adultery

Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Al-Husayn quoted on the authority of Dho’aib ibn Waqid on the authority of Husayn ibn Zayd that Imam Sadiq quoted on the authority of his forefathers on the authority of the Prophet :

أَلَا وَمَنْ زَنَى بِامْرَأَةٍ مُسْلِمَةٍ أَوْ يَهُودِيَّةٍ أَوْ نَصْرَانِيَّةٍ أَوْ مَجُوسِيَّةٍ، حُرَّةً أَوْ أَمَةً، ثُمَّ لَمْ يَتُوبْ مِنْهُ وَمَاتَ مُصِرًّا عَلَيْهِ فَتَحَّ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى لَهُ فِي قَبْرِهِ ثَلَاثِمِائَةَ بَابٍ يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا حَيَاتٌ وَعَقَارِبٌ وَتُعْبَانُ مِنَ النَّارِ، فَهُوَ يَحْتَرِقُ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ. فَإِذَا بُعِثَ مِنْ قَبْرِهِ تَأَذَى النَّاسُ مِنْ نَنْنٍ رِيحِهِ فَيُعْرَفُ بِذَلِكَ وَيَمَا كَانَ يَعْمَلُ فِي دَارِ الدُّنْيَا حَتَّى يُؤْمَرُ بِهِ إِلَى النَّارِ.

*“Beware! If a man commits adultery with a Muslim, Jewish, Christian or Magian woman– be it a free woman or a slave – and reaches the time of death without repenting, and persists on doing this wicked deed, God will open up three hundred gates into his grave from which snakes, scorpions and large serpents enter into it from the Fire. He will burn until the Resurrection Day. When he is raised from his grave, people will be tormented by his stench. He will be known by that and by his evil deeds in this world, until he will be taken into the Fire.”<sup>20</sup>*

Yes, this is the punishment for the people who commit adultery. They will be thrown into the Fire of Hell.

## Staying Chaste by Remembering Death

Imam Sajjad has expressed ways to remain chaste. The first thing to do is not view forbidden scenes. The second way is to remember death a lot. Now let us look at the following verse:

وَجَاءَتْ سَكْرَةُ الْمَوْتِ بِالْحَقِّ ذَلِكَ مَا كُنْتَ مِنْهُ تَحِيدُ

*“And the stupor of death will bring Truth (before his eyes): This was the thing which thou wast*

**trying to escape!” [The Holy Qur’an, Qaf 50:19]**

Death is like a state of being drunk. One will get so anxious when he realizes that he is going to be transferred from this world into the other world. He might even lose his mind realizing that he has to cut off all ties with this world with which he is used to, and he will enter a new world. Then he will be covered with fear, and experience a feeling similar to being drunk.

## **What is Death**

There is a tradition from Imam Sajjad which states that he was asked: “What is death?” He replied:

الموتُ) لِلْمُؤْمِنِ كَنَزَعِ ثِيَابٍ وَسَخَةِ قَمَلَةٍ وَفَكَ قِيُودٍ وَأَغْلَالٍ ثَقِيلَةٍ وَالِاسْتِبْدَالَ بِأَفْخَرِ الثِّيَابِ وَأَطْيَبِهَا وَأَوْطَى الْمَرَكَبِ (وَأَنْسِ الْمَنَازِلِ. وَلِلْكَافِرِ كَخَلْعِ ثِيَابٍ فَاخْرَةَ وَالنَّقْلِ عَنِ مَنَازِلِ أَنْيَسَةِ وَالِاسْتِبْدَالَ بِأَوْسَخِ الثِّيَابِ وَأُخْشَنَهَا وَأَوْحَشِ الْمَنَازِلِ وَأَعْظَمِ الْعَذَابِ.

*“For a believer, death is like removing dirty, lice-infested clothes and unfastening heavy chains and locks, in exchange for the most beautiful and best garments, the most comfortable mounts and the most delightful dwellings. However, for an unbeliever, death is like taking off the most magnificent clothes and moving out of loved houses, in exchange for the filthiest and coarsest clothes, the most desolate of dwellings and the greatest punishment.”<sup>21</sup>*

## **Imam Husayn’s Interpretation of Death**

Imam Husayn also presented a beautiful interpretation of death for his companions as follows:

صَبْرًا بَنِي الْكِرَامِ! فَمَا الْمَوْتُ إِلَّا قَنْطَرَةٌ تَعْبُرُ بِكُمْ عَنِ الْبُؤْسِ وَالضَّرَاءِ إِلَى الْجَنَانِ الْوَاسِعَةِ وَالنَّعِيمِ الدَّائِمَةِ، فَأَيْكُمْ يَكْرَهُ أَنْ يَنْتَقِلَ مِنْ سِجْنٍ إِلَى قَصْرِ؟ وَمَا هُوَ لِأَعْدَائِكُمْ إِلَّا كَمَنْ يَنْتَقِلُ مِنْ قَصْرِ إِلَى سِجْنٍ وَعَذَابٍ. إِنَّ أَبِي حَدَّثَنِي عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ أَنَّ الدُّنْيَا سِجْنُ الْمُؤْمِنِ وَجَنَّةُ الْكَافِرِ، وَالْمَوْتُ جِسْرٌ هُوَ لَاءٌ إِلَى جَنَّاتِهِمْ وَجِسْرٌ هُوَ لَاءٌ إِلَى جَحِيمِهِمْ.

*“O children of noble men! Persevere! Death is nothing but a bridge transferring you from hardship and suffering to the vast gardens of Heaven and lasting blessings. Which of you dislikes moving from a prison into a palace? However, death for your enemies is only as one transferred from a palace into a prison and punishment. My father quoted on the authority of God’s Prophet that this world is like a prison for believers and Heaven for unbelievers. Death is a bridge for these (believers) to their Gardens and a bridge for those (unbelievers) to their Fire.”<sup>22</sup>*

## Imam Sadiq's Interpretation of Death

Imam Sadiq was asked to describe death. He said:

هُوَ لِلْمُؤْمِنِ كَأَطْيَبِ رِيحٍ يَشْمُهُ فَيَنْعَسُ لِطَيِّبِهِ فَيَنْقَطِعُ التَّعَبُ وَالْأَلَمُ كُلُّهُ عَنْهُ، وَلِلْكَافِرِ كَلْسَعِ الْأَفَاعِي وَلدَغِ الْعَقَارِبِ وَأَشَدَّ.

*“Death for the believer is like breathing in a most pleasant breeze, the fragrance of which makes him slumber and all tiredness and pain comes to an end, but for the unbeliever it is like the biting of snakes and the sting of scorpions and even more severe.”*

Imam Ali said the following about the time of death when the curtains to the Unseen are drawn aside and the angels enter:

فَأَنَّكُمْ لَوْ قَدْ عَايَنْتُمْ مَا قَدْ عَايَنَ مَنْ مَاتَ مِنْكُمْ لَجَزَعْتُمْ وَوَهَلْتُمْ وَسَمِعْتُمْ وَأَطَعْتُمْ وَلَكِنْ مَحْجُوبٌ عَنْكُمْ مَا قَدْ عَايَنُوا وَقَرِيبٌ مَا يُطْرَحُ الْحِجَابُ.

*“If you could see what the dead see, you would be distressed and terrified and (as a result) you would hear and obey (God's words). However, what they see is veiled from you, and soon the veil will be drawn aside for you (and you too will see)!”<sup>23</sup>*

## The Reality of Death

It is often thought that death implies an ending and total destruction while this is in contradiction with what is said in the Holy Qur'an and intellectual reasoning. From the view of the Qur'an death is an existing affair. It is just a form of transferring from one world to another. That is why death has been interpreted to be a return of our soul to the angels in the Qur'an.

Three days in a person's life are said to be awesome for man in many Islamic traditions. They are the day on which he is born, the day he dies and sees the world beyond death, and the day on which he enters the Reckoning Ordeal and sees decrees that did not exist in this world.”<sup>24</sup> God said the following about John the son of Zachariah regarding these three days:

وَسَلَامٌ عَلَيْهِ يَوْمَ وُلِدَ وَيَوْمَ يَمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ يُبْعَثُ حَيًّا

***“So Peace on him the day he was born, the day that he dies, and the day that he will be raised up to life (again)!” [The Holy Qur'an, Maryam 19: 15]***

It is also said in the Qur'an that Jesus said:

وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيَّ يَوْمَ وُلِدْتُ وَيَوْمَ أَمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ أُبْعَثُ حَيًّا

***“So peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day that I shall be raised up to life (again)”! [The Holy Qur'an, Maryam 19:33]***

Imam Sadiq said:

ذِكْرُ الْمَوْتِ يُمِيتُ الشَّهَوَاتِ

*“The remembrance of death kills desires.”*<sup>25</sup>

God's Prophet said:

اذْكُرُوا هَادِمَ اللَّذَاتِ... الْمَوْتُ

*“Remember the destroyer of pleasures.”*

He was asked: “O Prophet of God! What is the destroyer of pleasures?”

He said: “Death.”

Imam Sajjad said that remembering death would destroy lust. Man should remind himself of divine chastisement since this will also help destroy lust. It is also important to seek God's help as the Imam said. If young people remember God and consider Him to be watching over all that they do, they will succeed and be saved. Joseph said:

وَمَا أُبْرِئُ نَفْسِي إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ إِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ رَبِّي إِنَّ رَبِّي غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

***“Nor do I absolve my own self (of blame): the (human) soul is certainly prone to evil, unless my Lord do bestow His Mercy: but surely my Lord is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.” [The Holy Qur'an, Yusuf 12:53]***

He entrusted himself to God and he was saved.

## **The Jurisprudents' Views on the Punishment for Fornication**

Islam has established rules and limitations to fight such a socially disastrous act that destroys the foundations of family life. If these rules and limitations are adhered to, then the Muslim society will be

pure and there will be security for the family members. This issue has been addressed in the Holy Qur'an:

الرَّانِيَةُ وَالرَّانِي فَاجْلِدُوا كُلَّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا مِئَةَ جَلْدَةٍ وَلَا تَأْخُذْكُمْ بِهِمَا رَأْفَةٌ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ  
الْآخِرِ وَلْيَشْهَدْ عَذَابَهُمَا طَائِفَةٌ مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

***“The woman and the man guilty of adultery or fornication, – flog each of them with a hundred stripes: Let not compassion move you in their case, in a matter prescribed by God, if ye believe in God and the Last Day: and let a party of the Believers witness their punishment.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Nur 24:2]***

There are three important instructions in this verse:

- 1 – The punishment for adultery or fornication for both men and women is prescribed.
- 2 – The Qur'an stresses that in interpreting this verse, we should rely on our faith in God and the Hereafter, not on our own feelings and emotions. The punishment should be carried out as stated. There is a tradition from God's Prophet in this regard. According to this tradition, some rulers who have reduced this punishment by one lash will be brought to trial in the Hereafter and asked for the reason they did so. They will say that they did so to have mercy on the people. Then God will tell them: “Were you kinder to them than I am?” Others who have hit an extra lash will be brought to trial in the Hereafter and asked for the reason they did so. They will say that they wanted to force the people to abandon committing sins. Then God will say: “Were you wiser and more knowledgeable than I am?” Then He will order that both of them be thrown into the Fire of Hell.
- 3 – The verse stresses that other believers should be present at the scene of the punishment since the aim of this punishing is not just for those who commit fornication to learn a lesson, rather it is meant to be a lesson for other people, too. This is because moral corruption might spread from the individuals involved to others in the society. As the case has been brought to court, there is no need to protect the honor of those who have committed fornication. They should be introduced to the people and punished in public so that others realize that they should respect the law.

The punishment for fornication has been prescribed to be one hundred lashes for men and women in this verse. This is a general decree. There are exceptions for this rule that we will point out. Certain conditions have been stated to be necessary for the punishment.

- 1 – The first condition is maturity. Thus, this does not apply to children who are not mature.
- 2 – The second condition is freedom of will. This applies if fornication is done with free will. Thus, someone who is raped will not be punished.

3 – The third condition is sanity. If the man or woman who commits fornication is insane, this punishment will not apply.<sup>26</sup>

4 – Imam Khomeini added: “It should also be added that the person who commits fornication should be aware of the punishment for fornication. Else this punishment will not apply.”<sup>27</sup>

The exception to the above rule is for adultery that is when a married man who can make love with his wife or a married woman who can make love with her husband commits fornication. Another exception to this rule is committing incest. The third exception is committing rape. The punishment for these crimes is death.

## Conditions

1 – To prove that fornication has been committed four just men, three just men plus two just women, or two just men plus four just women must witness that they have seen it take place.

2 – The place of committing fornication where they witness to have seen fornication take place should be the same for all witnesses.

3 – The time of committing fornication that they witness to should be the same.

4 – All the witnesses should witness in one court meeting.

5 – It is not acceptable if the four witnesses witness to have seen four different people commit fornication.

6 – It is not acceptable if the four witnesses who witness to have seen fornication take place cannot recognize the woman involved.

4 – Whenever three of the witnesses unite in their witnessing but the fourth person does not witness or disagrees with them, then the punishment of ‘Qazf’ – malicious accusation means that someone associates fornication or sodomy with a certain person<sup>28</sup> will be decreed for the three who witnessed.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>1.</sup> In the other version it is followed by:” The right of your private part is that you protect it from fornication and guard it against being looked upon.”

<sup>2.</sup> Nur al-Thaqalayn, v.3, p.588.

<sup>3.</sup> Bozorgsal wa Jawan (Guftar-i-Falsafi), v. 1, p.205, quoted from Andishehaye Freud, p.35, p.70.

<sup>4.</sup> Ibid., v. 1, p. 195, quoted from Zanashoyee wa Akhlaq-i-Islami, pp.46-52.

<sup>5.</sup> Makarim al-Akhlaq, p. 196.

<sup>6.</sup> Ibid. p.197.

<sup>7.</sup> Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, v.2, p.531.

<sup>8.</sup> Ibid. v.2, p.530.

<sup>9.</sup> Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, v.2, p.530.

<sup>10.</sup> Bozorgsal wa Jawan, v. 1, p. 194.

<sup>11.</sup> Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, v. 14, p.8.

[12.](#) The widespread disease called AIDS is just one example. A report published in the USA Today on May 29, 2001 states that although AIDS was initially discovered in 1981, the death toll from it has exceeded 21.8 million people in 2000. The following is according to the Joint United Nations Programme HIV/AIDS UNAIDS "AIDS epidemic update" of December 2001. Twenty years after the first clinical evidence of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome was reported, AIDS has become the most devastating disease humankind ever faced. Since the epidemic began, more than 60 million people have been infected with the virus. HIV/AIDS is now the leading cause of death in sub-Saharan Africa. Worldwide, it is the fourth biggest killer.

At the end of 2001, an estimated 40 million people globally were living with HIV. In many parts of the developing world, the majority of new infections occur in young adults, with young women especially vulnerable. About one-third of those currently living with HIV/AIDS are aged 15–24. Most of them do not know they carry the virus. Many millions more know nothing or too little about HIV to protect themselves against it. Eastern Europe – especially the Russian Federation – continues to experience the fastest growing epidemic in the world with the number of new HIV infections rising steeply. In 2001, there were an estimated 250,000 new infections in this region, bringing to 1 million the number of people living with HIV. Given the high levels of other sexually transmitted infections, and the high rates of injection drug abuse among young people, the epidemic looks set to grow considerably.

In Asia and the Pacific, an estimated 7.1 million people are now living with HIV/AIDS. The epidemic claimed the lives of 435,000 people in the region in 2001. The apparently low national prevalence rates in many countries in this region are dangerously deceptive. They hide localized epidemics in different areas, including some of the world's most populous countries. There is a serious threat of major, generalized epidemics. But, as Cambodia and Thailand have shown, prompt, large-scale prevention programmes can hold the epidemic at bay. In Cambodia, concerted efforts, driven by strong political leadership and public commitment, lowered HIV prevalence among pregnant women to 2.3% at the end of 2000 – down by almost a third from 1997. AIDS killed 2.3 million Africans in 2001. The estimated 3.4 million new HIV infections in sub-Saharan Africa in the past year mean that 28.1 million Africans now live with the virus. Without adequate treatment and care, most of them will not survive the next decade. Recent antenatal clinic data show that several parts of southern Africa have now joined Botswana with prevalence rates among pregnant women exceeding 30%.

In West Africa, at least five countries are experiencing serious epidemics, with adult HIV prevalence exceeding 5%. However, HIV prevalence among young adults continues to fall in Uganda, while there is evidence that prevalence among young people (especially women) is dropping in some parts of the continent. In the Middle East and North Africa, the number of people living with HIV now totals 440,000. The epidemic's advance is most marked in countries (such as Djibouti, Somalia and the Sudan) that are already experiencing complex emergencies. While HIV prevalence continues to be low in most countries in the region, increasing numbers of HIV infections are being detected in several countries, including the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Pakistan.

A larger epidemic also threatens to develop in the high-income countries, where over 75,000 people acquired HIV in 2001, bringing to 1.5 million the total number of people living with HIV/AIDS. Recent advances in treatment and care in these countries are not being consistently matched with enough progress on the prevention front. New evidence of rising HIV infection rates in North America, parts of Europe and Australia is emerging. Unsafe sex, reflected in outbreaks of sexually transmitted infections, and widespread injection drug use are propelling these epidemics, which at the same time are shifting more towards deprived communities.

An estimated 1.8 million adults and children are living with HIV in Latin America and the Caribbean – a region that is experiencing diverse epidemics. With an average adult HIV prevalence of approximately 2%, the Caribbean is the second-most affected region in the world. But relatively low national HIV prevalence rates in most South and Central American countries mask the fact that the epidemic is already firmly lodged among specific population groups. These countries can avert more extensive epidemics by stepping up their responses now.

[13.](#) American Social Health Association.

- [14.](#) Human papilloma virus.
- [15.](#) Human Immunodeficiency virus.
- [16.](#) Hepatitis B virus.
- [17.](#) International Family Planning Perspectives, 16:59, June 1990; USA Today, 8/8/96.
- [18.](#) Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, Kitab al-Nikah, Abwab Nikah Mahram, Bab 3, Tradition no. 11, v. 14, p.233.
- [19.](#) Ibid. p.231.
- [20.](#) Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, Kitab al-Nikah, v. 14, p.233.
- [21.](#) Kifayat al-Muwahhidin, v.3, p.203.
- [22.](#) Ma'ani al-Akhbar, v.2, p. 196.
- [23.](#) Nahj al-Balaghah, Fayz al-Islam, Sermon no.20.
- [24.](#) Nur al-Thaqalayn, v.3, p.327.
- [25.](#) Majmu'ah Waram, p.268.
- [26.](#) Mabani' Takmilat al-Minhaj, p. 169.
- [27.](#) Tahrir al-Wasilah, v.2, p.456.
- [28.](#) The punishment for 'Qazf' is 80 lashes for a man or a woman.
- [29.](#) Mabani' Takmilat al-Minhaj, Tahrir al-Wasilah wa Sharh-i-Lum'ah, Section on Fornication.

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