

Spiritual Rewards of The Tradition of The Cloak

فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ) : وَالَّذِي بَعَثَنِي بِالْحَقِّ نَبِيًّا وَاصْطَفَانِي بِالرَّسَالَةِ نَجِيًّا ، مَا ذُكِرَ خَبْرُنَا هَذَا فِي مَحْفَلٍ مِنْ مَحَافِلِ أَهْلِ الْأَرْضِ وَفِيهِ جَمْعٌ مِنْ شِيعَتِنَا وَ مُحِبِّينَا إِلَّا وَنَزَلَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الرَّحْمَةُ ، وَ حَفَّتْ بِهِمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَ اسْتَغْفَرَتْ لَهُمْ إِلَى أَنْ يَنْفَرُوا

The Prophet, peace be upon him and his Household, said, "I swear this by Him Who has sent me with the truth as Prophet and chosen me, as holding communion, to convey the Message; whenever the tale of this gathering of us is mentioned in an assembly of the people of the earth in which a group of our adherents and lover are present, the (divine) mercy shall certainly be poured down on them and the angels shall certainly surround them, asking forgiveness for them until they depart."

What was the Prophet's answer to Imam Ali's question? Interestingly, he begins his response by swearing, just as Allah (SWT) did before him. Again, the purpose behind swearing is to convey importance to the statement that will follow that swear. As we know, it is highly disliked that a person swears in general, but if he has to swear, then he cannot swear about anything but Allah (SWT).

In this case, the Prophet (SA) swears by Allah (SWT) but does so in an eloquent way. He swears by the Lord who sent him as prophet and chose him as holding communion to convey the Message.

The reason why the Prophet (SA) chooses to swear in that manner is to remind us (through Imam Ali) that he is the Seal of Messengers who is the representative of God. Hence, he does not speak out of his own free will and whatever he is about to say, is not from his personal wishes or an exaggeration from him. Everything the Prophet (SA) utters is directly the word of God without addition or subtraction.

After the swearing by Allah (SWT) who appointed him to his position, the Prophet (SA) answers the question by presenting a condition, and that is, *"Whenever the tale of this gathering of us is mentioned in an assembly of the people of the earth in which a group of our adherents and lover are present..."*

He lists a series of blessings in two separate statements which shall benefit those devotees. Before familiarizing ourselves with these blessings, it is important to first understand that the condition for reaping the benefits of reciting this tradition is contingent upon two major criteria and that is:

- 1) The servant must be a lover and Shi'a (devout follower) of the purified AhlulBayt (AS)
- 2) The servant would join a gathering of devotees to the Prophet's purified household where the *Tradition of the Cloak* is being recited.

There is no other criteria or qualification to this gathering except the above conditions. The attendees don't have to be residing in any particular location such as a mosque or holy sanctuary. They don't have to be living in a Muslim country or belong to a certain racial group. The skin of their color doesn't matter neither does their educational or intellectual backgrounds.

All that matters is their love and devotion to the Prophet's AhlulBayt (AS) which unifies the Shi'as at every level. It is interesting to note that the narration makes a distinction between the "Shi'as" and the "lovers". What exactly is the difference between the two groups? Isn't every Shi'a of AhlulBayt also a lover? And isn't every lover of AhlulBayt also a Shi'a?

Our Infallible Imams (AS) have described to us who exactly are the true Shi'as (supporters and followers) of the AhlulBayt. It is narrated that one time a man went to his wife and said to her, "Go to Fatima the daughter of the Prophet and ask her if I am from their Shi'a or not". The wife went to ask Lady Fatima (AS) and she answered, "Tell your husband that if he acts according to our commands and keeps himself away from what we forbid, then you are from our Shi'a; otherwise, you are not."

The wife returned back and conveyed the message to her husband who exclaimed, "Woe be to me! And who is not free of sins and mistakes?! I am surely in Hell-Fire for whoever is not from the Shi'a is truly in Hell-Fire!" The man's wife returned back to Lady Fatima and conveyed her husband's remarks.

Lady Fatima (AS) then said, *"Tell him that is not the case. Our Shi'a are the best of the people of Paradise. All our lovers and those who support our supporters, and those take our enemies as their enemies, and those who surrender to us by their hearts and tongues, are not from our Shi'a IF they disobey our orders and prohibitions at any time. Despite that, they are still going to Paradise. However, some of them will purify themselves from their sins by experiencing calamities and tragedies, or they may undergo hardships on the Day of Resurrection, or they may be placed at the upper level of Hell-Fire until they are purified and their love to us would save them and transfer them to our domain."*
(Bihaar Al Anwaar)

In another tradition, a man came up to Imam Hasan (AS) claimed, "I am from your Shi'a". So Imam Hasan (AS) replied, *"Oh Abdullah, if you obey our commands and abide by our prohibitions, then you are truthful. And if you are not, then do not increase in your sin by falsely claiming a great and honorable position that you don't deserve. Do not say "I am from your Shi'a". Rather say "I am from your*

supporters, lovers, and those who take your enemies as our enemy. You are in a good position and are heading to a good position”.

Another man said to Imam Al Sajjad (AS), “Oh son of Messenger of Allah, I am from your sincere Shi’a.” So the Imam (AS) replied back to him, “If you are like Prophet Ibraheem *Khaleelullah* whom Allah (SWT) has said

وإن من شيعته لأبراهيم

(Verily among those who followed his Way was Abraham.) (37:83)

and if your heart is like his heart, then you are from our Shi’a. And if your heart is not like his heart but it is free from deceit and animosity, then you are from our lovers.”

From these narrations by our Imams (AS), it becomes clear to us that the station of “Shi’as” and the station of “lovers of AhlulBayt” are different although they are both blessed and are include among the party of the good. Every Shi’a is also a lover of AhlulBayt (AS), however not every lover is considered to be a Shi’a. The rank of the Shi’as is certainly above the lovers of AhlulBayt (AS) due to their strict obedience and abidance to the path of AhlulBayt (AS) and their high level of piety.

The stronger the love to the AhlulBayt (AS), the more obedient and righteous actions will be manifested by the lover and that will certainly bring him closer to the rank of the Shi’as. As lovers of AhlulBayt (AS), we hope and pray that we are given success to reach the station of the Shi’as and deserve to be called with that honorable title. It is the intercession of the infallible AhlulBayt (AS) which manifests the mercy of Allah (SWT) on the devotees which brings them salvation by virtue of their moral and spiritual support to the divinely appointed guides.

The reward behind joining the gathering where the *Tradition of the Cloak* is being recited includes both the Shi’as and lovers. What are the three benefits that the Prophet (SA) mentions in this regard? The first statement covers three rewards which focus on the spiritual bounties related to the hereafter as they are most important and they are:

- 1) They will be encompassed with divine mercy.
- 2) The angels shall surround them.
- 3) The angels will seek forgiveness on their behalf until they depart from their gathering.

The bestowal of divine blessings manifested in Allah’s infinite mercy is conveyed in the short phrase of Basmalah known as *Bimillah Ar-Rahman Ar-Raheem*. These two words, *Rahman* and *Raheem* express slightly different variations of meaning. Imam As-Sadiq (AS) says that *Rahman* is a special name for a general attribute while *Raheem* is a general name for a specific attribute. And Prophet Isa (AS) states

that *Rahman* is a type of mercy related to this world while *Raheem* is related to the hereafter.

The term *Rahman* describes that aspect of the source of all creation which is endlessly radiating and nourishing, regardless of whom or what is receiving the endless flow of blessings. On the other hand, the term *Raheem* describes that aspect of mercy which is issued forth only in response to the actions and behavior of the recipient. It is in this manner that God takes ten steps toward us when we take even a single step toward God.

Allah (SWT) is *Raheem* with our religion, our worldly affairs, our hereafter and He (SWT) has made it easy for us with least amount of burden (Tafseer Saafi). According to many narrations, the mercy associated with *Raheem* is specific to the believers only who are the devotees and followers of the Prophet's AhlulBayt (AS) and divinely appointed Infallible Imams.

It is that mercy highlighted in the word "Raheem" that is referred to in the *Tradition of the Cloak*. Since the followers of AhlulBayt (AS) have embraced the path of the truthful and its representatives who were chosen by Allah (SWT), they deserve His infinite mercy and are its recipients whenever they gather to recite this tradition.

We may also deduce that any gathering in general which involves commemoration or remembrance of the AhlulBayt (AS) such as the Tradition of the Cloak does, whether it be their virtues, merits, tragedies, or autobiographies, will yield divine blessings and bounties for its participants.

In fact, this is deemed a highly recommended act as Imam Al Sadiq (AS) has said, *"Our Shi'a are compassionate amongst each other. When they hold a private meeting they remember Allah. Verily, the remembrance of us is of the remembrance of Allah. When we are remembered, Allah has been remembered, and when our enemy is remembered, Satan has been remembered."*

In another tradition, it is recorded that Imam al-Sadiq (AS) asked one of his companions Fudhail Ibn Yasaar, "Do you assemble with your friends and narrate traditions?" He said, "Yes, may I be sacrificed for you." He (AS) said, *"I hold dear such gatherings as it will revive our matter. May Allah have mercy on he who revives our matter. O Fudhail! He who remembers us or being reminded about us and this brings tears out of his eyes even to the extent of a wing of a fly, Allah will forgive his sins even if they are greater than the scum of the sea."*

The second reward mentioned in this tradition is that the angels surround that believer who has participated in a gathering of devotees to the holy household where the *Tradition of the Cloak* is being recited. It is a known fact that "angels" generally represent good while its antonym, "devils" symbolize bad.

Hence, the presence of angels in a location such as a holy sanctuary indicates goodness, purity, and righteousness, while the presence of devils in a place like a haunted house indicates evil, deceit, and falsehood. So, we can imagine that if a person is accompanied by devils, they are likely to be possessed

with evil, are misguided, and have deviated away from the path of the good.

On the other hand, if we are told that a person is accompanied by angels, we can safely assume that they are in good standing and have attained a high level of piety. We have examples in history such as Lady Maryam (AS) and the prophets and messengers who interacted with angels, something which normal human beings don't. In the case of the *Tradition of the Cloak*, the reward of the believer who recites or attends such blessed gathering will be the proximity of the angels to him.

Not only that, the third reward will be that the angels seek forgiveness for him not just once or ten times, but rather continuously until the believers depart this gathering! It is narrated that Imam Al-Sadiq (AS) once said to Dawud Ibn Sarhan, "O Dawud, offer my greetings to my friends and deliver this message to them that Allah blesses a servant who gathers with another to make the remembrance of our matter, and in that case, the third among them is an angel who asks forgiveness for them.

When two servants gather for our remembrance Allah reminds His glory to His angels (for having such servants). Thus, when you gather, spend your time on remembering (us) since your gathering and your remembering sets our matter alive. And the best people after us are those who remind others of our affair and invite others to our remembrance." (Bihaar Al Anwaar)

What a great blessing and reward for the Shi'a and lover of AhlulBayt! We are given the opportunity to have intercession performed on our behalf by the angels of God who are closer to Him than we are and are more purified than us. Surely, their performance of "Istighfaar" (repentance) for us will reach its target quicker with a higher degree of acceptance than our own individual repentance.

The same is the case if we seek intercession from those who are even closer to Allah (SWT) and higher in rank than the angels, who are the Prophet (and his AhlulBayt) who was given permission to cross the heavens at a point where Archangel Jibrael (AS) couldn't. In fact, we are encouraged by Allah (SWT) to seek repentance to Him and ask forgiveness of our sins by intercession via the Holy Prophet (SA), as indicated in the Qur'an,

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ إِذْ ظَلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ جَاءُوكَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا اللَّهَ وَاسْتَغْفَرَ لَهُمُ الرَّسُولُ لَوَجَدُوا اللَّهَ تَوَّابًا رَحِيمًا

"And had they, when they were unjust to themselves, come to you and asked forgiveness of Allah and the Messenger had (also) asked forgiveness for them, they would have found Allah Oft-returning (to mercy), Merciful." (4:64)

As indicated in this verse, a servant will find Allah (SWT) to be forgiving if he enhances his own repentance by seeking intercession of the Prophet (SA) whose prayers will be answered by virtue of his close proximity to the Almighty Creator.

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