

The Bright Lights of Guidance



Muhammad Ali Khansary

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The present book is a collection of sermons delivered by the well known religious scholar Mr Hajj Sayyid Muhammad Ali ibn al-Ridha Khansary.

The lectures include important issues like: the intellect, knowledge, the oneness of God, the need for the existence of the divine proofs (the prophets and the imams), the common and special prophets, the need for the existence of the imam of our time (atfs), the miraculous aspects of the Quran, the resurrection, ethics and giving advice, the benefits of a mosque, the supplications, asking for forgiveness and gratitude, the servitude if God, the Lord's recommendations to the Prophet (s), four important recommendations of the Prophet (s), honesty and spreading justice.

All of the above mentioned sermons have been delivered in accordance with the Holy Quran and the hadith of the Ahlul Bayt (as).

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We dedicate this work to both of our parents to whom we are greatly indebted – our fathers: the late Mr. Mohammad Mehdi Peiravi, and the late Mr. Charles Henry Morgan, and our mothers who are alive and whom we and our children love and are still under their spiritual protection and loving support: Mrs. Talat Sheikh Peiravi and Mrs. Betty June Morgan.

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We thank God the Almighty for the opportunity granted to us to undertake the preparation of The Bright Lights of Guidance after the successful completion of Al-Khisal (A Numeric Classification of Characteristics); Uyun Akhbar al-Ridha (a.s.); An Anthology of Islamic Poetry Vol. 1&2; Imam Ridha's (a.s.) Pilgrimage Procedures and Prayers; A Divine Perspective on Rights; The Treatise on Rights; Mishkat ul- Anwar Fi Ghurar il-Akhbar and The Islamic Family Structure.

Regarding the references to verses of the Holy Quran, we have exactly cited for coherency using an available translation of the Quran into English by Mr. Abdullah Yusuf Ali (May God reward him). The translation of the Holy Quran that we used is the following:

The Holy Quran,

Abdullah Yusuf Ali (English & Arabic).

We also warmly welcome any suggestions made by the readers that might help us learn about our mistakes and shortcomings, and help us improve our future works.

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The present book is a collection of the lectures delivered by a well-known religious scholar named Mr. Hajj Sayyid Muhammad ibn al-Ridha Khansary which have been delivered in sessions with religious students and scholars in Khansar. The material presented in this book constitutes the lectures delivered by him in recent years during which he has been suffering from old age, weak sight and an inability to read or write.

He merely relied on his memory for these lectures. The present book was published since it contains very valuable religious material presented in a most simple form. The book was reviewed by several noble religious scholars from the religious school in Khansar and then its publication was authorized by Mr. Hajj Aqa Khansary.

Abalfazl's Sermon on top of the Ka'ba before the Tragedy of Karbala

In the lunar year 60 A.H. on the day of Tarvia Abal Fazl Al-Abbas climbed up on top of the Ka'ba and delivered the following sermon:

Praise be to God who honored this Holy House (Ka'ba) with the birth of his¹ father Ali (a.s.) in it – the House which was just God's House before, has now turned into the direction of Qibla (towards which we pray) by the nobility of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.). O lustful and corrupt atheists! Are you blocking the way for the pilgrimage of the Divine Leader of the best of the people? Who deserves to visit the Ka'ba more than he (a.s.) does? Who is closer to than him (a.s.) to the Ka'ba? Were it not for the apparent wisdom, hidden secrets and Divine trials, the Ka'ba would have gone to circumambulate the Imam (a.s.), before he (a.s.) walked towards it. The people kiss the Hajar, but the Hajar kisses his hands. Were it not that my Master's will was based upon Divine destiny, I would have rushed into you as an angry eagle attacks little flying sparrows does and would have taken away your lives. O coward people! Are you trying to scare a tribe whose childish games are playing with death? How do you think they get when they become adults? I swear that I would sacrifice the lives of my dearest ones for him instead of offering animals for sacrifice. Woe! Look carefully and see whether you follow one who drinks wine or one who owns the Pond, and the Kauthar? Do you follow one in whose house there are drunk singers or one in whose house there are revelations and the Holy Quran? Do you follow the one in whose house there are lustful conceptions and deeds, or one in whose house there is purity and verses (of the Quran)? You have fallen into the same error in which the Quraish had fallen. They wished to kill God's Prophet (S) and you wish to kill the son of the daughter of God's Prophet (S). It was not possible for them to kill God's Prophet (S) as long as the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) was alive! How then is it possible for you to kill Abi Abdullah al-Husayn (a.s.) as long as I am alive? Let me show you how to kill him. Kill me and chop off my neck. Only then you may attain your goal. May God not let you attain your goals for which you have united; and shorten your lives and the lives of your children. May God damn you and your grandfathers.

الحمد لله الذي شرف هذا بقدوم أبيه من كان بالأمس بيتاً أصبح قبلة. أيها الكفرة الفجرة أئصدون طريق البيت لإمام البررة من ثو أحق به من سائر البرية؟ ومن هو أدنى به؟ ولولا حكم الله الجلية وأسراره العلية واختباره البرية لطار البيت إليه قبل أن يمشي لديه قد استسلم الناس الحجر والحجر يستلم يديه ولو لم تكن مشية مولاي مجبولة من مشية الرحمن ، لوقعت عليكم كالسفر الغضبان على عصافير الطيران. أتحون قوما يلعب بالموت في الطفولية فكيف كان في الرجولية؟ ولقد يت بالحمامات لسيد البريات دون الحيوانات. هيهات فانظروا ثم انظروا ممن شارب الخمر وممن صاحب الحوض والكوتر؟ وممن في بيته الغواني السكران وممن في بيته الوحي والقرءان؟ وممن في بيته اللهوات والدنسات وممن في بيته التطهير والأيات. وأنتم وقعتم في الغلطة التي قد وقعت فيها القریش لأنهم اردوا قتل رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله وأنتم تريدون قتل ابن بنت نبيكم ولا يُمكن لهم ما دام أمير المؤمنين (ع) حيا وكيف يُمكن لكم قتل أبي عبد الله الحسين (ع) ما دُمت حيا سليلا؟ تعالوا اخبركم بسبيله بادروا قتلوا واضربوا. عُنقي ليحصل مُرادكم وبددا عماركم وأولادكم ولعن الله عليكم وعلى أجدادكم.

1. Referring to Imam Al-Husayn (a.s.).

Discourse 1: On the Nobility of the Intellect

Introduction

It has been narrated on the authority of Abi Ja'far al-Baqir (a.s.), God – Exalted is His Praise – created the Intellect. Then God ordered it to come forward, and it did. He then ordered it to go back, and it did. Then God stated, “I swear by My Majesty and Honor and I have not created any creatures dearer to me than you (referring to the Intellect), and would not perfect anyone's intellect unless I like him. I shall enjoin others to do good and admonish others against evil due to the Intellect. Reward and punishment is given by means of the Intellect.”

The Intellect is the most important thing which is the source of man's honor and virtue. Also it is the most significant blessing which God the Blessed the Sublime has favoured man with, so that he may distinguish the good from the evil, and the ugly from the beautiful by using it.

From the above tradition one can also conclude that all of the following are due to man having an Intellect: enjoining (people) to the good and forbidding them from doing the evil; spiritual rewards and Divine Punishments as well as the issue of being responsible for our deeds.

The Intellect makes one pay attention to his duties

It is also stated in the following Honorable Quranic verse:

“We did indeed offer the Trust to the Heavens and the Earth and the Mountains; but they refused

to undertake it, being afraid thereof: but man undertook it; He was indeed unjust and foolish.”

The Holy Quran: Al-Ahzab 33:72

What is the meant by the phrase 'but man undertook it' in the above verse? What honor and virtue did man have that enabled him to undertake such a heavy and burdensome responsibility? It can be stated that the answer to the above question is man's nobility and honor which are due to his Intellect. Man could undertake this Divine Offer of the Trust because of the existence of his Intellect.

God the Exalted says:

“We have honored the sons of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favours, above a great part of our creation.” The Holy Quran: Isra 17:70

Therefore, all this honor and virtues are due to the Intellect. Also the Munificent Quran stresses that one must think and use his Intellect and find the solution to his problems. This has been stressed many times in the Holy Quran such as,

“Perchance ye may understand.” The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2:73¹

The honor of man who is the best creature in the world is due to the fact that everything in the world is gathered together in him. This means he has the attributes of the angels as well as the attributes of animals, the plants and the solid objects. It is exactly for this reason that he has the potential and worthiness of being a symbol of Divine Names and Attributes.

The Reason why Angels prostrate before man

The angels prostrate to man exactly due to the existence of the Intellect in him. Man is the only creature from amongst all the creatures that has acquired this honor. Of course, this is an honor for some people and not every man is endowed with such an honor. One who carries out his Divine duties and acts according to the purely Divine Laws has this honor.

Man can reach the state of being the symbol of Divine Attributes. He can attain such a high position as to assume the position of Prophethood or Trusteeship (Divine Leadership). In fact, the purpose of the creation of the world is bringing about the perfect man. This means that God has created all creatures for mankind and He has created mankind for the sake of the perfect man referring to the Prophets and their Testamentary Trustees.

Therefore, the Intellect which is the source of man's honor is a precious jewel that God the Exalted has placed in man. Man can attain high ranks and get near to God's Threshold by using this precious jewel, i.e. the Intellect.

Moreover, all goodness, perfection and praise-worthy behaviors are rooted in the Intellect.

The intellect invites one to seek Knowledge

Knowledge is the first thing which the Intellect directs man to seek. Man is promoted to a higher position when knowledge appears in man. This is similar to the case of the Prophets and saints whose rank is higher and better than the angels, since they have real knowledge. However, the Intellect must be in line with religious jurisprudence, so that the Intellect may invite others to knowledge.

The first decree which the Islamic Shariah (law) prescribes is seeking knowledge. God's Prophet (S) has stated the following in this regard,

'Seeking knowledge is incumbent upon every Muslim man and woman.' He (a.s.) has stated, 'Seek knowledge even if it is in China as seeking knowledge is incumbent upon every Muslim.' Muhammad (S) has also stated, 'If people only knew what a great gain there is in seeking knowledge, they would seek it every moment – even if their blood may be shed or they may get drowned at sea in this way.'

For this very reason, acquiring knowledge is of such great importance that if an individual faces problems while seeking knowledge, he must struggle against them. He must be serious and try as hard as he can to attain high ranks.

It is also stated in the following Quranic verses:

“Then, for such as had transgressed all bounds, and had preferred the life of this world, their Abode will be Hell-Fire; And for such as had entertained the fear of standing before their Lord's (tribunal) and had restrained (their) soul from lower desires, their abode will be the Garden.”The Holy Quran: An-Naziat 79:37-41

This means that they have gotten to know God which is the first thing that the Intellect invites one to. And knowledge is the recognition of God. Once one gets to know God, he discovers the Divine Majesty. Thus, the fear of God will be established in his heart. He would then restrain himself and control his lust. Therefore, he may attain his true abode in Paradise.

Discourse 2: Signs of the Perfection of the Intellect

Virtues of the Intellect

There are many honorable verses and traditions about the virtues of the Intellect. As an example, I state a tradition from Imam Musa Ibn Ja'far al-Kazim (a.s.) here. In some of Imam Musa Ibn Ja'far al-Kazim's (a.s.) recommendations to Hisham Ibn Hakam – may God be pleased with him – it has been stated, "O Hisham! If anyone wants to be self-sufficient without riches, be free of jealousy and have a healthy religion, he should really cry hard before the Honorable God the Exalted, so that God may perfect his Intellect. Once his Intellect is perfected he would be content with the minimum necessities of life. Whoever is content with the minimum necessities of life will become self-sufficient. However, if one is

not content with the minimum necessities of life, he will never become self-sufficient."

This means that if one is not content but is greedy, he will never attain self-sufficiency.

Contentment is a sign of the Perfection of the Intellect

In another tradition it has been narrated that the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated, "Whoever is content is honorable, and whoever is greedy is debased." In another tradition it has been narrated that the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated, "Contentment is a form of wealth that never ends."

Attributes which Indicate the Perfection of the Intellect

In another tradition it has been narrated that Imam Musa Ibn Ja'far al-Kazim (a.s.) told Hisham – may God be pleased with him – "O Hisham! The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) always stated, 'God has never been worshipped any better than when He has been worshipped with the Intellect. No one's intellect is perfected unless he acquires good characteristics.'" The first sentence in this tradition is similar to the decree of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) which stated, "Intellect is that ability by which the Merciful God is worshipped, and by which Heaven is attained."²

However, the attributes of a wise individual as stated in the words of Imam Musa Ibn Ja'far al-Kazim (a.s.) are as follows, "Amongst the attributes of a wise individual one can mention that he is always safe from unbelief and wickedness. He is also expected to always make progress and be good.³ He avoids being talkative. He never says more than what is necessary.⁴ The extra money he has is donated to others.⁵ What he benefits from in this world is the minimum that is absolutely necessary for him. He never demands more than that.⁶"

Acquiring Knowledge as a Sign of the Perfection of the Intellect

A sensible and wise individual never becomes tired of learning since his Intellect forces him to seek knowledge. He seriously endeavours to study, gain knowledge and virtues around the clock, and he tries to attain a high position in this world.

Of course, it is obvious that the knowledge-seeker's goal must be the Holy Attributes of Allah and attaining His Satisfaction. A knowledge-seeker must not strive to achieve worldly pomp and short-lasting worldly positions. We read the following in the Holy Quran in this regard,

'... Those truly fear Allah, among His Servants, who have knowledge: for Allah is Exalted in Might, Oft-Forgiving.' The Holy Quran: Fatir 35:28

Therefore, true wisdom is truly-fearing Allah and being afraid of disobeying Him. Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) has stated the following in this regard, "The perfection and completeness of perfection is to understand and to become wise in religion meaning to try to understand the religion. And perfection is having

patience in dealing with calamities and life's difficulties as well as being economical in life's affairs."⁷

A similar narration has been reported on the authority of Imam al-Ridha (a.s.), "The servants (i.e. the people) will not attain the reality of faith before they enjoy three characters: knowledge of religion, moderation of livelihood, and steadfastness against misfortunes. All power belongs to God the Exalted the Great."⁸

This is also stressed in another tradition which has been quoted on the authority of God's Prophet (S) in which he (S) also considers man's prosperity to be found in three things. He (S) states, "Whenever God intends to grant a blessing to His servant, He makes him an ascetic; a jurisprudent in religion; and aware of his own shortcomings. Whoever has such attributes, surely the blessings of this world and the Hereafter are bestowed upon him."⁹

That is to say that all of an individual's attention is concentrated upon his own faults. And he never intends to pry into others' affairs so as to reveal them.

Acquiring Knowledge of the Religion is a Sign of the Perfection of the Intellect

Now let us see what sort of knowledge is the knowledge that has had so much importance placed on it and been encouraged to gain. What knowledge has so much reward?

In answer to this question it must be stated that even though every form of science is appreciable, there are three sciences which have been encouraged to attain more than others, being:

1- The principles of religion

2- The branches of religion

3- Ethics

There is a tradition on the authority of God's Prophet (S) which says, "Indeed knowledge is three things: strong verses, ethics and established traditions."¹⁰

Here strong verses can either be interpreted to refer to the Holy Quranic verses or the principles of religion. Established traditions could also be interpreted to refer to the obligatory and the recommendable deeds, or knowledge thereof. Ethics could also refer to either ethics itself or the knowledge of ethics. Therefore a sensible and wise individual never becomes tired of getting educated.

It has been quoted on the authority of God's Prophet (S), "On the Resurrection Day, an individual will not make a move unless four things are asked from him:

1- He will be asked how he has spent his priceless life.

2- He will be asked how his youth was spent.

3– He will be asked how his wealth was earned and how it was spent.

4– He will be asked whether he expressed love for the members of the Prophet Muhammad's Household or not."¹¹

The last question is because the love for the members of the Household of God's Prophet (S) is just the reward for the Prophet's mission as we read in the following verse of the Holy Quran,

“... Say: ‘No reward do I ask of you for this except the love of those near of kin.’...” The Holy Quran: Ash-Shura 42:23.

Now let's return to the sayings of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.). He (a.s.) stated, "To be belittled but be with God is better than to be honored in the company of other than God." He (a.s.) also stated, "Being humble is better than being honored for the one who is intelligent."

The Prophet (S) stated the following in this regard, "God will raise the rank of anyone who is humble before God. God will debase anyone who is haughty."¹² The Prophet (S) also stated, "He (an intelligent person) would consider any little bit of goodness from others to be a lot. He (an intelligent person) would consider any goodness done by himself to be very little, even if it is great. He (an intelligent person) would consider everyone else to be better than himself. He (an intelligent person) would consider himself to be worse than everyone else."¹³

The last sentence can have two meanings:

1– These attributes are actually the perfection of the attributes and he (the intelligent person) has all of them.

3– The perfection of that individual just depends on this, meaning that the best attribute to be found in man is that he never takes himself into consideration, and he always considers himself to be lower in rank than others.

Discourse 3: The Intellect Moderates Lust and Anger and Fosters Wisdom

The Apparent Proof and the Hidden Proof

The Blessed Imam Musa Ibn Ja'far Al-Kazim (a.s.) stated the following about the Intellect, "O Hisham! God has two Proofs for the people: One being apparent and the other being hidden. God's apparent Proof is God's Prophets (a.s.), Messengers (a.s.) and the Imams (a.s.). God's Hidden Proof is the Intellect."¹⁴

Therefore, God has established two Proofs for men – one which is apparent being the Prophets of God.

Also the other Proof is Hidden being the Intellect that is similar to an angel for guiding man which God has placed within him as an ability.

The Need for the Prophets along with the Intellect

Here a question comes to mind. Why is there the need for the Apparent Proofs being the Prophets when there is a Prophet within us called the Intellect? It invites man to the belief in the oneness of God, virtues and perfection. The Intellect makes an individual stay away from vices.

The answer to this question is that the Intellect has a limited ability to understand matters. Should there be a veil in front of it, it must be guided so that this cover is removed. It is with the help of that guider being a Prophet that the Intellect can discover and understand the truth.

For example, man has eyes which enable him to see. This ability to see is always with him. However, when man is surrounded by darkness, he cannot see at all. However, when light comes the veil of darkness is removed and man can see everything. The same also holds true for the ability of the Intellect or wisdom which is a limited ability for understanding that exists in mankind. However, it needs a guide so that the various issues are explained for him in detail. In other words, the Intellect is an inner light. However, there must also be an apparent light so that the Intellect may be helped in understanding the truth.

That is why if one does not have the faculty of the Intellect, he bears no responsibility at all. And also he has no need for the Prophets. However, if one possesses intellectual abilities he would become the reflection of God's Beauty and Majesty with the aid of the Prophets and approach the Threshold of God's Throne. Upon understanding the position and status of the Intellect, we must pray to God to increase this ability within us.

The Significance of the Intellect and its Relationship to Lust and Anger

It was stated that the Intellect is similar to an angel that has been sent by God the Exalted to guide mankind. However, it must be noted that lust and anger also exist in man just like the Intellect. Even so, sometimes lust and anger rebel and are not satisfied within prescribed limits.

Lust and anger want to rule over the soul which is the master of the body and force it to obey them, so that whatever they desire is done by the soul. The Intellect opposes our lust and anger. The powers of lust and anger even try to destroy the Intellect. However, the Intellect does not aim to destroy these powers. Rather, the Intellect struggles to reform them, since lust and anger must exist in man as stated before. It is by means of lust which man may obtain his own interests. And it is by means of anger which he may fend off damages from himself. Although the two powers of lust and anger are beneficial for man's life, sometimes they rebel.

The goal of the Intellect is to reform and moderate them so that they may be prevented from rebelling.

There is a real conflict going on between the Intellect and these two; and as a result the realm of an individual's being is a battlefield for the fight between the Intellect, lust and anger. God has given man the Intellect to help him overcome lust and anger and not let them rule over his soul.

The Intellect can cause lust and anger to be suppressed, and not succeed. This is just that struggle with the spirit of lewdness. The spirit of lewdness is the spirit which is dominated by lust and anger. Once these two powers dominate man's soul, it is man's own responsibility to rid himself of them. God the Exalted has granted him the Intellect to assist him in overcoming these powers by moderating and controlling them. Should the Intellect attain authority and moderate lust, the attribute of modesty appears. Moreover, should the Intellect attain authority and moderate anger, the attribute of bravery appears.

When anger is moderated many pleasing attributes spring from it. Modesty appears as a result of the moderation of the power of lust. There are many virtues and much perfection which appear as a result of modesty.

The reason we say that these two powers must be moderated is that each of the powers of lust and anger have two extreme sides. One extreme side of the power of lust is overindulgence in sex, while the other extreme is rigidity and that is putting lust completely aside. Bravery is also the moderate form of the power of anger. Bravery should be moderated so that if bravery is in the excess, dangers result and a fool-hardy person is one who gets himself involved in dangerous and frightening situations. On the other hand, if an individual goes to the other extreme he would become too scared. However, when anger is moderated by the Intellect, this could be called bravery.

However, the Intellect itself may get deviated and go to extremes. One extreme side of the deviation of the Intellect is ignorance, while the other extreme is thinking too much in such a way that man gradually forgets the truth, and thinks about futile matters. For instance, it is possible that things will get to a point where an individual imagines that God does not exist at all and that nothing else exists except tangible matters.

Even it is possible that the Intellect imagines that nothing else exists in this world except for the imagination like a group of Sufi philosophers who wrote, "There were some people who followed a man called Birhun – The Wise. He believed that whatever you see in this world is not real. He even believed that the people themselves did not exist in reality. He believed that it was all just imagined. He maintained that pain does not exist. He believed in this so much that even if he ran into an animal or obstacle in the market place, he did not protect himself. However, his students would take hold of him and direct him over to a corner, so that he would not run into anything else."

This was an example of extravagance of the Intellect. However, if the Intellect goes to the other extreme, ignorance results. Ignorance may be simple in which case it may be cured. It may be compounded, which would be extremely difficult to cure.

The one who does not know and knows that he knows not shall succeed in life, since he will try to overcome his ignorance and carry out his responsibilities. This refers to the case of simple ignorance in which case the ignorant individual knows he is ignorant. Therefore, he slowly tries to learn and would ultimately be able to manage his affairs.

The one who knows not and does not know that he knows not shall remain forever in the state of compounded ignorance. This refers to a person who is ignorant, but is unaware of his ignorance forever. However, he who knows and knows that he knows shall succeed in the world.

Therefore, we can conclude that there is a constant conflict between the Intellect, lust and anger in one's body. The forces of lust and anger are trying to subdue the spirit and the Intellect; and pull them towards the rank of an animal. They even try to destroy the Intellect.

On the other hand, the Intellect does not want to destroy lust and anger. Rather, it attempts to moderate them. Moreover, the Intellect tries to make the spirit obey it, so that the spirit can attain the rank of Divine Proximity by obeying the religious rules. Should the spirit obey the Intellect, its rank will be raised and it will attain Divine Proximity. However, if the spirit follows lust and anger and indulges in them, it will be lowered to the rank of an animal.

His Holiness the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated, "Patience is a covering curtain. The Intellect is a sharp sword. You may cover up your shortcomings and behavioral disorders with the aid of your patience, and fight with and kill the soul's desires with the aid of your Intellect."¹⁵

The Holy War against the Self and its Relationship to the Intellect and the Soul

Now the importance of waging a Holy War against the soul will be clarified. And it will become evident why an individual must wage a Holy War against the soul and not let it obey lust and anger, but rather force his soul to obey his Intellect's orders. Of course, waging war against the soul is an exceedingly difficult task, and struggling against the soul's desires requires a serious effort.

There is always a fight going on between the Intellect on one side, and lust and anger on the other side. If the Intellect overcomes the other two, then an individual is led to obey religious rules and use knowledge. He then attains the rank of Divine Proximity. However, if lust and anger overcome the Intellect, he is pulled toward the rank of an animal and joins the devils. This is what Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) stated when asked about the Intellect, "The Intellect is that ability by which the Merciful God is worshipped, and by which Heaven is attained."¹⁶

Then they asked the Imam (a.s.), "Was it not the Intellect which existed in Muaviyah?" The Imam (a.s.) replied, "No. What he had was not the Intellect, but rather it was trickery and naughtiness which resemble the Intellect, while they are not actually the Intellect."

How can Justice be Attained?

Some have stated there are four powers which exist in an individual and are somewhat superior in comparison to other powers:

- (1) Intellect
- (2) Lust
- (3) Anger
- (4) Imagination

The task of the power of imagination is to perceive the details, while the task of the intellectual ability is to understand the whole. If the intellectual ability is moderated and there is no extravagance, then wisdom would appear. Wisdom means knowledge of the reality of things to the extent of man's ability to bear such concepts as the concept of monotheism or other things. Moreover when lust is moderated, modesty is gained, and when anger is moderated bravery appears.

Also some moralists say that the three powers are (1) bravery, (2) modesty, and (3) wisdom. Bravery results from the moderation of anger; modesty results from the moderation of lust; and wisdom results from the moderation of the Intellect. These three powers are the basis for more perfection and virtues. If one possesses these three powers, he possesses justice. However, those who say the power of the imagination can be moderated are of the opinion that justice will appear as a result of the moderation of the power of imagination.

Motivating the Intellect as the Goal of the Prophets' Mission

Therefore, the appointment of the Messengers and the Prophets to their posts is to awaken the Intellect and put it into motion. The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated, "God sent the Prophets from amongst the descendants of Adam (a.s.), so that they would demand mankind to be faithful to the covenant between God and man's innate disposition. And God sent the Prophets to remind mankind of the forgotten Divine Blessings, and to bring out the hidden treasure called the Intellect. This is so that with this intellectual talent, mankind would obey the decrees issued by the Prophets."¹⁷

One of the tasks of the Intellect is to invite human beings to knowledge. Man's Intellect forces him to seek knowledge and get to know monotheism (Towheed), the Prophethood (Nabuwat) and other religious beliefs. The Intellect invites man to seek knowledge. Knowledge is the most supreme virtue and perfection which could be imagined for mankind to possess. If man does not possess knowledge, he cannot make use of the Intellect and Divine Laws. Therefore, knowledge is of extreme importance and one must seriously try to acquire it.

1. and several other verses.

2. Kafi, 1/11.
3. The most supreme form of which is faith.
4. He never gossips, lies or makes fun of people. He never says anything which is meaningless.
5. This means that he always pays for the necessary expenses for which he is responsible and gives charity, too.
6. This means that he is content with what he has.
7. Kafi, 1/32.
8. Tuhuful – Uqool, 471.
9. Bihar ul–Anwar
10. Kafi, 1/32.
11. Bihar ul–Anwar, 71/180.
12. Bihar ul–Anwar, 75/122.
13. Kafi, 1/18–19.
14. Kafi, 1/16.
15. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 424.
16. Kafi, 1/11.
17. Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 1.

Discourse 1: The Honor of Divine Knowledge Accompanied by Moral and Intellectual Nobilities

The Virtue Of Knowledge

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated, "The best wealth which an individual receives is knowledge." Good etiquette and praise-worthy characteristics are like clean clothes which always adorn us. Pondering is a very bright mirror."¹

العلم وراثه كريمة والأداب حلل مجددة والفكر مرآة صافية

The honor and the virtue of knowledge is obvious. And it cannot be denied that whenever man refers to his Intellect he understands that knowledge is honorable.

God the Exalted states,

“...Say: ‘Are those equal, those who know and those who do not know? It is those who are endowed with understanding that receive admonition.’” The Holy Quran: Az-Zumar 39:9.

In fact, the point that the knowledgeable one and the ignorant one are not equal has been stated here, so as to remind the owners of the Intellect about it. This means that the owners of the Intellect and wisdom understand that knowledge is better than ignorance, and having knowledge is not equivalent to being ignorant. The Holy religion of Islam is also a religion of knowledge that continually invites its

followers to acquire knowledge and act accordingly.

The Necessity of Getting Educated in Divine Sciences

You have probably often heard the following tradition on the authority of the Seal of the Prophets – Muhammad Ibn Abdullah (S), "It is incumbent upon every Muslim man and Muslim woman to seek knowledge."² In the Arabic text of some versions of this tradition we find the word Muslamat (Muslim Women) along with Muslim, while in some other versions we only find the word Muslim which of course also includes men as well as women.

In another narration the Prophet (S) stated, "Seek knowledge even if you have to travel to China, since seeking knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim."³ This means that seeking knowledge is of such importance that even if it is necessary for you to travel a long distance to obtain it, you should do so.

In another narration the Prophet (S) stated, "You must seek knowledge from birth till death."⁴

In another narration it has been stated, "I heard that Aba Abdullah as- Sadiq (a.s.) stated, 'Try to sincerely and profoundly understand the religion, since anyone who does not do so is like a Bedouin.' The Honorable God the Exalted also stated in His Book:

"...they could devote themselves to studies in religion, and admonish the people when they return to them, – that thus they (may learn) to guard themselves (against evil)."⁵ ***The Holy Quran: Tauba 9: 122.***

The Honor Of Divine Knowledge

There are many Quranic verses in this regard including the following,

"There is no god but He: That is the witness of Allah, His angels, and those endued with knowledge, standing firm on justice. There is no god but He, the Exalted in Power, the Wise." ***The Holy Quran: Al-Imran 3: 18.***

In this verse God the Exalted has placed the witnessing of the knowledgeable ones in the same rank as His Own Witnessing. Of course, it is clear that the ones highest in rank of the knowledgeable ones are the Immaculate Imams (a.s.), the first of them being the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) who is the same peerless character about whom God the Exalted states,

"The Unbelievers say: 'No apostle art thou.' Say: 'Enough for a witness between me and you is Allah, and such as have knowledge of the Book.'" ***The Holy Quran: Ar-Ra'd 13:43.***

In another verse it is stated,

"...And when ye are told to rise up, rise up. Allah will raise up, to (suitable) ranks (and degrees),

those of you who believe and who have been granted (mystic) Knowledge. And Allah is well-acquainted with all ye do.” The Holy Quran: Al-Mujadilah 58: 11.

In another verse it is stated,

“Allah is He Who created seven Firmaments and of the earth a similar number. Through the midst of them (all) descends His Command: that ye may know that Allah has power over all things, and that Allah comprehends, all things in (His) Knowledge.” The Holy Quran: At-Talaq 65: 12.

This means that the world has been created so that you may acquire theological knowledge and realize that God is All-Powerful and All-Knowledgeable. The knowledge of theology is the first in rank of all sciences, and it is the source of all other branches of science.

Therefore, the nobility of knowledge is a certain issue. That is why it is stated, "The truth of knowledge is actually the same light which God the Exalted makes shine in the heart of whoever He wishes to do so."⁶

Knowledge must be Accompanied by Noble Behavior

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated, "The best wealth which an individual receives is knowledge..."⁷ It becomes evident from this sentence that knowledge has a lot of importance. The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) continued by saying, "Good etiquette and praise-worthy characteristics are like clean clothes and garments which always adorn us..."⁸

Knowledge becomes valuable when it is accompanied by admirable personal attributes and piety. Therefore, man should try to develop admirable ethics such as truthfulness, kindness, patience, humbleness, and other admirable ones.

Knowledge must be Accompanied by Thinking

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) continued by saying, "...Pondering is a very bright mirror."⁹ There are other narrations about this. For example, the following has been narrated on the authority of Abi Abdullah as-Sadiq (a.s.), "One hour of thinking is better than one year of worshipping (without any thinking)." Abi Abdullah as-Sadiq (a.s.) added,

“... It is those who are endued with understanding that receive admonition.” The Holy Quran: Ar-Ra'd 13: 19.

What is this (type of) thinking that is of such importance? The most significant type of thinking is thinking about the manifestations of God's Power, the wonderful things about God's Creations and Signs. Man must think about his own existence and notice the Manifestations of God's Power in his own existence and in Creation. This very act is the greatest type of thinking for man.

The second type of thinking which is of great importance is that about the unfaithfulness of the world. Man should realize that this world is transient and he must not rely on it a lot. On the other hand, he must take lessons from the events in the history of man. And the result of this would be that he will not get attached to this world anymore, but will get detached from it. Acquiring knowledge must also be for the sake of God, and not for this world. Otherwise, no benefit is derived from that. Amongst the various types of thinking which are very outstanding are thinking about scientific issues such as monotheism (Tawheed); the religious principles (monotheism, Prophethood and the Resurrection); religious jurisprudence; religious precepts; morality; Quranic commentary and to sum it all up – the Islamic sciences.

Discourse 2: The Virtue and the Divine Reward for Getting Educated and the Duties of the Knowledge-Seeker

Virtues of Getting Educated

The most important attribute of perfection which can be imagined for man is knowledge. There are many verses in the Noble Quran which express the virtue of knowledge, among which we can cite the following verses,

“Proclaim! (or read!) in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created–Created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood:Proclaim! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful, He Who taught (the use of) the pen, Taught man that which he knew not.” The Holy Quran: Al-Alaq 96: 1-5.

In these verses the beginning of man’s existence which is mentioned in this verse is the clot of congealed blood (Alaqih). And afterwards, these verses express the highest rank for man which is knowledge.

There also exist a lot of narrations about the virtues of knowledge. The Prophet Muhammad (S) stated, "Learn knowledge, for to learn it is an advantage: to study it is (a feature of) glorification of God; to search for it is (a sort of) holy war (jihad); to teach it (to the ignorant ones) is a form of charity; to instruct it freely is a pious act because it is the sign of the allowed (halal) and the forbidden (haram). It leads its seekers to Paradise; it entertains them during times of loneliness; and it is their companion when they are in a strange place.

It is a guide towards joy; a weapon against the enemies; and a beauty as seen by friends. It is with knowledge that God raises some people to such a high degree that it makes them guides to goodness, so that their conduct is cited as an example and their practices are followed as a lesson. The angels desire to become friends with them. Knowledge is the life of the hearts and light of the sights.

It is the strength of bodies. God takes the bearers of knowledge to the ranks of the beloved ones and grants them the association with the virtuous ones in this world and the life to come. Through

knowledge, God is obeyed, worshipped, acknowledged, and confessed as being One. Through knowledge, likewise, relationships are respected and the allowed (halal) and the forbidden (haram) things are recognized. Knowledge is the leader of the Intellect. The Intellect guides it towards prosperity and warns it about corruption."¹⁰

Worshipping God is the result and the ultimate point of man's creation as He stated in the Holy Quran,

"I have only created Genies and men, that they may serve Me." The Holy Quran: Az-Zariyat 51:56.

Thus, the aim of creation is worshipping God. Moreover, acquiring knowledge is not just a form of worship, rather it is the highest form of worship. This is so since if there is no knowledge, then man would not know how he should worship God. As we read in a part of the above narration, "...to study it is (a feature of) glorification of God..."¹¹

The same reward for praising God and supplicating by saying things such as "Glory be to God, praise be to God, there is no god but God, and God is the Greatest" or "There is no power nor any strength save in God the Great" is established for studying and learning knowledge.

There is a narration in which the Prophet (S) stated, "When a believing servant of God glorifies Him and praises God sincerely by saying 'Glory be to God; praise be to God; and there is no god but God; God is the greatest' God the Exalted commissions the angels to plant a sapling for him in Heaven, and these heavenly saplings yield fruit. This continues until the Heavenly saplings mature and bear fruit."¹² Therefore, studying and acquiring knowledge has the same reward as praising God.

The above narration goes on and says, "... to search for it is (a sort of) holy war (jihad); to teach it (to the ignorant ones) is a form of charity; to instruct it freely is a pious act ..." ¹³ However, why does knowledge have such a great amount of reward? It is because as in the above narration it is stated, "... to instruct it freely is a pious act because it is the sign of the allowed (halal) and the forbidden (haram). It leads its seekers to Paradise..." ¹⁴ In another narration on the authority of God's Prophet (S) we read, "God will open a way to Heaven for anyone who covers a distance to acquire knowledge."¹⁵

The above narration goes on and says, "... it entertains them during times of loneliness; it is their companion when they are in a strange place. It is a guide towards joy; a weapon against the enemies; and a beauty as seen by friends..."¹⁶

Knowledge forces man to be patient in times of hardship and he gets rewarded. Moreover it is man's guide when he is blessed and happy, since knowledge forces man to thank God for His Blessings, and use each blessing in its own place.

Fruits of Theology

When one completely recognizes God, he becomes greedy to seek knowledge. This is so because

Divine Decrees are based on knowledge. Thus in this narration we read the following, "Through knowledge, God is obeyed, worshipped, acknowledged, and confessed as being One."¹⁷

Therefore, man must try to acquire knowledge. And as much as it is possible one's intention to do so must be sincere. He must have the sole intention of doing so for God's sake neither leadership nor for worldly goods. This means that knowledge must be sought for the sake of knowledge, not for the sake of this world. "Attend to your soul and its nobilities. And try to acquire nobilities, since it is the soul that makes a man not the body."¹⁸

First Become Learned and then Guide Others

Therefore, one must try to seek knowledge and reach the rank of the knowledge-seeker, and act upon it until one becomes perfectly knowledgeable. This must be done in a praiseworthy manner. In each stage, one must first find the necessary information and act accordingly.

Then he may try to guide others. Amongst the orders of His Holiness Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) is the following, "Whoever opens the doors leading others to guidance and guides someone will receive the same rewards given to the doers of those good deeds. Whoever misguides others to deviation, will receive the same type of chastisement which the misguided ones receive."¹⁹

Thus, man must try to guide people. However, he himself must act upon that guidance first. The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated, "Whoever establishes himself as the leader of the people should train himself before he trains others. He should teach others with his own actions before he teaches them with his tongue. One who trains and guides himself and practices what he has learned is more worthy of respect than one who just trains and guides others."²⁰

Duties of Knowledge-Seekers

The duty of a knowledge-seeker is that his knowledge-seeking must be for God, since seeking knowledge is the most important type of worship and worship must be for the sake of God.

Knowledge for God

A knowledge-seeker should be sincere and ask God to grant him success in acquiring knowledge and acting upon it. He should struggle hard to seek knowledge. In this regard the Holy Quran states,

"And those who strive in Our (cause), – We will certainly guide them to our Paths: For verily Allah is with those who do right." The Holy Quran: Al-'Ankabut 29:69.

Knowledge Accompanied by Action

Moreover a knowledge-seeker must act according to his knowledge, since knowledge without action does not have any benefit. A knowledgeable individual lacking action is like a fruitless tree.

Knowledge along with Piety and Chastity

A knowledge-seeker's knowledge must be accompanied by piety. His soul or self must be decorated with good habits; a good temper and admirable attributes such as patience; humbleness; honesty; reliance on God; contentment and perseverance. There is a narration from Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) which states, "Nothing is better than knowledge combined with patience."²¹ Of course, patience is one of the evident qualities of the Prophets (a.s.). God praises them for having such an attribute.

Knowledge with a Good Temper

Moreover, a knowledge-seeker's knowledge must be accompanied by a good temper. God's Prophet (S) stated, "The most perfect of the believers from the aspect of belief are those who have a better temper."²²

God the Exalted praises God's Prophet (S) for having this quality where God states,

“And thou (standest) on an exalted standard of character.” The Holy Quran: Al-Qalam 68:4.

The attribute of being good-tempered was also one of the morals of the Divine Leaders (Imams). It has been quoted in another narration, "The good ones from amongst you are those who have a good temper, and who become intimate with the people so that they become intimate with them."²³

In another narration it is stated by God's Prophet (S), "The first thing to be measured on the Balance of Deeds from amongst one's actions is a good temper."²⁴

In another narration on the authority of God's Prophet (S) we read, "He (a.s.) told his companions, 'Do you want me to let you know about the individual who is more similar to me from the aspect of morality?' They answered in the positive. His Holiness (S) stated, 'The ones who are more similar to me are the ones from the aspect of temper and patience; and from the aspect of being more generous to their relatives; and from the aspect of being better in controlling themselves during times of anger or happiness.'"²⁵

Knowledge Accompanied by Paying Respects to the Professor

One of the duties of knowledge-seekers is that they should pay due respect to their professors. There is a narration on the authority of God's Prophet (S) in this respect which states, "God the Blessed the Exalted has designated a relationship between four things and four other things:

A – The blessing of knowledge is this that when the student sees his teacher he should show respect and bow before him.

Since when a student praiseworthy appreciates his professor, his knowledge is blessed. And if he does not show this respect he will lose his knowledge.

B – If an individual pays attention to God's Majesty (by observing the creatures), his belief will remain with him.

However, if he has not discovered the Majesty of God, he will lose his belief.

C – God has placed the joy of life in doing good to one's parents.

Whatever good an individual does for his own father and mother, he will be more fortunate in this world and the next. And he will enjoy life more.

D – One must abandon annoying people so as to be rescued from the Hell-Fire. This means that if a person does not annoy anybody, God will protect him from the Hell-Fire."²⁶

Therefore, we should try to be pious and be qualified with good attributes and morality. We must respect our parents and teachers and try not to bother anyone at all.

Discourse 3: The Nobility and Virtue of Getting Educated and Teaching that Knowledge

Introduction

His Excellency the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated to one of his companions Kumayl ibn Ziyad Nakhayi (may God the Exalted be pleased with him, "These hearts (meaning these souls) of the people are containers and the best of those containers is the one which can hold more."²⁷

يا كميل إحفظ عني ما أقول لك: الناس ثلاثة: عالم رباني ، ومتعلم على سبيل
نجاة ، وهمج رعا ، أتباع كل ناعق ، يميلون مع كل ريح ، لم يستضيئوا بنور
العلم ، ولم يلجئوا إلى ركن وثيق ، يا كميل العلم خير من المال ، العلم يحرسك
وأنت تحرس المال ، والمال تنقصه النفقة ، والعلم يزكو على الإنفاق

One can conclude from this saying of His Excellency (a.s.) in which he stated 'the one which can hold more' that some people's talents differ from those of other people and from the beginning, the learning capacity of various individuals differs. For this very reason people are held responsible to the degree of their capacity, although the same duties and beliefs are expected of everyone."

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) also stated, "O Kumayl! Remember what I tell you. The people are divided up into three groups: divine scholars; students seeking to be saved; and the pests in the air which fly in whichever direction the wind blows. They are the ones who have not benefitted from any

rays of knowledge and have not sought refuge in any strong base..."²⁸

He (a.s.) divided the people up into three distinct groups:

1- 'Divine scholars' include the Prophets, the Immaculate Leaders and other scholars who are in the field of religious studies or teach the people religious subjects.

2- 'Students seeking to be saved' refers to those who use the teachings of divine scholars and wish to be saved. They benefit from a high rank, since they seek knowledge by studying.

3- 'Pests in the air' refers to people who are unimportant and may be pushed around just as the wind takes pests along with it in any direction. Since these people are not enlightened by the light of knowledge, they go after anything they hear. They do not have a firm belief and are not leaning on any strong place.

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) goes on to enumerate the advantages of knowledge and stated, "O Kumayl! Knowledge is better than wealth. Knowledge will guard you, but you must guard your wealth. Wealth will be reduced once spent, but knowledge will increase when it is spread."²⁹

And what a difference there is between that which man must protect and that which would protect man. Knowledge, however, is not like this. Rather, it always accompanies man. Getting to know the truth of knowledge is religion itself and in return in the Hereafter it will be recompensed. Knowledge is the means by which man obeys and worships God in his own lifetime.

Knowledge Leads to Worship

And of course, it is obvious that the goal of creating man is worship of and obedience (to God) as we read in the Holy Quran,

"I have only created Genies and men, that they may serve Me." The Holy Quran: Az-Zariyat 51:56.

We also read in another verse,

"And they have been commanded no more than this: To worship Allah, offering Him sincere devotion, being true (in faith)..." The Holy Quran: Baiyinah 98:5.

Thus, the goal of this created world is worshipping God and that is the very quality of knowledge by which means man understands how to worship God. In the event that there is no knowledge, man does not know how to give away charity, say his prayers, associate with other people and finally how to be sincere. These things are expressed by religious knowledge.

Therefore, this means that man by means of religious knowledge chooses divine worship and obeying God as his way in life. Knowledge is the means by which man obeys and worships God in his own

lifetime. It is also by the means of knowledge that man will be remembered by his good name after he passes away. Knowledge is the ruler (and the orderer). However, an order is issued upon wealth.

The ones who pile up wealth upon wealth are actually dead in the time in which they are alive. However, the clergymen and scientists remain alive up until the end of time. And even though apparently their bodies are obliterated and they disappear from sight, their examples are always remembered in the hearts. This is like the great Shia scholars who left behind all of these precious writings and services. And they are always alive and eternal, even they are not present in the society. This is expressed in a poem attributed to the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) which says:

*The faces of people are like each other
Their father and mother are one.
Their father is Adam and their mother is Eve.
There is no virtue and perfection
except for the religious scholars.
Since for those who seek guidance,
they are the reason and the guide.*

Therefore, you should make a serious effort to acquire knowledge and get educated. You should not substitute anything else for it, since everyone is dead except for the learned ones who are alive.

It has also been stated that knowledge is the most valuable thing which you may store up. The glory of those who intend to acquire and teach knowledge will never diminish.

The Virtue of Teaching Knowledge and Guiding the People

Thus one must intend to get educated and struggle in this way which is the necessary condition for reaching that goal. And when a scholar is perfect in knowledge and action, he must make an effort to teach others and save people from the dark well of derivation. He must guide them to the Straight Path as is stated in the following narration, "If someone guides an individual, he is brighter than the sun which shines upon him."³⁰

It is clear that if an individual becomes perfect in knowledge and does not guide others, naturally the foolish ones will try to guide the people. Thus it is no wonder how much corruption will result from that.

1. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 5.
2. Mustadrakal – Vasa'el, 17/2 48.
3. Bihar ul-Anwar, 1/180.
4. Tafsir-i-Qumy, 2/401.
5. Kafi, 1/31.
6. Misbah ul-Shria, 16
7. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 5.
8. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 5.

9. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 5.
10. Tuhuf ul-Uqool, 28.
11. Tuhuf ul-Uqool, 28.
12. Vasa'el ash-Shia, 7/185.
13. Tuhuf ul-Uqool, 28.
14. Tuhuf ul-Uqool, 28.
15. Kafi, 1/34.
16. Tuhuf ul-Uqool, 28.
17. Tuhuf ul-Uqool, 28.
18. Kashkool-e-Sheikh Bahaei, 175.
19. Kafi, 1/35.
20. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 73.
21. Bihar ul-Anwar, 2/53.
22. Vasa'el ash-Shia, 2/156.
23. Bihar ul-Anwar, 77/149.
24. Bihar ul-Anwar, 71/385.
25. Kafi, 2/24.
26. Ithna Asharia.
27. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 147.
28. Al-Khisal, 3-257.
29. Al-Khisal, 3-257.
30. Bihar ul-Anwar, 33/448.

Discourse 1: The Appearance of God and the Reasons behind His Concealment

The issue of recognizing God and the fact this world has a Creator is the most obvious thing as God the Exalted says,

"Is there a doubt about Allah, The Creator of the heavens and the earth? ..." The Holy Quran: Ibrahim 14: 10.

The Master of the Martyrs Imam Al-Husayn (a.s.) said the following in one of his supplications, "O my Lord! Is there any appearance in things other than You which You may lack and by which they may make You reappear? Has there ever been any moment at which you disappeared so that there be a need to prove your existence? Has there ever been a moment at which you were far away so that there be a need to seek your effects to prove your existence?"¹

Of course, the rank presented in this supplication is that of the Immaculate Divine Leaders (a.s.), since they are the ones who first see God whenever they look at anything. The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) said, "I never see anything unless I see God before it, with it and after it."² This can also be seen in the Abu Hamzeh Supplication of Imam Sajjad (a.s.) as follows, "I got to recognize You by You. You presented yourself to me. I could not have recognized You without your assistance."³

Thus the Holy Essence of God the Nourisher is the most evident of all things. So others must be recognized by means of God, while He is not recognized to be by means of others as we read

“He is the First and the Last, the Evident and the Immanent: and He has full knowledge of all things.” The Holy Quran: al-Hadid 57:3.

It has been narrated that once during the time of Imam Sadiq (a.s.), a group of atheists were sitting in the Al-Haram Mosque. Abdullah ibn Moqaffah and Ibn Abi al-Owjah were amongst them. Ibn Moqaffah was sitting in a corner of the Al-Haram Mosque while Imam Sadiq (a.s.) was sitting in another corner of the mosque. A group of Muslims were circumambulating around God's House.

At that time, Ibn Moqaffah faced Ibn Abi al-Owjah, pointed to Imam Sadiq (a.s.) and said, "These people whom you see do not deserve to be called human. The only one who deserves to be a human and can be called a complete human is the one who is sitting in the other corner of the mosque." Ibn Abi al-Owjah said, "What are you saying! What is the difference between him and other people like us? He is also one of these same people." Ibn Moqaffah said, "It is not so. I have seen something in this great Sheikh which I have not seen in others!" Ibn Abi al-Owjah said, "What you have stated about him must be examined."

Ibn Muqaffah stated to him, "Lest you do this, I am afraid that it will take away the benefit of saying the rosary with your prayer beads."

Ibn Abi al-Owjah stated, "You do not have this opinion: Rather you are afraid that the opinion which you have about him and the rank which you know he deserves may become affected."

Ibn Muqaffah stated, "If you do not confirm that he is a perfect human, go and talk with him."

Ibn Abi al-Owjah stood up, went and sat down by Imam Sadiq (a.s.). Still he had not stated a word when the Imam (a.s.) stated to him, "If it is as you say, you and I will be like each other. However, if I am right, woe be to you since you will be tortured until eternity".

The Imam (a.s.) meant that if due to Owjah's opinion God does not exist, any deed which he has done in this world and any deed which the Imam (a.s.) has done in this world, will all be like each other. Then according to Owjah's viewpoint, all these deeds will be ruined and come to an end. However, if God exists and there is Resurrection as we believe, woe be upon Owjah's state!

At this time, Ibn Abi al-Owjah found an opportunity to change the subject and said, "I am not arguing with you."

The Imam (a.s.) said, "How can you say that you are not arguing with us? We say that this world has a Powerful Creator, and punishment and Resurrection exists, while you say that none of these things will happen. Thus we are not of the same opinion."

Ibn Abi al-Owjah said, "If your prayer is right and this world has a Creator, why does not God manifest and show Himself to the people? And why doesn't He talk with the people and tell them about these issues so that these arguments can come to an end?"

The Imam (a.s.) stated, "How has God who has created you been concealed from you? Which Powerful Hand created you when you did not exist? And who granted you all these parts of the body and blessings, so that you can see the different effects and various states in yourself? Sometimes you are ill and sometimes you are healthy.

This is how God the Exalted displays your health to you after your being ill. Sometimes you are strong and able, and sometimes you are weak and feeble. God the Exalted shows you your weakness and your powerfulness. He makes you understand anger after satisfaction and vice-versa; He shows you your fullness after being hungry.

And He makes you understand your thirst being quenched after being thirsty; and your debasement after being honored. And He shows you how you dislike something after liking it." The Imam (a.s.) continued to count these changes of the mood and the heart in man one after another until Abi ibn al-Owjah stood up and went to Abdullah ibn Moqaffah. Ibn Muqaffah asked him, "O.K. What happened?" Ibn Abi al-Owjah said, "Woe be upon you! Imam Sadiq (a.s.) is not a human. He is a perfect human. He is an angel who has appeared in the face of a human. He (a.s.) spoke with me in such a way that it seemed I saw God with my own eyes, and I stood up and came to you."⁴

Thus we can conclude that God the Exalted is clearer than everything and the reason He is concealed from us is the extent of severity of His Manifestation. The other reason why God the Sublime has been concealed from man's Intellect is that He has no opposite since we usually can recognize things by their opposite.

For example, if darkness did not exist, no one would understand what light means. Man understands light when darkness exists, too. Thus we may recognize things by recognizing their opposite. However, God the Sublime does not have an opposite. Thus He has become concealed for the intellects.

Thus we may conclude that God is clearer than everything else. If the sun was always fixed in the midst of the sky, no one would pay any attention to the light which comes from it. However, when it changes by rising and setting and its darkness which is the opposite of light comes, we understand that the sun gives off this light. God the Sublime states,

"Say: Behold all that is in the heavens and on earth"; but neither Signs nor Warners profit those who believe not."The Holy Quran: Yunus 10: 101.

The greatest joy of the scientists, scholars and wise men is looking at the world of Creation and pondering over the Majesty, Knowledge, Wisdom and Power of God the Nourisher. The Quran is the first to invite us to benefit from this joy, since it invites the people to think about the creatures and the world

to see the manifestation of power of the Nourisher. In one place God states,

“Say: Behold all that is in the heavens and on earth”; but neither Signs nor Warners profit those who believe not.” The Holy Quran: Yunus 10:101.

In another place God states,

“Do they not look at the sky above them? How We have made it and adorned it, and there are no flaws in it?” The Holy Quran: Qaf 50:6.

Elsewhere God states,

“On the earth are signs for those of assured Faith, As also in your own selves: Will ye not then see?” The Holy Quran: Az-Zariyat 51:20-21.

This is so that you may see all of the wonderful things which exist in your own being and the kinds of blessings which the Nourisher has granted you.

Moreover, in another verse God states,

“Then let man look at his food, (and how We provide it):” The Holy Quran: Abasa 80:24.

Although by looking at the food we eat we will enjoy it more, this verse does not mean that. Rather, the intention of this verse is that man must look at the food which he eats and think what factors have been used in preparing this food as we read in the following verses,

“For that We pour forth water in abundance, And We split the earth in fragments, And produce therein Corn, And Grapes and nutritious Plants, And Olives and Dates, And enclosed Gardens, dense with lofty trees, And Fruits and Fodder for use and convenience to you and your cattle.” The Holy Quran: Abasa 80:25-32.

In these verses God the Blessed the Sublime draws the people's attention to thinking about the foods and the fruits which they eat, and see what factors have influenced the making of these foods.

As Sadi says in the Golestan, "Cloud and wind, moon and sun move in the sky

That thou mayest gain bread, and not eat it unconcerned.

For thee all are revolving and obedient.

It is against the requirements of justice if thou obeyest not."

Many factors influence the production of food and other aspects of human life. If the sun does not exist, no plants could grow on the Earth and humans and the animals would not survive. If this Earth was closer to the Sun than it is now, the creatures on the Earth would burn up due to the heat from the Sun.

And if the Earth was farther away from the Sun than it is, the plants would not grow, and the humans and the animals would not survive. The Power and Wisdom of God the Blessed destined that this distance be what it is.

Thus, in addition to all of the factors at work, there must also be a farmer to plant the seeds, and plough the earth before that. Then he should water the earth and must take care that the crop is yielded. Harvesting, putting stalks into groups, heaping up the crop, taking what is yielded to the mill and producing wheat, then making the dough and bread are all factors which result in producing the bread. All of these factors have a share in eating this bread. Thus we see what actions of man and how many tools are used to prepare it.

If man really thinks about the wonders of Creation by studying about the earth, the sea, the sky and all other creatures and considers how the plants on the earth revive in the spring after everything perishes in the winter, and various fruits grow with different colors and tastes, then he will conclude that the Wise and Mighty God plans for and manages the wide world of Creation.

Discourse 2: Physical Signs of the Wise Creator

God the Blessed the Sublime states in His Book,

“And among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variations in your languages and your colors: verily in that are Signs for those who know.” The Holy Quran: Al-Rum 30:22.

One of the greatest pleasures of scholars and scientists is to look at the effects of God's Power in this world and to see the strange things which exist in the heavens and the Earth. In the above noble verse God the Blessed the Sublime points out the creation of the heavens and the Earth as being one of His Signs.

He also points out the variation of colors and languages as another Sign of the Mightiness of God. One of the differences amongst languages are in the words which the people use in their conversation such as in Urdu, Farsi, or Arabic. Another difference amongst languages is in the case of sounds. All the people who live on the Earth do not have the same voice. This is so that no one's voice is mixed up with another person's voice. Anytime someone speaks to you, you say he is so and so.

And you will rarely mix him up with another one. Another sign pointed to is that of color. One of the other differences is the difference in skin colors; for example we have people who are black, white, yellow, red or of other colors. The other meaning is the differences between colors of the people of the same color. This means that all white skin colors, all yellow skin colors or black skin colors are not the same. There are different shades of color. And the difference in colors in man is due to the fact that no face, form and no man is like another. No one is mistaken for another.

This is in the same way that voices are not confused for one another. If it was other than this – that is if everyone did not have a special appearance – people would not recognize each other. Then a father might be mistaken for a son, two brothers could not be distinguished from each other, etc. and mankind could not survive. When man thinks about these matters, he would be amazed at the display of God's Power. That is why all over the earth voices, appearances and faces are not be similar to each other! Of course, there are some instances where two brothers or sisters look like each other, but they are not exactly the same. There are some differences even in twins.

Sometimes in some cases God does not act in the usual way, so that the people become aware of how God has demonstrated His Power. In another noble verse He states the following about the differences in colors,

“Seest thou not that Allah sends down rain from the sky? With it We then bring out produce of various colors. And in the mountains are tracts white and red, of various shades of color, and black intense in hue. And so amongst men and crawling creatures and cattle, are they of various colors. Those truly fear Allah, among His Servants, who have knowledge: for Allah is Exalted in Might, Oft-Forgiving.” The Holy Quran: Fatir 35:27-28.

Also God states in another verse,

“And the things on this earth which He has multiplied in varying colors (and qualities): verily in this is a sign for men who celebrate the praises of Allah (in gratitude)” The Holy Quran: Al-Nahl 16: 13.

This implies that the variation of colors exists in everything. Moreover, everything glorifies God as we read in the following verse,

“The seven heavens and the earth, and all beings therein, declare His glory: there is not a thing but celebrates His praise; And yet ye understand not how they declare His glory! Verily He is Oft-Forbearing, Most Forgiving!” The Holy Quran: Isra 17:44.

When Moses (a.s.) and his brother Aaron (a.s.) were given the mission to invite Pharaoh to worship God as the Quran states,

“(When this message was delivered), (Pharaoh) stated, ‘Who, then, O Moses, is the Lord of you two?’ He stated, ‘Our Lord is He Who gave to each (created) thing its form and nature, and further, gave (it) guidance.’” The Holy Quran: Ta-Ha 20:49-50.

Thus we see that God has granted every creature what has been necessary for its creation. For example, God has granted man whatever he needs and is suitable for him. He has created each of our organs with a proper size and functioning.

He has also given whatever has been necessary to the animals with this same quality. He has created

those which must live in a dry land in a way that is suitable with dry land. He has created the sea animals in a way which is proper for the sea so that they live in water. He has created the birds birds in such a way that they can fly in the air. God says the following in this respect,

“Do they not look at the birds, held poised in the midst of (the air and) the sky? Nothing holds them up but (the power of) Allah. Verily in this are signs for those who believe.” The Holy Quran: Al-Nahl 16:79.

Now the important point which must be mentioned is the goal of man's creation is for him to acquire knowledge and recognize and worship God as God the Blessed the Sublime states in the following verse,

“Allah is He Who created seven Firmaments and of the earth a similar number. Through the midst of them (all) descends His Command: that ye may know that Allah has power over all things, and that Allah comprehends, all things in (His) Knowledge.” The Holy Quran At- Talaq 65: 12.

God dominates over everything, is aware of their needs and has granted every creature what it needs. This means that God has provided fish for the birds in the sky and has provided little fish for the bigger fish as their sustenance.

Thus man has come to this world so as to acquire knowledge, recognize God and learn things from the world. This world with all its creatures and with its unimaginable extent and uncountable number of stars and galaxies. Even if man considers what he has come to learn about until now, he would get to recognize some of the Power of God and His Wisdom as the Holy Quran states,

“And if all the trees on earth were pens and the ocean (were ink), with seven oceans behind it to add to its (supply), yet would not the words of Allah be exhausted (in the writing): for Allah is Exalted in Power, full of Wisdom.” The Holy Quran: Luqman 31:27.

Discourse 3: The Impossibility of Recognizing the True Essence of God

God the Blessed the Sublime stated,

“Glorify the name of thy Guardian – Lord Most High, Who hath created, and further, given order and proportion;” The Holy Quran: Al-A'ala 87: 1-2.

God cannot be truly understood by the mind and the Intellect. The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) said, "God cannot be realized by the Intellect just as He cannot be seen by the eyes."⁵

It has been narrated on the authority of Imam Al-Baqir (a.s.), "Whatever you imagine God to be is only a created product of your mind and is not God."⁶

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) has said the following about God, "Praise is due to Allah – whom the height of intellectual courage cannot appreciate, and the deepest attempts at understanding cannot reach.⁷ This concept has been expressed in various ways by Arab and Iranian poets as we read in Bustan of Sadi⁸,

"The people of the world are agreed to His divine origin;

Overpowered in respect to the substance of His essence.

The people discovered not what was beyond His majesty;

The vision discovered not the extent of His power.

The bird of Fancy flies not to the summit of His nature;

The power of the intellect arrives not at the skirt of His description.

In this whirlpool a thousand ships of reason foundered,

In such a way that not a plank was found on the marge.

Many nights I sat lost in this journey of thought of God,

When suddenly terror seized my sleeve, saying, "Get up!"

The knowledge of the King is the encircler of the wide plain of creation;

Thy conjecture becomes not the encircler of Him.

Genius reaches not to the substance of His nature;

Thought reaches not to the profundity of His qualities.

One can attain to the Arab poet, Suhban, in eloquence;

But one cannot reach to the substance of God without equal.

Because the immature ones have on this road urged the steed of thought,

At the words "la ahsa," they have wearied of the pace. "

When God sent Moses (a.s.) to invite Pharaoh to submit to God,

"Moses stated: 'O Pharaoh! I am an apostle from the Lord of the worlds,' The Holy Quran: Al-A'raf 7: 104.

Pharoah asked,

'And what is the Lord and Cherisher of the worlds?'" The Holy Quran: Ash-Shuara 26:23.

This is indeed asking about the nature and essence of God. Since the true Essence of God can never be expressed Moses (a.s.) replied by stating God's Attributes as we read,

"(Moses) stated: 'The Lord and Cherisher of the heavens and the earth, and all between, if ye want to be quite sure.'" The Holy Quran: Ash-Shuara 26:24.

God who owns this attribute has created the heavens and the Earth. His power is a reason for His Holy Existence. Although His Power is exactly the same as His Essence. When Moses (a.s.) stated these words, Pharoah faced the people in his court as we read,

"(Pharaoh) stated to those around: 'Did ye not listen (to what he says)?'" The Holy Quran: Ash-Shuara 26:25.

Pharaoh wanted to stress that Moses (a.s.) was giving an answer that was different from the question asked. Moses (a.s.), however, went on and stated,

"Your Lord and the Lord of your fathers from the beginning!" The Holy Quran: Ash-Shuara 26:26.

Pharoah used this chance and stated,

"Truly your apostle who has been sent to you is a veritable madman!" The Holy Quran: Ash-Shuara 26:27.

However, Moses (a.s.) stated,

"Lord of the East and the West, and all between! if ye only had sense!" The Holy Quran: Ash-Shuara 26:28.

Pharaoh threatened Moses and stated,

"If thou dost put forward any god other than me, I will certainly put thee in prison!" The Holy Quran: Ash-Shuara 26:29.

Moses (a.s.) challenged his power and stated,

"Even if I showed you something clear (and) convincing?" The Holy Quran: Ash-Shuara 26:30.

Pharaoh stated,

"Show it then, if thou tellest the truth!" The Holy Quran: Ash-Shuara 26:31.

Then Moses (a.s.) showed some of his miracle and

“So (Moses) threw his rod, and behold, it was a serpent, plain (for all to see)! And he drew out his hand, and behold, it was white to all beholders!”

The Holy Quran: Ash-Shuara 26:32-33.

This goes on until the end of the verses which state the events which occurred between the magicians and Moses (a.s.), and the struggles of Moses (a.s.) against Pharaoh.

The above events were referred to in order to show that the true Essence of God cannot be recognized, and even Moses (a.s.) introduced God the Blessed by means of His Attributes.

Thus the question that comes up is how to recognize God. The answer to this question is that God can be recognized by thinking about what He has created. That is why after God the Blessed the Sublime stated,

“Glorify the name of thy Guardian – Lord Most High,” The Holy Quran: Al-A'ala 87: 1.

God says,

“Who hath created, and further, given order and proportion;” The Holy Quran: Al-A'ala 87:2.

Therefore, we can get to recognize God by the signs which exist in the heavens and the Earth.

We read the following in the Jowshan Kabir supplications, "O the One whose Majesty lies in the heavens! O the One whose signs lie in the Earth. O the One for which everything is a reason! O the One whose Wonders lie in the seas! O the One whose Treasures lie in the mountains!"⁹

Thus recognizing the Holy Essence of God is attained by means of thinking about what is created as we read in the Holy Quran,

“On the earth are signs for those of assured faith, as also in your own selves: Will ye not then see?” The Holy Quran: Az-Zariyat 51:20-21.

Once we ponder over ourselves, we shall realize that we did not exist before and a certain Power has brought us into this existence. We realize that we have a body with eyes to see, ears to hear, a nose to smell, a tongue to taste, and skin to touch. We possess all these parts which give us the ability to understand the outward nature of things. God the Blessed the Sublime says,

“It is He Who brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers when ye knew nothing; and He gave you hearing and sight and intelligence and affections: that ye may give thanks (to Allah).” The Holy Quran: Al-Nahl 16:78.

Of course, the ability to see and hear are related to what can be seen and heard. The eye and the ear

only transfer what they realize to our brain. There are also other inner abilities in man such as the ability to memorize which enable man to store whatever he sees, smells, feels, tastes or hears in his lifetime in his brain.

This is one of the greatest God-given blessings. We could not live if we lacked any of these abilities. For example, people could not live if they could not remember things and forgot whatever they experienced. The Intellect is the best inner power with which man can distinguish between right and wrong, or good and bad.

Thus we may recognize God by means of thinking about the animate and the inanimate things. This world is like a school to which God the Blessed has sent us to so as to acquire knowledge and recognition in it.

One of the most important means of acquiring knowledge and recognition is the ability to see and the other one is the ability to hear. The ability to see is one of the most important Divine Blessings by which we can see things.

Whenever we look at any of the creatures, we see the manifestations of God's Power. For example, the air which we breathe is exactly composed in such a way that we can live. Were it any different from the way it is, we could not survive.

Or if we consider the four seasons, we see that the plants in the Earth die in the winter, but the rain will revive everything again in the spring. Then we get plants which emerge from the black soil and the earth becomes green again. Vegetables grow and fruits grow on the trees which will yield various kinds of fruits with different colors, smells and various tastes as a result of God's Mercy.

Now we must see what our duty is once we recognize God. The duty of one who has recognized God is to worship God the Blessed as we read in the following verse of the Holy Quran,

“I have only created Genies and men, that they may serve Me.” The Holy Quran: Az-Zariyat 51:56.

This world is like a book by looking at which and thinking about God's Majesty man can attain more knowledge about God. Once man attains knowledge about God the Glorified he will worship God. Acts of worship can be divided into two groups.

One group are the usual acts of worship like saying one's prayers, fasting, going on pilgrimage to Hajj, giving the alms-tax, giving the one-fifth levy, etc. And the other kind of deeds are those which technically are not called worshipping but can be done in a way similar to acts of worship.

This means that man can engage in acts of business, work, trade, industry, agriculture etc., in addition to fasting, saying one's prayers, going on the Hajj pilgrimage and waging a Holy war against the unbelievers which are acts of worship. Once done according to Islamic Laws and for the sake of God, they are a form of worshipping God.

It has been narrated that God's Prophet (S) stated, "A business man (who earns money according to the religious laws) is beloved by and a friend of God." It has been stated in a narration, "If one makes an effort and does business so as to fulfill his own needs and the needs of his family and help his religious brothers, his face will shine like a full moon when he meets God."¹⁰ Based on this, man should first learn the Islamic matters and precepts when he intends to do trade.

There is a narration on the authority of the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.) who stated, "First the jurisprudence, the Divine lawful and unlawful and the lawful and unlawful trades must be learned and then man must engage in trade."¹¹

It has been written in another narration, "Do business so that you do not become in need of people, since the Honorable God the Exalted likes honest businessmen." ¹² That is why the most important duty of ones who want to do business is to be righteous. There is also another narration on the authority of God's Prophet (S) who stated, "A person who has the following characteristics has perfect chivalry and justice: one who does not oppress the people in his dealings with them; one who does not lie when he talks to the people; and one who does not act opposite to what he promises. It is incumbent to act like a brother with him; support his justness; respect his manliness; and not gossip about him." ¹³

To rap it all up, man can live in such a way that all the things which he does such as business transactions or other deeds are a form of worship of God. For example, one can intend to gain power from eating in order to serve God, and thus set his act of eating food as a form of worship of God (Of course, the food must be allowed food and should be obtained in a legitimate way). Or he may intend to get enough strength to serve God. In this way he can live in such a way that all his life is a form of servitude and worship.

Discourse 4: The Order of the Universe is a Sign of the One and Only God

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) wrote the following addressed to his son Al-Hassan (a.s.) upon his return from the Battle of Siffin, "O My dear son! Beware that if there were any partners for your Lord, they would have surely dispatched Messengers and Prophets to inform you about their deeds and attributes. But, the Lord of this world is the One God as He has described himself to be..." ¹⁴

One may first think that this is a very simple saying. However, a more careful consideration of it shows that it is very strong reasoning which disapproves of the existence of any partners for God.

Thus taking a closer look at this world and everything in it shows a strong interrelationship which makes us understand that the totality of these things is like a big machine whose parts are related to each other. This indicates that everything has been created by a single Wise Creator. For example, we need air and cannot survive if it does not exist. As Sadi said, "Each breath inhaled sustains life, exhaled imparts rejuvenation. Two blessings in each breath, each due a separate salutation."

The plants and the animals also need air. Also we are strongly in need of water and it quenches our thirst. Also foods and fruit are related to our taste. Also their colours are related to our vision. In fact, all the creatures are related to our vision.

Not only are we in need of water, but all the other creatures of the Earth are in need of it. Everything on the planet Earth needs water. All of their parts are related to each other. In addition, everything on the Earth is also dependant on the things in the sky. For example, if the sun does not shine, it is not only we who cannot survive, but also all the animals and the plants.

Also these planets are dependent upon other planets. Our solar galaxy is related to other galaxies. All the galaxies and whatever we have learned about so far all are related to each other. This means that everything in the universe is a part of a system. The universe is like a big machine with various parts all of which are interrelated. The amazing order which governs the universe and its parts is a sign of the existence of God as the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated, "But the Lord of this world is the One God ..."

Whatever you see and whatever has been stated by the Prophets (a.s.) are all from one God. Whatever signs we see are all related to the One. Therefore, the Universe itself bears witness for us that its God and Creator is only one.

Moreover, when we look at the creatures, we realize that the Creator has granted each one whatever it needs to live. A mosquito is well- equipped with the means to live. So is an elephant. Neither one has any deficiencies.

The same holds true for all other animals, birds or fish. Thus we realize that the creator of all animals is the same. He is the same God who has also created man. That is why the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated, "The world itself testifies that there are no partners for God. No one has come to inform us about the existence of another god. There are also no signs of deeds or attributes of another god. Moreover, everything which exists in the Universe is so interrelated that it points to the fact that there is a single Creator."

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) continued on and stated, "However, the Lord of this world is the One God as He has described himself to be as we read in many verses in the Holy Quran,

"And your Allah is One Allah. There is no god but He, Most Gracious, Most Merciful." The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2: 163.

What is so amazing is the strong reasoning which follows,

"Behold! in the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of the night and the day; in the sailing of the ships through the ocean for the profit of mankind; in the rain which Allah sends down from the skies, and the life which He gives therewith to an earth that is dead; in the

beasts of all kinds that He scatters through the earth; in the change of the winds, and the clouds which they trail like their slaves between the sky and the earth; (Here) indeed are Signs for a people that are wise.” The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2: 164.

This is the only verse in the Holy Quran where everything in the creation is mentioned followed by reasoning that these are signs of God. The fact that they are brought together in one verse here refers to their interrelationship and the fact that all together they are signs of God.

You may only worship God after you recognize Him. One must have knowledge of God the Sublime since it is due to knowledge which man can distinguish between the forbidden and the allowed, and serve God.

Thus we must strive hard to acquire knowledge and act accordingly. There is a narration on the authority of God's Prophet (S) in which we read, "Indeed God the Sublime has established four things in four other things. He has established the continuation of faith in being humble to God."¹⁵

Man must think about the Creation and be humble to God for his faith to remain intact. Once man recognizes God's Majesty, he will see everything else to be small as the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated, "The realization of the Majesty of God would make everything seem to be small in your sight."¹⁶

Discourse 5: God's Attributes

Introduction

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated, "Praise is due to Allah whose worth cannot be described by speakers, whose bounties cannot be counted by calculators and whose claim (to obedience) cannot be satisfied by those who attempt to do so, whom the height of intellectual courage cannot appreciate, and the deepest understanding cannot reach."¹⁷

It has also been narrated on the authority of the Noble Prophet Muhammad (S) to say, "O My God! I cannot praise and eulogize You as I should. You are just as You praised and eulogized Yourself."¹⁸

Some of the religious scholars have stated the difference between glorifying God and thanking Him as follows, "Thanking is the verbal glorification of someone for some good that has been done voluntarily, whether it be a deed or a bestowed blessing. Praising is the verbal act of glorification of someone for a good deed whether it is done voluntarily or not."¹⁹

Therefore, thanking God is for a blessing, but praising God could be in return for blessings or other things. For example, we may praise or glorify a person, flowers or even sweet basils, but we cannot thank sweet basils since their good scent is not spread by a voluntary action on their part. Thus we may praise or thank the Divine Leaders (a.s.) or the good people, but we may only praise the flowers.

The Divine Blessings are Uncountable

The blessings granted to us by God are uncountable. If all the computers in the world try to calculate them, they cannot do so. God the Blessed the Sublime states,

“If ye would count up the favors of Allah, never would ye be able to number them: for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.” The Holy Quran: Al-Nahl 16: 18.

Therefore, how can man who cannot even count God's blessings thank Him for them.

The following is a part of the supplications of Imam Sajjad (a.s.) called 'The Supplications of the Grateful Ones.' After expressing the blessings of God in this supplication, the Imam (a.s.) says, "O God! Your blessings are so innumerable that I cannot verbally count them. Your blessings are so extensive that I can neither count them nor even understand them. Then how could I thank You for them. I can never fully appreciate them, since even thanking You for them is itself another blessing which You have granted to me. Thus I should still thank You for that."²⁰

Thus, man cannot even fully count the blessings of God the Blessed the Sublime and is not able to fully appreciate the blessings of the Benevolent the Mighty God. Not even all the worshipping done by all the worshippers in the world can compensate for the blessing of servitude to God.

God cannot be Worshipped as He Deserves to be

The Prophet (S) says, "We have not recognized You as we should and we have not worshipped You as You deserve to be worshipped."²¹ It is impossible for mankind to understand the Creator's Truth. Moreover, since nothing is like God, His truth cannot be truly understood by man as we read in the Holy Quran,

“...There is nothing whatever like unto Him...” The Holy Quran: Shuraa 42: 11.

God's true Essence can also not be recognized by our eyes in this world or in the Hereafter just as God's Truth cannot be recognized by us. It is even impossible for the Prophets (a.s.) and God's Trustees to see Him with their physical eyes.

Moses (a.s.) went to the place to meet God along with seventy of the Israelites as we read in the following verse,

“And Moses chose seventy of his people for Our place of meeting...” The Holy Quran Al-A'araf 7: 155.

And God spoke to Moses (a.s.), stating,

“And remember ye stated: 'O Moses! We shall never believe in thee until we see Allah manifestly'”

but ye were dazed with thunder and lightning even as ye looked on." ***The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2:55.***

Most commentators are of the opinion that Moses (a.s.) asked the following from God due to the request of the Israelites,

"... 'O my Lord! show (Thyself) to me, that I may look upon thee.' Allah stated: 'By no means canst thou see Me (direct); But look upon the mount; if it abide in its place, then shalt thou see Me.' When his Lord manifested His Glory on the Mount, He made it as dust. And Moses fell down in a swoon. When he recovered his senses he stated: 'Glory be to Thee! to Thee I turn in repentance, and I am the first to believe.'" ***The Holy Quran: Al-A'arf 7: 143.***

If it were asked why Moses (a.s.) stated, *'...I am the first to believe'* while many believers existed before him, the answer would be that he meant he was the first one to believe that no one can see God with the physical eyes. This is the opinion of most of the commentators. However, the late Allameh Tabatabaee has a different view regarding the following words of Moses, *"O my Lord! show (Thyself) to me, that I may look upon thee."* He states, "What Moses (a.s.) meant was not looking physically. He (a.s.) meant to see God using his insight similar to what happens after death when the veils to the unseen world are removed and man can see the metaphysical things. This is similar to the case when Abraham prayed to God and stated,

"My Lord! Show me how Thou givest life to the dead." ***The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2:260.***

A call was heard,

"...He stated: 'Dost thou not then believe?' He stated: 'Yea! but to satisfy my own undertaking.'..."
The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2:260.

The request of Moses (a.s.) was similar to that of Abraham and he (a.s.) just wanted to attain this metaphysical experience before death."²²

If the request of Moses (a.s.) is taken to be with his insight and not seeing with the eyes, then we can realize the high rank of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) who stated, "My certitude would not increase even if the veils to the unseen are pushed aside."²³

This means that Ali (a.s.) had the same certitude that we would gain after we die and the veils to the unseen are pushed aside. This shows how much he (a.s.) ranked higher than Moses (a.s.). The issue of seeing is a very important issue and a lot has been stated about it. For example, a man named Za'lab Yamani went to see Ali (a.s.) and asked him, "O Commander of the Faithful! Have you seen your Lord?"

The Imam (a.s.) replied, "I am not one to worship God without having seen Him." The man asked, "Then how did you see God?!" The Imam (a.s.) replied, "Eyes do not see Him face to face, but hearts perceive Him through the realities of belief. He is near to things but not (physically) contiguous.

He is far from them but not (physically) separate. He is a speaker, but not with reflection. He intends, but not with preparation. He moulds, but not with (the assistance of) limbs. He is subtle but cannot be attributed with being concealed. He is great but cannot be attributed with haughtiness. He sees but cannot be attributed with the sense (of sight). He is Merciful but cannot be attributed with weakness of heart. Faces feel low before His Greatness and hearts tremble out of fear of Him."²⁴

The term 'looking towards' used in the following verse of the Holy Quran:

“Some faces, that Day, will beam (in brightness and beauty); Looking towards their Lord;” The Holy Quran: Al-Qiam a 75:22.23

is also not referring to physically seeing with the eyes. Rather, it refers to insight or observation by the heart or soul, since the veils to the unseen are pushed aside after death. We can conclude this from several narrations on the authority of the Immaculate Divine Leaders as mentioned by the late Sayyid Morteza in his book *Al-Muhkam val-Mutashabih*. This means that we will believe in the existence of God the Sublime on the Resurrection Day after the veils to the unseen are drawn aside, just as we believe something which we see in this world.

God is close to everything but is not observable. God is away from everything, but not apart from them. God speaks but not by narrating as the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated, "...He is near to things but not (physically) contiguous. He is far from them but not (physically) separate..."²⁵

God is speaking, but not with his tongue and thinking power as the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated, "...He is a speaker, but not with reflection. He intends, but not with preparation. He moulds, but not with (the assistance of) limbs. He is subtle but cannot be attributed with being concealed. He is Great but cannot be attributed with haughtiness. He sees but cannot be attributed with the sense (of sight). He is Merciful but cannot be attributed with weakness of heart. Faces feel humble before His Greatness and hearts tremble out of fear of Him."²⁶

God is speaking as He spoke to Moses (a.s.), and spoke to the Prophet Muhammad (S) on the night of his Ascension, but not by means of language and thought. Even the revelation of the Holy Quran to the Prophet Muhammad (S) is a form of speaking. But God's speaking is not due to thinking. God orders and the Quran is embedded in the heart of the Prophet Muhammad (S) as we read in the following verse of the Holy Quran,

“Verily, when He intends a thing, His Command is, “be”, and it is!” The Holy Quran: Ya-Sin 36:82.

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) added, "...He moulds, but not with (the assistance of) limbs. He is subtle but cannot be attributed with being concealed. He is Great but cannot be attributed with haughtiness. He sees but cannot be attributed with the sense (of sight). He is Merciful but cannot be attributed with weakness of heart. Faces feel humble before His Greatness and hearts tremble out of fear of Him."²⁷

God dominates over all that can be seen. God is All-hearing which does not mean the God hears with the ears as we do. His Hearing is not by means of some physical means. On the contrary, His Knowledge encompasses everything. Therefore, God's being All-Seeing and All-Hearing are just His Essence similar to His Knowledge. However, God creates what is stated to have been spoken by Him. God is Merciful but His Mercy is not due to His Heart as it is in our case. God has Mercy and bestows it on everyone. Faces are humble in front of Him. And the hearts are trembling and scared because of being fearful of Him.

Discourse 6: The Recognition of God using Signs

Introduction

The first step which man must take in his religion is recognition of God as the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated in the first sermon in Nahjul Balaqah as follows, "The foremost thing in religion is the acknowledgement of Him; the perfection of acknowledging Him is to testify to Him; the perfection of testifying to Him is to believe in His Oneness; the perfection of believing in His Oneness is to consider Him to be Pure. And the perfection of His Purity is to deny Him attributes; because every attribute is a proof that it is different from that to which it is attributed and everything to which something is attributed is different from the attribute.

Thus whoever attaches attributes to Allah recognizes His like, and whoever recognizes His like regards Him as being two; and whoever regards Him as being two recognizes parts for Him; and whoever recognizes parts for Him mistook Him; and whoever mistook Him pointed to Him; and whoever pointed to Him admitted limitations for Him; and whoever admitted limitations for Him numbered Him."²⁸

Sincerity for God

The following two meanings have been presented for sincerity:

1– The popular meaning, which is doing one's tasks with sincerity for God. This means that when man becomes a monotheist, he worships God. When man engages in worshipping God, he must do it sincerely for the Holy Essence of the Lord.

2– The other meaning of sincerity is what Ibn Abil Hadeed has mentioned in his commentary on the Nahjul Balaqah. He says, "Sincerity (Ikhlas) means considering God the Blessed to be pure (and not made up of various compounds). Perfect monotheism depends on this concept of God's Purity. This means that God the Blessed the Sublime is pure while everything else is composed of various compounds."²⁹

God's Attributes

The perfection of sincerity is not to ascribe attributes to God the Sublime. This holds true no matter which one of the above two meanings of sincerity we adopt. This implies that we should not ascribe to God the attributes which are in the creatures. For example, when we say that so and so is knowledgeable and wise it means that there was a time in the past when he did not have any knowledge or power, and then he acquired knowledge and became powerful. This means that his knowledge is different from himself and his power is also different from himself.

However, in the case of the Blessed God the attributes and His Holy Essence are indivisible. He existed before the creation of anything and shall exist after the termination of everything. His Knowledge, Power and all other attributes cannot be separated from Him.

Therefore, whoever considers God's attributes to be like our attributes and claims that God has attributes which are divisible from His Holy Essence has indeed considered God to be like something else. Whoever does so has divided up God into two. Such a person has not indeed recognized God. Thus, God does not have the common attributes which are separable from us. On the contrary, the attributes of God's Holy Essence are just the same as His Essence. Then the question comes up as to how God can be recognized by us.

The answer to this question is as follows. The best way to recognize God is by means of the physical signs which exist in the heavens and the Earth – the amazing signs which can be seen by everyone. We can see this in Bihar ul-Anwar, "There is a sign in everything indicating the Oneness of God."³⁰ From amongst these signs which indicate the power of God we can refer to rain as we read in the following verse of the Holy Quran,

“Seest thou not that Allah sends down rain from the sky? With it We then bring out produce of various colours...” The Holy Quran: Fatir 35:27.

This refers to the various brands of fruits with their various types. For example, we can see that the same land, water, sunlight and air produce fruits which are extremely varied in smell, taste and colour. These blessings point out to us the power of God the Sublime and we can see God with our insight. God is so clearly out there that we fail to see Him.

We can also refer to the following verse of the Holy Quran in which the wonders in the mountains are pointed out to us,

“...And in the mountains are tracts white and red, of various shades of colour, and black intense in hue.” The Holy Quran: Fatir 35:27.

We can also note that the following verse points out the wonders of the people and animals,

“And so amongst men and crawling creatures and cattle, are they of various colours. Those truly fear Allah, among His Servants, who have knowledge: for Allah is Exalted in Might, Oft-Forgiving.” The Holy Quran: Fatir 35:28.

We see that there are so many various creatures that we can hardly find two similar ones. This is an aspect of God's power, but we fail to realize it since we take it for granted. Many people keep asking themselves about the whereabouts of God while they can easily see God if they only try to use their heart and insight. This is similar to the following words of wisdom, "Once many fish gathered together and stated, 'We sometimes hear about water and it is stated that our lives depend on water, but we have never seen water. Let's go to the wise fish who knows about water and ask him to show us water. They all swam to the wise fish and asked him to show them water. The wise fish told them, 'Show me something other than water then I shall show you water.'"31

The Quran states,

“...Those truly fear Allah, among His Servants, who have knowledge...” The Holy Quran: Fatir 35:28.

Here we read that those who have knowledge truly fear God. They ponder over the amazing order in the universe and see God's Majesty. The Quran says,

“...and contemplate the (wonders of) creation in the heavens and the earth, (with the thought): 'Our Lord! not for naught Hast Thou created (all) this!'" The Holy Quran: Al-Imran 3: 191.

They are the ones who believe in the Hereafter and say,

“...Give us salvation from the penalty of the Fire.” The Holy Quran: Al-Imran 3: 191.

They also say,

“Our Lord! we have heard the call of one calling (Us) to Faith, 'Believe ye in the Lord,' and we have believed. Our Lord! Forgive us our sins, blot out from us our iniquities, and take to Thyself our souls in the company of the righteous.” The Holy Quran: Al-Imran 3: 193.

Discourse 7: The Main Duty of Man is to Recognize and Worship God

Introduction

God the Blessed the Sublime states,

“O ye people! Adore your Guardian-Lord, who created you and those who came before you, that

ye may have the chance to learn righteousness; Who has made the earth your couch, and the heavens your canopy; and sent down rain from the heavens; and brought forth therewith fruits for your sustenance; then set not up rivals unto Allah when ye know (the truth).”

The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2:21-22.

The first duty of man is knowing and recognizing God the Blessed the Sublime. His next duty is worshipping and serving God. All the Prophets (a.s.) have been appointed to Prophethood so as to invite the people to God and monotheism and to direct them to worship God. The Blessed and the Sublime God states,

“We sent Noah to his people. He stated: 'O my people! worship Allah...” The Holy Quran: Al-A'raf 7:59.

There are other verses in the Quran which state that the Prophets (a.s.) invite the people to God and to worshipping Him since this is exactly the aim of the creation of this world as we read,

“I have only created Genies and men, that they may serve Me.” The Holy Quran: Az-Zariyat 51:56.

Also God states the following addressing the Prophet (S),

“Not an apostle did We send before thee without this inspiration sent by Us to him: that there is no god but I; therefore worship and serve Me.” The Holy Quran: Al-Anbiya 21:25.

The Relationship between Servitude, Piety and Certitude

In another verse God the Blessed the Sublime states the following addressing all the people of all ranks,

“O ye people! Adore your Guardian- Lord, who created you and those who came before you, that ye may have the chance to learn righteousness;” The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2:21.

Servitude and worship means that man should act according to God's orders in all tasks including personal and social acts. All deeds must be done for the sake of God.

This means that one must gain a mood and power due to worshipping God that results in paying full attention to God; acting according to God's orders; avoiding what is forbidden by God; and acquiring what is usually referred to as piety. The highest rank of piety is certitude which is the main goal of recognition of God and worshipping Him.

Thus, one way for man to attain piety and certitude and strengthen his faith is to act according to the Divine Decrees so as to acquire piety. This is a result of acting upon the obligatory and recommendable deeds, and avoiding the unlawful and the abominable acts. Then he may attain perfect faith and certitude which are man's primary goals. Worshipping and servitude strengthen faith and faith reinforces worshipping and servitude.

Ways to Strengthen Faith

The way to strengthen one's faith is to reinforce good ethics and praiseworthy attributes in oneself. When one attains praiseworthy attributes such as righteousness; honesty; humbleness; kindness; reliance upon God; surrendering to God; contentment and good ethics – and he purifies his soul as much as he should – then he shall see the true light of knowledge in his heart and attain certitude. We read in the following tradition, "Knowledge is a light with which God shall illuminate whosoever's heart that He wills."³²

Thus, it has been narrated on the authority of Muhammad – the Seal of the Prophets (a.s.) – who stated, "True knowledge which is the main aim of worshipping is certitude in the Origin and Resurrection. It is neither in the heavens for you to say that you shall fly in the sky and bring it down, nor is it in the depth of the Earth for you to say that you shall dig it out. Rather, it is within you. The way to attain true knowledge is purification of your soul, acquiring good attributes and praiseworthy ethics resulting in certitude shining upon your hearts."³³

The Cradle of Earth is a Proof of the Existence of the Wise Creator

God has drawn a similitude for the Earth to be like a carpet spread out for us to live on as we read,

“He Who has, made for you the earth like a carpet spread out...” The Holy Quran: Ta-Ha 20:53.

In another verse we read,

“He Who has, made for you the earth like a carpet spread out; has enabled you to go about therein by roads (and channels); and has sent down water from the sky. With it have We produced diverse pairs of plants each separate from the others. Eat (for yourselves) and pasture your cattle: verily, in this are Signs for men endued with understanding.” The Holy Quran: Ta-Ha 20:53–54.

What we may understand from the Arabic word *Mahd* used in the above verse when referring to the earth (which has again been translated to be 'like a carpet spread out' by Yusuf Ali in the previous verse where the Arabic word *Firash* meaning carpet was used) – is that here the earth is made similar to a cradle. This is in reference to the issue of the Earth's movement at the time when all the scientists considered the Earth to be a still planet and believed that the Sun rotated around the Earth.

Of course, the Quran does not explicitly refer to the movement of the Earth since the people at that time would not believe this. However, now we believe this when we read it. We realize that God has stated this issue since it was not discovered until three centuries ago.

Another reference to the Earth as being similar to a cradle is in some of the interpretations of the Egyptian scholars where we read, "A child does not stay in the cradle forever, but only for a while so that

he grows up and then comes out to live on the Earth. God the Blessed the Sublime has similarized this world to a cradle which means that the eternal place of living for us is not this world. We must go from this world to the Hereafter which is of infinite extent. The life in this world is only a preliminary phase of life, just like the baby's life in the cradle."³⁴

Of course, there are many such references in the Holy Quran. For example we read,

“He Who has, made for you the earth like a carpet spread out; has enabled you to go about therein by roads (and channels); and has sent down water from the sky. With it have We produced diverse pairs of plants each separate from the others. Eat (for yourselves) and pasture your cattle: verily, in this are Signs for men endued with understanding.” The Holy Quran: Ta-Ha 20:53-54.

Or we read,

“From the (earth) did We create you, and into it shall We return you, and from it shall We bring you out once again.” The Holy Quran: Ta-Ha 20:55.

Or in another verse we read, “...***and the sky as a canopy***,...”³⁵ This means that God has raised the sky for us like a ceiling and sitting on the Earth is just like calmly sitting in a very large house with the sky as a ceiling.

Meanwhile the Earth and all the other planets are in orbit although we do not see them. Each one of them moves according to a special rule, and any deviation from this order would result in a catastrophe. This order guides us to God the Wise. Thus we must worship God who has manifested all of these signs.

In a portion of the above-mentioned verse, we read,

“He Who has sent down water from the sky. With it have We produced diverse pairs of plants each separate from the others. Eat (for yourselves) and pasture your cattle: verily, in this are Signs for men endued with understanding.” The Holy Quran: Ta-Ha 20:53-54.

Thus we should only worship God since He has Majesty, Power, Knowledge and Wisdom, and He has granted us all of these Blessings. We should only serve Him as we read in the opening verses of this discourse,

“...then set not up rivals unto Allah when ye know (the truth).” The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2:21-22.

You know that all of this amazing order, power, heavenly and earthly signs, etc. are for the purpose of paying attention to God – the Creator of the world. However, mankind has gone after deviation and destruction from the very beginning and has ascribed partners for God. Some people worshipped the sun; some worshipped the moon; some worshipped the stars; and some people worshipped idols. Men

worshipped various forms of idols which they set up as partners for God. The Prophets (a.s.) came so as to invite mankind to monotheism, and to rescue man from deviation and destruction.

Discourse 8: Belief in Monotheism is Inherent in Man by Nature

Introduction

It has been narrated on the authority of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.), "The Glorified God chose Prophets from amongst the offspring of Adam (a.s.) and made a covenant with them regarding what they are entrusted with; the revelations; and spreading God's Message. This was at a time when most of the people had completely forgotten God. They had forgotten the covenant which God had made with their nature and did not recognize God's Right. The Prophets (a.s.) were appointed to Prophethood when the people had associated partners with God, and Satan had plotted and made them deviate from the path of monotheism and the recognition of God. Satan had led them to idol-worshipping, atheism and polytheism. It was at such times when God appointed Prophets with whom He had made a covenant regarding the spreading of His Message so that they may remind the people about the covenants made with their very nature. They came to remind the people of the blessings which they had forgotten about. They came to deliver the Divine Message and give men clear proofs, so that the treasures of their intellects would be aroused and the signs of God's Holy Essence would be clearly pointed out to them."³⁶

One can cite the Earth on which we live, the sky above our head, the time given to us to live, and the necessities of life as an example. The Prophets were sent to remind the people of all of these Divine Blessings so that they would obey God. This is exactly the aim of sending the Prophets.

Recognizing the Blessed God is by Nature

If one asks what this statement means, "Does religion exist in our nature?" – he must be answered, "It means that God has given us Intellect and wisdom by which man recognizes God and reasons about the issues of monotheism and the Holy Essence of God."

Of course, the issue of recognizing God, remembering God, and praising God exists in the nature of all of the creatures. This means that all of the creatures recognize God by their nature and acknowledge the Holy Essence of God. All of them are humble before God and traverse in the path on which God has placed them. This is certified by the following verse of the Holy Quran,

"Seest thou not that to Allah bow down in worship all things that are in the heavens and on earth, the sun, the moon, the stars; the hills, the trees, the animals; and a great number among mankind? But a great number are (also) such as are fit for Punishment..." The Holy Quran: Al-Hajj 22: 18.

Again God states in another verse about the fact that all the created things recognize God by their very natures as we read,

“...there is not a thing but celebrates His praise; And yet ye understand not how they declare His glory!...” The Holy Quran: Al-Isra 17:44.

Some have interpreted this to mean that the things obey God in their own world, while this interpretation does not seem to be correct. The above verse clearly states that everything celebrates God's praises implying that they all glorify God just as we do. That is why the late Sheikh Bahaoddin Ameli made the following comments about the fact that the pebbles which God's Prophet (S) held in his hand glorified God aloud by saying Subhanallah valhamdullilsh va laillaha illalah, "The fact that the pebbles stated God's glorifications is not a miracle itself since everything utters God's Glorifications. What is a miracle of God's Prophet (S) is to enable those who were present to hear the pebbles declaring God's Glorifications.

Also God states in another verse,

“Whatever is in the heavens and on earth, let it declare the Praises and Glory of Allah...” The Holy Quran: Hadid 57: 1.

and in another verse we read,

“Whatever is in the heavens and on earth, doth declare the Praises and Glory of Allah...” The Holy Quran: Al-Jome'a 62: 1.

It has been stated in all these verses that whatever exists within the sky and the Earth recognizes God and surrenders to Him. They all follow the path which God has prescribed for them. All of the celestial bodies move in the orbits which God has ordered them to traverse. All of the animals go along the path which God has prescribed for them.

They all submit to Him and move in the pre-determined way. Thus, all the creatures are humble before God the Blessed. They all know God, praise Him and declare God's Glorifications. The only exception to this rule is man. God the Blessed the Sublime has granted him the Intellect, and has established some religious duties for him with the freedom to choose whether to walk on God's path or divert to the deviated path.

Discourse 9: The Recognition of God The Glorified as the First Rank of Man's Perfection

The Attributes of the ones who have recognized God (and God's Trustees)

The Prophet Muhammad (S) stated, "Whoever recognizes God and His Majesty would prevent his

tongue from speaking; his stomach from taking in any food; and would purify himself by fasting and standing up (to pray)." He (S) was asked, "O may our parents by your ransom! Who are God's Friends (the Trustees)?" The Prophet (S) replied, "Indeed God's Friends (the Trustees) remain silent. Their silence is itself a form of God's Remembrance. They look and their act of looking is itself a form of learning. They talk and their speech is filled with wisdom.³⁷ They walk and their walking amongst the people is a blessing. Were it not for the restrictions of time and place to live which God has established for them, their souls would have left their bodies due to the fear of chastisement and eagerness for the rewards."³⁸

The root of all sciences is the science of the recognition of God. The first step for man to take in the way of his religion is to try to recognize God. As God's Prophet (S) stated, "The highmost wisdom is the recognition of God."³⁹

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) has stated, "The first thing for man to understand and learn from the religion is the recognition of God. The perfection of such recognition is acknowledgement of God. The perfection of acknowledgement of God is the belief in monotheism. The perfection of belief in monotheism is sincerity of one's acts for God."⁴⁰

Therefore, the first step for man to take is to attain knowledge about God the Blessed since all other forms of knowledge are rooted in this. Even the roots of Prophethood, Divine Leadership and Resurrection are rooted in the recognition of God. That is why the Noble Prophet (S) has stated, "Whoever recognizes God and His Majesty would prevent his tongue from speaking; his stomach from taking in any food; and would purify himself by fasting and standing up (to pray)." ⁴¹

The Holy Quran has encouraged us to look at the things which have been created so as to realize God's Power. In one place God says,

“Do they not look at the camels, how they are made? And at the sky, how it is raised high? And at the mountains, how they are fixed firm? And at the Earth, how it is spread out?” The Holy Quran: Al-Qashia 88: 17-20.

What a wonderful creation? The long neck, the legs and the rest of the camel's organs all match each other. Although the camel has a big body, it is very patient. It walks so gently and would even tread behind a small child if he takes ahold of its leash. It tolerates thirst and hunger such that it can survive without water and food for ten days! Thus it is also called patient. If a Bedouin Arab looked at the camel on which he rides, or looked at the Earth, the mountains or the sky he would realize God's Majesty. The same holds true if a scholar looks at a camel and its various states.

The Heavenly and the Earthly Signs for Proving the Existence of the Wise Creator

And in another place God says,

“On the earth are signs for those of assured Faith, As also in your own selves: Will ye not then see?” The Holy Quran: Az-Zariyat 51:20-21.

Yet in another place God says,

“Do they not look at the sky above them? How We have made it and adorned it, and there are no flaws in it? And the earth – We have spread it out, and set thereon mountains standing firm, and produced therein every kind of beautiful growth (in pairs) – to be observed and commemorated by every devotee turning (to Allah)” The Holy Quran: Qaf 50:6-8.

And in another place God says,

“He Who created the seven heavens one above another: no want of proportion wilt thou see in the Creation of 'Allah' Most Gracious. So turn thy vision again: seest thou any flaw? Again turn thy vision a second time: (thy) vision will come back to thee dull and discomfited, in a state worn out.” The Holy Quran: Mulk 67:3-4.

In another place God says,

“With power and skill did We construct the Firmament: for it is We Who create the vastness of space. And We have spread out the (spacious) earth: How excellently We do spread out! And of everything We have created pairs: that ye may receive instruction.” The Holy Quran: Az-Zariyat 51:47-49.

The point that everything is created in pairs is one of the facts which the Quran has informed us about while it has been proven in recent centuries. The amazing discipline which governs everything is another reason to prove monotheism. The fact that the vegetables grow on the Earth and become green, the plants grow and produce various fruits with different colours and tastes is another indication of God's power.

Then the Prophet (S) stated the following about God's Friends (the Trustees), "Indeed God's Friends (the Trustees) remain silent. Their silence is itself a form of God's remembrance. They look and their act of looking is itself a form of learning. They talk and their talking is filled with wisdom.⁴² They walk and their walking amongst the people is a blessing..."⁴³

God's Friends (the Trustees) understand the vanity of this world by just looking at the people who have come before and are now gone with their homes in ruin. They are never attached to this world. The Holy Quran says,

“Do they not travel through the earth and see what was the end of those before them? They were even superior to them in strength, and in the traces (they have left) in the land...” The Holy Quran: Al-Mumin 40:21.

The Prophet (S) stated the following about the Trustees, "...They talk and their talking is filled with wisdom.⁴⁴ They walk and their walking amongst the people is a form of blessing..."⁴⁵ The Prophet (S) added the following about the Trustees, "...Were it not for the restrictions of time and place to live which God has established for them, their souls would have left their bodies due to the fear of chastisement and eagerness for the rewards."⁴⁶

They have fear of God on the one hand, and are hopeful of God's Mercy on the other hand. A believer should be both hopeful and afraid of God. He should always be between the two states of having hope and fear. In another narration we read, "If they split the heart of a believer, two rays of light will be seen within it. One of these is fear and the other one is hope."⁴⁷

Discourse 10: Good Recognition of, Obedience to and Having a Good Opinion of God

God's Prophet (S) stated, "The Intellect consists of three parts. Whoever has these three has attained intelligence. Whoever does not is not intelligent. They are as follows: having good recognition of God, being completely obedient to God, and having a good opinion about God."⁴⁸

Good Recognition of God The Glorified

Having good recognition of God is one of the three parts of the Intellect. This means that man should know God correctly. He should know the God who is the mixture of the whole attributes of perfection, beauty and glory: The God who is innocent from being a body and who is not like any of the things or creatures which He has created. This is certified by the following verse of the Noble Quran in which we read,

"...there is nothing whatever like unto Him..." The Holy Quran: Shuraa 42: 11.

It is not proper to compare God to other things and say things such as, "He is like the sun, the moon and the stars".

Everything which we see is composed of some parts. Man consists of millions of parts and in the same way water, air, plants, animals and everything else are all composed of various parts. However, God the Blessed is neither composed of material parts nor composed of spiritual parts. Moreover, God cannot be seen as we read in the Holy Quran,

"No vision can grasp Him, but His Grasp is over all vision: He is above all comprehension..." The Holy Quran: An'am 6: 103.

Nothing ever happens to God. The world as you see it is subject to changes and accidents. Man is also subject to changes and accidents. One time he is a child. Later he becomes a young adult and later he

grows old. Moreover, the plants, animals and all the created things are changing. The trees are green at one time and their leaves fall off at another time. Everything in this world is changeable, but God the Blessed the Sublime is neither changeable nor subject to any accidents.

God does not appear in anything. What the Christians stated when they claimed that God appeared in the shape of Jesus (a.s.) was a lie. Neither in Essence nor in Attributes or Deeds God does not have any partners. Man should never ascribe a partner for God in worshipping. God's Attributes are just His Holy Essence. God is not like other created things whose attributes are added to their essence. For example, man does not have knowledge at a time and then he becomes learned at a later time. Thus the attribute of having knowledge in man is different from his essence. At one time man does not have any power but becomes powerful at a later time. Thus the attribute of being strong and powerful is different from his essence. However, this is not the case for God. God's Attributes are just His Essence. This means that God is exactly the same as His Knowledge and Power. His Knowledge and Power are exactly the same as His Holy Essence.

God the Blessed the Sublime is not needy. On the contrary, all things and creatures are in need of God. God is rich in Essence as we read in the Holy Quran,

“O ye men! It is ye that have need of Allah, but Allah is the One Free of all wants, worthy of all praise.” The Holy Quran: Fatir 35: 15.

God is the Creator of all things and creatures. There are no partners in the act of creation for God's Holy Essence. God the Blessed the Sublime has created everything which is visible or invisible. Whatever any of the creatures has is from God the Blessed. For example, one may be healthy, ill, rich or poor as God wills. God is knowledgeable about everything and is able to do anything. He is the One who has been from the beginning and will be until eternity.

God does the tasks by His Will. However, God's Will is not like man's will as we read in the Holy Quran,

“Verily, when He intends a thing, His Command is, ‘be’, and it is!” The Holy Quran: Ya-Sin 36:82.

God has perceptions. He sees and hears, but not with eyes and ears like mankind. On the contrary, these perceptions are not by means of things like an eye or an ear. When it is stated that God the Blessed the Sublime is All-Hearing and All-Seeing, it refers to a prerequisite to God's Knowledge. This means that He is All-Encompassing everything with His Knowledge. He has Knowledge of all sounds and sights in the Universe. His All-Hearing and All-Seeing are just the same as His Knowledge which are just the same as His Essence.

God speaks but not with a physical means like the tongue. The speaking of God the Blessed the Sublime is that He Creates speech. Examples are God's talking with Moses (a.s.) and God's talking with the Prophet Muhammad (S) during his Ascension⁴⁹ which are instances of the Creation of speech by God. Another example is the Quran which has been created by God; God creates speech. It is not the

case that God talks like man does.

God honestly promises and acts on all the promises which He has made as we read in the Holy Quran,

“...for Allah never fails in His promise.” The Holy Quran: Al-Imran 3:9.

Thus, one part of the Intellect is having good recognition of God.

Being Completely Obedient to God

The second part of Intellect is complete obedience to God. An intelligent person is one who obeys God completely and observes all the necessary conditions. For example, he should say his prayers which are said in remembrance of God and carry out all the rituals like bowing down and prostrating just as described in Islamic decrees.

He should say his prayers with sincerity and just for the sake of God. His prayer should be such that all his attention is directed towards God the Holy and he does not see other than Him while saying his prayers. He should pay attention to his prayer, know what he says, with Whom he speaks and what the intention is behind bowing down and prostrating.

He should pay attention to God's Holy Essence, His Majesty and the fact that He is the Lord of all the creatures in both worlds.⁵⁰ The same thing holds for his other acts and obligatory deeds. If he fasts, all his parts and organs should be fasting. If he gives charity to the poor, he should give them good things. If he enjoins others to do good deeds and admonishes them against doing wicked deeds, he should observe proper etiquette and abide by the conditions of such deeds.

Having a Good Opinion of God

The third part of the Intellect is having a good opinion of God. Having a bad opinion of God is one of the worst attributes. An example of having a bad opinion about God is to believe that God will never forgive us. This is not correct. One must be hopeful of God and must have a good opinion of God the Sublime. One should be hopeful that God would have Mercy upon him and would forgive him. One should do the acts of worshipping God which are a sign of having a good opinion of God. However, being hopeful should be accompanied by some fear of God.

In a narration on the authority of Loqman, he told his son, "Be afraid of God the Blessed the Sublime such that you fear God even if you have done all the obedience of all the people. Be hopeful of God's Mercy such that you have hopes even if you have committed all the sins of all the people."⁵¹ Therefore, fear and hope must be equal to each other.

In another narration we read, "If they split the heart of a believer, two rays of light will be seen within it. One of these is fear and the other one is hope."⁵²

The following is from amongst the sayings of the Master of the Martyrs al-Husayn (a.s.), "No one is safe from God's torture on the Resurrection Day unless he is afraid of God⁵³ in this world."⁵⁴

It has been stated in another narration that God says, "I am close to my worshipper who has a good opinion of Me."⁵⁵

Therefore, one must have a good opinion of God and be hopeful of God's Mercy. However, he should also have fear of God. The following is from amongst the sayings of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) where he (a.s.) stated, "I advise you to try to attain five attributes. They are worth attaining even if you have to hit a camel's side with your feet to make it move fast.⁵⁶ None of you should be hopeful of anyone except God. You should not fear anything but your sins. Do not be one of those who do not perform their duties, but hope to have salvation in the Hereafter. And if one of you does not know something, he should not be shy to ask. I advise you to be patient.⁵⁷

The relationship of patience to belief is similar to the relationship of the head to the body. In the same way that a headless body is of no benefit, one who has belief but is not patient is of no benefit."⁵⁸

1- None of you should be hopeful of anyone except God. You should not fear anything but your sins. Moreover, one should not place hopes in anyone else and should only have hopes in God.

2- You should not fear anything but your sins. The issue of fearing God returns to fearing one's own sins. One should fear that God may punish him for the sins which he has committed.

The above two points are about the issues of fear and hope which have been mentioned. When man is hopeful of God, he will plan to do his duties. Being just hopeful of God without saying one's prayers, fasting and performing other acts of worshipping is of no benefit. It is like being one who neither has any land nor has cultivated the land that he has, and is hopeful that the Blessed and the Sublime God will help him get a high yield that year. This is not being hopeful. Rather, it is being too proud. Real hopefulness is accompanied by performing one's duties.

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated, "Do not be one of those who do not perform their duties but hope to have salvation in the Hereafter."⁵⁹

On the other hand, fear must be such that one performs the acts of worshipping as well as his duties in spite of being afraid of his sins and the low amount of his deeds. Therefore, hope and fear must both be accompanied by action.

3- "If one is asked something which you cannot answer, you should not be afraid to say, 'I do not know.'"

4- "And if one of you does not know something, he should not be shy to ask."

And if they ask him something which he does not know, he must simply say, "I do not know." Man is not supposed to know everything. If asked something which he does not know, he should not be ashamed

to say, "I will study, and answer you when I find the answer."

5– I advise you to be patient.⁶⁰ The relationship of patience to belief is similar to the relationship of the head to the body. In the same way that a headless body is of no benefit, one who believes but is not patient is of no benefit."

1. Bihar ul-Anwar, 98/226.
2. Kalamate Maknunehye Faiz
3. Mafatih ul-Jinan
4. Kafi, 1/74.
5. Bihar ul-Anwar, 69/292.
6. Bihar ul-Anwar, 69/263.
7. Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 1.
8. <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/sadi-bustan.html> [15]
9. Mafatih ul-Jinan, The Jowshan Kabir supplications.
10. Bihar ul-Anwar, 103/8.
11. Bihar ul-Anwar, 103/117.
12. Al-Khisal, Narration No. 27–7.
13. Al-Khisal, Narration No. 4– 28.
14. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 31.
15. Ithna Asharia
16. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 129.
17. Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 1.
18. Misbah ul-Shria, Chapter 5 on Remembrance.
19. Side-note on Moula Abdullah 3.
20. Mafatih ul-Jinan
21. Awali al-Lali
22. Tafsir al-Mizan
23. Bihar ul-Anwar
24. Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 178.
25. Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 178.
26. Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 178.
27. Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 178.
28. Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 1.
29. Sharhe Nahjul Balaghah, 1/73.
30. Bihar ul-Anwar, 81/184.
31. Kalamate Maknone, 6.
32. Misbah ul-Shria 16.
33. Kashf ul-Qita an Vojuhe Marasim al-Ehteda 30.
34. Al-Jawahir 20/164.
35. [It is Allah Who has made for you the earth as a resting place, and the sky as a canopy, and has given you shape – and made your shapes beautiful, – and has provided for you Sustenance, of things pure and good; – such is Allah your Lord. So Glory to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds!] The Holy Quran: Mu-min 40:64.
36. Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 1.
37. Since what they say is either from the Holy Quran, glorifications of God, supplications, enjoining to do good, admonishing against evil or guiding the people.
38. Kafi, 2/237.
39. Bihar ul-Anwar, 3/269.

40. Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 1.
41. Kafi, 2/237.
42. Since what they say is either from the Holy Quran, glorifications of God, supplications, enjoining to do good, admonishing against evil or guiding the people.
43. Kafi, 2/237.
44. Since what they say is either from the Holy Quran, glorifications of God, supplications, enjoining to do good, admonishing against evil or guiding the people.
45. Udat ul-Da'ee 34.
46. Kafi, 2/237.
47. Udat ul-Da'ee 34.
48. Jame'a al-Akhbar 186.
49. Mi'raj
50. This world and the Hereafter
51. Kafi, 2/67.
52. Udat ul-Da'ee, 34.
53. As a result of which he is prevented from committing sins.
54. Bihar ul-Anwar, 44/192.
55. Bihar ul-Anwar, 70/385.
56. Meaning even if you have to work hard to get them.
57. In all bad events, affairs and hardships.
58. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 82.
59. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 150.
60. In all bad events, affairs and hardships.

Discourse 1: The Necessity for the Existence of the Prophets

So as to prove that there is Common Prophethood the wise men say, "On the one hand, man has numerous needs such as the necessity for having a wife and children, and food and clothing, etc. On the other hand, man cannot live alone. Rather, he has to live in the society and each person must accept to do some job. One must do business and the other bake bread. Another must be a tailor, and eventually every person must do something, so that people can continue to live their lives.

Everybody must gather together so that man fulfills his need to have a social life. It is not possible for them to spread themselves all over the wildernesses and the jungles. This gathering of mankind is described as civilization, and where everyone comes together is called a city. And for this very reason they say, 'Man is social by nature.' This means that man's nature needs a social life."

Man possesses lust and anger. And because of his lust capacity, everyone wants to attract benefits to himself and fend off harmful things. When people gather together in one place and have decided to live together on the one hand, and on the other hand, they have the two powers of lust and anger – they need laws to moderate these two powers. This is so that they do not engage in acts of oppression, attacking and not observing the laws and invading each other's personal territory. However, if making and passing laws is in the hands of man himself, firstly each group will make laws to benefit itself and

harm others. Secondly, he cannot pass laws which are perfectly just.

Thus, since man's laws are never fair, it is necessary that the laws for man's life be designed by God the Exalted – who is the Creator and Possessor of mankind. And the law must be declared to man's society by the means of one of the Divine Prophets. This law is exactly what we call religion. It is that religion which makes man aware of God.

Explanation of the Religion

Therefore, religion is a law which includes a chain of obligatory acts, precepts, laws and commandments which have been made by God the Exalted and announced (to mankind) by one person. In summary, the subject is that man has numerous needs and by the means of those very needs, he needs a society. This social man wants law and this law must be just and divine, so that all the classes of the society benefit from it without oppression. Of course, this important event will not take place without the existence of religion.

So far, man's need for God's law has been proven, however, who must preach this divine law and God's religion. It must be stated in answer to this question, "The only one who can intercede between God and the people, and achieve the highest rank which is called Prophethood is a Prophet. The Prophet is the one worthy to achieve this high rank and become the interceder between God the Exalted and the people, so that he may hand over the divine religion to the people without anything lost or added. Prophethood is the revelation from God to the Prophets.

The Difference between a Prophet, a Messenger and a Prophet who Guides the People of His Time and Those after His Time

If it is the case that a Prophet is also given the mission to guide others, in addition to being a Prophet, he is also a Messenger. And if he was given a mission to invite all of the people of his time and after his time (to the religion), he is called Ulul-Azm. And if he had the position of being the Seal of the Prophets, and his religion continued up until the Resurrection, he is the Seal or Last of the Prophets.¹ Thus, the position of being the Seal of the Prophets which is that of His Holiness the Prophet Muhammad (S) is higher than the rest of those ranks.

The Necessity for the Existence of the Prophets as Expressed by Imam as-Sadiq

There are numerous narrations which prove the existence of the Prophethood, including a narration from Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) as follows, "Once one of the deniers of the Prophethood, and an opposer of Islam asked the Imam (a.s.), 'What is your reason to prove the existence of the Prophets?' The Imam (a.s.) replied, 'When it is proven that we have a Creator and Maker who is Wise and His Work is based upon wisdom, we may understand that God the Exalted is Wise, and would never leave man in a state of being uninformed. God cannot be seen or touched by anyone. He does not converse with anyone.'² It is

also proven that God the Wise must have Divine Ambassadors to guide the people to what benefits them, and to warn them about what harms them. These Ambassadors teach mankind what to do to have an Eternal Life and make man understand that he should not abandon those duties or he shall be in hardship forever and be destroyed.

Thus it has been proven that God the Exalted has some Divine Ambassadors who are the Prophets being learned and wise men. They are in the highest rank of knowledge. The difference between them and others is that they have been trained in knowledge by the Lord of the world. God the Exalted educated them to train and teach other people.

The Creation and the features of the Prophets are similar to mankind in having eyes, ears and other parts of the body. They walk, eat and in general are the same as other people in these affairs. However, they cannot be compared to other people from the aspect of knowledge and a spiritual state. Thus it has been proven that outstanding individuals are appointed to the post of the Prophethood to guide mankind so that the Divine Decrees and Prohibitions are related to the people."³

The Attributes of the Prophets (Innocence, Knowledge, Power and Patience)

Of course, these divine individuals are not similar to mankind in terms of wisdom, attributes and morality. This means they are the Manifestation of God's Names and Attributes. In particular, the Prophets must have four attributes, so as to achieve being the Manifestation of the Holy Essence of God as follows:

1– The Prophets must be the Manifestation of God's Holiness. For this very reason, they must be Immaculate, so that in action, in thought and in speech they are free from all mistakes and sins. The reason why the Prophets must be Immaculate is that they may be trusted by the society and the people. This is so that they do not take anything away from or add onto the revealed matters, and commit no sins.

2– They must be the Manifestation of God's Wisdom and Knowledge, so that they may receive the religious precepts and decrees from God the Exalted, and then relate them to the people. The reason why the Prophets have the position of Knowledge is that they know all the good and bad things. This is so that they may have a firm footing on which to enjoin the people to do good and admonish them from doing the evil.

3– The Prophets must be the Manifestation of God's Power. This means that they can do things which other people cannot, and which are miracles to prove their Prophethood.

4– The Prophets must be the Manifestation of God's Patience and Mercy. This is so that they may be patient when oppressed as a result of the Manifestation of God the Exalted's Mercy.

The Necessity for the Existence of the Divine Proofs (The Prophets and The Imams) on the Earth up until the Ressurrection Day

After Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) stated these remarks about the necessity of the Prophets' Missions and their necessary attributes, then he (a.s.) mentioned the following significant point, "This Divine Proof⁴ must remain up until the Resurrection. And this Caliph of the Truth from God the Exalted must exist in every era in order to give the people an Ultimatum. No period of time must remain without a Divine Guide and Proof. It is also stated in the Holy Quran,

"...I will create a vicegerent on earth..." The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2:30.

God's aim in creating mankind is that the Divine Caliph always exists on the Earth. Just as He states,

"I have only created Genies and men, that they may serve Me." The Holy Quran: Az-Zariyat 51:56.

One of the requirements for these Divine words of God the Glorified is that in every era there must exist a perfect person so that God the Exalted is worshipped as it is should be done. If it is not so, meaning that if God's Caliph, the perfect person and the men of truth do not exist on the Earth, then what the angels stated will come true. As we read in the Holy Quran,

"...They stated: "Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood? - whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy Holy (name)?"..." The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2:30.

Of course, the issue of the Earth not being left free of a Proof is found in the words of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) to Kumayl ibn Ziyad Nakhayee – may God be pleased with him – as follows, "This Earth is never free of a Proof. However, that Divine Proof appears at one time and the people see him. And at other times, he is absent and concealed from the people's sight."⁵

There are also a lot of narrations about this issue concerning that if the Earth is left without a Proof, it will take in all its inhabitants.⁶ And in some other narrations it is stated that the Earth will engulf its inhabitants with waves, just as the sea covers its inhabitants with waves.⁷

And in another tradition it is stated that God's Prophet (S) stated, "The stars are the security for the people of the Heavens. When the stars fall down, the people of the Heavens will also fall down. My Household is also the security for the people of the Earth, and when no one from my Household exists on the Earth, all the people of the Earth will also perish."⁸ Therefore, there is an absolute need for a Divine Proof in this world since the firmness of the Earth and sky is due to the existence of the Divine Proof as we read, "Due to the blessing of the Divine Proof, the daily bread is given to the people. By the means of his existence, the Heavens and the Earth are firmly maintained."⁹

Therefore, today the firmness of the sky and Earth is due to the mediation of the Immaculate Imam of

the Time (May God the Sublime expedite his noble appearance): Even though that Imam – May our souls be sacrificed for him – is apparently not amongst the people, so that they may make use of his existence. However, his very existence is a blessing for the people from God.

From amongst the words of Mr. Nasir ud-Din Toosy we read, "The very existence of the Imam of the Time – May God the Sublime expedite his noble appearance – is a blessing from God and his involvement in worldly affairs is another blessing. We ourselves are the ones who put off the involvement of His Holiness (a.s.) in worldly affairs, and are deprived of the blessing of his presence."¹⁰

This means that the people do not yet deserve to benefit from the appearance of His Holiness – the Riser (a.s.)¹¹, and the filling up of the Earth with justice by him (a.s.) after it has been filled up with oppression. Thus, the loss is ours, not that if Imam al-Mahdi's (a.s.).

1. Kafi, 1/176.
2. Except for the Prophet Moses (a.s.), and the Prophet Muhammad (S) during his Ascension.
3. Kafi, 1/68.
4. Referring to the Prophets and their Trustees.
5. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 147.
6. Bihar ul-Anwar, 60/213.
7. Kafi, 1/179.
8. Bihar ul-Anwar, 27/309.
9. Tajrid ul-E'ateqad
10. Ibid.
11. Imam al-Mahdi's (a.s.)

Discourse 1: The World during the era of the Mission of the Prophet, and the Results of the Noble Prophet's Mission

The World at the Time of the Mission of the Prophet

His Holiness the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) delivered sermons about the mission of His Holiness the Prophet Muhammad (S), and the conditions of the people during that time. In one of those sermons he (a.s.) stated, "God sent His Prophet (S) at the time when there were no signs of Divine Guidance and all the routes of the religion were destroyed. The light of monotheism had disappeared and all the people were involved in ignorance, the darkness of deviation, and moral corruption. Ali (a.s.) clarified the truth and advised the people. And he (a.s.) guided the people to the Straight Path and enjoined them to be moderate."¹

As Ali (a.s.) stated the main characteristic of that time was that, "...there were no signs of Divine Guidance..." A group of the people worshipped the sun and the moon. Some thought that Jesus (a.s.) was the son of God. And some worshipped Uzayr (an Arab idol). The Jews and the Christians believed

in various kinds of superstitions. Nobody in the world worshipped God and the people had become deviated from religion. It was at that time that the brightness of the Truthfulness of Muhammad's religion lit up all this darkness. And the world was enlightened with monotheism, knowledge, wisdom, good behavior, and admirable qualities.

As he (a.s.) continued "...and all the routes of the religion were destroyed."² The Prophet (S) clarified the truth and advised the people.

The Results of the Noble Prophet's Mission

The Noble Prophet Muhammad (S) revived worshipping God; honesty and righteousness; admirable morality and qualities; serving God; belief in the origin of Creation and the Resurrection Day; etc. which are all parts of the Truth. Thus God made the Prophet (S) appear amongst the people as the one who provided the most good for them, "And he guided the people to the Straight Path and enjoined them to be moderate."³

This means that he (S) guided the people to what made them fortunate in this world and prosper in the Hereafter, and invited them towards a moderate religion which is the utmost point of guidance. The Prophet (S) invited the people to moderation and frugality. To be frugal means being moderate in your affairs, and it comes from moderation which is truthful moderation in one's beliefs and actions. His Holiness the Prophet of God (S) stated that the basis of the Prophets' invitation after the invitation to monotheism and the worshipping of God is the establishment of justice, and putting an end to cruelty and corruption. Also God the Blessed the Exalted states in this noble verse,

"We sent aforetime our apostles with Clear Signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance (of Right and Wrong), that men may stand forth in justice..." The Holy Quran: Al-Hadi d 57:25.

Thus the basis of the Prophet's invitation (a.s.) is the invitation of the people to monotheism; worshipping God; the Resurrection; establishing justice; and putting an end to cruelty and corruption.

His Holiness the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) in the continuance of the sermon stated, "O people! Know and be aware that God the Blessed the Exalted has not created you in vain."⁴ God has also stated in this noble verse,

"Did ye then think that We had created you in jest, and that ye would not be brought back to Us (for account)?" The Holy Quran: Al-Mu'm inun 23: 115.

Once we realize the truth that God the Blessed has created human society for a very excellent purpose, and we understand that prosperity in this world and the Hereafter lies in what the Prophet Muhammad (S) has brought for us, we must make an effort and be serious as much as we can.

This is so that, firstly, we completely believe in the issues of the origin of Creation and the Resurrection as we should. We must always keep in mind what the Prophet of Mercy Muhammad (S) has bought from God, as well as acting upon what is obligatory in the holy laws. We must avoid what is forbidden, and we must carry out our duty as we should in every phase of life, post and occupation. We should abide by the Prophet's (a.s.) orders and those of the Immaculate Imams (a.s.) and trot on the same path which they trotted so as to become prosperous in this world and the Hereafter.

Discourse 2: The Astrologers' and Priests' Prediction about the Appointment of the Prophet to the Post of Prophethood and the Reaction of Shapoor and Anushirvan to this

The Astrologers' and Priests' Prediction about the Appointment of the Prophet (S) to the Post of Prophethood and its effect in changing World Conditions

One of the appropriate matters to mention here about the condition of the world before the appointment of Muhammad (S) to the post of Prophethood is the prediction of the astrologers and priests about the Divine Mission of the Holy Messenger before his appearance, and his appointment to the Prophethood. There are two important historical events among these matters which are mentioned as follows.

One course of events is about Shapoor the Owner of the Shoulders who was one of the Iranian kings (Akhasereh or one of the Kasa's). He took the reins of the rule at an early age after his father's death.

At that time, some Bedouin Arabs attacked Iran's borders, and looted and killed the people. Thus as Shapoor grew up, he decided to take revenge. He took an army to Arabia and fought with all of the Arab tribes. He killed whomever he captured to such an extreme that it has been recorded that he ordered holes be made in the Arabs' soldiers shoulder blades and ropes be passed through them. He tortured them to such an extent that he became known as Shapoor the Owner of the Shoulders.

The Battling of Shapoor with the Arabs and Shedding their Blood to Prevent the coming of the Prophet Muhammad

Shapoor kept on fighting with the Arabs until finally he met up with the Tamim tribe. An old man came up to him and asked, "What's the reason why you are so hostile with all these people and are killing them?" Shapoor answered him as follows, "The reason is that they have attacked our country's borders and have looted and killed many." The old man stated, "Well, you have also killed many more times the number of the people they killed. Hasn't your revenge been taken? Isn't it enough."

Shapoor stated, "No. The truth of the matter is something else, and that is that the astrologers predicted that a great man will arise from amongst the Arabs. His followers will attack Iran and take possession of that country. For this very reason, I will kill them (the Arabs) so that this event will not happen."

The old man stated, "Why are you killing so many people for the reason that an event may happen or may not happen? In addition to this, if this event really happens, then you had better be less oppressive, so that they will oppress and kill you and your nation less when they dominate over you."

Shapoor admired the words of the old man and consequently stopped killing and looting the Arabs.

The Dream of Anushirvan and its Interpretation

Now let's consider another course of events which has been written about. When the Prophet Muhammad (S) was born, many wonders and a strange course of events took place as follows:

- 1- The fire burning in the Zorastrian fire-worshipping place was extinguished;
- 2- The fourteen pinnacles of the terrace of Mada'in (Anushirvan or Kasa's palace) tumbled down and its ceiling cracked open.⁵
- 3- The Saveh Lake which had been full of water for many decades, suddenly dried up.
- 4- In the Samaveh Desert, which was a completely dry desert water began to flow.
- 5- A lot of strange events took place including a dreadful dream seen by Anushirvan at the time of the Prophet's (S) birth which made him very nervous. The chief Magian who was also one of the most religious scholars also had a dreadful dream. Anushirvan who had become nervous consulted with the chief Magian.

The chief Magian stated, "This issue is related to an event which has taken place in Arabia. Ask some of the persons who are informed about this matter to come here, so that we can find out more about those events." Then a person named Abdul Masih was introduced. When Abdul Masih came to Anushiravan, Anushiravan asked him, "What do you know about these courses of events which have taken place?" Abdul Masih stated, "I have no information about these courses of events. However, I have an uncle named Sutayh in Damascus. I can go there to ask him about these courses of events."

After Abdul Masih was sent on a mission to Damascus by Anushiravan, he arrived there when the priest Sutayh was about to die. Abdul Masih had not yet gone to see his uncle, but Sutayh told his relatives, "Abdul-Masih is riding on a camel and will come to see Sutayh when Sutayh is about to die." Upon his arrival, Sutayh told him, "The Sassanian king sent you to ask why the Mada'in terrace cracked open and why the fire in the Persian fire-worshipping place was extinguished as well as what was the dream of the chief Magian."

Then without Abdul Masih having related his dream, Sutayh started to interpret the dream as follows, "The chief Magian had a dream in which he dreamt that the Arabs were riding on camels and entered the country of Iran. They scattered themselves all over that country and took possession of it." Then Sutayh went on and stated the following about the interpretation of this dream, "O Abdul Masih! When

the owner of the cane is appointed⁶; reading the Quran increases amongst the human society; the Saveh Lake dries up; water begins to gush out of the earth in the Samaveh Desert; and the fire in the Persian fire-worshipping place is extinguished, it is then that Damascus will no more be Damascus for Sutayh (and Babylon) (formerly Iraq) will no longer be a part of Iran.⁷

And when the Mada'in terrace cracks open and also those fourteen pinnacles tumble down, all of these are the signs that equal to the number of those pinnacles, fourteen men and women from the Sassanian Dynasty will reign. And after that, whatever is going to happen will happen." Sutayh stated all of this and then died. Abdul Masih returned to Mada'in from Damascus and went to Anushirvan to narrate the event. Upon hearing this Anushirvan stated, "Whatever is going to happen let it happen after fourteen individuals from amongst us have reigned." However, he did not know that some of them would not reign for more than six months or a year, and the Sassanian dynasty would rapidly come to an end.

Discourse 3: The World from the Aspect of Culture and Literature at the Time of the Appointment of Muhammad to the Prophethood

Introduction

God the Blessed the Exalted states,

"O Prophet! Truly We have sent thee as a Witness, a Bearer of Glad Tidings, and Warner, and as one who invites to Allah's (grace) by His leave, and as a lamp spreading light." The Holy Quran: Al-Ahzab 33:45-46.

At the time of the birth of God's Prophet Muhammad (S) some wonders and strange things happened which have not only been reported by the Muslims, but they have also been confirmed by reports by some of the fair foreign scholars.

Gustave Laban has written, "The Islamic historians narrate strange things about the time of the birth of Islam's Prophet (S), and they write about wonders some of which are as follows: The fire in the Zorasterian's fire-worshipping place was extinguished; the idols tumbled down and the terrace of Kasra's palace cracked open; the fourteen pinnacles of the Mada'in terrace tumbled down and the Saveh Lake dried up. Things similar to them happened but indeed these were symbols of that great revolution which appeared in the world as a result of the appearance of Islam's Prophet Muhammad (S). His appearance revolutionized and changed the world."⁸

The World from the Aspects of Culture, Literature and Belief at the Time of the

Appointment of Muhammad to the Prophethood

If we refer to history before his birth and after his appointment to the Prophethood, we understand that the world became a different world after the appearance of Muhammad (S), and his appointment to the post of Prophethood.

Moreover, if we refer to Nahjul Balaqah we see that the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) has also stated the people's state during the Age of Ignorance and before Islam in several sermons. In some of the sermons, Ali (a.s.) explains the wildness and ignorance, unbelief, polytheism and the common ethical corruption amongst the Arabs of that time. In some of the sermons, he (a.s.) refers to the quality of the conditions of all of the world's people. For example, in one of his sermons Ali (a.s.) states, "God sent His Prophet at a time when no Prophets existed. And it was a long time since the last time any Prophets were sent by God the Blessed the Sublime. The people had totally forgotten monotheism; their own nature; and morality. Sedition had engulfed the world and the world's affairs were in disorder. The fires of war had increased, and the light of God-worshipping and knowledge had in general become erased from the pages of history. And the world had evidently become too proud. The leaves of the world's trees had turned yellow⁹ and its autumn had come. The result was hopelessness which was spread all over the world. It was at that time that world's water disappeared.¹⁰ The signs of guidance had disappeared and the flags of baseness and deviation were raised, and the world looked strangely bad at its people. The fruit of the world was polytheism, unbelief and moral corruption. The motto of the people was fear, blood-shedding and sword fighting."¹¹

The Effect of the Start of the Mission of the Prophethood

It was in this condition that the sun of the truth of Muhammad's religion uprose from Mecca and enlightened the world with God- worshipping, honesty, fair dealing, knowledge and moral virtues.

"Muhammad (S) is the Master of the two worlds, man, the genies, the Arabs and other people.

Our Prophet is the Prophet of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil. He is the most truthful amongst the people.

He is the most beloved of God. It is his intercession for which everyone on the great fright of the Resurrection Day are awaiting.

The Noble Prophet (S) invited the people to worshipping God. Therefore, those who joined him, grasped unto a rope which will never tear.

His Holiness the Prophet Muhammad (S) was much better than all the Prophets in terms of nature and temperament. (And those Prophets with all their greatness cannot even approach the Prophet Muhammad (S).

All those Prophets always raise their hands in supplication to the royal hall of the noble Prophet Muhammad, so as to drink a handful of water from this sea or wet their lips with this ever-lasting rain.

He is the only one whose face and nature have reached perfection. And then the Creator of the lives chose him as his friend.

He is much more superior than others to have a partner in goodness and handsomeness. The superior jewel of excellence is found in him and not divided up.

Every nobility belongs to him and every greatness originates from his superior rank."¹²

His Holiness the Noble Prophet (S) was superior to all the Prophets in all forms of perfection and ethical virtues. He invited his nation to good morality, good ethical acts and praiseworthy attributes. The Prophet (S) stated, "I was appointed in order to perfect good ethics."¹³

Discourse 4: The Prophets' Pledge of Allegiance to God to carry out their Missions and the Islamic Religion as a Comprehensive Religion

The Pledges of Allegiance to God of the Prophets to carry out their Missions

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated, "God chose Prophets from the offspring of Adam – the father of mankind (a.s.) – and He got a pledge of allegiance from them, so that they would spread the Divine inspiration to the people and propagate their Missions."¹⁴

This refers to the covenant referred to in the following noble verse of the Holy Quran,

“And remember We took from the Prophets their covenant: As (We did) from thee: from Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus the son of Mary: We took from them a solemn covenant.” The Holy Quran: Al-Ahzab 33:7.

Also God the Exalted sent these Prophets at a time in which the people had forgotten their pledges of allegiance which is referred to in the following verse of the Holy Quran,

“Did I not enjoin on you, O ye Children of Adam, that ye should not worship Satan; for that he was to you an enemy avowed?” The Holy Quran: Ya-Sin 36:60.

Recognition of God is a Natural Pledge of Allegiance to God

God has taken this pledge of allegiance from man's nature so that man serves God. This means that man recognizes God by means of his own nature, and he only knows Him and no other than Him. In another verse He states,

“So set thou thy face steadily and truly to the Faith: (establish) Allah's handiwork according to the pattern on which He has made mankind: no change (let there be) in the work (wrought) by Allah; that is the standard Religion, but most among mankind understand not” The Holy Quran: Ar-Ru m 30:30.

Therefore, God's recognition is in man's nature and it is not done by force. This means that man's nature, the Intellect and the conscience decree that God exists. In another verse He states,

“When thy Lord drew forth from the Children of Adam – from their loins – their descendants, and made them testify concerning themselves, (saying): ‘Am I not your Lord (who cherishes and sustains you)?’– They stated: ‘Yea! We do testify!’ (This), lest ye should say on the Day of Judgment: ‘Of this we were never mindful.’” The Holy Quran: Al-A'raf 7:172.

Now the following question could be asked: "When did God the Exalted take the pledge of allegiance from mankind?" Some of the commentators have maintained that this pledge is related to those very worldly minute particles. The particles which were used at the time the Great God created Adam's offspring from his back and brought them into existence. Then He had them testify by asking them,

“...Am I not your Lord?...” The Holy Quran: Al-A'raf 7:172.

Everybody confessed to it and stated, “Yes.”

Even though several narrations have been narrated which confirm this issue, the issue which must be paid attention to is that if the intention from this pledge be the pledge in the world of minute particles – then why does not mankind remember the scene of pledging allegiance? If such a scene existed, all people should remember that this pledge of allegiance was taken from them. Especially God the Exalted gave the Ultimatum and states,

“(This), lest ye should say on the Day of Judgment: ‘Of this we were never mindful.’” The Holy Quran: Al-A'raf 7:172.

Thus some of the researchers state, "This pledge was taken from mankind's Intellect and Nature at that very place. It is a natural pledge that was taken from them just when God brought them into this world. Thus if they be asked, “Don't you see this wisely power of God in all the creatures?” or

“...Am I not your Lord?...” The Holy Quran: Al-A'raf 7:172.

their very Nature and Intellect will respond, “Yes.”

God states that they were given this Ultimatum

“(This), lest ye should say on the Day of Judgment: ‘Of this we were never mindful.’” The Holy Quran: Al-A'raf 7:172.

The Prophets' Missions were intended to attract the attention of Man to his Pledge of Allegiance to God

His Holiness the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) states, "Those Prophets came for mankind when mankind had forgotten this pledge and had set up partners for God the Exalted. The devils also had completely removed God and His worship from man's memory. It was at such a time that the Prophets came and invited the people to worshipping God.

God sent the Prophets one after another until He honored the believers and appointed the Prophet Muhammad (S) to the post of Prophethood and gave him the Divine Mission. This has been stressed in the following verse of the Holy Quran,

"...Allah did confer a great favour on the believers when He sent among them an apostle from among themselves..." The Holy Quran: Al-i-Imran 3: 164.

When the Prophet Muhammad (S) was chosen for the Divine Mission and Prophethood, there were widespread differences of opinion and the people of the world had several different kinds of thinking each going their different ways."

Deviation from Recognition of God before Muhammad's Appointment to the Prophethood

A group of people likened God to the people and claimed He had weaknesses and maintained that God had the attributes of man. Others placed God's name on other things such as idols. Others worshipped things other than God such as the sun, the moon and the stars. Some people just believed in this world and accepted nothing but this world as we read in the following verse,

"And they say: 'What is there but our life in this world? We shall die and we live, and nothing but time can destroy us.' But of that they have no knowledge: they merely conjecture:" The Holy Quran: Al-Jathiya 45:24.

Some of the people worshipped animals. To wrap it all up, there were diverse ways and various religions on the earth, but all had one thing in common and that was they had forgotten God. People no longer believed in monotheism.

Inviting People to the Recognition of God by the Prophet Muhammad

It was at this time that God the Exalted appointed Prophet Muhammad (S) to the Divine Mission of Prophethood. The Prophet revived worshipping God and honesty, righteousness, kindness, unity of the people, morality and good human characters. Since he was given a Divine Mission from God to be the guide of all people, he uprose against all the people just as we read in the following verse of the Holy Quran,

“O thou wrapped up (in the mantle)! Arise and deliver thy warning! And thy Lord do thou magnify! And thy garments keep free from stain!” The Holy Quran: Al-Muddaththir 74: 1–4.

To sum it all up, the Noble Prophet (S) revived all of those human attributes and morals which had vanished. The Prophet (S) brought more information for the people about the Holy Essence of God and His Attributes than what all the Prophets had brought before.

His Holiness the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated the following to Imam al-Hassan Mujtaba (a.s.) in his last Will and Testament, "You should know that from amongst all the Prophets who had been sent by God, there was no one except for the Noble Prophet Muhammad (S) who brought more information about God, His attributes and His Decrees. So be happy that you have chosen this Prophet of great rank as your Leader and Guide."

The Comprehensiveness of the Islamic Religion in the Sermons of the Prophet (S)

The religion of Islam has not neglected anything. The Noble Prophet (S) brought information from God the Exalted concerning whatever is necessary for man's life. This includes what is necessary in this world and the Hereafter.

God's Prophet (S) stated in a sermon, "O people! No Prophet will ever come after me and no other Muslim nation will come after my Muslim nation. Indeed be informed that you must worship God the Great; establish and say your five daily prayers; fast on the days of the Month of Ramazan; go on pilgrimage to the House of God; pay the alms due on your possessions and purify them by doing so. Completely follow the ones who have been appointed as your leaders by God so that your Lord may take you to Paradise."¹⁵

In another sermon the Prophet (S) stated, "There is nothing which brings you closer to Heaven and takes you farther away from Hell except, for what I have stated for you and I ordered you to do. And there is nothing which takes you farther away from Hell except for what I have stated for you and what I forbid you from doing."

The Prophet (S) is the Seal of the Prophets and a Lit Lamp

Thus no Prophet will ever come after His Holiness God's Prophet Muhammad (S) and for this very reason you can see that God the Exalted in some instances draws a similitude for the Noble Prophet Muhammad (S) to a lit lamp such as the following verse of the Holy Quran,

“O Prophet! Truly We have sent thee as a Witness, a Bearer of Glad Tidings, and Warner, – And as one who invites to Allah's (grace) by His leave, and as a lamp spreading light.” The Holy Quran: Al-Ahzab 33:45–33:46.

The Noble Prophet (S) is like a lit lamp which gives off a lot of light removing the darkness of ignorance,

polytheism, unbelief, sedition and corruption, and which enlightens the world. In another place the Prophet (S) has been similarized to the sun by God, where He states,

“By the Sun and his (glorious) splendour; By the Moon as she follows him.” The Holy Quran: Ash-Shams 91: 1-2.

Discourse 5: The Condition of the World before and after the Appointment of Muhammad (S) to the Prophethood and the Attributes of the Prophet (S) and the Strict and Modest Commandments of that Pure Soul

Introduction

God the Blessed the Sublime stated in the following verse of the Holy Quran,

“It is He Who has sent amongst the Unlettered an apostle from among themselves, to rehearse to them His Signs, to sanctify them, and to instruct them in Scripture and Wisdom,- although they had been, before, in manifest error;” The Holy Quran: Al-Jumu'ah 62:2.

The issue up for discussion is the especial Prophethood. Thus this Noble verse which is related to the Prophethood of the Prophet Muhammad (S) is presented to continue our discussion.

The Condition of the World before the Appointment of Muhammad (S) to the Prophethood

In the sermons of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) we can read about the condition of the Arabs during the Age of Ignorance and before the coming of Islam as well as the people elsewhere. From amongst them is a sermon expressing the state of the Arabs as follows, "God sent His Prophet so as to frighten the people about torture and establish him as a person to be entrusted with revelations. (Then His Holiness the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) addresses the Arabs whose time was nearer to the Age of Ignorance and states), 'O you group of Arabs! You had the worst religion (meaning idol-worshipping) and lived in the worst place (meaning Hijaz).¹⁶ And you spent your lives in the worst culture and religion. You lived amongst snakes that did not run away from noise.¹⁷ You used dark-colored water which accumulated due to the rain, and was polluted with all kinds of pollutants. You ate unsuitable food."¹⁸

Many of the Arabs ate lizards, and even eating corpses was common. It was for this very reason that God decreed,

“Forbidden to you (for food) are: dead meat, blood, the flesh of swine,...” The Holy Quran: Al-

Ma'idah 5:3.

To wrap it all up, Ali (a.s.) stated that they were backwards in regard to material and spiritual matters, and spent their lives in barbarianism and wildness.

The Commander of the Faithful (a.s.) continued by saying, "You spilled each other's blood and looted each other.¹⁹ In summary, killing and looting was your customary work. You cut off relationships with your relatives. You set up idols.²⁰ You were completely involved in all types of sin."²¹

It is for this very reason that God the Exalted states in this verse up for discussion,

"... although they had been, before, in manifest error;" The Holy Quran: Al-Jumu'ah 62:2.

Anyhow, this was the condition of the Arabs who were involved in the darkness of oppression, polytheism, unbelief, and corruption before Islam.

The Condition of the World after the Appointment of Muhammad (S) to the Post of Prophethood

Luckily, the sun of the truth of Muhammad's (S) religion rose out of this darkness and Muhammad (S) invited the people to worshipping God and having good morality. He (a.s.) stated God's attributes and helped them understand the matters of the origin of Creation and the Resurrection. Muhammad (S) brought laws which are sound and permanent. His Holiness the Noble Prophet Muhammad (S) was superior to all the Prophets and had the highest rank amongst all of them in regards to morality and action.

Sheikh Azry has stated the following in this regard, "You cannot imagine the morals and the attributes of the Noble Prophet (S). This is a truth which you can never understand. His Holiness the Prophet (S) was the source of all sciences, wisdom, and all the knowledge about the world and its creatures (from when they first appeared on Earth). God searched all over the world and at that time He chose His Holiness His Prophet Muhammad (S) from amongst them and designated him as the Seal of the Prophets."²²

The Prophet's Noble Manners

The Prophet Muhammad (S) was the most perfect human in terms of morality. God the Exalted greatly esteemed the Prophet (S) and states the following about him,

"And thou (standest) on an exalted standard of character." The Holy Quran: Al-Qalam 68:4.

And in another place He states,

"Now hath come unto you an Messenger from amongst yourselves: it grieves him that ye should perish: ardently anxious is he over you: to the Believers is he most kind and merciful." The Holy

Quran: At-Tauba 9: 128.

Just as it is clear in this verse, God the Exalted has used the two attributes of kindness and mercy which are the Divine Attributes of the Noble Prophet (S). Also God states the following about the Prophet Muhammad (S),

“We sent thee not, but as a Mercy for all creatures.” The Holy Quran: Al-Anbiya 21: 107.

Not only was His Holiness the Prophet Muhammad (S) superior and better than all others from the aspect of morals and attributes, but also he (a.s.) perfected Noble Attributes as he (a.s.) himself stated, "I was appointed to the Prophethood so that I would perfect the Noble Attributes."²³ God stated this in the same noble way in the following verse,

“..., to sanctify them ...” The Holy Quran: Al-Jumu'ah 62:2.

It is evident that because His Holiness the Noble Prophet (S) was endowed with the highest degree of good morals, he (S) invited his nation to adhere to good morals. If man possesses good and admired morality, he would benefit from that true knowledge which is the cause of Eternal Prosperity. This is just as the Immaculate Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) stated, "...The truth of knowledge is like a light which God the Blessed the Exalted places in the heart and soul of any person He wishes..."²⁴

Also the Prophet of Islam (S) stated in relation to this, "Knowledge does not exist in the Heavens so that you can ask, 'Who will bring it down?' nor is it amongst the Earth's layers so that you can ask,

'Who will bring it out of the surface of the Earth?' Therefore, strive to achieve good and praiseworthy attributes so that true knowledge would flourish and the real knowledge would emerge from your inner self."²⁵ This means that when you have good attributes such as righteousness, patience and perseverance, and finally you have attained a good temper, it is then that in reality you have attained the truth of these affairs, and the truth of those attributes appear in you. However, if you do not attain them and it be just in words, no benefit is derived from that.

Good Morality is one of the Miracles of Islam's Prophet (S)

The existence of these morals and attributes of the Noble Prophet (S) and their increase amongst such a society, which has been formally described, is really the greatest miracle of His Holiness Muhammad (S), especially since he (S) had no teachers and was not educated.

The Moral Precepts and Commandments of the Noble Prophet (S) being the Best Reason for the Prophethood

Firstly, Muhammad (S) brought some laws that the lawmakers of the world are unable to bring.

Secondly, the Prophet Muhammad (S) stated things about God the Blessed, His Holy Attributes and the

issues related to the origin of Creation and Resurrection about which the world's greatest philosophers are really surprised.

If we think about the rules, precepts and ethics which Islam's Prophet (S) brought, we may find out that these issues themselves are the most important reason for proving his Prophethood. Thus it can be stated that the best reason for the proof of the Prophethood of the Noble Prophet Muhammad (S) and the Divine Leadership of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.), and the Immaculate Imams (a.s.) is that knowledge which those Holy Lights (the Prophet, Ali and the Imams) possessed, and passed on to the people.

Thus, by paying attention to the cultural conditions of those times and the fact that those innocent Immaculate Imams were not educated and had no professors, the narrations and supplications left by them are the most important proof for proving the Prophethood of Muhammad (S) and the Divine Leadership of the Immaculate Imams (a.s.). The Noble Prophet (S) and all the members of his Holy Household (a.s.) were given the mission to speak in the people's tongues and according to the people's intellects. This has been clarified in a narration on the authority of Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) as follows, "We the Prophets have been given the mission by God to speak with the people according to their intellects."²⁶

Those great men did not express all the real Knowledge which they possessed. They only presented a part of it. Yet this small amount is the most important reason to prove their rightfulness.

This can be clearly deducted from the following which is stated to be expressed by his Holiness Imam Zayn ul-Abidin as-Sajjad (a.s.), "I conceal these expensive jewels of my own knowledge lest the people be deviated about us. Before me, His Holiness the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.), Imam al-Hassan (a.s.) and Imam al-Husayn (a.s.) were just like me.

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) recommended the same to Imam al-Hassan (a.s.) and Imam al-Husayn (a.s.). So many expensive jewels of knowledge exist that if I reveal them for the people, they will tell me you are an isolator, and it is then that the Muslim people will kill me."²⁷

This means that the people cannot bear the truths of the knowledge the Prophet (S) and the Imams (a.s.) possessed, so they concealed those expensive jewels of knowledge.

In summary, the sciences, precepts, rules, and ethics which have been narrated on the authority of the Noble Prophet (S) and the Innocent Household of His Holiness (a.s.) are perfectly sound and permanent. All are miracles which confirm the truth of their sayings. For this very reason, it is our duty to obey their orders and admonishments since obeying them is just like obeying God the Exalted who stated,

"He who obeys the Messenger, obeys Allah..." The Holy Quran: An-Nisa 4:80.

And one must take as an example the behaviour and the deeds of the Noble Prophet (S) and His Household (a.s.). This means that we should seek refuge with them and follow in their footsteps as much as possible, so that we may prosper in this world and the Hereafter.

1. Nah j u l B al aq ah, Sermon 195.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 195.
5. It is even available today and can be seen.
6. Referring to the Prophet Muhammad (S) and symbolizing the Quran to be like the Cane of Moses (a.s.).
7. Babylon is the old name for Iraq which was a part of Iran, but was conquered by the Muslims.
8. Islam and Arab Civilization, p106.
9. Referring to God-fearing people.
10. This means that the virtue s and the good deeds which revive the society like water had disappeared.
11. Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 89.
12. Qaside Barde
13. Kanz ul-A'mal, 3/16.
14. Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 1.
15. Bihar ul-Anwar, 82/206.
16. The nobility of Hijaz (the Arabian peninsula) is honored since Mecca is situated there housing the House of God (Ka'ba). However, the intention of His Holiness was regarding sedition, corruption, blood-shedding and other ugly deeds, and stated that they had settled down in the worst place.
17. As if you were so dumb that the snakes heard nothing at all to escape from.
18. Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 26.
19. They would fight with each other for many consecutive years – 100 to 200 years. If one person was killed in a tribe, they would say we have to kill ten people in retaliation.
20. In the Ka'ba (House of God) hundreds of idols had been placed. Also each of the tribes had an idol for themselves which they worshipped and sacrificed (animals) for asking them to fulfill their prayers.
21. Drinking alcohol, adultery, corruption, blood-shedding, oppression, transgression, sedition plus many other sinful acts were common amongst them.
22. Takhmis al-Arziah Sheikh Jabir Kazemi 130.
23. Kanz ul-A'mal 3/16.
24. Misbah ul-Shria 16.
25. Kashf ul-Ata an Vujuh Marasim al-Ehteda
26. Bihar ul-Anwar, 16/380.
27. Haqayeq Fayz

Discourse 1: Divine Leadership is one of the major principles of the Religion, the necessity of the leader being Innocent and appointed by God

Divine Leadership is one of the major Religious Principles

The most important difference of opinion between the Sunnis and the Shias is the matter of Divine Leadership (Imamate). And this matter is of such importance that the origins of all other differences in opinion stem from it. The scholars of the Shia religion say that Divine Leadership (Imamate) is one of the major religious principles (Usul-ul-Din). However, the Sunnis say that Imamate is one of the minor religious principles (Furu- ul-Din).

Coincidentally, it has been mentioned in both the Shia and the Sunni books that His Holiness the Noble Messenger (S) stated, "If one passes away and does not acknowledge the Divine Leader (Imam) of his time, it is as if he has died in the Age of Ignorance."¹

When someone died in the Age of Ignorance, he died as an atheist since he neither recognized God nor God's Prophet. And someone who does not believe in the leader of his time is just like that, and has died in a state of unbelief. For this very reason acknowledging the Divine Leader of the time is one of the major religious principles, not one of the minor religious principles. Thus, not believing in this principle results in unbelief and irreligiousness.

Thus, the true religion is the religion of the Shias with twelve Divine Leaders after the Prophet Muhammad (S) in which Divine Leadership is one of the major principles of religion.

A Divine Leader must be Nobler and more superior than others in Virtues and Knowledge

Another difference of opinion between the Sunnis and the Shias is that the Shias believe that the Divine Leader must be the most knowledgeable and the most virtuous of all the people. This means that from the aspects of knowledge, perfection and praiseworthy temper, he should be the best. The Sunnis, however, do not believe that the Divine Leader (Imam) should be more virtuous than others. They believe that one with a lesser degree of nobility can be put in a post to command over one who is nobler than him. However, this is illogical from the standpoint of the Intellect, since one's Intellect assumes that the noblest person must rule.

Another difference of opinion between the Shias and the Sunnis is that the Shias believe that the Divine Leader must be sinless since he is the successor to the Prophet (S). However, the Sunnis believe that being sinless is not a condition for being a Divine Leader. This is because the Sunni Caliphs (Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman) were idol-worshippers until the age of forty or more.

On the contrary, the Sunnis believe that being just is enough for being the Divine Leader, while those three Caliphs did not even have justice.

Being sinless is the condition for being a Divine Leader

Why is sinlessness the condition for being The Imam? This is because the Divine Leadership consists of leading mankind in worldly and religious affairs. In other words, the successor to the Prophet (or to any Divine Leader after the Prophet (S)) is one who handles all the people's worldly and religious affairs in the same way that the Prophet Muhammad (S) managed the affairs.

Therefore, the Divine Leader must be sinless just like the Prophet Muhammad (S) was so that nothing is added on or taken away from the religious rules, and the Divine Leader does not cause any problems in religion. This is due to the fact that the Divine Leader is the Protector of the Religion, and the Protector must be trustworthy in order that no innovation appears in religion.

The people do not choose the Divine Leader

There is another difference of opinion between the Sunnis and the Shias. This is that the Sunni scholars say that the Divine Leader is chosen by the people; meaning that the people must gather together so that the Divine Leader (Imam) and the Prophet's Caliph successor may be chosen. The Sunni scholars say the reason for this is that the Prophet's companions gathered together and had a consensus on the issue of Abu Bakr being the Caliph.

Meanwhile, the Shia scholars prove this to be wrong since there was no real consensus in choosing Abu Bakr as the Caliph, since the gathering faced a lot of disagreement from a lot of the companions such as Abbas – the Prophet's uncle (a.s.); Salman; Abuzar; Miqdad; and His Holiness the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.). Therefore, there was actually no consensus in the group. The Shiites also believe that the consensus of the people about the Divine Leader is not proper, since a Divine Leader must be Immaculate and no one but God knows about this.

No one but God knows for the Immaculateness of a Divine Leader

Thus the consensus of the people is not the proper means for declaring a Divine Leader, since it is established that a Divine Leader (Imam) must be immaculate and no one but God can be aware of all the private actions and inner thoughts of an individual. Therefore, it is only God who can appoint someone as an Immaculate Divine Leader. This position (being the Divine Leader can only be filled after God informs the Prophet (S) (or the present Divine Leader) about the person to fill that position next.

Actually, this is what occurred, since we can see that at the advent of the Appointment to the Prophethood (Be'sat) the Prophet (S) introduced the Commander of the Faithful to be his successor and stated, "Whoever pledges allegiance to me in order to assist me in the affairs of the religion will be my Caliph and my successor." Ali was the first man to pledge allegiance to the Prophet. His Holiness Ali (a.s.) stated, "O God's Messenger (S)! I am ready." Then His Holiness the Prophet Muhammad (S) stated, "Thus you are my successor."

The same has been stated in the book Tarikh-i-Tabari on the authority of the Noble Prophet Muhammad (S) who stated, "Which one of you will help me in this mission and be my successor?" Then His Holiness the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated, "O God's Messenger (S)! I am ready." Then His Holiness the Noble Prophet Muhammad (S) stated, "Thus you are my Trustee and Successor."²

This happened at the advent of Muhammad's appointment to the Prophethood (Be'that). However, the Prophet Muhammad (S) repeated these statements at the oasis between Mecca and Medina called Qadir-i- Khum at the end of Muhammad's Prophethood.

Most of the learned scholars have reported it and it is so frequently reported that it is a certain fact. It has also been reported in Shia narrations. Thus God the Exalted ordered Muhammad (S) to appoint His Holiness Ali (a.s.) to the position of Divine Leadership (Imamate).

Both Sunni and Shia scholars have mentioned that the following verses have been revealed about His Holiness the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.):

1 – 'O Messenger! Proclaim the (message) which hath been sent to thee from thy Lord. If thou didst not, thou wouldst not have fulfilled and proclaimed His mission. And Allah will defend thee from men (who mean mischief). For Allah guideth not those who reject Faith.' The Holy Quran: Al-Ma'idah 5:67.

2– '...This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion...' The Holy Quran: Al-Ma'idah 5:3.

3– 'Your (real) friends are (no less than) Allah, His Messenger, and the (fellowship of) believers, those who establish regular prayers and regular charity, and they bow down humbly (in worship).' The Holy Quran: Al-Ma'idah 5:55.

Also the phrase 'those charged with authority among you' in the following verse refers to the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) and the rest of the Divine Leaders after him,

'O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger, and those charged with authority among you...' The Holy Quran: An-Nisa 4:59.

The best proof for the Prophethood of the Prophet of Islam is that Ali (a.s.) has acknowledged it as we can see in the following verse,

"The Unbelievers say: 'No apostle art thou.' Say: 'Enough for a witness between me and you is Allah, and such as have knowledge of the Book.'" The Holy Quran: Ar-Ra'd 13:43.

Of course, it is clear that the individual mentioned in this verse by the phrase 'and such as have knowledge of the Book' is His Holiness – the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.). This means that the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) is the one who clarifies the Quran, is the one who protects the

Quran, is the one who keeps the Quran, and is the one who interprets the Quran.

Going to Paradise depends upon Ali

As the Noble Prophet (S) stated, "God the Blessed the Sublime stated, 'I will not torture anyone who loves Ali even if he commits sins, and I will not have mercy upon Ali's enemies even if they obey Me.'"³

Thus, is necessary for everyone to love the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.). This will cause an individual to be saved from the worldly and eternal torture.

You cannot love both Ali and His enemies

And it is impossible that whoever likes the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) to be friendly with his enemies since God the Exalted has stated,

"Allah has not made for any man two hearts in his (one) body..." The Holy Quran: Al-Ahzab 33:4.

Discourse 2: 'Those who are true' refers to the Members of the Holy Household and the attributes and virtues of the Commander of the Faithful Ali

Who are 'those who are true'?

God the Blessed the Sublime stated,

"O ye who believe! Fear Allah and be with those who are true (in word and deed)." The Holy Quran: At-Tauba 9: 119.

Of course, it is clear that there must exist a group of 'those who are true' for God the Exalted to invite the believers to follow them. According to what has been derived from the narrations, and what is certain from all the passages His Holiness the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.), Her Holiness Fatimah Zahra (a.s.), and the rest of the Immaculate Imams (a.s.) are the true symbols of the truthful individuals. This is because they possess the rank of sinlessness, and that has been narrated in some of the narrations, "Be with Ali (a.s.) and his companions"⁴ implying the decree of God the Blessed to follow Ali (a.s.) and His companions; believe in their kindness and Leadership, and accept their being in charge of our affairs.

When it became clear that what was meant by 'those who are true' (Sadiqeen) was actually the fourteen Immaculate individuals⁵; and when we stated that when honesty comes it means that everything else also comes, it becomes clear that the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) and all the other Divine Leaders (a.s.) from his progeny were truthful in all their intentions and actions both before God and the people. This is certified by the following tradition on the authority of God's Prophet (S) in which he (S)

stated, "I will leave two weighty things with you one of which is greater than the other one. It is God's Book that is a rope extended out from the heavens onto the Earth. The other one is my Household. Therefore, be careful and see how you treat these two after me."⁷

And it is stated in another Prophetic narration in which God's Prophet (S) stated, "The similitude of the members of my Holy Household to you is like that of Noah's Ark which whoever boarded was rescued, and anyone who did not was drowned."⁸ Therefore, it has become clear that the Muslim nation must follow the fourteen Immaculate ones (a.s.) in all their worldly and eternal affairs.

The meaning of 'those who are true' in another verse of the Quran

As parts of the Quran interpret other parts of it, the same holds true for the above-mentioned verse. It interprets other verses. For this very reason, in this Noble verse God the Exalted has stated that you must

***'Fear Allah and be with those who are true (in word and deed).'* The Holy Quran: At-Tauba 9:119.**

I stated that 'those who are true' are those who are better than all the people in terms of all virtues, perfection, and honesty.

In another Quranic verse it can be seen that the attributes of such individuals are expressed and specifically distinguished, so that the attributes of 'those who are true' are clearly made known as we read,

***"It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces towards East or West; but it is righteousness to believe in Allah and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers; to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer, and practice regular charity; to fulfil the contracts which ye have made; and to be firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the Allah-fearing."* The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2:177.**

Thus, this verse comments upon the verse at the beginning of this discussion for the very reason that in the first verse of the discussion it is stated '...be with those who are true (in word and deed)' and the attributes of the 'those who are true' are expressed in this verse. It is clearly stated that those who have these attributes; and are the best amongst all those in terms of virtues and perfection and 'are the people of truth.'

Therefore, this verse confirms the verse at the beginning of the discussion. So it is evident that the point of this noble verse is to obey and follow the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) and the Immaculate Imams (a.s.), since they are the only people in the Muslim nation who have the attributes mentioned in the Noble verse to the best extent.

Attributes and Virtues of the Commander of the Faithful Ali

Of course, the attributes and virtues of His Holiness the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) are as clear as the sun is and they cannot be covered up in any way. When Muaviah dominated over the Muslims, not only was the mentioning of His Holiness Ali's virtues and attributes prohibited and restrained, but also Muaviah ordered that narrations about Abu Bakr, Uthman and Umar be made up. However, the virtues and attributes of His Holiness Ali (a.s.) filled and covered up the whole world, even though Muaviah tried to prevent the publicizing of the virtues of His Holiness Ali (a.s.). The Shias could not express those virtues, and Ali's opponents concealed those virtues out of their enmity and hatred.

It is quoted on the authority of Muhammad Ibn Idris Shafi-ee who is one of the four Sunni leaders that when some questions about the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) were asked of him, he answered, "What can I say about the one whose friends have not expressed his virtues out of fear, and whose enemies have concealed his virtues and attributes from others due to their enmity. However, his virtues and attributes were widely spread around the whole world."⁹

It has also been quoted on the authority of Muhammad Ibn Idris Shafi-ee in the book *Isna Asharia* that there exist certain nobilities in His Holiness Ali (a.s.) that are combined together even though they contradict each other. His Holiness was the perfect combination of those contradictory attributes. Shafi-ee says the following about the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.),

1- "Knowledge and action were combined to the most perfect extent in the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) such as rarely can be found in anyone else."¹⁰ Most often knowledgeable men do not do what they say, but "doing what you say" (the virtues of knowledge and action) were combined together in the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.). Combining them together at this stage of perfection is exceedingly difficult. However, knowledge and action were combined together to the most perfect extent in the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.). And it rarely happens that these two virtues are combined together.

Of course, it is clear that His Holiness was the gate to the city of the knowledge of the Prophet (S)¹¹ as the Prophet (S) stated, "I am the city of Knowledge and Ali (a.s.) is the gate to that city. Whoever wants to learn some knowledge must enter from that door (Ali (a.s.))."¹²

Also it has been stated by the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.), "God's Prophet (S) taught me one-thousand gates of knowledge each of which opens up to one-thousand other gates."¹³

Also the following is attributed to His Holiness Ali (a.s.), "Should I be asked to judge, I shall judge based on the Torah for the Jews, based on the Bible for the Christians, based on the Psalms of David for the followers of David, and based on the Quran for the Muslims."¹⁴

It is also generally accepted by both the Shias and the Sunnis that the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated the following from the top of the pulpit, "Ask me questions before the time when I am not available, because I am wiser about the way to get to Heaven than the roads on the Earth."¹⁵

Also in another place he (a.s.) stated, "No one else after me will make this statement unless he is a liar."¹⁶

Both the Shias and the Sunnis have narrated this matter. Whoever made this statement after His Holiness Ali (a.s.) was publicly disgraced since this statement was especially attributed to His Holiness Ali (a.s.).

Therefore, one must go to the doors of the houses of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) and the Immaculate Imams (a.s.), and learn Islamic precepts from them. One must refer to them and must never go to the door of the house of anyone else. 'Anyone else' means those three caliphs (Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman) and the Ummayyad clan caliphs and the Abbasid clan caliphs and others such as those. This is because they did not have the religious knowledge, and for this very reason they were actually not the Prophet Muhammad's successors.

For example, it was asked of the first caliph Abu Bakr,

***"What is the meaning of the Arabic word abba (or fodder) in the verse 'And fruits and fodder?'
The Holy Quran: 'Abassa 80:31.***

Even though he was an Arab, he stated he did not know! Abu Bakr was asked many questions but did not know the answer.¹⁷ Umar was also asked a great deal of questions, but he went to the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) and got the answers by referring to Ali (a.s.). A lot has been written about these cases, and Umar stated the following in approximately seventy of those cases, "If Ali (a.s.) did not exist, Umar would be ruined."¹⁸ And on another occasion Umar stated, "I had to seek refuge in Allah on any occasion where there was a problem, and Abul Hassan Ali a.s) was not available."¹⁹ The same was the case for Umar on other occasions when he was unable to resolve the problems and stated, "O Ali (a.s.)! I will not survive after you."²⁰

The case was the same for Uthman who was not able to provide answers for the problems. Also the four leaders of the Sunni schools of thought did not know theology and had only learnt some theology from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) and Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) and the other Divine Leaders (a.s.). Thus, one must refer to the Immaculate Imams (a.s.) in all of the sciences of theology and generally in everything. This is referred to in a poem on the authority of Sheikh Ibrahim ibn Soleiman al-Qatifi, "Do not pay any attention to the sayings of Abu Hanifeh, Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, Shafe-ee and Malik as well the sayings of Ka'b-ul-Ahbar. Instead express your love for and follow those Holy Imams who say, 'We narrate from our ancestors and they narrate from Gabriel and Gabriel narrates from God the Exalted.'"²¹

Thus His Holiness the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) ranked first in knowledge. Also in the stage of action it is evident what state he was in. In the stage of worship His Holiness (a.s.) stated one-thousand units of prayers at night. And there was also the prayer stated while an arrow-head was pulled out of his blessed leg. And His Holiness (a.s.) was so deeply involved in worship that he did not pay any attention to this.

One of the very important actions of His Holiness Ali (a.s.) was his Holy War in the Battle of the Trench (Khandaq) in which he struck down Amru ibn 'Abd Wudd.²² The Noble Prophet (S) stated the following about this incident, "Ali's strike of the sword in the battle of Khandaq was the best of all the actions of my nation up until the Resurrection Day."²³ This has been expressed in the following way in some other narrations, "The strike of the sword of His Holiness the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) is the most excellent worship of all the worship of the genies and mankind up until the Judgement Day."²⁴

And this is much less than the Holy Wars of His Holiness Ali (a.s.) and the rest of the battles which were sincerely waged for God's sake. Only God knows the worth of those battles. Therefore, it is obvious that knowledge and action were completely combined in Ali (a.s.) at the most perfect level.

2- "Excellent personal merit, noble descent and humbleness were combined together in His Holiness Ali (a.s.) and both of them reached the most perfect extent."²⁵

Ali (a.s.) was the Prophet's cousin and the offspring of Abu Talib also known as Sayyid Batha who was an important man amongst the Arabs. Al-Hassan (a.s.) and Al-Husayn (a.s.) were Ali's (a.s.) children and his wife was Fatimah Zahra (a.s.) – the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad (S). No better personal merit and noble descent can be imagined than this. With all this greatness and nobility, the humbleness of His Holiness (a.s.) had reached the stage of such perfection that he took company with the poor. And he (a.s.) stated, "I am a poor companion of the poor."²⁶

Of course, many cases regarding Ali's (a.s.) humbleness have been narrated. And it is important that even though his (a.s.) personal merit, noble descent, and humbleness had reached the utmost extent, they were all combined together. And it rarely happens that someone with noble descent and excellent personal merits is also humble. Yet it is highly improbable for those attributes to be perfected in one person.

3- "Poverty and generosity combined together within His Eminence Ali (a.s.). And both of them reached the state of perfection although it is highly improbable for these two attributes to be combined together (within an individual)."²⁷

Persons who are poor are not generous. And those who are generous are not poor. However, the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) was poor as well as generous. Of course, His Holiness Ali (a.s.) was poor before the time of the Caliphate. This means that he (a.s.) did not have any wealth. However, the sincere generosity of His Holiness (a.s.) at that time was remarkable. The Chapter of the Quran (Hal Ata) was revealed about the sincerity of His Holiness (a.s.) and the Prophet's (S) Household when they gave charity and were generous.

4- "Ascetism accompanied by a good temper had reached the most perfect extent within His Holiness Ali (a.s.) although it is highly improbable that these two attributes combine together (within an individual)."²⁸

Often, people who are ascetic are bad-tempered. It rarely happens that they are pleasant and have a

good temper. At the same time, ascetism and having a good temper could be found in His Holiness Ali (a.s.) at their most perfect extents. His Holiness (a.s.) stated, "I swear by God that in my opinion the world is more base than a meatless bone of a pig in the hands of a person who has leprosy."²⁹

His Holiness Ali (a.s.) separated himself totally from the world, and paid no attention to it and what was in it at all. Thus, his asceticism reached the most perfect level. He reached the same level of perfection in being good-tempered so that his enemies stated the following in order to express it as a fault in him, "His Holiness Ali Ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) jokes too much."³⁰ However, the jokes stated by Ali (a.s.) were very much similar to those stated by God's Prophet (S) and were nothing but the truth.

5- "Bravery and tender-heartedness had reached their most perfect extent in His Holiness (a.s.) although it rarely happens that these two combine together." ³¹

The bravery of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) was such that all agreed upon the fact that no one like him in bravery had ever lived. He (a.s.) stated, "I swear by God that even if all the Arabs unite together against me I shall not run away from the battlefield, and when the occasion arrives I shall do my best to subdue them."³² The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) was so brave that anyone who encountered him (a.s.) in the battlefield became frightened and lost his self-control.

The same point is stressed in a supplication referred to as 'The Greetings to the Divine Leader of the Time' in which we read, "May God's blessings, greetings, increase and blessedness be granted to the owner of the Prophetic call and Haydar's³³ bravery."³⁴ Here one of the attributes of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) has been mentioned as Haydar's bravery.

The issue of pulling out the gate of the fort at Khaybar is another amazing event about which even the Sunni poet Ibn Abil Hadid has composed the following poem, "O the one who pulled out the gate at Fort Khaybar even though forty-four who tried to do so together could not do so."¹ The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) himself stated the following in this regard, "I pulled out the gate of Fort Khaybar not using my own power. Rather I did it with the Power of God."³⁵

We can conclude that opposing attributes were combined together in the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) to the point of perfection. That is why it is commonly stated that the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) is and was the perfect combination of opposing attributes.

Discourse 3: The Goal of Imam Husayn's (a.s.) uprising

Introduction

Movement implies the uprising of one or a group of people for a good and admirable affair which is to the benefit of the general public. There have always been movements and uprisings of the followers of the Truth against the followers of the False. For example, the Prophets (a.s.) uprose against the polytheists and the idolaters.

His Holiness Abraham (a.s.) uprose against Namrood and His Holiness Moses (a.s.) uprose against the Pharaoh. And His Holiness Jesus (a.s.) uprose against the unbelievers from the Jewish tribe. His Holiness the Seal of the Prophets Muhammad Ibn Abdullah (S) uprose against the unbelieving Arabs, polytheists and idolaters. Likewise His Holiness the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) uprose against Muaviyah. His Holiness the Master of the Martyrs Imam Al-Husayn (a.s.) uprose against Yazid and the Ummayyads.

Amongst all of these movements, the movement of His Holiness the Master of the Martyrs Imam al-Husayn (a.s.) is more outstanding than all the other movements, even those of the Prophets (a.s.). One of the reasons for this is that the calamities which His Holiness the Master of the Martyrs Imam al-Husayn (a.s.) suffered were much more severe than the calamities which the Prophets (a.s.) suffered during their uprisings.

The main Aims of Imam Al-Husayn's uprising

You may ask what the goals of His Holiness Imam Husayn (a.s.) were for this astonishing uprising. You can find the answer to this question in Imam al-Husayn's (a.s.) own sayings. Before the Karbala tragedy, he (a.s.) delivered a sermon in Mina for a large group of people during the reign of Muaviyah. There was a group of companions and followers present as well as some of the adherents of Muaviyah who made up narrations.

His Holiness (a.s.) blamed those people who pursued the same goals as those of the Ummayyads. His Holiness (a.s.) guided and advised them. At the end of this sermon His Holiness (a.s.) recited the following supplication which expresses parts of his real objectives, "O Allah! You know that it was not a matter of conflict for power or request for the worldly pleasures and vanities (that made me say so), but it was just for showing the signs of Your Religion and spreading improvements over Your lands so that the wronged servants will be safe and secure, and Your Ordinances, Traditions, and Laws will be acted upon."³⁶

God the Blessed the Sublime says,

"We sent aforetime our apostles with Clear Signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance (of Right and Wrong), that men may stand forth in justice; and We sent down Iron..." The Holy Quran: Al-Hadid 57:25.

Therefore, attaining justice has always been one of the great goals of the Prophets.

Other goals of the Imam (a.s.) were to rescue the oppressed servants of God from the wickedness of the oppressors, and rid the oppressed of oppression. He (a.s.) also wished for the people to act upon the obligatory and recommended deeds and the laws of God's Religion.

It can be understood from the above that the objectives of His Holiness Imam al-Husayn (a.s.) were merely invitation to monotheism; worshipping God; propagating the Islamic sciences; advocating justice;

fending off oppression from the oppressed; and acting upon the Islamic Decrees and Ordinances.

The conditions of the Muslims at the time of Muaviyah

Now let us investigate about the state of the Muslims during the time of Imam al-Husayn (a.s.), so that it becomes clear for which objectives His Holiness (a.s.) uprose. Of course, we know that Muaviyah's main aim was to wipe Islam off of the face of the Earth and destroy it.

This can be confirmed by reports in some Sunni historical books. For instance, one can see the following reported in the historical book Murooj Az-Zahab by Masudy which is acknowledged by both the Shia and the Sunni scholars. In that book, it is reported that Mutrif Ibn Muqayrih ibn Shu'bah stated, 'I had gone along with my father Muqayrih to visit Muaviyah, and my father always talked about Muaviyah's cleverness. One day I found my father so upset that he refused to eat dinner. I asked him,

'Why are you so upset?' He replied, 'I have just arrived home from the presence of the most wicked person – Muaviyah. I stated to him that now that he has become the King of the Islamic country, he must desire the good and establish justice. However, he answered me like this, 'Abu Bakr ruled for a few years and left. No mention was ever made of him again. It was just the same for Umar and Uthman. Nothing remains of their names, but the name of Muhammad (S) is still greatly mentioned. And five times a day it is stated in the prayers Ash-hadu anna Muhammadan Rasool Allah (I bear witness that Muhammad is God's Messenger). I will not be calm until I wipe that name off the face of the Earth.'"

From this statement we can understand that the aim of Muaviyah and other Umayyad Caliphs was to wipe out Islam. Actually they were the enemies of His Holiness the Prophet (S); and their enmity for Muhammad (S) was carried over to the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.).

Since they could not be envious of the Prophet (S), they expressed their enmity for His Holiness Ali (a.s.) as Abdullah Ibn Abbas says, 'The reason why they cursed the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) was that they wanted to curse the Prophet (S).' They wanted to defame the Prophet (S), but did not dare to do so.

Of course, there exists many reasons why the aim of the Umayyad clan was not only fighting with the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) and His Holiness the Seal of the Prophets Muhammad (S), but their main aim was to sever the roots of Islam and monotheism. Thus, after Muaviyah took over the reigns of the rule, firstly he ordered that no one should state the virtues of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.), and anyone who mentioned those virtues should be punished. Secondly, he decreed that narrations from the Prophet (S) be made up about the virtues of Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman.

Therefore, people such as Amru 'As, Abu Hurayrih and Muqayrih ibn Shu'bah and others began to fake narrations about the virtues of Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman. Presently some of those very same narrations exist in some of the books. And there are also some narrations about the virtues of His Holiness the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) which were so well known that they could not be

denied; such as, "I am the city of knowledge and Ali (a.s.) is the door to that city."³⁷

They even faked some additions to those narrations, and stated that the Prophet (S) stated, 'I am the city of knowledge and Ali (a.s.) is the door to that city. Abu Bakr is the foundation of that city, Umar is the wall of the city, and Uthman is its ceiling.'³⁸ Nowadays this narration can be found in their books. Some of the Shia sages object to this and say a city has no ceiling.

Or for instance, there is a well-known narration about Imam al-Hassan (a.s.) and Imam al-Husayn (a.s.) that could not be denied since God's Prophet (S) had said, "Al-Hassan and Al-Husayn are the Masters of the Youth of Paradise."³⁹

To oppose what the Prophet (S) had said, they made up another narration as follows, "Abu Bakr and Umar are the elders of the old men in Paradise."⁴⁰ Of course, this is objectionable since there are no old men in Paradise and everyone shall be resurrected as a young person in Paradise. They faked many other narrations about the virtues of Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman and the deficiencies of the Hashimites, and even taught those narrations to young children in schools.

Muaviyah ordered that Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) be cursed and insulted all over the country from the farthest East to the West from the top of the pulpits; in the Friday congregational prayers; and on every other occasion.

This was done in such a way that the cursing and insulting of Ali (a.s.) was normal in all the Islamic countries, and continued up until the time of Umar ibn Abd ul-Aziz until he himself banned this practice of cursing and insulting.

However, his prevention of that practice lasted only for the period of two and a half years while he was the Caliph. After him, the rest of the rulers from the Umayyad clan continued the practice of cursing and insulting Ali (a.s.). This continued up until the time of the rule of the Abbasid clan.

The Abbasids ordered that every Shia individual should be killed wherever he or she was seen, and his or her house should be destroyed. Moreover, they ordered that their salaries should be cut off. Thus, mass killing and looting of the Shias began in all cities.

All of this happened during the time of His Holiness Imam Husayn (a.s.) and His Holiness (a.s.) witnessed these events. For example, it has been stated in history books, "Ziyad ibn Abih ordered his governor in Basra called Samrat ibn Jundab to kill eight-thousand Shias whose only sin was to be a follower of Ali (a.s.)."⁴¹

Only God knows what terrible things happened in other cities. All of this took place during the time of Imam Husayn (a.s.) and His Holiness (a.s.) was a witness to those bitter events.

Imam Al-Hassan Mujtaba (a.s.) deemed it necessary to reconcile with Muaviyah for the survival of the Religion. Imam Al-Husayn (a.s.) found himself to be subject to the same circumstances during the reign

of Muaviyah. Apparently, he (a.s.) found it necessary to make peace with Muaviyah. Muaviyah did not obey the peace conditions. Included amongst them were the following three conditions:

1– Do not curse the Commander of the Faithful, (but they cursed him).

2– Shias must be safe, but they were not.

3– Muaviyah must not designate Yazid to be his successor, but he did. Muaviyah opposed the peace conditions. However, since the same conditions existed as before, Imam al-Husayn (a.s.) waited until Muaviyah died. After Yazid took over the reigns of the rule, His Holiness the Master of the Martyrs al-Husayn (a.s.) uprose. Once Yazid came into office, he wrote to Medina's governor to force Imam al-Husayn (a.s.) to pledge allegiance to Yazid. He ordered that they should kill the Imam (a.s.) if he refused to pledge allegiance to Yazid. Marwan encouraged Valid to do so and Valid decided to carry out this order. Therefore, Imam al-Husayn (a.s.) could not stay in Medina anymore and was forced to leave for Mecca at night. He (a.s.) stayed there for four months. Meanwhile, Kufians wrote twelve-thousand letters to His Holiness (a.s.), and some of them departed from Kufa to Mecca to invite His Holiness (a.s.) to Kufa. This continued and they strongly insisted upon it. Thus His Holiness the Master of the Martyrs (a.s.) sent Muslim ibn Aqil as his representative to Kufa. Upon the arrival of Muslim ibn Aqil, 18,000 people from Kufa swore allegiance to him.

After the people swore allegiance to Muslim ibn Aqil, he wrote a letter to Imam al-Husayn (a.s.) which confirmed that the people had sworn allegiance. On the other hand, Yazid ibn Muaviyah had ordered thirty people from the Ummayyad clan to secretly kill the Imam (a.s.) when he was circumambulating around the House of God (the Ka'ba).

Thus, all the conditions led to the departure of the Imam (a.s.) from Mecca to Kufa. For this reason, the Imam (a.s.) left Mecca and uprose against Yazid although His Holiness (a.s.) himself knew that he (a.s.) would be martyred in this way. Moreover, the Prophet (S), the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.), and His Holiness Imam al-Hassan Mujtaba (a.s.) had previously foretold about the events of Karbala and the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn (a.s.) before it happened.

When Imam al-Husayn (a.s.) was about to depart from Mecca, he (a.s.) delivered a sermon and said, "Death is written down for the offspring of Adam (a.s.) and accompanies them just like a necklace worn by a young lady around her neck which accompanies her. Indeed, I see that wolves (of Kufa and Damascus) tear up my body into pieces in the land of Karbala and I get covered up with blood. Whoever is ready to sacrifice himself in this way may depart along with me tomorrow morning."⁴²

We can understand from the Blessed Imam's (a.s.) words that His Holiness (a.s.) explains clearly that he (a.s.) would be martyred. Although in reality His Holiness (a.s.) was aware of his upcoming martyrdom, he (a.s.) had been invited by the people to go to Kufa. The Imam (a.s.) combined his outward and inward duties. His outward duty was to go to Kufa and his inward duty was to attain martyrdom.

Of course, the goal of all the Prophets and their mission from God has been to struggle to revive the Religion of the Blessed God even if they may be killed on this path. Imam al-Husayn (a.s.) also fought in order to revive God's Religion even though he (a.s.) knew that he would become martyred in this way. God established this victory in the martyrdom of Al-Husayn (a.s.) as we notice its impact today in the mourning ceremonies. The Religion survived and it will continue on forever due to the blessedness of the mourning ceremonies which are always held for the martyrdom of Al-Husayn (a.s.).

We read the following in the Varith pilgrimage supplications, "I bear witness that, verily, you established the prayers; gave the prescribed share to the needy; commanded to do that which is right and lawful, and not do that which is wrong and unlawful; and sincerely served Allah, till the inevitable came unto you..."⁴³

As you can see, the facts and the Islamic teachings are usually expressed in the mourning ceremonies held for Imam al-Husayn (a.s.). It is due to the blessings of such meetings that the people learn the Islamic decrees. Thus the uprising of Imam al-Husayn (a.s.) will forever assist the revival of the religion of Islam. We also read the following in the Arba'een pilgrimage supplications, "O God! Al-Husayn (a.s.) was one who gave his life for Your sake to save the people from ignorance and loss." ⁴⁴

Some may say that if Al-Husayn (a.s.) knew about his destiny to be martyred since the Prophet (S) had given the news of that ending – then he (a.s.) should have stayed in Medina to be martyred. Why did he (a.s.) go to Mecca and then on to Karbala to get martyred there? The answer is that had Al-Husayn (a.s.) remained in Medina to be martyred in private, his martyrdom would not have had the same effect that it had and it would not have such an everlasting influence.

He (a.s.) decided that the martyrdom should take place in a very vast place where more than thirty-thousand troops had gathered to kill him while he did not even have any water to drink or food to feed his family and companions.

They killed the best companions of Imam al-Husayn (a.s.); chopped off the hands of Abul Fazl Abbas (a.s.); killed Ali Akbar and Ali Asghar; and ultimately killed Imam al-Husayn (a.s.) and chopped off his head. They did not stop at this and continued their atrocities by captivating the members of his holy household and took them on a caravan to Kufa and Sham (Damascus).

Thus we may conclude that the goal of Imam al-Husayn (a.s.) was to revive monotheism, Islam, Islamic knowledge, decrees and orders and the establishment of justice. Therefore, we should revive these in our daily lives and express Divine Decree to those under our control as much as we can as we read in the following tradition from the Prophet (S), "It has been narrated on the authority of God's Prophet that you are all responsible for those who are under your control."⁴⁵

Discourse 4: The love for Al-Husayn (a.s.) in the hearts of the believer

There are various narrations about the Master of the Martyrs in both Shia and Sunni sources. For example, there is a narration in which God's Prophet (S) said, "There is hidden love for Al-Husayn in the hearts of the believers."⁴⁶ This implies that whoever believes in God and loves Him would also love Al-Husayn (a.s.). This is because Al-Husayn (a.s.) was a true servant of God and gave his life to revive the Religion. We also read in the Holy Quran,

"On those who believe and work deeds of righteousness, will Allah Most Gracious bestow love."
The Holy Quran: Maryam 19:96.

Therefore, we may conclude that one who believes and does good deeds will also be loved. There is another narration in which God's Prophet (S) said, "Al-Husayn (a.s.) is from my flesh and blood and I am from Al-Husayn (a.s.)."⁴⁷ The first part of this is clear but the second part means that the Prophet (S) declares everything in Islam to be due to Al-Husayn's (a.s.) sacrifice. Were it not for the bravery and sacrifice of Al-Husayn (a.s.), the Religion which the Prophet Muhammad (S) had brought would have been lost.

A careful historical review of that time shows that Islam was nearly abolished and the Umayyads planned to totally eradicate Islam and all the Religion for which many Prophets (a.s.) had struggled.

It was Al-Husayn (a.s.) who saved the Quran, Islam and the Religion by sacrificing his life, and the lives of his relatives and companions, and the captivity of the members of his household.

In another tradition about the nobility of Al-Husayn (a.s.) we read that God's Prophet (S) said, "It is written on the pillars of the Throne that Al-Husayn (a.s.) is the lantern of guidance and the ark of salvation."⁴⁸ What is meant by "the lantern of guidance" is that Imam al-Husayn (a.s.) appeared as a lantern at the time when the darkness of loss and corruption during the oppressive rule of the Umayyads covered the whole world to eliminate it. What is meant by "the ark of salvation" is that whoever relies on Imam Al-Husayn (a.s.); follows Imam Al-Husayn (a.s.); revives his (a.s.) goal of the revival of Islam; and tries to honorably act out the Islamic decrees; and make others do the same; has revived Imam al-Husayn's (a.s.) aim. Consequently, he will be saved.

Even the captivity of the members of the household of Al-Husayn (a.s.) including Imam Al-Husayn's sister Zaynab (a.s.) caused the people to understand more about the unbelief and the falseness of the Umayyad clan. It was then that the truthfulness of Islam appeared much more clearly and the falsehood of the Umayyads became apparent. God the Blessed the Exalted announced the great event of the martyrdom of Al-Husayn (a.s.) and the captivity of his family to all the Prophets. For example, God informed Adam (a.s.) – the father of mankind – about that event as we read, "O Adam! This is the beloved offspring of the Messenger of the end of time. They will kill him when he is alone and has no

one to assist him."⁴⁹

Discourse 5: The necessity of the Imam of the Time (a.s.)

God the Blessed the Exalted created all the creatures for the sake of mankind. However, all of mankind was created for the perfect man. The perfect man is that very same God's vicegerent who must always be on the Earth. Until man is on the Earth and the creatures on the Earth are moving around, this vicegerent must exist as we read in the Holy Quran,

"Behold, thy Lord stated to the angels: I will create a vicegerent on earth." The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2:30.

When God the Blessed the Exalted decided to create mankind, He informed the angels.

The meaning of the term "vicegerent" is the one person created on the Earth being the manifestation of the Divine Names and Attributes; the manifestation of Divine Knowledge and the manifestation of God's Power and the rest of the attributes.

This very noble verse of the Quran which all the Muslims accept proves that the vicegerent of Allah who is the manifestation of the Divine Names and Attributes must always exist on the Earth. Of course, this vicegerent of Allah is either a Prophet or the Prophet's successor.

That is just how it was. After Adam (a.s.) – the father of mankind – became the vicegerent of Allah on the Earth, the Prophets and their Trustees came in order to be the Divine Vicegerents. Finally, this great post was turned over to the Seal of the Prophets His Holiness Muhammad ibn Abdullah (S).

After the Prophet Muhammad (S), the twelve Divine Leaders (a.s.) – who were the Trustees of the Prophet (S) – were the Vicegerents of God. The twelfth one being that Holy Essence His Holiness Hujjat ibn al-Hassan al-Askari (May God expedite his noble appearance). Nowadays, he (a.s.) is the Vicegerent of God on the Earth and he (a.s.) is the Supervisor of our time. Even though we are deprived of seeing that Divine Proof, he is unseen until God decides that he should appear and please the people with his appearance. And we ask God the Blessed to benefit us with the sight of that great handsome face.

In another verse it is stated,

"I have only created Genies and men, that they may serve Me." The Holy Quran: Al-Zariyat 51:56.

It is stated in another narration, "O Children of Adam! Everything was created for you, while you were created for Me." This means that we were created to become perfect and worship God in a pariseworthy way. Therefore, it becomes clear from this verse and narration that the goal of this world's creation is worshipping God. Now it must be asked whether that would be fulfilled even if there are several billion

people on the Earth who commit sins and disobey God. The answer is clearly negative. However, this would be achieved if there is only one perfect individual who exists in all eras. This is so that God is worshipped in the way that He must be worshipped. If such an individual does not exist at any moment in time, the problem which the angels stated would arise as we read,

"... They stated: Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood? whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy (name)?" The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2:30.

But God stated,

"I know what ye know not." The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2:30.

This means that God did not create the world for the type of people who make mistakes, disobey God, commit sins, and shed other people's blood. Rather, God created everything for those whom the angels did not know about. Then God taught Adam (a.s.) – the father of all mankind – the names of those who God the Blessed the Exalted created everything for. Firstly, there is His Holiness the Seal of the Prophets Muhammad (S) and the Immaculate Imams (a.s.) and Her Holiness Fatima Zahra (a.s.); and then there are the Divine Prophets and their Trustees.

God's response to the angels was that the reason behind His creating anyone on Earth is a prelude to the creation of the Holy Lights. Thus the goal behind the creation of the Earth is the existence of the perfect man who is either a Prophet or one of his Trustees. This series of events from the beginning of creation up until now has never stopped, and will not cease up until the Resurrection Day. Therefore, today the heavens and the Earth continue to exist awaiting the Holy Divine Leader of the Time – His Holiness Hujjat ibn al-Hassan al-Mahdi (May God the Sublime expedite his noble appearance). He was the ultimate cause for Creation.

Another verse which indicates the issue of Al-Mahdi the Saviour is as follows,

"Before this We wrote in the Psalms, after the Message (given to Moses): My servants the righteous, shall inherit the earth." The Holy Quran: Al-Anbiya 21: 105.

This means that the bad deeds of those who are corrupt; oppressive; shed blood on Earth; and oppress others will end, and the 'righteous' (Holy Lights) will rule over the Earth and inherit it. Here the phrase the 'righteous' (Holy Lights) refers to the Divine Leader of the Time (May God the Sublime expedite his noble appearance).

Of course, this verse refers especially to the Imam of the Time (May God the Sublime expedite his noble appearance) and his companions. If some people become polluted by committing sins in that time, they are few in number and they shall perish.

In the Era of Appearance, the Holy Imam of the Time (May God the Sublime expedite his noble

appearance) will rule over the world, and establish justice all over the world. There are many narrations in this regard from both Shia and Sunni sources all of which agree that such a blessed person will come who is a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad (S) and from the progeny of Al-Husayn (a.s.). Their only difference in opinion regards who that person will be. Even many of the Sunnis believe that the Imam of the Time will be Al-Mahdi (a.s.), the son of Imam Al-Hassan al-Askari (a.s.) as the Shiites do.

Therefore, God has promised the glad appearance and uprising of His Holiness al-Mahdi (May God the Sublime expedite his noble appearance). And this promise shall be fulfilled. God the Blessed the Exalted will make the Imam of the Time appear when He deems it appropriate, and by the means of His Holiness Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.) God will fill the Earth with justice when it is filled with oppression.

In another verse it is stated,

"Allah has promised, to those among you who believe and work righteous deeds, that He will, of a surety, grant them in the land, inheritance (of power), as He granted it to those before them; that He will establish in authority their religion - the one which He has chosen for them; and that He will change (their state), after the fear in which they (lived), to one of security and peace: They will worship Me (alone) and not associate aught with Me. If any do reject Faith after this, they are rebellious and wicked." The Holy Quran: Al-Nour 24:55.

Therefore, since God does not take back His Promise, every Muslim should believe in the Riser as we read, "Anyone who dies without having recognized the Divine Leader of his time has died as if he has died in an ignorant state."⁵⁰ There are many more verses in the Quran in this respect. However, we shall restrict ourselves to just the above three.

There are many narrations which have been expressed about the fact that this Earth will not be left without a Proof (meaning a Divine Leader of the time) and if there is a time when the Earth does not have a proof, it will devour all its inhabitants. In other narrations, it is stated that if the Earth is ever left without a Proof it will become full of waves and will not be get calm, just as the sea has great waves.

His Holiness the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) told Kumayl Ibn Ziyad (May God the Sublime grant him residence in Heaven), "Indeed this Earth will not be left without His Proof who will either be apparent and the people can see him or he will be concealed."⁵¹ This means that he chooses not to be seen by the people.

What was stated so far were a few examples of narrations that have been related by the Shias which were narrated on the authority of some of the Immaculate Imams (a.s.). They state that there must always be an Immaculate Divine Leader on the Earth. There are also some narrations which all the Muslim sects accept. One of these narrations which is surely to be found amongst all the Muslims is the narration which His Holiness the Noble Prophet Muhammad (S) stated as follows, "Anyone who dies without having recognized the Divine Leader of his time has died as if he has died in an ignorant state."⁵² This means that such a person has died as an atheist.

What we can conclude from this narration that:

1– It is of the utmost importance to recognize the Imam of the Time and everyone has the duty to recognize him.

2– In each era the Imam of that time must exist.

It was previously stated that the Sunnis also accept that in each time there must be an Imam and it is necessary to recognize him. However, it is interesting to see what they say about the meaning of the above narration. Another narration which has been quoted on the authority of the noble Prophet Muhammad (S) must be taken into consideration. It is quoted in another narration that God's Prophet (S) said, 'The affairs of my Nation will proceed until there come twelve Caliphs all of whom are from the Quraysh.'⁵³

Some of the Sunnis say that the Imams whose recognition is necessary are as follows. They say that the twelve consist of the first three Caliphs (Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman), and then His Holiness the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.). Then they consider Muawiyah and Yazid to be the next Imams. Next they complete the list of the twelve Imams from the rest of the Ummayyad clan. Some of them consider that the issue of the twelve Divine Leaders ends with the Ummayyad dynasty.

However, many of these Ummayyad Caliphs regularly drank liquor and were extremely corrupt and disgraceful. Some of them have included some of the Abbasids and resorted to them to complete the list of those twelve persons. In this list only the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) is an exception and is rightly an Imam. They claim that after these twelve, the kings who ruled such as Taymur, Genghis Khan and other oppressive kings who came were Divine Leaders although we all know what kind of individuals they were.

Of course, it is evident that this is all nonsense and no wise person can accept that the Imam of the Time upon whose existence the survival of the world depends can be any of these people.

During the rule of the Uthmani Bayazid King, there was once a discussion held amongst the Sunni clergy who were discussing the following narration, "Anyone who dies without having recognized the Divine Leader of his time has died as if he has died in an ignorant state."⁵⁴

It was asked who was then the Imam of the time at that period? They stated, "The Imam of the time now is the king of the time (who was the Uthmani Bayazid King.) One of the Sunni clergy men rubbed his beard and said, "O God! Then on the Resurrection Day you are going to torture my beard for not recognizing Bayazid!?"

Some of the Sunni scholars who realized that the above interpretation of this narration is not logical said that the first three caliphs meaning Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman were three of the twelve and then the rest of them were from the Divine Immaculate Leaders starting with the Commander of the Faithful Ali

(a.s.). They wrote many books about the twelve Imams, their virtues and attributes and the wonders of the Immaculate Ones (a.s.). They do not accept the birth and the occultation of His Holiness Hujjat Ibn Al-Hassan Al-Mahdi (May God the Sublime expedite his noble appearance).

They completely object to this matter (Mahdaviyat). So to speak, these are those very same twelver-Imams Sunnis who have been involved in such a destiny because of the false explanation which they have made up about this narration. For gaining more information, you can refer to the books Najm-as-Saqab and Yanabee-ul-Mavaddat and see how many books the Sunnis have written about this issue meaning the mentioning of the virtues and the attributes of the Household of Innocence and Purity (a.s.). They have not only written many books about the Imams but also they have written special books about the Imam of the Time (May God the Exalted expedite his noble appearance). They have written special books such as the book Al-Bayan-fi-Akhbar-i-Sahebul az-Zaman written by Gangi Shafiiand, the book Aqdad ud-Durar fi-Akhbar-i Imam-ul-Muntazir written by Damishqi, the book Al-Burhan-fi-Alamat-i- Mahdi Akhar-uz-Zaman written by Mulle Ali Muttaqi, and the book Manaqib Al-Mahdi written by Abu Naim Isfihani,etc. In these books the Sunnis have recorded the conditions of the Imam of the Time (a.s.) and the quality of his birth and occultation in the same way that the Shias have written.

Thus you see that the above narration is generally accepted by all Muslims. However, those who interpret "the Divine Leader of his time" to be other than the twelve Immaculate Divine Leaders starting with the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) and ending with the Riser Al-Mahdi (a.s.) are wrong, and shall ultimately laugh at themselves. Some have stated that the phrase "the Divine Leader of his time" refers to the Quran. However, when they are asked why don't the more than one billion Muslims know the Quran today, they respond that it only refers to the opening chapter of the Quran. You can easily see that this cannot be accepted at all.

On the other hand, the following narration is cited in Sunni sources, "The Prophet (S) said, 'This good religion will proceed on and no one can harm it until there come twelve Leaders after me. They are all from the Quraysh.'"55 It is also quoted in another narration that God's Prophet (S) said, "The affairs of my Nation will proceed until there come twelve Caliphs all of whom are from the Quraysh."56

There are also narrations on the authority of God's Prophet (S) related by the Sunnis themselves in which Jabir ibn Abdullah al-Ansari quoted that His Holiness the Seal of the Prophets Muhammad Ibn Abdullah (S) clearly names the twelve Immaculate Divine Leaders naming the first one of them to be Ali Ibn Abi Talib (a.s.), and then Imam al-Hassan (a.s.), Imam al-Husayn (a.s.), Imam as-Sajjad (a.s.), Imam al-Baqir (a.s.), Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.), Imam al-Kazim (a.s.), Imam al-Ridha (a.s.), Imam al-Javad (a.s.), Imam al-Hadi (a.s.), Imam al-Hassan al-Askari (a.s.), and the Imam of the Time al-Mahdi (a.s.). These are the Immaculate Imams who succeed the Prophet (S).57

Also in another narrations some of the Sunni scholars have written that the Noble Prophet (S) stated, "The twelfth Imam has a long period of occultation during which the Shias benefit from him just as the people may benefit from the sun when it is concealed behind clouds."58

Therefore, we see that the names of the twelve Imams have also been mentioned in the main Sunni sources. Thus, no room remains for any doubt and all the Muslim sects have quoted the relevant narrations.

Moreover, there are also some references to the coming of the Prophet Muhammad (S) and the twelve Divine Leaders after him in the Torah and the Bible. We find the following reference in the Torah, "After God gave the glad tidings to His Holiness Abraham (a.s.) that God will grant him Issac (a.s.) and Jacob (a.s.) and some Prophets will be created from their progeny, Abraham (a.s.) said, "O God! What will You grant to my son Ishmael?" God said, "I heard your sayings about Ishmael. I'll make him great and fortunate and I will honor him with the blessing of His Holiness Muhammad (S) and I will create from the progeny of Ishmael twelve important Masters after that Prophet (referring to His Holiness Muhammad (S))."⁵⁹

Thus you see that this is in agreement with what the Prophet Muhammad (S) said about the twelve Leaders after him as we read in the following tradition, "I heard the Prophet (S) say, 'There will be twelve Leaders after me.'"⁶⁰

We may conclude that all the nations in the world are awaiting the coming of the Reformer of the end of time. There is no doubt about this and it is supported by many of the religious books of various religions. There is a lot of evidence in books and narrations which say that the true Reformer is the Holy Imam of the Time His Holiness Hujjat Ibn Al-Hassan Al-Mahdi (May God the Exalted expedite his noble appearance).

The survival of the heavens and the Earth and the system of the universe today depends upon the Immaculate Hujjat Ibn Al-Hassan Al-Mahdi (May God the Exalted expedite his noble appearance) as we read in the following verse,

"And the Earth will shine with the Glory of its Lord..." The Holy Quran: Az-Zumar 39:69.

Also many narrations about the very pleasant appearance of His Holiness Hujjat Ibn Al-Hassan Al-Mahdi (May God the Exalted expedite his noble appearance) have been narrated both by the Sunni clergymen and the Shias and have been recorded in credible sources. We can cite the following narration as an example, "Even if only one day remains in the world, God will extend that day until one of my offspring appears and by him God will fill the world with justice after it has been filled with oppression."⁶¹

Nowadays, oppression has spread all over the world notwithstanding unbelief, idolatry and polytheism. Actually Muslims are under a lot of pressure and we see that many of the Shia Muslims are subject to oppression. Hopefully, God will expedite the appearance of that innocent light – the Imam of the Time – so that relief and comfort will come in the affairs of the Muslims especially the Shia Muslims.

2. Tarikh-i-Tabari, 3/1171-1172.

3. Al-Khisal 24-7 [24-7 (The compiler of the book narrated) that his father – may God be pleased with him – narrated that Al-Hassan ibn Ahmad al-Askif al-Qumi linked up this tradition to Muhammad ibn Ali who narrated that Muhammad ibn Hisan al-Qoosi quoted Ali ibn Muhammad ibn al-Ansari al-Marvazy, on the authority of Abdullah ibn Abdul Karim al-Razi known as Abi Dor.at, on the authority of Abdul Hamid al-Himmani, on the authority of Layth, on the authority of Mujahid, on the authority of Ibn Abbas that God.s Prophet (S) stated, “Gabriel came to me while he was very happy.

I asked, ‘O my friend Gabriel! As happy as you are please tell me what you have to say so that I know what the place of my brother and cousin Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) is in God’s presence?’ Gabriel stated, ‘I promise by Him who appointed you to the Prophethood and chose you for that mission that I have only descended down to the Earth for that very same issue. O Muhammad! The Sublime God sends greetings to both of you and says, ‘Muhammad is the Prophet of My Mercy and Ali is the Upholder of My Proof. I will not torture anyone who loves Ali even if he commits sins, and I will not have mercy upon Ali’s enemies even if they obey Me.’”

Ibn Abbas added that God.s Prophet (S) stated, “When the Resurrection Day comes, Gabriel will come to my presence with the Flag of Praise (Leva ul-Hamd) which has seventy long narrow pieces each of which is wider than the Sun and the Moon. He will come to me when I am sitting on one of the chairs in Paradise atop one of the many sacred pulpits. I will take the flag and entrust it to Ali ibn Abi Talib.”

Then Umar ibn Khattab jumped up from his place and stated, “O Prophet of God! How could Ali stand to hold it with it having seventy pieces each of which is wider than the Sun and the Moon? Then the Prophet (S) replied, “When the Resurrection Day comes God will grant Ali (a.s.) powers similar to the powers of Gabriel, light similar to the light of Adam, patience similar to the patience of Paradise, beauty similar to the beauty of Joseph, a good voice like the voice of David. Were it not that David is going to be the speaker of Paradise, God would have given David.s voice to Ali (a.s.). Indeed Ali will be the first person to drink from the fresh cool water (Salsabil) and ginger (Zanjebil) Pool. When Ali takes one step on the Bridge, his other foot will be held firmly on it. There is such a position and rank for Ali and His followers in God’s presence that the people of the past and the people of the latter times would envy.”]

4. Tafsire Nur ul-Saqalayn 2/280.

5. Muhammad (S), Fatimah (a.s.), Ali (a.s.), and the other eleven Divine Leaders from the progeny of Fatimah (a.s.).

6. See tradition No. 23-1 regarding the meaning of Itrat where God’s Prophet stated, ‘I am leaving amongst you two weighty things: God’s Book and my progeny; my family. They will not depart each other until they will join me at the Divine Pool.’

7. Uyun Akhbar al-Ridha 31-40.

8. Bihar ul-Anwar, 23. We also read the following in Al-Khisal 24-1, " God.s Prophet (S) say, .O Ali! Your similitude in my nation is like that of Noah’s Ark which whoever boarded was rescued, and anyone who did not was drowned.."

9. Ithna Asharia 64.

10. Ibid.

11. Yanabi ul-Mavadat 54.

12. Bihar ul-Anwar, 40/202-206.

13. Al-Khisal, 24-1.

14. Bihar ul-Anwar, 40/125.

15. Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 189.

16. Irshad ul-Quloub, 2/376.

17. Nur ul-Saqalayn, 5/511.

18. Bihar ul-Anwar, 46/309.

19. Bihar ul-Anwar, 40/149.

20. Bihar ul-Anwar, 40/148.

21. Bihar ul-Anwar, 108/117.

22. We read the following in Al-Khisal, 22-31: [Then Ali (a.s.) stated, ‘I swear to you by God! Is there anyone amongst you who went to fight with Amru ibn ‘Abd Wudd when he came into the field and challenged someone to fight with other than

me? You were all scared. It was I who stood up. God's Prophet (S) asked me, 'Where are you going?' I replied, 'To fight this corrupt person!' The Prophet (S) stated, 'This is Amru ibn 'Abd Wudd!' I stated, 'O Prophet of God! If he is Amru ibn 'Abd Wudd, I am Ali ibn Abi Talib.' The Prophet (S) stated the same thing to me again. I gave him (a.s.) the same response. Then the Prophet (S) stated, 'Go in the name of God!' Once I went there and approached him, he asked me, 'Who are you?' I stated, 'I am Ali ibn Abi Talib!'

He stated, 'O cousin! You are a noble fighter. Please return! I was friends with your father and I was his companion. I do not like to kill you.' I told him, 'O Amru! You have made a covenant with God to honor one of three proposals presented to you by anyone.' Amru stated, 'Go ahead and propose!' I stated, 'Bear witness that there is no god but God, Muhammad is God's Prophet and confess to what he has brought to us from God.' Amru stated, 'Present your second proposal.' I stated, 'Return to your own house.' Amru stated, 'By God, the women of Quraysh are going to say that I was scared and ran away from the battlefield.'

Then I stated, 'Get off your horse and let's fight.' He accepted this proposal and got off his horse. We started to fight and two strikes were exchanged between us. His strike ruptured my armor and his sword reached my head, but I chopped off his legs with my strike. God had him killed by my hands. Is there anyone amongst you to have done this?' They replied, 'By God; no.']

23. Ihqaq al-Haq 8/319.
24. Iqbal al-A'mal 467.
25. Ithna Asharia 64.
26. Rowzat al-Shohada Kashefi 172.
27. Ithna Asharia 64.
28. Ithna Asharia 64.
29. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 116.
30. Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 84.
31. Ithna Asharia, 64.
32. Nahjul Balaghah, Letter 45.
33. Ali (a.s.) usually referred to as Haydar and Haydar's bravery refers to Ali's bravery.
34. Khaje Nasir Tousi's supplications for the twelve Divine Leaders.
35. Amali Sheikh Sadooq
36. Tuhuf ul-Uqool.
37. Al-Qadir 6 pp. 61-79.
38. Al-Sawarim al-Muhqarih 132.
39. Bihar ul-Anwar, 37/73.
40. Bihar ul-Anwar, 37/73.
41. Mukhtasar Tarikhe Damesq, 9 pp.86-88.
42. Kashf ul-Qamma, 2/29.
43. Mafatih al-Jinan, Chapter 3.
44. Mafatih al-Jinan, Chapter 3.
45. Bihar ul-Anwar, 72/38.
46. A slightly different form of this narration is in Bihar ul-Anwar, 43/272.
47. Bihar ul-Anwar, 43/270.
48. Bihar ul-Anwar, 36/204.
49. Bihar ul-Awar, 44/245.
50. Yani'ye al-Mavada, 3/206.
51. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 147.
52. Yani'ye al-Mavada, 3/206.
53. Al-Khisal, Narration No. 12-38.

54. Yani'ye al-Mavada, 3/206.
55. Al-Khisal, Narration No. 12-29.
56. Al-Khisal, Narration No. 12-38.
57. Ta'vil la-Ayat al-Zahera, 141.
58. Ta'vil la-Ayat al-Zahera, 141.
59. Tora, Parash.
60. Al-Khisal, Narration No. 12-13.
61. Sahih Turmuzi

Discourse 1: The Quran as the Divine firm grip between the creator and the Created

Introduction

It has been narrated on the authority of Ali Ibn Musa al-Ridha (a.s.), "The Quran is a Divine Stronghold. It is God's Firm Grip and the ultimate Divine words which guide man to Paradise and save him from Hell. The Quran shall not get old with the passage of time. It will not lose its freshness by being reiterated. It will even get fresher since it has not been created for a special time. It is the greatest ultimatum to every man. No falsehood can infiltrate the Quran since it is a revelation from the Wise, the Praised."

The Quran is the Divine stronghold and firm grip

In numerous narrations and Quranic verses, the Quran has been described as God's stronghold (Hablulah) as we read in the following noble Quranic verse,

"And hold fast, all together, by the rope which Allah (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves..." The Holy Quran: Al-Imran 3: 103.

Of course, some have stated that God's Stronghold here refers to monotheism, and others have stated that it refers to Prophethood. Some have stated that it refers to Divine Leadership (Imamate). However, it is more proper to say that it refers to all of these on the whole as God's Stronghold. Bearing witness to the oneness of God the Exalted, the Prophethood of Muhammad (S) and believing in and testifying to the Divine Leadership of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) are all aspects of God's Stronghold. Each of the above are God's Stronghold in its own right.

This can also be concluded from the well-known narration about the Two Heavy things (the Thaqalyn) in which His Holiness the Noble Prophet (S) stated, "Indeed I shall entrust you with two precious things: the first of them being the book of God the Exalted which is the Stronghold suspended from the heavens down to the Earth. The second one is my Household (a.s.). Then let's see how you shall honor me by respecting them."¹ The Quran has been referred to as God's Stronghold in this narration. The same reference to the Quran as God's Stronghold can be seen in the elegy of Badrih in the following context, "I

told the Quran's reciter that the Quran is a book which enlightens every reciter's eyes. Now that you have discovered the Divine Stronghold, hold onto it firmly and do not let go." Moreover, other poets have also referred to the Quran as God's Stronghold.

Thus both the Quran and the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) are God's Stronghold and man can come out of the dark well of lust and temptations by seeking refuge in them – i.e. the Quran and Ali (a.s.). He may trot on the Right Path until he attains Eternal Prosperity.

His Holiness Al-Ridha (a.s.) said, "The Quran is God's Stronghold or Firm Grip, and the excellent Divine words which guide man to Heaven and rescue him from Hell. The Quran does not become old with the passage of time and it does not become corrupt and worthless. On the contrary, it becomes newer because the Quran has been created for all eras. Moreover, it is the ultimate proof for every man in proving the Prophethood of the Seal of the Prophets Muhammad Ibn Abdullah (S)."

This means that the Quran is the permanent miracle of the Noble Prophet (S) with which we can answer all the eloquent opponents and the law-makers of the oppressive world. We can challenge them to bring firm laws like those in the Quran, and bring wise knowledge regarding monotheism, ethics and theology like that of the Quran. Since they will fail to do so, the Quran is not just for a given era and it will never get outdated. Then His Holiness Al-Ridha (a.s.) sought refuge in the following Quranic verse,

"No falsehood can approach it from before or behind it: It is sent down by One Full of Wisdom, Worthy of all Praise." The Holy Quran: Fussilat 41:42.

The Quran has not been altered

One may understand that the Quran has not been altered from the words of His Holiness Al-Ridha (a.s.) who said, "... Moreover, it is the ultimate proof for every man..." Of course, everyone accepts that nothing has ever been added to the Quran, and all the common and learned men agree that nothing has been added to Quran. The only thing left to discuss is whether anything has been omitted from the Quran or not.

A few of the Sunni and Shia scholars believe that some subjects have been left out of the Quran. However, both Sunni and Shiite researchers believe that the Quran has not been changed and nothing has been omitted from it. For example, the late Sayyid Murtazah (may God have Mercy upon him) says, "At the time of the Noble Prophet (S) the Quran was compiled with the same quality that it has now."

Shiekh Mufid has the same opinion being that the Quran has not been changed at all. Therefore, such esteemed scholars say that the Quran has not been altered. They hold the view that those narrations which refer to some words being removed from the Quran as referring to words which were only meant to interpret the Quran, not words that were an integral part of the Quran. For example, there is a narration in which it is stated that the following noble verse of the Chapter Mai'da was as follows:

"O Messenger. proclaim the (message) which hath been sent to thee from thy Lord (to Ali). If thou didst not, thou wouldst not have fulfilled and proclaimed His mission. And Allah will defend thee from men (who mean mischief). For Allah guideth not those who reject Faith." The Holy Quran: Al-Ma'ida 5:67

The (to Ali) that appears in boldface is not part of the verse, but only there to interpret its meaning.

The blessed name of His Holiness Imam Ali (a.s.) is not found in the Quran. This is as God the Sublime deemed it better to be so. Although there is a reference to Ali (a.s.) in numerous Quranic verses, his name has not been explicitly stated anywhere since that might have been used by the enemies to alter the Quran.²

The only miraculous aspect of the Quran is not its eloquency, but also because of various other aspects such as news of the Unseen, the future affairs, theology, morals, religious precepts, etc. However, since at the time of revelation of the Quran, the issue of eloquency was of especial importance since all of the Arabs – men, women and children – were highly eloquent in speech. Yet, they were not able to produce anything similar to the Quran. This issue has been narrated in history as follows.

During the Hajj pilgrimage season when the people entered Mecca from all of Arabia, the Meccan idol-worshippers gathered around one of their chiefs called Valid ibn Muqayrih and said, "Now that the people are coming here from faraway and near places and hear the recitation of the Quran and the speeches delivered by Muhammad (S) they will become attracted to him (S) and the Quran due to its fluency and attractiveness and will believe in him. Thus, we must take serious measures to prevent this from happening." Valid Ibn Muqayrih responded by saying, "You must dissuade the people from believing in Muhammad (S)." Some of them said, "We shall say that he is a Rabbi and the Quran are the words of the Rabbis." Valid answered, "We have been with Rabbis and know that the Quran is in no way similar to those words of Rabbis."

Some said, "Then we will say that Muhammad (S) is a magician." Valid responded, "Well we have also heard the words of magicians, but we can never compare the Quran with magic." Some others said, "We will say he is a poet." Valid answered, "We have seen all kinds of poems, but the Quran cannot be compared with poetry." Then they asked him, "So what should we say?" Valid thought for a little while and said, "It is better for us to tell the people who go to see the Prophet (S) and hear his words that they are magic."

They did exactly that and went to the people who came to see the Prophet (S) and told them, "The Prophet (S) has brought words with which he practices magic and separates mothers from fathers, and wives from their husbands using these words." That was how they dispersed the people from around the Prophet (S). Then the following noble verses were revealed about Valid Ibn Muqayrih,

"For he thought and he plotted; And woe to him! How he plotted! Yea, Woe to him; How he plotted! Then he looked round; Then he frowned and he scowled; Then he turned back and was

haughty; Then stated he: 'This is nothing but magic, derived from of old; This is nothing but the word of a mortal!' Soon will I cast him into Hell-Fire!' The Holy Quran: Al-Muddaththir 74: 18-26.

This implies that these people have proved to be unable to do anything against the Qur'an, even though they were the best in eloquency of speech. Not only were the Arab elders like this, but their children were also the best in eloquency of speech. A real story has been written in this respect on the authority of Asma' who stated, "I saw a five or six year old child who was very eloquent in speech. I told him, 'You are very eloquent in speech.' He replied, 'You call me eloquent while you have the Quran which includes many Quranic verses which are the best in eloquency of speech such as the following verse,

"So We sent this inspiration to the mother of Moses: 'Suckle (thy child), but when thou hast fears about him, cast him into the river, but fear not nor grieve: for We shall restore him to thee, and We shall make him one of Our apostles.'" The Holy Quran: Al-Qasas 28:7.

This verse includes two orders, two admonishments, two glad tidings and two pieces of news. The two orders are "suckle" (An Arzeihe) and "cast him" (Faalqehe). The two admonishments are "fear not" (La Takhafi) and "nor grieve" (La tahzani). The two glad tidings are "We shall restore him to you" (Inna Raddooho Ilayka) and "We shall make him one of Our apostles" (Jaelho menal morsalin) which are also the two pieces of news."

Of course, we cannot thoroughly comprehend the miracles of the Quran since we only see the words and cannot understand their inner meaning. Therefore, we are not able to discover the Quran's true miracles.

Discourse 2: The Miraculous aspects of the Quran

Introduction

Is the Quran's fluency meant only for the Arabs? Can this fluency be utilized by other nations? Fluency is not the only miraculous aspect of the Quran. There are also other miraculous aspects of the Quran. Some people claim that since the Quran is in Arabic, it is only binding on the Arabs since only the Arabs know Arabic. They can be told that there are many non-Muslims in Arab countries who are fluent in Arabic.

Moreover, there are many non-Muslims in other countries who are experts in Arabic. For example, we can name Gorgy Zeydan who has written the history of Islam in Arabic, and the author of the book Al-Monjed and the authors of many other similar books who are non-Muslims.

It is also worth mentioning that many authors who composed books against Islam were fluent in Arabic. Therefore, the Quran's miraculous aspect is not just for the Arabs, and non-Arabs are also aware of it. For example, a foreigner called Padori wrote a book against Islam during the era of the late Mirza Qummi. Then some of the scholars wrote books in response to that book and refuted his claims! In the

book that Padori wrote to discredit Islam he stated, "We accept that the Quran is extremely fluent.

However, even with its high degree of fluency it has not reached the state of being miraculous."Therefore, we can realize from this statement that even though Padori who was not an Arab denied the Quran as being miraculous, he acknowledged it being highly fluent.

Or there is the case of Dr. Shibly Shumayyil who was a materialist scientist and did not believe in religion. He wrote a letter to an Egyptian scholar named Rashid Ridha. In his letter he mentioned the following, "You honor Muhammad (S) and think that His Holiness Muhammad (S) is very important since you believe in his Prophethood. However, I honor him and regard him to be much greater than what you think him to be even though I do not consider him to be a Prophet." After that, he mentions some poems in the letter which deliver the following meaning, "Although I do not believe in the Prophet's religion, how can I disbelieve his strong Quranic verses. How can I deny his religious laws and precepts, whereas if the people of the world had acted according to these religious principles, they would not have spoiled this beautiful world with their ugly deeds. He is a wise politician and a clever man who was victorious in all the battles³. He has dominated over all the people's intellects by means of the Quran's eloquency. And his sword split open the parts of the enemies' hair. There exists no one like him in the world. From the past and in the present and the future, all of the world's heroes and brave men are less than him."

Thus, none of the opponents of the Quran can deny its fluency, no matter who they are or where they are. However, they deny its miraculousness since they oppose it.

The Quran's miraculous account of future events

Amongst the various miracles of the Quran is the Quran's foretelling of future events. One instance of such foretelling of future events in the Quran is that of Rome's victory over Iran.

Foretelling the victory of the Romans

A war broke out at the time of the Persian King Khusrow Parviz between him and the Caesar of Rome. The Persian army defeated the Roman army. When this news reached Mecca, the Arab idolators stated that the Persians who were not People of the Book⁴ defeated the Romans who were People of the Book⁵. Thus, they argued that they could also defeat the Prophet Muhammad (S). The Prophet's companions were distressed due to this, but the following verses were revealed by God the Exalted to end this argument:

"A. L. M. The Roman Empire has been defeated- In a land close by; but they, (even) after (this) defeat of theirs, will soon be victorious- Within a few years. With Allah is the Decision, in the past and in the Future: on that Day shall the Believers rejoice - With the help of Allah. He helps whom He wills, and He is Exalted in Might, Most Merciful." The Holy Quran: Ar-Rum 30: 1-5.

There are two instances of foretelling future events in this verse which happened as foretold.

1– Another war broke out between Iran and Rome. However, the Roman army defeated the Persian army in this war.

2– When the news of the victory of the Romans over the Persians reached the Muslims, the Muslims had already defeated the unbelievers in the Battle of Badr and had killed seventy of the unbelievers.

Therefore, both of the above events which were foretold by the Quran happened. However, the unbelievers stated that these were simply predictions of future events and not foretelling them. They claimed that such predictions may or may not have happened in the future.

Another instance of foretelling future events is that of the conquest of Mecca. The Quran foretold the conquest of Mecca by His Holiness the Messenger Muhammad (S) and his companions at the time they had been thrown out of Mecca and fled to Medina. The Prophet (S) was upset but the following Holy Quranic verse was revealed,

"Verily He Who ordained the Qur'an for thee, will bring thee back to the Place of Return..." The Holy Quran: Al-Qasas 28:85.

This foretold event happened exactly as it was foretold in the above verse and the Noble Prophet Muhammad (S) returned to Mecca with one-hundred thousand people. Mecca was conquered without any fighting and bloodshed. The Noble Quran also foretold the conquest of Mecca in the following verse:

"Truly did Allah fulfil the vision for His Messenger. ye shall enter the Sacred Mosque, if Allah wills, with minds secure, heads shaved, hair cut short, and without fear. For He knew what ye knew not, and He granted, besides this, a speedy victory." The Holy Quran: Al-Fath 48:27.

Another instance of foretelling relates to the case of Abu Lahab. Early after the appointment of Muhammad (S) to the position of Prophethood, the Quran revealed the following verse about Abu Lahab which clearly states that he is an atheist and will go to Hell,

"Perish the hands of the Father of Flame! Perish he! No profit to him from all his wealth, and all his gains!" The Holy Quran: Al-Masad 111:1-2.

Now consider what would have happened if Abu Lahab had lived long enough to bear witness that "There is no God but Allah" and to become a Muslim, just the way Abu Sufyan became a Muslim after a lot of animosity with the Prophet (S) and fighting seventy battles with the Prophet (S). The Prophet (S) accepted Abu Sufyan's submission to God. Had Abu Lahab done a similar thing, what would have been the case with the two above verses? That is why these words are the words of God by which God made man understand that Abu Lahab was not like others and would die as an atheist.

Or consider the case of two of the wives of the Prophet (S) about whom God brings the similitude of the wives of Noah and Lut and unveils their acts of treason to the Prophet (S). We can see that they too confessed to their acts of treason,

"Allah sets forth, for an example to the Unbelievers, the wife of Noah and the wife of Lut: they were (respectively) under two of our righteous servants, but they were false to their (husbands), and they profited nothing before Allah on their account, but were told: "Enter ye the Fire along with (others) that enter!" The Holy Quran: At-Tahrem 66: 10.

Or you can see that the Quran unveils the news about the conditions of the hypocrites as to what they stated and what they did. Or consider the foretelling of the Quran about the way the Abbasids would rule as we read in the following verse,

"Then, is it to be expected of you, if ye were put in authority, that ye will do mischief in the land, and break your ties of kith and kin?" The Holy Quran: Muhammad 47:22.

Or consider the following verse which informs us about the attributes of the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.) and the way he fought for the sake of God,

***'O ye who believe! if any from among you turn back from his faith, soon will Allah produce a people whom He will love as they will love Him, lowly with the believers, mighty against the rejecters, fighting in the way of Allah, and never afraid of the reproaches of such as find fault. That is the grace of Allah, which He will bestow on whom He pleaseth. And Allah encompasseth all, and He knoweth all things.'* The Holy Quran: Al-Ma'idah 5:54.**

There are also some other traditions narrated upon the authority of the Immaculate Imams which state that the above verse concerns Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.), the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) and their companions. We read the following in regard to this in the book Tafsir Al- Mizan, "This is one of the verses which is not only about the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.) but also about the Imam of the Time Al-Mahdi (May God the Sublime expedite his arrival))."

The miraculous detailed account of previous Prophets

Of course, there are many such verses in the Quran which bring news of the Unseen. Another miraculous aspect of the Quran is the detailed accounts which the Prophet (S) brought regarding previous nations and past Prophets. Considering the fact that the Prophet Muhammad (S) was illiterate and could neither read nor write shows that what he (a.s.) brought was rooted in his Prophetic knowledge. The Quran says the following in this regard,

***'And thou wast not (able) to recite a Book before this (Book came), nor art thou (able) to transcribe it with thy right hand: In that case, indeed, would the talkers of vanities have doubted.'* The Holy Quran: Al-'Ankabut 29:48.**

The Prophet (S) did not meet Christians or Jews in Mecca. Therefore, the detailed accounts of the previous nations and past Prophets were clear indications that they had been rooted in something other than human knowledge. Should you compare the detailed accounts in the Quran with those of the Torah

and the Gospel, you will see that many sins are ascribed to the Prophets in the other two books and God the Sublime has been represented as being weak and having a body. For example, you may refer to the account of Moses wrestling with God in the Torah.

The Miraculous influence of the Quran on the people

Of course, there are also many other miraculous aspects of the Quran. One such aspect is the Quran's influence on the people as the religious scholars say. This and many other miraculous aspects of the Quran are beyond the scope of this discourse.

Discourse 3 – The Quran's Fluency– an unmet challenge

Introduction

In this section we will point out the miraculous aspects of the Quran in terms of eloquency and clearness as expressed in the words of Imam Al- Ridha (a.s.). Ibn Sakkit6 went to see His Holiness Imam Ridha (a.s.) and asked, "What are the reasons behind the following forms of miracles?

1-His Holiness the Prophet Moses (a.s.) turned his cane into a snake.

2-His Holiness Moses (a.s.) put his hand in his shirt and when he pulled it out it was white.

3-His Holiness the Prophet Jesus (a.s.) revived the dead and cured people who were born blind.

4-The miracle of His Holiness the Prophet Muhammad (S) is the Quran.

His Holiness Imam Ridha (a.s.) replied, "Since the art which was popular at the time of His Holiness Moses (a.s.) was magic and the magicians of the time were very important individuals, the miracles of the Prophet Moses (a.s.) were like magic, being the turning of his cane into a snake and his hand becoming white, and other miracles like these. Therefore, when the magicians at the time of Moses (a.s.) witnessed the cane being turned into a snake, they realized that this act was not related to magic but rather it was superior to magic. During the time of His Holiness Jesus (a.s.) the medical sciences were popular and expert doctors lived at that time, and the greatest miracles of Jesus (a.s.) were reviving the dead and curing the blind, so that they realized that these acts were superior to the profession of doctors and the medical sciences.

This was so since the limit to a doctor's profession is curing some of the diseases, and reviving the dead is beyond any man's power. The greatest miracle of the Prophet Muhammad (S) was the Quran since the greatest art of the Arabs at the time of the Prophet Muhammad (S) was that of the eloquency and clearness of speech. When the Quran was revealed and the people heard its verses, they all confirmed that this type of speech was beyond man's power. And those who were the Quran's enemies and did not accept the Quran as being a miracle called it magic."

Thus the Quran is the greatest miracle of the Prophet Muhammad (S) and it is God's Proof over the people up until the Resurrection Day.

It has been narrated on the authority of the Noble Prophet Muhammad (S) that he (a.s.) stated, "Try to understand the Quran⁷

1-If you want to have a prosperous life and die as the martyrs have.

2-If you want to be saved from the difficulties on the Resurrection Day (which is the day of being sorrowful)

3-If you want to be safe from the severity of the Heat on that Day

4-If you want to turn away from deviation and loss and turn towards guidance and prosperity."⁸

Therefore, the Quran includes all the sciences. It is an endless sea of Divine Knowledge and is an eternal miracle of the Prophet of Islam (a.s.). For this very reason, we must honor the Quran as much as we can and try to learn the science of the Quranic commentary, so that we may benefit from its truths, stories, details and points.

The Quran is the permanent miracle of the Prophet of Islam (a.s.) up until the Judgment Day and every Muslim can use it to challenge all the opposers of Islam to bring the like of it if they can. Every Muslim can announce to them that this is the book of the Prophet of Islam and the words of God the Exalted saying "If you deny this matter, then create something similar to it." Of course, no one can ever meet this challenge.

It must be known that the matter of the miraculousness of the Quran is not restricted to just its eloquency and clearness. Its eloquency and clearness is just one aspect of its miraculousness. The Prophet (S) used this aspect of the Quran and challenged the Arab masters of eloquency on several occasions.

Firstly: Early in the Prophethood in Mecca when only a few verses of the Quran had been revealed, the Prophet challenged his opposers to bring verses similar to what had been revealed as we read in the following verse,

"Or do they say: 'A Poet! we await for him some calamity (hatched) by Time!' Say thou: 'Await ye! I too will wait along with you!' Is it that their faculties of understanding urge them to this, or are they but a people transgressing beyond bounds? Or do they say, 'He fabricated the (Message)?' Nay, they have no faith!" The Holy Quran: At-Tur 52:30-33.

Then the Quran goes on and says,

"Let them then produce a recital like unto it, if (it be) they speak the truth!" The Holy Quran: At-Tur 52:34.

Secondly: Another verse which was also revealed in Mecca is as follows,

"Or they may say, 'He forged it,' Say, 'Bring ye then ten suras forged, like unto it, and call (to your aid) whomsoever ye can, other than Allah if ye speak the truth!'" The Holy Quran: Hud 11: 13.

However, no matter how much the Quran's opposers tried, they failed to create ten chapters similar to the Quranic chapters.

Thirdly: It is stated in the Chapter Baqara, which was revealed after the above verses, that

"And if ye are in doubt as to what We have revealed from time to time to Our servant, then produce a Sura like thereunto; and call your witnesses or helpers (if there are any) besides Allah, if your (doubts) are true." The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2:23.

It is surprising that even though there are short chapters in the Quran like Asr, Kauthar and Towhid, etc. the Arabs who were most eloquent in speech failed to bring anything like them. It is noteworthy that even the liar Muslimah who claimed to be a Prophet – and was one of the most eloquent Arabs – failed to bring sentences similar to those in the Holy Quran.

Amongst his writings presented to challenge the Quran we can read the following words and the like which caused him to be a total failure: "I swear by those who farm, I swear by those who harvest, I swear by those who bake bread, I swear by those who eat bread."⁹ or "By the elephant, What is the elephant? It has a long trunk."¹⁰

The failure of the Quran's enemies to create something like it

In each era there were people who opposed the Quran and made attempts to bring the like of it but they all failed. For example, there were some atheists who argued with Iman Ja'far As-Sadiq (a.s.) during the oppressive rule of Mansoor, the Davaneqi. The Imam always defeated them in their arguments. Once they gathered together in the Al-Haram Mosque (House of God) and said, "We should do something and bring something against the Muslims. The Quran is the most important document of the Muslims. Then we should make an effort and bring a book similar to it. That will put an end to all their claims."

They were all eloquent atheists Among them there were four who were most eloquent. They chose these four and gave them one year to do research. Each of them was supposed to bring one quarter of the book to challenge the Quran. They were supposed to gather together in the same mosque after one year and put their work together to defeat the Muslims. However, after a year had passed, the four people gathered together in the Al-Haram Mosque. One of them said, "To tell you the truth, once I read the following verse, I realized that the Quran is not the words of mankind and it cannot be replicated,

"If there were, in the heavens and the earth, other gods besides Allah, there would have been confusion in both! but glory to Allah, the Lord of the Throne: (High is He) above what they

attribute to Him!" The Holy Quran: Al-Anbya 21:22.

The second man said, "When I reached the following verse I realized that the Quran is not the words of mankind and it cannot be replicated,

"Now when they saw no hope of his (yielding), they held a conference in private..." The Holy Quran: Yusuf 12:80.

The third man said, "When I read the following verse I realized that I cannot bring the like of it,

"Then the word went forth: 'O Earth! Swallow up thy water, and O sky! Withhold (thy rain)!' and the water abated, and the matter was ended. The Ark rested on Mount Judi, and the word went forth: 'Away with those who do wrong!'" The Holy Quran: Hud 11:44.

The fourth man said, When I read the following verse, I realized that one cannot challenge the Quran:

"... Those on whom, besides Allah, ye call, cannot create (even) a fly, if they all met together for the purpose! and if the fly should snatch away anything from them, they would have no power to release it from the fly. Feeble are those who petition and those whom they petition!" The Holy Quran: Al-Hajj 22:73.

Just then, Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) passed by them and recited the following verse,

"Say: 'If the whole of mankind and Genies were to gather together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they backed up each other with help and support.'" The Holy Quran: Al-Isra 17:88.

The miraculous aspects of the Quran

As it was said, the Quran's eloquency is only one aspect of its miraculousness. It has other miraculous aspects, too. For example, the Quran includes foretelling of unknown future events. Another miraculous aspect of the Quran is its coverage of Divine Attributes of God, God's Names, His Power, and the unbelievable Order in the Universe. There are nearly seven-hundred verses about the creation which illustrate the influence of God's Power in the heavens and the Earth and everything within them.

Another miraculous aspect of the Quran is its style. There are many other miraculous aspects of the Quran which may be discussed. However, it is very important to ponder over the true meaning of the Quran and its true interpretation since the Quran has clarified everything as we read in the following verse,

"...and of all things have We taken account in a clear Book (of evidence)." The Holy Quran: Ya-Sin 36: 12.

God also says,

"... Nothing have we omitted from the Book, and they (all) shall be gathered to their Lord in the end." The Holy Quran: Al-An'am 6:38.

We shall end our discussion with the mention of the following narration on the authority of Abi Ja'far al-Baqir (a.s.) who said, "There are three groups of people who recite the Quran. First there are those who have turned to the Quran as their source of income. They use it to approach the rulers and act haughty with the people. Then there are those who recite the Quran and memorize it bit by bit, but violate its bounds and do not act accordingly. Lastly there are those who recite the Quran and paste it as a medication to their hearts. They use it at night to say supplications and use it in the daytime while suffering from the thirst of fasting. They use the Quran to worship in the mosque and stay out of their comfortable beds. The Honorable the Omnipotent God fends off calamities from them; takes revenge from the enemies by them and sends down rain from the sky for them. I swear by God that such recitors of the Quran are as scarce as red matches are."¹¹¹²

قال أبي جعفر عليه السلام: قراء القرآن ثلاثة: رجل قرأ القرآن فاتخذ به بضاعة واستدر به الملوك واستطال به على الناس ، ورجل قرأ القرآن فحفظ حروفه وضيع حدوده ، ورجل قرأ القرآن فوضع دواء القرآن على داء قلبه ، فأسهر به ليله ، وأظمأ به نهاره. وقام به في مساجده ، وتجافى به عن فراشه ، فبأولئك يدفع الله العزيز الجبار البلاء ، وبأولئك يدل الله من الأعداء وبأولئك ينزل الله الغيث من السماء ، فوالله هؤلاء قراء القرآن أعز من الكبريت الأحمر.

1. Bihar ul-Anwar, 23/108.

2. Al-Lavame an-Nuyaniah fi asma'eh Ali va Ahle Baytehi al-Qurania

3. Dr. Shumayyil referred to looting in the battles.

4. They were not Christians or Jews.

5. Christians

6. One of the Shiite scholars who was martyred by Motevakil when in response to his question, "Do you like my children more or Al-Hassan (a.s.) and Al-Husayn (a.s.)?" he replied, "Even Qanbar who was the slave servant of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) has a higher rank than you and children have."

7. Study it, learn it, teach it and try to comprehend the true meaning of the Quran.

8. Bihar ul-Anwar, 19/92.

9. Montahial A'mal, 33.

10. The Quran and the Last Prophet, 49.

11. Meaning that good and sincere friends are very hard to find.

12. Al-Khisal 3-164.

Discourse 1: Physical and Spritual Resurrection

Introduction

Resurrection is one of the major principles of religion and denying it equals denying a necessity of the religion. Resurrection is an important major principle which God the Blessed has ordained. Thus, whoever denies the Resurrection, has in reality denied an issue which God the Exalted has stated which is one of the major principles and one of the necessities of the religion. Thus the issue of Resurrection is very important just like the major principle of monotheism.

Is the Resurrection on the Judgement Day a spiritual Resurrection, meaning that the bodily pleasures such as eating, drinking and etc. do not exist in the same way that some of the philosophers say, or is it a truly physical Resurrection?

Spiritual Resurrection and the Physical Resurrection

It is correct to say that Resurrection is both a physical Resurrection and spiritual Resurrection. Both the soul and the body will experience the pleasures of Paradise. Likewise, both the soul and the body are tortured in Hell where man is tortured for his evil deeds in this world.

Also the Quranic verses indicate there is both a physical Resurrection and a spiritual Resurrection. From amongst the Quranic verses which prove the existence of a physical Resurrection and a spiritual Resurrection we may cite the following noble verse,

"Doth not man see that it is We Who created him from sperm? yet behold! he (stands forth) as an open adversary! And he makes comparisons for Us, and forgets his own (origin and) Creation: He says, 'Who can give life to (dry) bones and decomposed ones (at that)?' Say, 'He will give them life Who created them for the first time! for He is Well-versed in every kind of creation!'"
The Holy Quran: Ya-Sin 36:77-79.

The following verse was revealed about Obayy ibn Khalaf or A'as ibn Va'el who picked up a decayed bone and brought it to the presence of the Prophet and said, "O Muhammad (S)! Do you say that God will revive this decayed bone?" God the Blessed the Sublime revealed the following in response to this question,

"Doth not man see that it is We Who created him from sperm? yet behold! he (stands forth) as an open adversary! And he makes comparisons for Us, and forgets his own (origin and) Creation: He says, 'Who can give life to (dry) bones and decomposed ones (at that)?' Say, 'He will give them life Who created them for the first time! for He is Well-versed in every kind of creation!'"
The Holy Quran: Ya-Sin 36:77-79.

Then God states,

"Is not He Who created the heavens and the earth able to create the like thereof? Yea, indeed! for He is the Creator Supreme, of skill and knowledge (infinite)! Verily, when He intends a thing, His Command is, 'be', and it is! So glory to Him in Whose hands is the dominion of all things: and to Him will ye be all brought back." The Holy Quran: Ya-Sin 36:81-83.

Evidently in these verses God states that if those who are in doubt about the Resurrection think about it themselves, they will realize that the same God who created man once can create him again. The above verses also indicate a physical Resurrection and a spiritual Resurrection because it states,

"Say, 'He will give them life Who created them for the first time! for He is Well-versed in every kind of creation!'" The Holy Quran: Ya-Sin 36:79.

In another verse we read,

"O mankind! if ye have a doubt about the Resurrection, (consider) that We created you out of dust, then out of sperm, then out of a leech-like clot, then out of a morsel of flesh, partly formed and partly unformed, in order that We may manifest (our power) to you; and We cause whom We will to rest in the wombs for an appointed term, then do We bring you out as babes, then (foster you) that ye may reach your age of full strength; and some of you are called to die, and some are sent back to the feeblest old age, so that they know nothing after having known (much), and (further), thou seest the Earth barren and lifeless, but when We pour down rain on it, it is stirred (to life), it swells, and it puts forth every kind of beautiful growth (in pairs)." The Holy Quran: Al-Hajj 22:5.

In the continuation of this same noble verse He establishes another reason and states,

"This is so, because Allah is the Reality: it is He Who gives life to the dead, and it is He Who has power over all things. And verily the Hour will come: there can be no doubt about it, or about (the fact) that Allah will raise up all who are in the graves." The Holy Quran: Al-Hajj 22:6-7.

Thus, reasoning for Resurrection consists of two issues: The creation of man and its phases.

Rain and the growth of the plants, the trees and the flowers from the dead Earth that come after.

And the phrase

"... Allah will raise up all who are in the graves." The Holy Quran: Al-Hajj 22:6-7.

is a reason for the physical Resurrection showing that Resurrection is not just spiritual; rather it is both physical and spiritual. Otherwise, the rising of the dead from their graves is not necessary.

There are also other Quranic verses which indicate the fact that on the Day of Judgement, God the Exalted will create both the soul and the body because He states,

"...(consider) that We created you ..." The Holy Quran: Al-Hajj 22:5.

This means that God created both the body and the soul, and will return the body and the soul resurrected back to its owner.

This was a summary about the major principle of Resurrection. However, there are many other indications of this issue such as the examples which God has brought in the Quran about the Resurrection. Examples such as the case of 'Uzair, Abraham (a.s.) and the Companions of the Cave who spent 309 years in a cave, but their bodies did not decay. When they woke up from sleep they only said, "It seems that we have slept for a long time." There are many other verses to indicate the existence of a physical Resurrection and a spiritual Resurrection.

Discourse 2: Physical and Spritual Resurrection– continued

Introduction

Let's start this discourse by referring to a verse from the Holy Quran in which God the Blessed the Exalted said,

"Or (take) the similitude of one who passed by a hamlet, all in ruins to its roofs. He stated: 'Oh! how shall Allah bring it (ever) to life, after (this) its death?' but Allah caused him to die for a hundred years, then raised him up (again). He stated: 'How long didst thou tarry (thus)?' He stated: '(Perhaps) a day or part of a day.' He stated: 'Nay, thou hast tarried thus a hundred years; but look at thy food and thy drink; they show no signs of age; and look at thy donkey: And that We may make of thee a sign unto the people, Look further at the bones, how We bring them together and clothe them with flesh.' When this was shown clearly to him, he stated: 'I know that Allah hath power over all things.'" The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2:259.

Just as it was mentioned before, the existence of both a physical and a spiritual Resurrection are proven in the Quranic verses which God the Blessed the Exalted has revealed. Moreover, it is a religious necessity for the Resurrection to be both physical and spiritual. Thus, on the Resurrection Day man would appear both in physical form and the spiritual form before God.

The following verse which is about the Prophet 'Uzair (Ezra) (a.s.) is amongst the verses which clearly mention the issues of spiritual and physical Resurrection. Its relation to the previous verse lies in the fact that it states the reasoning of Abraham (a.s.) with Nimrud regarding the issue of monotheism (or the belief in the only God the Exalted).

There exist different views regarding who this verse refers to. However, it is certain that it is about one of the Divine Prophets – either

'Uzair, Ermia, Khizr, or some other Prophet. Some people have claimed that it is about an unbeliever.

However, the fact is that it is about a Prophet. It is highly probable that it refers to the Prophet 'Uzair (a.s.) or Ezra.

Thus, after explaining the issue of Abraham (a.s.), God the Blessed the Exalted states,

"Didst thou not turn by vision to those who abandoned their homes, though they were thousands (in number), for fear of death? Allah stated to them: 'Die! Then He restored them to life. For Allah is full of bounty to mankind, but most of them are ungrateful." The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2:243.

Some scholars have said that the village referred to here is Jerusalem which Bakht-Al- Nassr had destroyed. Others have said that this refers to the 'hamlet' mentioned in the previously cited verse.

'Uzair (a.s.) passed through the village and saw that the village that had been destroyed and its inhabitants had perished. 'Uzair was amazed at how God could revive the ones who had died after a very long time. Then God the Exalted took his soul for one-hundred years, and after this period, God revived him and addressed him as follows¹, "How long have you been asleep?" At first he thought that he had been asleep. Later on he was told he was dead. He replied, "One day or half a day." God told him that he had been dead for one-hundred years. He was told to look at his food and drink which were preserved by God and stayed fresh. He was told to look upon the skellet of his donkey and how God revives it by adding fresh flesh to it. He was told that God wanted to set him up as an example for mankind. Once he realized what had happened and learned how God revives the dead, he said, "I know that God is able to do everything." This show that he had belief in the Resurrection, but wanted to become wholeheartedly sure just like Abraham (a.s.) who said,

"... Yea! but to satisfy My own undertaking." The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2:260.

This scene appeared to him so as to increase his certainty.

The case of Abraham (a.s.) is similar as we read in the following verse of the Holy Quran,

"Behold! Abraham stated: 'My Lord! Show me how Thou givest life to the dead.' He stated: 'Dost thou not then believe?' He stated: 'Yea! but to satisfy My own undertaking.' He stated: 'Take four birds; Tame them to turn to thee; put a portion of them on every hill and call to them: They will come to thee (flying) with speed. Then know that Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise.'" The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2:260.

The birds referred to in the above verse have been said to be a dove, a crow, a peacock and a rooster in several authentic narrations. Thus, Abraham (a.s.) reached the stage of certitude after passing through the stage of knowledge by experiencing the above event. This verse is another proof of the physical and spiritual Resurrection because the birds were revived from their own parts.

1. It is evident from this addressing that the addressee is a Prophet not an unbeliever.

Discourse 1: On the real Advisor

Introduction

From amongst the statements of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) to Imam Hassan Al-Mujtaba (a.s.) is, "Revive your heart and soul by means of advice and control your lust by means of abstinence and piety."¹

أحي قلبك بالموعظة وأمته بالزهاده

Firstly; you must know that the real advisor is the Holy God as God the Blessed the Sublime says,

"O mankind! there hath come to you a direction from your Lord and a healing for the (diseases) in your hearts,- and for those who believe, a guidance and a Mercy." The Holy Quran: Yunus 10:57.

Of course, the Quran is also a cure for physical illnesses based on what is stated in the narrations. However, it is a cure for all the inner pains and it is a source of blessings for the ones who have certitude.

The Prophet (S) and the Immaculate Imams (a.s.) as Advisors on behalf of God

The real Advisor is God the Sublime who has advised all the people by means of the Quran. After God the Sublime, the Prophet (S) is an advisor on behalf of God as we read in the following verse,

"Say: 'I do admonish you on one point: that ye do stand up before Allah,- (It may be) in pairs, or (it may be) singly,- and reflect (within yourselves): your Companion is not possessed: he is no less than a warner to you, in face of a terrible Penalty.'" The Holy Quran: Saba' 34:46.

Thus, the Noble Prophet (S) has the rank of an advisor on behalf of God the Sublime. After the Prophet (S), the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) and the Immaculate Imams (a.s.) have this rank. After them, the scientists and the learned men have this rank. Their speeches and preachings which have been narrated in the Quranic verses and narrations are expressed for all the people. It is because of this fact that the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated to Imam Al-Mujtaba (a.s.), "Revive your heart and soul by means of advice and control your lust by means of abstinence and piety."²

أحي قلبك بالموعظة وأمته بالزهاده

Now a question comes to mind that is "What is meant by 'revive your heart' and 'control your lust'?" It

must be stated in response that the meaning of reviving the heart is strengthening the Intellect by listening to advice. And controlling the lust means fighting one's selfish desires.

The Means of abstinence

The most pious of the people is the one who avoids the doubtful acts. And the best worshipper is the one who carries out the religious obligatory deeds.³ The most abstinent of the people is the one who does not do the forbidden acts. And the most assiduous of the people is the one who avoids sins."⁴

أورع الناس من وقف عن الشبهة ، أبى الناس من اقام على الفرائض ، ازهد
الناس من ترك الحرام عند الشبهة ، اشد الناس اجتهاد من ترك الذنوب.

The most pious of the people avoids Doubtful Acts

Thus, the most pious of the people are the ones who not only avoid the forbidden acts but also protect themselves from the doubtful acts. And piety means that a human protects himself against all the sins. For example, this is just like the one who wants to pass through a thorny place and protects himself against the thorns so that they do not injure him. A pious person protects himself against all the sins with the same quality.

There is a narration on the authority of God's Prophet Muhammad (S), "The lawful and forbidden acts are evident, and the doubtful acts are somewhere in between. Thus, a person should protect himself against both the doubtful acts and the forbidden ones. If an individual does not protect himself against doing the doubtful deeds, then he may engage in doing some of the forbidden acts without having realized what he has done."⁵ Based upon this it has been stated that the most pious of the people is the one who protects himself against all of the doubtful acts.

Discourse 2: On fulfilling the needs of the people

Introduction

The Master of the Martyrs Al-Husayn (a.s.) stated in one of his sermons, "O people! Get more inclined to do generous acts and take the lead in getting the booties (referring to ethical virtues). Beware that the people's need of you is one of the greatest blessings of God the Blessed the Exalted. Thus, do not become tired of fulfilling the people's needs. Should that happen, then these very blessings will change into disasters."⁶

This saying is similar to the saying of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) who stated, "Indeed there are people who gain God's blessings by fulfilling the people's needs. Thus, as long as they fulfill the

people's needs those blessings will remain. However, if they do not do so those blessings will be taken away from them."⁷

Of course, the people have different needs. Sometimes they become fulfilled with some financial assistance. At other times some other action is needed. Sometimes needs are fulfilled by writing; sometimes by giving guidance and verbal advice; and sometimes they are fulfilled by using one's position. Even, sometimes one helps the people by means of his knowledge and wisdom and guides them. Of course, this is the best form of help because it has a lot of benefits for the people. On this basis, those who are learned have a heavy duty. They must not neglect guiding the people. Another form of helping the people is guiding them by giving them consultation.

Let's return to the saying of the Master of the Martyrs Al-Husayn (a.s.) who said, "O People! Anyone who is generous will reach lordship, greatness and manliness. However, anyone who withholds generosity will be debased. The most generous of the people is the one who bestows to those who have no hopes. The most forgiving of the people is the one who forgives when he is in power. The most strengthener of the ties of kinship among the people is the one who establishes bonds with his relatives who have cut off the bonds of relationship with him."

Of course, these attributes are amongst the most praiseworthy attributes as they have been referred to in a narration. This means that amongst the praiseworthy morals these are the attributes in the first rank, because they are the reasons for the humanity and the manliness of man. Every person's generosity is displayed through these attributes. These were evidently amongst the attributes of the Noble Prophet (S) and the Immaculate Imams (a.s.) as reported in the narrations and historical records.

For example, it has been reported in history that when the Prophet (S) conquered Mecca, the people of Mecca were the same people who had fought with the Prophet (S), martyred his companions and showed much enmity towards him. All of them were wondering about how the Prophet (S) would treat them. In that same state, the Noble Prophet (S) told them, "How do you think I will treat you?" All of them stated, "You are my big brother and master, and you are the son of our big brother and master."⁸ In other words, they meant to say that they expected nothing other than goodness from the Prophet (S). Due to this the Prophet (S) stated, "I forgive you and from today on you are all free." Even Abu Sufyan who was their chief and had led many battles against the Prophet (S) was amongst them. However, the Prophet of Mercy (a.s.) even forgave his number one enemy. That is why God the Sublime praises the deeds of the Prophet (S) and says,

"And thou (standest) on an exalted standard of character." The Holy Quran: Al-Qalam 68:4.

A similar instance occurred when Basra was conquered in the Battle of Jamal. The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) forgave those who had fought with him and dispatched Ayesha with complete respect to Medina.⁹

Or for example, in the Battle of Seffin Muaviyah's army entered Seffin first and took control of the

Euphrates River closing off the waterway. This was so that when the army of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) entered Seffin, they could not use the Euphrates River.

When the army of Ali (a.s.) entered Seffin and saw that Muaviah's army would not let them fetch any water; he (a.s.) did not start the battle. However, after some time passed and it became hard for them to suffer from thirst, Ali (a.s.) allowed his army to attack. They kept fighting until Malik Ashtar – May God sanctify his grave – and others took over control of the river.¹⁰ Then they closed off the water on Muaviah's army. It was then that some people were dispatched by Muaviah to seek Ali's permission to use the water. Some of the companions of Ali (a.s.) said, "O Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.)! Take an eye for an eye and do not give them water as they did to us." The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated, "I will not close the waterway for any servant of God" and ordered them to open the waterway for Muaviah's army to go and use the water.¹¹

A similar situation arose when the Master of the Martyrs Al-Husayn (a.s.) went towards Kufa. He ordered his (a.s.) companions to carry a lot of water with them. When they reached the army of the enemy headed by Hurr, the enemy soldiers were thirsty. Imam Al-Husayn (a.s.) ordered his companions to give the enemy soldiers as much water as they needed to quench their thirst.

Discourse 3: On the benefits of the Mosque

Introduction

There is a narration on the authority of Imam Hassan Al-Mujtaba (a.s.) on the nobility and the virtue of the mosque as follows, "Those who go to the mosque often shall acquire one of the following eight characteristics: strong verses; brotherhood for the sake of the Honorable God the Exalted; new knowledge or words of guidance; awaited Mercy; or something which may save them from destruction; or shyness or fear due to which they abandon sins."¹²

من أدام الإختلاف إلى المساجد أصاب إحدى ثمان: أية محكمة وأخا مستفاداً
وعلماً مستظرفاً ورحمة منتظرة ، وكلمة تدله على الهدى أو ترده عن ردى
وترك الذنب حياء أو خشية.

In this narration the Arabic word Al-ikhtelaf is used to mean going or associating. The same word Al-ikhtelaf appears in the following verse,

"Behold! in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, – there are indeed Signs for men of understanding," The Holy Quran: Al-Imran 3: 190.

which is translated to mean 'alternation.' However, the one used here means going. This is similar to its

use in *Ikhtelafe ummati rahmat*¹³ which means association amongst the Muslims is a source of mercy.

There are many benefits in going to mosques. The first benefit mentioned here is 'strong verses.' One of the deeds which has been emphasized upon in mosques is reading the Quran and learning the truths, the knowledge and the commentary of the Noble Verses. By practicing this important issue man becomes familiar with the reasons for and the reasonings behind monotheism, Prophethood, the other religious principles and Quranic knowledge which are the firmest reasoning and the signs of recognizing God.

The second thing mentioned is 'brotherhood for the sake of the Honorable God the Exalted' since by going to the mosque man finds religious brothers who are useful for him, because the mosque is the place of brotherhood. The people's sense of brotherhood and friendliness becomes firmly established when they go to the mosque.

At the beginning of Islam it was also in the mosque that the Noble Prophet (S) established the relation of brotherhood amongst the Muslims and it was also in that very place that he called the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) his brother and stated, "You are my brother in this world and the Hereafter."¹⁴

Due to this text and the other recorded texts the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) is the brother, substitute and the Trustee of the Prophet (S). The Holy Religion of Islam is the religion of brotherhood, kindness and friendship, unity, righteousness and honesty. In short, Islam is the religion of worshipping God. We also read in the Quran,

"The Believers are but a single Brotherhood..." The Holy Quran: Al-Hujurat 49: 10.

Thus we see that one of the important benefits which is derived from acting upon the precepts and commandments is establishing brotherhood, kindness, and unity which has received especial attention in the Islamic commandments.

Brotherhood in Religious Precepts and minor Religious Principles

It was said that going to the mosques and gathering together in the mosques causes the strengthening of the bonds of brotherhood and friendship. Moreover, the gathering together of the people in the Friday congregational prayer; the Festival prayers; and the acts of worship and circumambulations in the Great Mecca – with all its glory and greatness where Muslims with different nationalities gather together strengthens the bonds of unity and brotherhood. All of these make the bonds of friendship and unity so firm that if the Muslims properly utilize this strong unity, the enemies of Islam cannot dominate over them at all.

The moral aspects of brotherhood

We see a similar point in the moral aspects of brotherhood in Islamic jurisprudence. It can be seen that

adhering to this important issue of unity and brotherhood is highly stressed in the Holy Islamic law. For example, we see that righteousness which is one of the greatest admirable moral attributes causes kindness and friendship. The Muslims will trust each other when they tell the truth. As a result of this assurance friendship, familiarity and intimacy, unity and monotheism are fostered amongst them. Once this happens, the Muslims will never be disunited.

It has been stated in a narration, "A Muslim is the brother of other Muslims. No one ever oppresses him or talks badly with him."¹⁵

Of course, the same holds true regarding other good moral attributes. Adhering to moral values causes firmness of the bonds of brotherhood. On the contrary, acting against moral values will cause misfortune. For example, gossiping causes the people to become separated from each other.

In another narration we read, "The Muslims are united against others."¹⁶

Thus, the issues of brotherhood, kindness and unity have been stressed in the ethics and the precepts of Islam which form the practical decrees in Islam. Moreover, the practice of going to the mosque is one of Islam's practical decrees which is meant to strengthen the bonds of brotherhood amongst them.

The third thing mentioned in the above narration is "new knowledge or words of guidance" since the mosque is the place of acquiring and spreading knowledge. It is in the mosque that man can learn new religious knowledge. All the sermons of the Noble Prophet (S) and the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) were delivered in the mosques.

The fourth benefit of going to the mosque is receiving the "awaited Mercy" since whoever enters a mosque may receive God's Favor and Mercy.

The fifth benefit for the people going to the mosque is hearing "something which may save them from destruction" since the mosque is the place of advice. Whenever man goes to the mosque, he may hear something which guides him towards the right path or saves him from going astray.

The next benefit of going to the mosque is "shyness or fear due to which they abandon sins." The shyness or fear may be either from the people or God. One knows that if he commits any sins the people there would blame him and they will object to him and say "If you are blessed by going to the mosque and endowed with saying your prayers, then why do you pollute yourself with sins?"

The mosque has extreme nobility and virtue since it is the House of God and the place to worship God the Blessed. God has ascribed the mosque to Himself and said that the mosque is His House. Of course, God is not of a physical form to fit in a physical place like a mosque. This is like the Ka'ba which is the most sacred place of worship on the planet Earth as we read in the Holy Quran,

"Behold! We gave the site, to Abraham, of the (Sacred) House, (saying): 'Associate not anything (in worship) with Me; and sanctify My House for those who compass it round, or stand up, or

***bow, or prostrate themselves (therein in prayer)."* The Holy Quran: Al-Hajj 22:26.**

In another instance we read that the blood of the Master of Martyrs Al-Husayn (a.s.) is ascribed to God when we read the pilgrimage prayers of Imam Al-Husayn, "Assalmu Alayk ya sarallah..." which means, "Peace be upon you O he whose blood-claimer is God!"¹⁷ In another instance God ascribes man's soul to Himself and says,

***"When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit..."* The Holy Quran: Suad 38:72.**

Or in another instance God relates the female camel of Saleh (a.s.) to Himself since its appearance from out of a mountain was an important miracle and stated,

***"It is a She-camel of Allah. And (bar her not from) having her drink!"* The Holy Quran: Ash-Shams 91: 13.**

Therefore, God ascribes the mosque to Himself and calls it as His Own House due to its nobility as a place of worship. There is a narration in this regard in which we read, "My houses on the Earth are the mosques and My pilgrims are those who worship Me there."¹⁸ One may ask whether God can be seen for whose pilgrimage they must go to the mosque? The answer is simply no. God is not visible. However, but those who go to the mosques and are familiar with the mosque see God – but not with their physical eyes. Rather they see and visit that Pure Essence with their insight.

There is a lot of reward for going to the mosque as we read, "Blessed be the servants who purify themselves at home, and then come to visit Me in My house."¹⁹ Also we read in another narration, "It is a duty for the one being visited to honor his pilgrims."²⁰

In another narration we read, "The mosques are God's houses, and it is from these mosques that light shines into the sky as a result of the people's worship, in the same way that the star shines upon the Earth."²¹ Thus, one of the places which is very noble is the mosque as God the Blessed the Exalted states in the Holy Quran,

"(Lit is such a Light) in houses, which Allah hath permitted to be raised to honor; for the celebration, in them, of His name: In them is He glorified in the mornings and in the evenings, (again and again), – By men whom neither traffic nor merchandise can divert from the Remembrance of Allah, nor from regular Prayer, nor from the practice of regular Charity: Their (only) fear is for the Day when hearts and eyes will be transformed (in a world wholly new)." The Holy Quran: Al-Nour 24:36–37.

The houses which God has permitted to be raised so that they gain popularity include the mosques as we may conclude from the literature on narrations. Also, there are other examples of such houses. For example, the homes of the Noble Prophet (S), the Immaculate Imams (a.s.), and Fatima Zahra (a.s.)

may be cited from which knowledge and wisdom is constantly propagated. The shrines of the Noble Prophet (S) and the Immaculate Imams (a.s.) are also other examples of such houses. These places are so noble that God the Blessed has ordered that they be respected and honored forever.

Discourse 4: On Purification

Introduction

In his will to Ali (a.s.) God's Prophet (S) stated, "O Ali! There are three ranks, three expiations, three things which destroy, and three things which save. As for the three things which raise the ranks they are making ablutions with cold water; waiting for the next prayer after you pray; walking in the day and night to the prayers; and attending congregational prayers. As for the three expiations, they are greeting aloud, feeding the needy, and spending the night in prayer when other people are asleep. As for the three things which destroy, they are being really stingy; following one's selfish desires; and being haughty and selfish. As for the three things which save, they are fearing God in private and in public, moderation in times of affluence and poverty, and saying what is fair whether you are pleased or angry."²²

عن النبي صلى الله عليه وآله أنه قال: في وصيته له: يا علي ثلاث درجات وثلاث كفارات ، وثلاث مهلكات ، وثلاث منجيات ، فأما الدرجات فإسباغ الوضوء في السيرات ، وانتظار الصلاة بعد الصلاة ، والمشي بالليل والنهار إلى الجمعات. وأما الكفارات فإفشاء السلام وإطعام الطعام والتهجد بالليل والناس نيام ، وأما المهلكات فشح مطاع ، وهوى متبع وإعجاب المرء بنفسه. وأما المنجيات فخوف الله في السلا والعلانية ، والقصد في الغنى والفقر ، وكلمة العدل في الرضا والسخط.

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Making ablutions with cold water

A Muslim individual must be clean. His clothing, body, home, carpets and whatever belongs to him must be clean. It has been stated in a narration, "Islam has been established upon cleanliness."²⁵ Also it has been stated in another well-known narration, "Cleanliness is due to faith."²⁶

Cleanliness has many ranks as follows:

Rank One: Personal cleanliness of the body and one's clothing.

Rank Two: Spiritual cleanliness such that one is free of committing sins.

Rank Three: Spiritual purification such that one purifies his own soul from all bad traits and attributes, and attends only to the Lord of the Universe. However, since the love for the Prophet (S), the Divine Leaders (a.s.) and the believers is rooted in the love for God, one can express this kind of love and it is not in contradiction to the love for God.

Rank Four: Ultimate Purification that is to purify one's self from everything other than God such that nothing but the love for God has any room in his heart.

These were the various ranks of purification and cleanliness.

One who prays to God and says, "O God! Please purify me in every aspect of life!", should be ready to purify himself from all baseness, and acquire all ranks of purification. That is why it is recommended for one to rinse out his mouth thrice and recite the following supplication when he wants to make ablutions, "O my God! On the day I meet you, please dictate Your Proof to me and turn my tongue into expressing your words of remembrance."²⁷

One will never disobey God because the origin of God's remembrance is remembrance in the heart. Thus if man pays attention to God and in every condition remembers God in his heart, he will never disobey God. And once one rinses out his nose, he should recite the following supplication, "O my God! Do not deprive me from the scent of Paradise and make me one of those who smells that scent." ²⁸ And when one wants to wash his face, he says the following at the Threshold of God, "O my God! Make my face shiny and white on the day on which the faces are enlightened, and do not darken my face on the day on which the faces are darkened." ²⁹

In fact, when an individual physically stands before God's Threshold, what actually connects him up to God the Sublime is his soul. For this very reason, man must pay attention to free his soul from any sense of belonging to anyone other than God. This is required so that he is able to establish contact with God the Sublime. Of course, the state of purity when man's soul is free from anyone but God is the highest rank of purity.

Also when one wipes his right hand with water, he should say, "O My God! Hand over my letter of deeds to my right hand and entrust the decree of Eternal Life in Paradise to my left hand. Please take the reckoning of my deeds easy on me"³⁰. And when one wipes his left hand, he should say, "O My God! Please do not give my book of deeds to my left hand and do not hang it into my neck and I take refuge to you from the flames of the Hell-fire"³¹.

It has been quoted in a narration on the authority of the Noble Prophet Muhammad, "On the Resurrection Day the hands, the faces and the feet of the people in my nation will shine because of the ablutions they have made in this world."³² And when one wipes the part of his hair with water during his ablutions, he should say, "O God! Act in such a way that mercy, forgiveness and happiness encompass

me". And when he wipes his right and left foot, he should say, "O God! Keep me firmly on the Right Path in this world so that I do not slip off the Bridge (Sirat) in the Hereafter when many shall slip. Please grant me the success to do things which You like me to do."

One must be very careful and follow the Right Path in this world so that he can easily cross over the Bridge on the Resurrection Day since it is his worldly state which will be reflected then.

The people who have followed the Straight Path and the religious commandments have in fact held the fire firmly in their grip. There is a famous saying regarding the Bridge as follows, "The Bridge over Hell is thinner than a strand of hair, sharper than a sword and it is located in the darkest place."³³

This means that the people are different from each other in the Hereafter. If they have passed through this world in a praiseworthy manner, then they will pass over the Bridge as if they are riding on something. Of course, a real model to follow is the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) since the Right Path is exactly the path which Ali (a.s.) has followed. Therefore, we must try to follow in the footsteps of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.).

Waiting for the next prayer after you pray

This means that when man has completed his prayer, he must wait for the coming of the next prayer like one who has invited a dear guest and waits for his arrival. The individual awaiting his prayer is like a host awaiting his guest.

Attending congregational prayers

This means that it is recommended to say the prayers in the day and night in congregation.

However, those three things which are the expiation for committing sins are:

Greeting aloud

This means that one formally pays attention to greeting others. He greets others in such a way that greeting others becomes an official act amongst the people. Greeting others in the religious laws of Islam is like greeting of the nation of Islam and it has a lot of effects. Some have stated that saying salam (hello) is asking for the health of the person greeted from God the Exalted. However, a more agreed upon meaning of salam is that "you are safe from me." There is a narration that has been quoted on the authority of God's Prophet (S) who stated, "Salam is a greeting for our nation and a form of security for the minorities who are subject to our rule."³⁴ Or it has been stated in another narration, "A Muslim is one from whose tongue and hands other Muslims are safe."³⁵ And the Prophet (S) goes on and says, "And a believer is one from whom the people's lives and property are safe."³⁶

Feeding the needy

Spending the night in prayer when other people are asleep.

There is a question that can be raised here. Consider the case of a person who has committed a major sin or who is in debt to someone. Would saying the night prayers, greeting others or feeding needy people eliminate these rights of God and the people? Islamic scholars have pointed out that the sins referred to in the above-mentioned narrations are minor ones in which one does not insist on doing. This can be understood from the following Quranic verse,

"If ye (but) eschew the most heinous of the things which ye are forbidden to do, We shall expel out of you all the evil in you..." The Holy Quran: An-Nisa 4:31.

In another honorable verse it is stated,

"And establish regular prayers at the two ends of the day and at the approaches of the night: For those things, that are good remove those that are evil..." The Holy Quran: Hud 11:114.

The Islamic scholars have stated "the two ends of the day" mentioned in this verse refer to the morning and the afternoon. They also hold that "at the approaches of the night" mentioned in this verse refers to the evening (Maqrib) and the early night prayers (Isha). Saying these prayers would eliminate wicked deeds or "those that are evil." The commentators have pointed out the wicked deed referred to here mean minor sins which are eliminated by praying.

It is stated in the continuation of the narration, "As for the three things which save, they are fearing God in private and in public; moderation in times of affluence and poverty; and saying what is fair whether you are pleased or angry."³⁷

Fearing God in private and in public

Of course, this fear of God must be accompanied by hope. One of the recommendations of Loqman the Wise (a.s.) to his son is also this issue of fear and hope. He stated, "If they cut apart the heart of a believer or a servant of God, two lights are seen in them which are fear and hope. Neither one of them dominates over the other. On the contrary, they are of equal strength."³⁸

It has been quoted in a narration on the authority of God's Prophet (S), "The foremost form of wisdom is fearing God the Blessed the Sublime."³⁹

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Therefore, the most outstanding form of wisdom is fear of God and being humble before God, because

fear of God causes man not to commit sins. There is another narration in which we read, "The foremost form of knowledge is recognizing God the Blessed the Sublime."⁴⁰

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Therefore, so long as man does not recognize God and does not understand God's Majesty, he will not become afraid. It is for this very reason that the most outstanding of all wisdom is recognizing God.

Moderation in times of affluence and poverty

This means that we must live economically and in balance.

Speaking what is fair whether you are pleased or angry

This means that he must observe justice when he is happy as well as when he is angry and upset. A narration has been quoted on the authority of Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (a.s.) in which we read, "Anger is the key to all evil."⁴¹

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It has also been narrated on the authority of some wise scholars who said, "A ship that has fallen into a whirlpool and the wind takes it here and there is about to sink. However, such a ship is nearer to being rescued than the ones who became angry."⁴²

Thus, patience at the time of anger, which is the very same attribute of perseverance, has great results. God also describes His Prophets as having this attribute of perseverance where He states,

"For Abraham was, without doubt, forbearing (of faults), compassionate, and given to look to Allah." The Holy Quran: Hud 11:75.

Also in another verse God says,

"So We gave him the good news of a boy ready to suffer and forbear." The Holy Quran: As-Saffat 37: 101.

There is a narration on the authority of Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) who said, "Nothing has been mixed and united with another thing better than mixing of perseverance with knowledge."⁴³

The narration goes on to say that the three things which destroy are:

1-Being really stingy

2-Following one's selfish desires

3- Being haughty and selfish.

The cure for this is to get a better recognition of God. Then once one gains more knowledge about God the Sublime selfishness will disappear in him. In a narration on the authority of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) we read, "If God's Greatness becomes apparent in your soul and you understand His Majesty yourself, then all creatures will become unimportant in your mind. Let alone you compare yourself to God's Majesty!"⁴⁴

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) says the following in a part of the Hammam Sermon which is about the pious people, "The pious people are those who have recognized God's Majesty so much that they see everything other than God as being unimportantly small."⁴⁵

The opposite of the characteristic of selfishness and admiring oneself, is the attribute of humbleness. By including it in one's morals, man becomes one of God's servants and beloved by God.

Discourse 5: On whims and high aspirations

Introduction

God's Prophet (S) stated, "What I am most afraid of for my nation is whims and unreachable hopes. Whims would hinder one from the truth and unreachable hopes would make one forget the Hereafter. The life in this world is to be ended while the life in the Hereafter is ahead of you. Each life has its own children. Try to be of the children of the Hereafter if you can. Try not to be of the children of this world. Today you are alive, can do things and there is no reckoning. However, tomorrow you will die and will be in the World of Reckoning where you cannot do anything."⁴⁶

The mention of whims here refers to the case when lust and anger rebel in man. God the Sublime has granted the blessings of lust and anger upon man so that he may use them moderately. He should benefit from the power of lust to attract the benefits and he should benefit from the power of anger to ward off the detriments. However, he should not forget God completely as a result of following these two powers. He should not do whatever he pleases whether it be forbidden or allowed, whether it be a sin or it be an obedience as a result of the rebellion of these two powers within him.

Since these two powers may rebel, God the Sublime has granted the Intellect upon man to moderate them. The Intellect does not destroy these two powers, rather it just prevents them from rebelling. Once the Intellect obeys the holy religious laws, it distinguishes good deeds from bad deeds and ugly things from beautiful things. Thus it will moderate lust and anger and will struggle with these two powers if they rebel.

Thus, the rebellion of lust and anger are whims. Whims are those actions in which God is not considered and is absolutely forgotten. In these cases, whatever the heart wants is acted upon whether it be lawful or unlawful, whether it be a sin or not.

From amongst the commandments of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) is, "Perseverance is a protective covering and the Intellect is a sharp sword. Cover up your moral disorders with perseverance. And pacify and wipe out the rebellion of the Whims (Lust and Anger) with the Intellect."⁴⁷

We may also read the following in the Holy Quran,

"Then, for such as had transgressed all bounds, And had preferred the life of this world, The Abode will be Hell-Fire; And for such as had entertained the fear of standing before their Lord's (tribunal) and had restrained (their) soul from lower desires, Their abode will be the Garden." The Holy Quran: An-Naziat 79:37-41.

Unreachable hopes

In the afore-mentioned narration the Prophet (S) also stressed unreachable hopes and said, "What I am most afraid of for my nation is whims and unreachable hopes. Whims would hinder one from the truth and unreachable hopes would make one forget the Hereafter. The life in this world is to be ended while the life in the Hereafter is ahead of you. Each life has its own children. Try to be of the children of the Hereafter if you can. Try not to be of the children of this world. Today you are alive, can do things and there is no reckoning. However, tomorrow you will die and will be in the World of Reckoning where you cannot do anything."⁴⁸

Thus the Prophet (S) expressed his worries about his nation having unreachable hopes or lifelong aspirations in which case they will become extremely involved in worldly affairs, and they will get far away from the other world. One of the examples that show lifelong aspirations to be reproachable a story in which Sa'di narrates in Golestan as follows, "I knew a merchant who had a hundred and fifty camels of burden and forty bondsmen and servants in his caravan. One night he entertained me at his lodgings on the island of Kish, in the Persian Gulf, and continued for the whole night talking idly, and saying: "Such a store of goods I have in Turkestan, and such an assortment of merchandise in India; this is the mortgage-deed of a certain estate, and this is the security bond of a certain individual's concern."

Then he would say: "I have a mind to visit Alexandria, the air of which is salubrious; but that can not be, for the Mediterranean Sea is boisterous. O Sadi! I have one more journey in view, and, that once accomplished, I will pass my remaining life in retirement and leave off trade." I asked: "What journey is that?" He replied: "I will carry the sulphur of Persia to China, where, I have heard, it will fetch a high price; thence I will take China porcelain to Greece; the brocade of Greece or Venice I will carry to India; and Indian steel I will bring to Aleppo; the glassware of Aleppo I will take to Yemen; and with the bardimani, or striped stuffs, of Yemen I will return to Persia. After that I will give up foreign commerce

and settle myself in a warehouse."

He went on in this melancholy strain 'till he was quite exhausted with speaking. He said: "O Sadi! do you too relate what you have seen and heard." I replied: "Hast thou not heard that in the desert of Ghor as the body of a chief merchant fell exhausted from his camel, he said, 'Either contentment or the dust of the grave will fill the stingy eye of the worldly-minded.'"

The Noble Prophet (S) says in the continuation of his commandments, "...Whims would hinder one from the truth and unreachable hopes would make one forget the Hereafter. The life in this world is to be ended while the life in the Hereafter is ahead of you. Each life has its own children. Try to be of the children of the Hereafter if you can. Try not to be of the children of this world. Today you are alive, can do things and there is no reckoning. However, tomorrow you will die and will be in the World of Reckoning where you cannot do anything."⁴⁹

Therefore, each day we live in this world, we become farther away from this world and become closer to the Hereafter and the duration of our remaining life span – which is the greatest Divine Capital – decreases. Given the fact that the lost lifetime does not return back to us, we must make the most of it so that not even a single moment of it is spent without any benefits. Rather man must make as much use of his life as possible to gain much perfection and knowledge.

It has been reported that the Noble Prophet (S) said, "You should appreciate five things before five other things: Firstly, appreciate being young before you get old. Secondly, appreciate being healthy before becoming ill. Thirdly, appreciate being rich before becoming poor. Fourthly, appreciate being free before becoming too busy. Fifthly, appreciate being alive before you die."⁵⁰

Moreover, it has been reported that the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) said, "Time is passing like a cloud, thus make the most of the good chances."⁵¹ Sa'di said, "Since yesterday has gone and tomorrow has not come, take account of this one moment that now exists."

Discourse 6: On the praised world and the blamed world

Introduction

There is a narration on the authority of the Noble Prophet (S) which says, "World– loving is the main cause of committing all sins."⁵²

The world has been blamed in several narrations. And in some other narrations the blaming of the world has been admonished against. In other words, the world has been both praised and blamed. And in fact, there are two worlds: One is praised and the other is blamed.

Firstly, we must understand what the world is. And after that we must understand why the world is praised and why it is blamed.

The meaning of the world

The world has a meaning for itself and a meaning in relation to us. However, the meaning of the world for itself is that it is the earth, what grows on it, the sky and what is within it. Thus the world includes everything such as the trees, the fruits, rain, sunshine, the moon and stars, etc. If this is what the world is, then it is not bad. Not only should we not blame it, but rather all of the world consists of God's verses. This earth and what is on it, the sun, the moon, the stars, the weather, water and fruits, are all divine blessings. They are all God's verses and all point to having a single Creator.

Therefore, this world is neither unpleasant nor is it to be blamed. Rather it must be praised a lot. And for this very reason, it has been stated in the narrations that once someone blamed the world in the presence of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.). Then the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) said, "Were you proud of the world and then you blamed it?..."⁵³

أيها الزام الدنيا المغتر بغرورها المخدوع باباطيلها اتغتر بالدنيا ثم تذمها؟ إن
الدنيا دار صدق لمن صدقها ودار عافية لمن فهم عنها ودار غنى لمن تزود منها
ودار موعظة لمن إتعظ بها مسجد أحباء الله ومصلى ملائكة الله ومهبط وحي
الله ومتجر أولياء الله اكتسبوا فيها الرحمة ورجوا فيها الجنة فمن ذا يذمها فقد
أذنب بينها ونادت بفراقها

Now several questions come to mind regarding this narration as follows: When did the world make you proud? When did it deceive you!? How could the world deceive us since the world is full of moral lessons and advice for man. Did you become proud of this world because of seeing the passing away of your parents and other next of kin while all of these awaken man as we read in the continuation of the above, "Indeed, this world is the house of truthfulness and righteousness for the one who verifies it, and treats it with truthfulness and righteousness."⁵⁴

All the world is based on righteousness and justice. The whole world is based on order and discipline. The sun rises and sets at a certain time. Nothing ever goes wrong in the process of the rising and the setting of the sun – the night never comes instead of the day and vice-versa. This system remains forever and the same holds true for the four seasons, etc.

Finally, all of this world which we can see is based upon righteousness, justice, discipline, order, rules and laws. The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) goes on and says, "And it is the house of healthiness for the one who understands this and it is the house of prosperity for the one who wants to take provisions for the Hereafter from it." God the Sublime has provided all the means of servitude so that man is able to serve God in all his affairs and under all conditions.

Man can use everything as means for the Hereafter and have only God in mind when he does things. Even his sleeping and walking can be for God's sake. For example, he can sleep with the intention of getting vigorous for worshipping God. He can walk with the intention of gaining power for worship, and he can eat food so that he can worship God. Thus, man can use everything he possesses in the way of God, so that the provisions for the Hereafter are provided.

Then the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) added, "... The world is the place of advice for the one who accepts.

The world is the place for prostration and the servitude of God's worshippers and companions. It is also the place of worship and praying of God's angels. Revelation for the Prophets – including for the Seal of the Prophets Muhammad Mustafa (S) – descended in this very same world. The friends of God the Sublime did business in this very world. And they sold all they had to God and in return they bought the Eternal Heaven. It was in this world that God's friends provided God's Mercy and the Eternal Heaven for themselves. Who can blame this world? Meanwhile, this very world has announced that man is separated from it by dying and going to the Hereafter."⁵⁵

The world consists of lessons and tests

Thus all this world is just a lesson and a verse of God the Sublime. And God the Glorified has adorned this world so as to examine mankind as we read,

"That which is on earth we have made but as a glittering show for the earth, in order that We may test them – as to which of them are best in conduct." The Holy Quran: Al-Kahf 18:7.

In other words, it is so that it becomes clear who is attached only to this world and has forgotten God, and who is not attached to this world. We should know that we must not reproach this world because the world which is the place of examining people is nothing other than goodness, blessings and felicity.

Our benefit from this world

Our share of the world is the benefit we take from this world and we use it in our lifetime: water; air; the Earth; shelter (housing); children; spouses, etc are all the benefits we take from this world in our lifetime. Our benefitting from and using of this world is of two kinds. Sometimes what we gain from this world is used by us as a means for our Hereafter and our purpose in all our deeds is only God. And we set these deeds as the provisions for the Hereafter. In such cases, we worship God in all phases of life. This world of ours is to be praised.

The other possibility is that one uses this world as a means to commit sins. It means that if one uses all this world including the blessings that God the Sublime has granted us such as the eyes, the ears and the other parts of the body, the moon, the sun, the wife, the children, the wealth, the ambitiousness, the position, etc. as the means for committing sins, then this world is to be blamed.

Thus, the parise-worthy world and the blameworthy world are clarified by considering how the world is used by us. Therefore, we must try to take the most benefit from this lifetime, our health and what God has granted us in the way of gaining perfection and prosperity. We must make all of them the means for the Hereafter. And we must act in a way in all affairs and phases which is due to the decree of God the Glorified. And in any task we want to do, we must first consider God's Decree about that deed. A narration from the Noble Prophet (S) exists which says, "Man must provide provisions for himself, from this world for his Hereafter and from his youth for his old age. This world has been created for you, but you are created for the Hereafter."⁵⁶

Also the Quran states,

"And take a provision (with you) for the journey, but the best of provisions is right conduct. So fear Me, O ye that are wise." The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2: 197.

One must provide provisions from his youth for his old age. During one's youth one must get educated and worship God, so that he is not deprived of anything during his old age. This world has been created for our sake, but we have been created for the Hereafter. It is stated in the Quran,

"It is He Who hath created for you all things that are on earth..." The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2:29.

We have not been created for this world, but rather we have been created for the Hereafter. This world is only a preliminary phase before the Hereafter. In a Prophetic tradition it is stated, "O man! I have created everything for you, but you have been created for Me."⁵⁷

Of course, this does not mean that man's worship of God benefits God, but rather God means, "I have created you so that you become near to Me, and by becoming near to Me you attain the stage of perfection and benefit." This means that one must worship God so that he reaches the rank of being near to God.

Discourse 7: On supplications, gratitude, perseverance and asking for forgiveness

Introduction

Ja'far ibn Muhammad as-Sadiq (a.s.) stated, "Whoever is granted four things would not be deprived of four other things. Whoever is granted the opportunity to supplicate would not be disappointed of its being answered. Whoever is granted the opportunity to ask for God's forgiveness would not be disappointed of repentance. Whoever is granted the opportunity to be grateful would not be disappointed of an increase in his blessings. Whoever is granted the opportunity to persevere would not be disappointed of its reward."⁵⁸

قال الصادق عليهما السلام: من أعطى أربع لم يحرم أربعاً من أعطى الدعاء لم يحرم الإجابة ، ومن أعطى الإستغفار لم يحرم التوبة ، ومن أعطى الشكر لم يحرم الزيادة ، ومن أعطى الصبر لم يحرم الأجر 282

Making supplications to God and their benefits

As we read in the above narration, "... Whoever is granted the opportunity to supplicate would not be disappointed of its being answered..." Supplicating to God has been strongly emphasized in the Quran and narrations, for example, it states,

"And your Lord says: "Call on Me; I will answer your (Prayer): but those who are too arrogant to serve Me will surely find themselves in Hell - in humiliation!" The Holy Quran: The Believer, the Forgiver 40:60

It can be understood from this Noble verse that making supplications is a kind of worship. Man must make supplications to the Threshold of God the Sublime whenever he has a problem.

One of the recommendations made by the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) to his son Imam Hasan Mujtaba (a.s.) in his will is the following, "O My dear offspring! Know that God who controls all of the treasures of the sky and the Earth is that very same God who has given you permission to ask something from Him. And He Himself guarantees that it will be fulfilled."⁵⁹

When the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated that "He Himself guarantees that it will be fulfilled" refers to this Noble verse which states,

"When My servants ask thee concerning Me, I am indeed close (to them): I listen to the prayer of every suppliant when he calleth on Me: Let them also, with a will, Listen to My call, and believe in Me: That they may walk on the right way." The Holy Quran: Baqara 2: 186.

Then the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) added, "And God has decreed you to ask of Him your requests, so that He may grant them to you. And He has decreed to you to ask Him for kindness, so that He may be kind to you. And He has not placed a person who would be a cover and an obstacle between you and Himself (so that you may state your request to that intercessor and he relates it to God the Sublime)."⁶⁰

Man can turn his face towards the Threshold of God the Sublime without any intercessor – in all moments and hours and in public or private and ask of Him his requests. This is because God the Glorified is so close to an individual that He is nearer to him than any other person or intercessor, as He states,

"It was We Who created man, and We know what dark suggestions his soul makes to him: for We are nearer to him than (his) jugular vein." The Holy Quran: Qaf 50: 16.

It is for this very reason that the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated, "He is so close to you that you may directly ask your requests from Him. If you want to repent and turn back to Him, there will never be an obstacle before you." However, this issue of being able to directly turn to God is in no way in contradiction to the issue of intercession which is one of our religion's necessities. If your supplication is perfect, intercession will be done on your behalf. However, making supplications does not necessarily result in intercession. The intercession of the Prophet (S), and the Immaculate Imams (a.s.) is as follows.

An individual requests those Holy Lights who are close to God's Threshold to intercede for him. Meanwhile he himself states his request to God and tries to use those individual's intercession, so that his supplications may become complete and be fulfilled sooner. This is because God has given the Prophet (S) and the Imams (a.s.) permission to intercede as He states in the Quranic verse, "Allah. There is no god but He,—the Living, the Self-Subsisting, Eternal. No slumber can seize Him nor sleep. His are all things in the heavens and on earth. Who is there can intercede in His Presence except as He permitteth? He knoweth what (appeareth to His creatures as) before or after or behind them. Nor shall they compass aught of His knowledge except as He willeth. His Throne doth extend over the heavens and the earth, and He feeleth no fatigue in guarding and preserving them for He is the Most High, the Supreme (in glory)."

Also we read in the pilgrimage supplication entitled Jame'a, "O God! Could I have ever found ones to intercede near Thee on my behalf who would be closer to Thee than Muhammad and the Members of his Household – the leaders of the Company of Good – the pious ones?"⁶¹

اللهم إني لو وجدت شفعاء أقرب من محمد وأهل بيته الأطهار الأئمة الأبرار
لجعلتهم شفعاي

Thus, the same God who has not placed a shield between himself and his servant – so that his servant's requests may be answered sooner – has given the permission of intercession to those Holy Lights – the Prophet's Household (a.s.). Of course, there are a lot of questions to be asked about supplications and their conditions. Here we just refer to the sentence which has come in a Prophetic tradition, "Making supplications is your job, however, fulfilling them is My job."⁶² Also Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) stated in the previously mentioned narration, "...Whoever is granted the opportunity to supplicate would not be disappointed of its being answered..."⁶³ We also read in another narration that the Prophet (S) said, "The origin and the truth of servitude is supplication and making it to the needless Divine Threshold. Nobody who makes supplications gets ruined."⁶⁴

In another narration we read that Imam Ridha (a.s.) said, "Saying supplications is the weapon of the Prophets (a.s.)."⁶⁵ And yet in another narration we read that the Prophet (S) said, "Sayings supplications is the weapon of the believer."⁶⁶ Some may ask why we should make all these supplications, although many of them are not fulfilled?

Some may ask why many of our supplications are not answered. It can be stated in answer to this question: "The reason why some of the supplications are not fulfilled is that the Wise God does not deem it proper to fulfill those supplications. However, God's servant who makes these supplication does not know that the thing he wants from God may harm him. And for this very reason God does not fulfill his supplications. For example, a child may ask his parents for a needle, a scissor or other similar objects, but they know that he would injure himself with these things.

Thus, the kind parents would not fulfill his requests and in return they may give him things better than these.

There is another narration in which we read, "If God does not deem it proper to grant something to his servant, God will grant him something better in return in this world and the Hereafter."⁶⁷

Success for repentance

We read in the afore-mentioned narration by Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.), "...Whoever is granted the opportunity to ask for God's forgiveness would not be disappointed of repentance..."

ومن أعطى الإستغفار لم يحرم التوبة

God the Sublime said,

"But, without doubt, I am (also) He that forgives again and again, to those who repent, believe, and do right, who, in fine, are ready to receive true guidance." The Holy Quran: Ta-Ha 20:82.

If man thinks carefully, he will understand that all of the sins which he commits, in fact are rooted in the spiritual ailments and diseases which he suffers from. Man suffers from spiritual ailments just as he may suffer from physical illnesses. The sins which he commits are the results of his spiritual illness. A healthy soul demands good morality, and an ill and distressed soul demands bad morality and committing bad deeds. It has been narrated in a narration from the Prophet of Islam Muhammad Ibn Abdullah (S) who stated, "Should I not inform you about your ailments and their cures?"

They stated, "O God's Prophet! Surely say them." Then the Noble Prophet (S) stated, "Your ailments are your sins and their cure is repentance."⁶⁸ This narration is similar to the narration in which Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (a.s.) stated to a man, "You are your own doctor and your illnesses and cures exist in yourself.

You know how to be healthy. And you have been shown the cures. Thus, look at how you treat your own soul."⁶⁹ Thus, this agrees with "Your ailments are your sins and their cure is repentance."⁷⁰ This means that man must be his own doctor and by means of the intellect and the religious laws he can completely protect himself against spiritual illnesses and cure the ailments which he suffers from. On the whole God has shown the way to man as we read in the Holy Quran,

"We showed him the Way: whether he be grateful or ungrateful (rests on his will)." The Holy Quran: Insan 76:3.

God has clearly stated what bad deeds are so that we can avoid them and He has stated what the good deeds are so that we may do them. Now this is man who can commit a sin or can obey and worship God.

Thus man's insight is in his own existence and in the same way which he knows his ailment, he can also cure his spiritual diseases by using the intellect and the religious laws. Thus man will be held responsible if he does not cure them. Thus, you are your own doctor so treat your ailments with the medicine which is in your own existence.

Success for gratitude

In the narration stated in the beginning of this discourse, we read that Ja'far ibn Muhammad as-Sadiq (a.s.) stated, "...Whoever is granted the opportunity to be grateful would not be disappointed of an increase in his blessings..."⁷¹

ومن أعطى الشكر لم يحرم الزيادة 296

"And remember! your Lord caused to be declared (publicly): 'If ye are grateful, I will add more (favours) unto you; But if ye show ingratitude, truly My punishment is terrible indeed.'"The Holy Quran: Ibrahim 14:7

In another verse it is stated,

"If ye reject Allah, Truly Allah hath no need of you; but He liketh not ingratitude from His servants: if ye are grateful, He is pleased with you..." The Holy Quran: Az-Zumar 39:7.

Thus, being thankful for blessings is necessary and it is in two forms:

1- Thanking the Nourisher of the World.

2-Being thankful for the goodness which the people do for us.

It must be known that being thankful for God's blessings is based upon four things. If those exist, then being thankful has been done.

1– After man has come to know God he should realize that blessings are from God.

2– Man should be content with the blessings of God

3– Man should be grateful both verbally and wholeheartedly.

Being wholeheartedly grateful implies that man should be a true servant of God. Being grateful verbally is done by saying: Praise be to the Lord of the Two Worlds. This implies that both praise and glorifications are from God – the Nourisher of the Two Worlds.

4– Man should spend the blessing where it should be spent and of course, this matter needs a lot of knowledge and it is not possible for one to do so except by using Divine Guidance.

It is not possible to acknowledge all of God's blessings as we read,

"But if ye count the favors of Allah, never will ye be able to number them..." The Holy Quran: Ibrahim 14:34.

On the other hand, using the blessings properly requires one to know jurisprudence, since man's intellect alone does not dominate over all the benefits and the corruptions of the affairs. Thus, it can not state the correct ways of using the blessings.

These were the basics of being grateful. If all these things are done, then man has acted upon the duty of being grateful. However, finally man is unable to reach the rank of being grateful for these countless Divine Blessings. Thus the only thing which he can do is to thank God and say, "O Nourisher! I am unable to be thankful for even one of Your Blessings, lest to be thankful for all of them."

Of course, one must note that the greatest of the blessings is the blessing of the Noble Prophet Muhammad (S). The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) also says after the recommendations he made about the world's condition in the Age of the appointment of Muhammad to Prophethood, "O worshippers of God! Take lessons from your previous conditions and think about your parents' conditions in the Age of Ignorance and before the Prophet came. Think what acts they were involved in. And think about their conditions after the Prophet Muhammad (S) came."⁷²

Although, this was addressed to the people of that time, these recommendations are for all the people up until the Judgement Day. Thus man must be fair and thank this great blessing and appreciate the greatest blessing which is the Prophet Muhammad (S), although God cannot be thanked for even this blessing. Also the Noble Qur'an describes this unique Divine Blessing as a great favor and states,

"Allah did confer a great favor on the believers when He sent among them an apostle from among

themselves... ' The Holy Quran: Al-Imran 3: 164.

Likewise, we cannot really get to know the Prophet (S) just as we cannot be grateful enough for him as we read, "Do not use your powers of thought in recognizing the truth of the Noble Prophet (S), because His Holy Existence is a truth which you can not truly recognize."⁷³

We should also try to be thankful for the goodness which the people do for us, since it has been stated in a narration that if one does not thank the people he has not indeed thanked God. There is a narration on the authority of Imam Al-Ridha in which we read, "Whoever does not thank the blessings from the creatures has indeed not thanked the Honorable God the Exalted."⁷⁴

Success for perseverance

Ja'far ibn Muhammad as-Sadiq (a.s.) stated, "... Whoever is granted the opportunity to persevere would not be disappointed of its reward."⁷⁵

ومن أعطى الصبر لم يحرم الأجر³⁰¹

Perseverance is the struggling of the soul under the order of the intellect and using the religious laws. Perseverance is of several kinds and includes patience against committing sins; patience against love for the world (abstinence); patience at the time of anger; and patience at the time of waging a Holy war (bravery). Many people believe that many of the virtues and perfection are rooted in perseverance as many others are rooted in gratitude. Also it has been quoted in a narration from the Noble Prophet (S) who stated, "There are two halves of faith: one half is perseverance and the other half is gratitude."⁷⁶

There is another narration on the authority of Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) who stated, "Whoever is granted three things would not be deprived of three things. Whoever is granted 'the chance to call upon God' is also granted 'an answer to his prayers'. Whoever is granted 'being grateful is also granted 'an increase in favors'. Whoever is granted 'reliance' is also granted 'sufficiency'"⁷⁷

What is especially stressed in this narration is about reliance on God as we read, "Whoever is granted 'reliance' is also granted 'sufficiency.'"⁷⁸

This same concept is stated in the following Noble verse of the Holy Quran,

"...And if anyone puts his trust in Allah, sufficient is Allah for him..." The Holy Quran: At-Talaq 65:3.

There is also a narration on the authority of Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) who stated, "Trusting God and entrusting the businesses to God is the cost for many valuable things and is the ladder to progress and

prosperity."⁷⁹ Thus, we must rely on God in all our affairs and we must trust God. However, this does not mean that we should abandon the apparent means of reaching our goal since they are the natural means which God has determined for us to reach our goals. We must go through the proper means, but rely on God to succeed. For example, businessmen must engage in business and put their trust in God. Or students of religious sciences should try their best to study and discuss all of their lessons with certainty while trusting in God to help them acquire true knowledge which is the ever greatest imagined forms of perfection for man.

Discourse 8: On the Servitude of God

Introduction

Abi Abdullah as-Sadiq (a.s.) stated, "The Honorable God the Exalted revealed to Adam (a.s.), the father of all men, that He would summarize all knowledge and wisdom for him in four sayings. Adam (a.s.) asked, 'O Lord! What are they?' God stated, 'One of them is for Me; one is for you; one is about Me and you and one is about you and the people.' Adam (a.s.) stated, 'O my Lord! Please tell them to me so that I may learn them.' God stated, 'The one that is for Me is that you should worship Me and not ascribe any partners for Me. The one which is for you is that I will give the recompense of your work to you when you are very needy for it. The one which is about you and Me is that you should supplicate to Me and I will answer. The one that is about you and the people is that you should accept for yourself whatever you accept for the people.'"⁸⁰

عن أبي عبد الله عليه السلام قال: أوحى الله عز وجل إلى آدم عليه السلام أنني سأجمع لك الكلام في أربع كلمات ، قال: يا رب ومن هن؟ واحدة لي ، وواحدة لك ، وواحدة فيما بيني وبينك ، وواحدة فيما بينك وبين الناس ، فقال: يا رب بينهن لي حتى أعلممهن ، فقال: أما التي لي فتعبدني ولا تشرك بي شيئاً ، وأما التي لك فأجزيك بعملك أحوج ما تكون إليه وأما التي بيني وبينك فعليك الدعاء وعلي الإجابة ، وأما التي بينك وبين الناس فترضى الناس ما ترضاه لنفسك

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We must stress the major point in the above as, "The one that is for Me is that you should worship Me and not ascribe any partners for Me..."⁸¹

We must know that the aim of man's creation is that he should worship God, and man has been born to recognize and serve God. God says the following,

"Not an apostle did We send before thee without this inspiration sent by Us to him: that there is

no god but I; therefore worship and serve Me." The Holy Quran: Al-Anbiya 21:25.

He also says,

"And they have been commanded no more than this: To worship Allah, offering Him sincere devotion, being true (in faith)... " The Holy Quran: Al-Baiyinah 98:5.

God also states,

"O ye people! Adore your Guardian-Lord, who created you and those who came before you, that ye may have the chance to learn righteousness;" The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2:21.

The issue of servitude is of utmost importance. This is to such an extent that in the prayer's profession (tashahud) of monotheism and the Prophethood of the Noble Prophet Muhammad (S), firstly he must bear witness to the fact that there is no god but God (monotheism). Then he must bear witness that the Prophet (S) is a servant of God. After these two testimonies are given, we bear witness to the mission of the Prophet Muhammad (S) and say, "Ashadu an la illaha ilallah vahdahu la sharika lah va ashahu ana Muhammadan abduhu va rasuleh"⁸²

And it is clear that here the issue of serving God has been stated before the issue of the Prophet's mission. Or in another verse God states about Noah (a.s.),

"...the People of Noah rejected (their apostle): they rejected Our servant, and stated, 'Here is one possessed!'; and he was driven out." The Holy Quran: Al-Qamar 54:9.

We should note that referring to Noah (a.s.) as His servant in this verse is a form of honoring Noah's (a.s.) rank. God states this same description in relation to Abraham (a.s.) and his offspring,

"And commemorate Our Servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, possessors of Power and Vision" The Holy Quran: Suad 38:45.

and praises them for being God's servants.

God refers to Jacob (a.s.) and Solomon (a.s.) in a similar fashion as we read,

"...How excellent in Our service! ever did he turn (to Us)!" The Holy Quran: Suad 38:44.

And God states the following regarding the Divine Leaders (a.s.),

"And We made them leaders, guiding (men) by Our Command, and We sent them inspiration to do good deeds, to establish regular prayers, and to practise regular charity; and they constantly served Us (and Us only)." The Holy Quran: Al-Anbiya 21:73.

It is stressed that the important characteristic of the Divine Leaders who are appointed by God the

Exalted, is their pure servitude of God.

In another verse God says the following about monotheists,

"And the servants of Allah Most Gracious are those who walk on the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them, they say, 'Peace!' " The Holy Quran: Al-Furqan 25:63.

And He states in relation to the Dear Prophet (S),

"Glory to Allah Who did take His servant for a Journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the farthest Mosque..." The Holy Quran: Al-Isra 17:1.

And again He states,

"Is not Allah enough for his Servant?..." The Holy Quran: Az-Zumar 39:36.

where God's servitude is stressed again. Thus, we see that everywhere the issue of servitude is set ahead of all other issues.

Therefore, the issue of God's servitude is very important. Also the aim for the creation of this world is that the people worship God the Exalted after recognizing Him which is expressed in the following Quranic verse,

"I have only created Genies and men, that they may serve Me." The Holy Quran: Az-Zariyat 51:56.

The more man worships and serves God, the more noble and virtuous he is.

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated the following in his supplications to God, "O My Nourisher! It is enough of an honor for me to be Your servant! It is enough of an honor for me that You be my Lord! You are that same God whom I want. Please let me be the way that you want me to be."⁸³

Now that it has become evident that man has been created to serve God, he needs knowledge of the religion in order to realize how to perform this servitude properly. The knowledge of religious jurisprudence will teach him how to serve God in all deeds, how to pray, how to enjoin others to do good deeds and all other religious precepts from cleanliness to expiations. All these are issues which clarify how man should serve God.

And of course in all of these matters, if man's intention is for God, his deeds become acts of worship. Even if one's intention in doing deeds which are neither recommended nor prohibited is serving God the Exalted, these deeds will also be considered God's worship. If one sleeps or eats with the intention to gain ability to worship, these deeds will be considered to be worship.

He states in the continuation of the above narration, "... The one which is for you is that I will give the recompense of your work to you when you are very needy for it..."⁸⁴ This is so because man's deeds –

whether good or bad – do not get lost. There are many Quranic verses related to this.

From amongst the words of Loqman (a.s.) to his son which God has stated are as follows,

" 'O my son!' (stated Loqman), 'If there be (but) the weight of a mustard-seed and it were (hidden) in a rock, or (anywhere) in the heavens or on earth, Allah will bring it forth: for Allah understands the finest mysteries, (and) is well-acquainted (with them).'" The Holy Quran: Luqman 31: 16.

He states in another place,

"... They will find all that they did, placed before them..." The Holy Quran: Al-Kahf 18:49.

And He states,

"But it will be no more than the retribution of (the Evil) that ye have wrought;" The Holy Quran: As-Saffat 37:39.

Moreover, the Noble Prophet (S) has also stressed this point and said, "Indeed your deeds shall return to you."⁸⁵ The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) has also said the following in this respect, "These days are like the pages of a notebook in which your deeds are written. Thus write good deeds in this notebook so that they stay with you eternally and you benefit from them."⁸⁶

The narration goes on by saying, "...The one which is between you and Me is that you should supplicate to Me and I will answer. The one that is between you and the people is that you should accept for yourself whatever you accept for others."⁸⁷

In the same way that you seek health, wealth, comfort and convenience for yourself; you should also want those things for your religious brothers. You should want for the people whatever satisfies you and makes you happy. You have attained fairness if you do so. If man reaches a state of real justice by worshipping God then all his actions will become Divine.

In a Prophetic narration it is stated, "My servant gets close to me by worshipping Me and he becomes closer to Me by doing the recommended deeds to such an extent that I become his eyes, ears and hands."⁸⁸

إنه ليتقرب إلى بالنافلة حتى أحبه ، فإذا أحببته كنت سمعه الذي يسمع به
وبصره الذي يبصر به ، ولسانه الذي ينطق به ، ويده التي يبطش بها³¹⁷

The eyes, the ears and the hands of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) are similar to God's eyes, ears and hands. The Immaculate Imams really worshipped God and that is why they have attained such high ranks.

Discourse 9: On the nobility of the fitr festival and the virtues of piety

Introduction

We read the following in the hand-suplications of the Fitr and Azha Festivals, "I ask Thee by this day which You have established as a holiday for the Muslims, and by Muhammad – may God's Blessings be upon him and his household..."⁸⁹ The Fitr Festival has such nobility that we swear by this Festival and request our needs (from God) by the means of the nobility of that Festival. It is one of the greatest Muslim Festivals.

The reason why the Fitr Festival is so noble is that the Blessed month of Ramazan is the month which has the most Divine Favors and Benefits. This is so since God the Exalted has made fasting obligatory for His own servants during the month of Ramazan. Thereby, they have actually carried out the Major Holy War and have attained perfect benefits and favors by worshipping God and avoiding committing sins.

The Prophet (S) stated, "O people! The gates of Paradise are open in this month. Then ask your Lord not to close them on you. And the gates of the Fire are closed. Then ask your Lord not to open them up to you.

Satan is chained down. Then ask your Lord not to let him overcome you."⁹⁰

أيها الناس إن أبواب الجنان في هذا الشهر مفتحة فأسألوا ربكم أن لا يغلقها
عليكم وأبواب النيران مغلقة فأسألوا ربكم أن لا يفتحها عليكم والشياطين
مغلولة 320

For this very reason, this month has especial nobility. The Noble Prophet (S) has also stated in a noble sermon entitled Sha'baniyyih, "O People! Indeed the doors of Paradise are opened in this month. Then ask your Lord not to close them on you. The doors of Hell are also closed in this month. Ask your Lord not to open them to you during this month and that you do not be overcome by Satan."⁹¹

Of course, the doors of Heaven are opened and the doors of Hell are closed as a result of man's deeds, his obedience (of God) and his worshipping God. The Satans are in chains as a result of this struggle with the soul. However, the satans are let free for those who commit sins.

However, whatever is in the Hereafter must be obtained from what is in this world as we read, "This world is like a farm (preparing one) for the Hereafter."⁹²

What becomes Heavenly saplings and fruits are the following words of God's Praise and Glorification: Subhanallah (Glory be to God); Al- Hamdulillah (Thanks God); La Ilaha Ilallah (There is no god but God; and Allahu Akbar (God is Great). These praises (of God) will turn into those heavenly fruits and saplings. When man says these praises truthfully and wholeheartedly, they turn into heavenly saplings and fruits in the Hereafter.

In the blessed month of Ramazan man is busy fighting with Satan and struggling with the soul which orders him to do bad deeds. Man is also trying to obey and serve God in this holy month. And when he gets through with this great trial, it is time to celebrate, since he has done his duty and has worshipped God. Thus, we state in the hand-prayer of the festival prayer, "O God! We ask you to send blessings and greetings upon the Immaculate soul of the Noble Prophet (S) and his household. Then make me obey them regarding doing good deeds and avoiding evil deeds."

The relationship of fasting and piety

Fasting leads man to piety as we read,

"O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may (learn) self-restraint,—" The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2: 183.

Fasting is a preliminary step so that piety appears in all times of man's life and affairs.

Many Quranic verses have been stated in the Noble Quran about piety. Piety has also been strongly emphasized in the recommendations of the Immaculate Imams (a.s.). Especially in the recommendations of Ali (a.s.) in Nahjul Balaqah we see many instances of "I advise you about piety and fear of God."

The attributes of a Shiite

In a narration that has been quoted on the authority of Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (a.s.) we read, "Is being called a Shiite enough for the people? I promise to God that we do not intercede on behalf of anyone, show kindness or take as companion anyone except for the pious ones – those who obey God."⁹³

The pious people cannot be recognized except by their attributes, one of them being humble before God the Exalted, "God will give a high rank to the one who is humble. God will make base the one who is too haughty."⁹⁴

One of the most apparent attributes of a Shiite is humbleness which is attained by remembering God a

lot both in mind and words. Other attributes are:

1– Remembering the Immaculateness and Greatness of God and saying 'Glory be to God (Subhan–Allah).'

2– Paying attention to God's Greatness and saying 'God is Great (Allahu Akbar).'

3– Recognizing the Majesty of God and saying 'There is no god but God (La Illaha Illalaho).'

4– Being thankful for God's blessings and saying 'Thanks be to God (Al–Hamdulillah).'

If all of these are uttered during prayer, the result would be humbleness before God the Exalted. Other signs of being a Shiite are saying one's prayers, fasting and doing good to one's parents. Another sign of one being a good Shiite is honesty. This involves honesty in one's beliefs, one's intentions and words, and in one's actions. A Shiite must be honest with God and the people. He must be trustworthy with the worst people and the best people, and not gossip about others, except for expressing their goodness. A Shiite must not reveal the deficiencies of anyone nor must he bother people with his bad words. This is so since the one who is trustworthy amongst the people is never disloyal to them in financial and non–financial affairs.

Discourse 10: Purification of the soul and salvation of the Pure Ones

Introduction

There are several instances in the Holy Quran where we run into God swearing by some important issue such as,

"By the Sun and his (glorious) splendour;" The Holy Quran: Ash–Shams 91: 1.

In the Holy Quran God the Sublime swears by important issues which He Expresses. God swears by those issues when he is addressing someone who denies something. Since the atheist people in the Quraysh tribe and the other Arab idolators denied God's many verses, God the Glorified swears by the important issues when He wants to express them. For example, after the beginning phrase

"In The Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful"

we read the following in the Quran,

"By the Sun and his (glorious) splendour; By the Moon as she follows him; " The Holy Quran: Ash–Shams 91: 1–2.

The real meaning of the sun and the moon in the above verse

What can be read from the above verse only indicates an apparent meaning of it. However, the actual meaning of the sun is the Seal of the Prophets Muhammad Ibn Abdullah (S) and the actual meaning of the moon is the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.). Here the Noble Prophet (S) has been compared to the sun because before his appointment to the Prophethood, unbelief, ignorance, moral corruption, plotting and fighting were widespread all over the world. When Muhammad's (S) light of truthfulness arose from the East in the Great Mecca, all of this darkness and oppression disappeared. The world was lit up with the light of worshipping God, honesty and pleasing attributes.

The reason why the Commander of the Faithful Ali has been compared to the moon is that just as the moon seeks the rising of the sun, Ali (a.s.) is the unseparable Caliph or Successor of the Prophet (S). Ali (a.s.) is the protector of Islamic Laws after the Prophet (S). Just as the moon gets light from the sun, the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) got light, knowledge, and wisdom from the Seal of the Prophets – Prophet Muhammad (S). The Noble Prophet (S) stated about Ali (a.s.), "I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its portal."⁹⁵

Then God swears by the day, the night, the sky and the Earth because the day and night are the Greatest Divine verses and the sky and the Earth are full of the strange verses of God. In another part of the Holy Quran we read,

"By the Day as it shows up (the Sun's) glory; By the Night as it conceals it; By the Firmament and its (wonderful) structure; By the Earth and its (wide) expanse:" The Holy Quran: Ash-Shams 91:3-6.

After that He swears to man's speaking soul and states,

"By the Soul, and the proportion and order given to it;" The Holy Quran: Ash-Shams 91:7.

The Speaking Soul is the orderer which gives order to man's body and the humanhood of man is related to its existence. "A sword is called so because of its attribute of cutting existence with it, otherwise it is nothing more than a piece of iron." Also a man is called so because of his Speaking Soul existing within him. Otherwise, if the soul does not exist, this body is nothing more than a form. Thus, the thing which exists is the soul and man's truth is that same soul and it is this same manhood's truth which makes man more noble than all of the other creatures. For the same reason, he is comprehensive and includes all the various aspects.

Man is a very complicated creature. On the one hand, he possesses animal characteristics such as lust and anger. At times he may even be worse than the most voracious animals. On the other hand, he possesses angelic characteristics. Should he obey the intellect he becomes superior than the angels. It is for this comprehensive nature that he can attain a rank even higher than the angels and become God's vicegerent (Caliph).

Of course, this rank of being God's Caliph is specifically for the Prophets (a.s.) and the Immaculate Divine Leaders (Imams). They are the real representatives of the Wise God. However, any individual can become God's Caliph to the extent of his suitability to attain such divine attributes within himself. This implies that other people can also become the manifestation of God's attributes. The attributes of God the Sublime would appear in them to the extent of their capacity and trustworthiness. Thus, people other than the Prophets and the Divine Leaders (a.s.) can become the manifestation of God's attributes to an extent and become God's Caliph.

Thus, all of the attributes are included in man and he has a high rank. He is the master of all the creatures since he can be like a mirror and reflection of God's attributes and become more superior than all the angels.

The seventh oath which God the Sublime makes in this Blessed Chapter is that He swears by the soul and the proportion and the order given to it – that same Truth which rules over the body and all the limbs obey its orders. God states,

"By the Soul, and the proportion and order given to it;" The Holy Quran: Ash-Shams 91:7.

This means that God has given order to the soul and created man in the best form as we read in, "Man's form is God's most evident proof for all the creatures."⁹⁶ Moreover, God has given a balance to all of man's parts and organs. He has created them in the right size and in the right place.

To summarize, it is noteworthy to say that man is basically composed of both the body and the soul. God the Sublime has connected the soul from the Celestial World to the body which is from the Earthly World. Man's nobility and virtue is also by means of the soul. It is not by means of the body since the body is mortal and transient. When man dies, his body gets buried and deteriorated until the time comes when the soul is blown back into it and he is revived again. The soul, however, does not get deteriorated and is everlasting.

In the same way that man's body becomes healthy and sick, his soul becomes healthy and sick. The blessing of the body's health is one of the greatest Divine blessings and man must always take care of his health. Also in the Islamic Laws the body's health has been stressed a lot. For example, consider the following narration on the authority of the Holy Prophet (S), "Two blessings are taken for granted⁹⁷: security and health."⁹⁸ When man becomes ill and his body is not in a state of moderation, he gets well by referring to a physician and using drugs. Likewise a man's soul may get ill.

The health and illness of the soul

One's soul is healthy so long as he obeys God and attains such good attributes like honesty, truthfulness, kindness, humbleness, etc. However, the state of the soul's illness comes when he disobeys God, commits sins and acquires such attributes as world-loving, self-admiration, haughtiness, jealousy, stinginess, enmity and other unpleasant moral traits.

There are doctors to refer to when our souls get ill just as there are doctors to refer to for the diseases of the body. The first of these doctors is the Holy Essence of God. Then the next ones are the Prophets (a.s.) and the Divine Leaders (a.s.) who cure the illnesses in a person's soul with God's permission. The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) states the following about the Noble Prophet (S), "He is a doctor who wanders amongst the people with his medicine, prepares and strengthens his ointments and has heated his instruments to heal the wounds."⁹⁹

Thus, the Prophets (a.s.) and the Divine Leaders (a.s.) – especially Muhammad, the Seal of the Prophets (a.s.) and the Immaculate Divine Leaders (a.s.) after him are the real doctors of the soul who diagnose the soul's diseases and prescribe the procedure for treatment.

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) who is one of the greatest doctors of the soul states, "Beware that poverty is one of the worst calamities. Physical illness is even worse than poverty. Yet even illness of the heart (i.e. soul) is even worse."¹⁰⁰

The illness of the soul is of such an importance that man must plan to cure it immediately. If the illness of the soul is not treated, it will cause everlasting destruction. Therefore, the illness of the soul is even worse than the illness of the body. Although health is better than wealth, piety is even better than health.

Piety implies protecting one's soul from doubt in beliefs and preserving the soul from unpleasant moral attributes. Once man keeps himself purified from sins and attends to God's worship, he will become a pious person.

The superiority of the blessing of piety to the blessing of health

We read the following in the Holy Quran,

"... And for those who fear Allah, He (ever) prepares a way out, And He provides for him from (sources) he never could imagine..." The Holy Quran: At-Talaq 65:2-3.

Moreover, piety has been recommended as the most important human attribute. In this regard the Holy Quran states,

"... Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)." The Holy Quran: Al-Hujurat 49: 13.

After swearing to the soul and all proportion and order given to it the Quran says,

"And its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right;"
The Holy Quran: Ash-Shams 91:8.

This means that God has inspired goodness and badness to the soul and by means of nature He has shown the way to each one as He states,

"We showed him the Way: whether he be grateful or ungrateful (rests on his will)." The Holy Quran: Al-Insan 76:3.

So far we have discussed the instances of swearing by God. The final conclusion of these instances of swearing by God is in the following, where God states,

"Truly he succeeds that purifies it," The Holy Quran: Ash-Shams 91:9.

God wants His servants to be pure and clean. The meaning of the Arabic word Zakkaha used in the verse is cleaning and purifying oneself. It includes both apparent cleanliness and inward cleanliness. Apparent cleanliness is the physical cleaning which is good and highly encouraged in Islam as we read in the following narrations: "Cleanliness is due to faith"¹⁰¹; "Purity is half of faith"¹⁰²; "Islam is founded upon cleanliness"¹⁰³; "Cleanliness is a part of the ethics of the Prophets"¹⁰⁴ and "Be clean since Islam is cleanliness."¹⁰⁵

This means that Islam has invited us to be clean and pure to such an extent as if Islam itself is just being clean. This means that cleanliness is such an integral part of Islam that it is equal to Islam.

The first stage of cleanliness is physical cleanliness. Any Muslim person should clean his body, his room, his house, and everything that belongs to him. Inner cleanliness is true purity for which physical cleanliness is only a prelude. We read the following in the Holy Quran,

"... For Allah loves those who turn to Him constantly and He loves those who keep themselves pure and clean." The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2:222.

This form of inner purity is a higher rank of cleanliness. In this state man's limbs are free of committing sins or doing what God has admonished against doing.

The third rank of purity is the purity of man's soul from ignorance by enlightening it with knowledge and wisdom. In this state man's soul is cleansed of atheism, deviations, bad attributes and behaviour. Man should fend off all bad attributes from himself and acquire good attributes such as honesty, truthfulness, humbleness, reliance on God, submission to God, etc. The most important of these characteristics is honesty and truthfulness.

The fourth rank of cleanliness is for man to completely purify his soul from everything other than God. He should only have the love of God in his heart and not have any love for anything or anyone else. He should only attend to God and not attend to anyone else. However, saying that one should only love God does not mean that he should not love the Prophet (S) or the Holy Household of the Prophet (S) since they are also associated with God. The basis of love for the Prophet (S) is the love for God. We love them since God has ordered us to do so. One of the greatest nicknames of the Prophet Muhammad (S) is Habibullah which means loved by God. Love for the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) is also due to God's Love as we read, "The love for Ali equals faith, and despising him equals atheism."¹⁰⁶

The same holds true for the love for the Divine Leaders (a.s.) as we read in the following narration, "Whoever loves you indeed loves God, and whoever despises you indeed despises God."¹⁰⁷ The same holds true for the love for Imam al-Husayn (a.s.) as we read, "There is a deep love for Al-Husayn (a.s.) in the hearts of the believers."¹⁰⁸ Therefore, loving these holy persons is the same as loving God. It is not at all in contradiction with loving God. Following them also equals following God the Exalted.

In the next verse of the same chapter we read,

"And he fails that corrupts it!" The Holy Quran: Ash-Shmas 91: 10.

which refers to polluting the soul. The word used for corrupt in this verse in Arabic is *Dassaha* which means polluting and secretly mixing something in another thing. An example is when people add water to milk to dilute it and it becomes hard to tell. This is the opposite of purifying and implies acquiring bad moral attributes. That is why in the above-mentioned verse God has said that whoever corrupts his soul fails.

Thus, our prosperity and perfection depends on how we train and educate our soul and how we tame ourselves by acquiring good attributes so that our soul and heart become the place for the manifestation of Divine Lights. Then God the Exalted may bless us. This means that our heart will then only have room for God's Love and it will not have any room for any other kinds of love for temporary things.

The Late Sheikh Baha-o-ddin Ameli has narrated the following poems on the authority of the late Sheikh Abulfath Bosti who says, "Greediness and wanting more of this world is a loss. What man gains from anything other than good deeds is a true loss. Whatever man gains from nature which is temporary is true loss and poverty. O you who try to build up this ruined world! I swear you by God! If the days of your life run up, is it possible to build them again? O you who are greedy in collecting worldly wealth! Have you forgotten that the happiness that comes from this worldly wealth is followed with bitter sadness? O you who are the servant of your body! Do you seek the very thing in which there is nothing but loss? Direct all your attention towards your own soul. Try to acquire virtues and moral perfection. Try to ornament your soul with all these admired attributes since you are considered to be human because of your soul not because of your body. Prevent your heart from attachment to this world and its ornaments. The feasting, drinking and pleasure that remains from this world leave nothing but trouble. Reaching what you desire in this world is coupled with loss and separation. Open your ears to the advice which I gave you since I have ordered them just as they order pearls and corals. Be kind to all the people so that you conquer their hearts. There have been many free people who became slaves of others for their kind treatment. Try to help those who need you since this is a character of freedom lovers." And another poet says, "The sword is a sword because of its sharpness. A human is a human because of his soul (spirit) not for his body."

Finally, all human values and nobilities arise from the soul and one must strengthen his soul by worshipping God so that he may attain a high rank – even higher than that of the angels.

Discourse 11: On the six states of the body and the spirit

Introduction

The Commander of the Faithful Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) has stated, "There are six states for the body: health, ailment, life, death, sleep and being awake. The same six states hold true for the spirit. However, knowledge is life for the spirit, and ignorance is death for the spirit. Doubt is ailment for the spirit. Certitude is health for the spirit. Neglect is sleep for the spirit."¹⁰⁹

There are six states which exist for the body and the soul, too. Man is a compound of body and soul. But the body is from the flesh world which is mortal and ephemeral since when man dies, his limbs fall apart from each other until again the soul is put back into it with God's permission. And the soul comes by the command of the Lord as God the Exalted states,

"They ask thee concerning the Spirit (of inspiration). Say: 'The Spirit (cometh) by command of my Lord: of knowledge it is only a little that is communicated to you, (O men!)" The Holy Quran: Al-Isra 17:85.

The command of God mentioned here is that which God states in this holy verse,

"Verily, when He intends a thing, His Command is, 'be', and it is!" The Holy Quran: Ya-Sin 36:82.

Therefore, the soul is from the Celestial world and comes from the command of God, but the body is from the Flesh world which is the ephemeral world. Both are from God and both are created by God's command. It is this very compound of body and soul which results in the recognition of God the Exalted usually referred to in man arafa nafsehi faqad arafa rabeh which means 'Whoever recognizes himself has recognized his Lord.'

This is due to the fact that once man pays attention to his own existence and ponders over his own being he realizes that his spirit has control over his body. When man wills he sees, hears, walks and talks. Of course, all of these abilities are endowed to us by God. Likewise, the Holy Essence of God has total control over everything in the universe.

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) has stated in the afore-mentioned narration, "There are six states for the body: health, ailment, life, death, sleep and being awake. The same six states hold true for the spirit. However, knowledge is life for the spirit, and ignorance is death for the spirit. Doubt is ailment for the spirit. Certitude is health for the spirit. Neglect is sleep for the spirit."¹¹⁰

Here certitude refers to the certain belief in the Origin, the Resurrection, the religious principles, the Prophethood, the Divine Leadership and the Divine Decrees. Doubt is said to constitute ailment for the spirit. The way to treat this ailment is to put religious decrees into practice so that his certitude is reinforced. There is a narration in this respect on the authority of Imam Al-Ridha (a.s.) in which we read,

"Whenever one of the servants of God spends forty days in sincerity, springs of wisdom will flow from his tongue." 111

Physical health is also stressed in Islam as spiritual health and belief related issues are stressed. However, each have their own importance.

Islam guards one's material life as it guards his spiritual life. The life of this world is a prelude to the life of the Hereafter. Islam guards the apparent things and the inner things, the face value of things and their real meaning, the body and soul, this world and the Hereafter. All of these are attended to and guarded by the Holy Religion of Islam. When we precisely consider the Islamic laws, we see that the Holy Religion of Islam pays a lot of attention to health related issues such as cleanliness. Take, for example, the issue of the practice of making ablutions several times each day plus the ritual ablutions such as the recommendable ones or the obligatory ones like the ones we perform after intercourse.

This practice is clearly health related. Now if pouring water on the skin has some physical harm for someone, then he may perform dry ablutions (Tayamum) instead which is using some dried dirt to rub over his hands and face instead of performing the ablutions. Or the fact that when fasting may harm someone, he or she need not fast until he or she gets well. Therefore, you see that the central idea in all these decrees is health. This is stressed so much that the religious jurisprudents have said, "Anything which is harmful for man is forbidden."

In a narration it has been stated, "One day Ja'far Ibn Muhammad as- Sadiq (a.s.) went to see Mansoor when an Indian doctor who was reading medical books was there. The Imam (a.s.) was listening. When the Indian doctor finished reading he asked the Imam (a.s.), 'O Aba Abdullah! Do you want me to teach you medicine?' As-Sadiq (a.s.) replied, 'No, since what I know is better than what you know.'

The Indian doctor stated, 'What do you know?' The Imam (a.s.) stated, 'I treat heat with cold, cold with heat, moisture with dryness and dryness with moisture. I leave the rest of the affairs to the Honorable God the Exalted and rely on the Prophet's saying 'that the stomach is the center of all ailments and abstinence is the best treatment for all ailments. The body should be left to get used to things.'" The doctor stated, 'Medicine is nothing else but this.'" 112

حضر أبو عبد الله جعفر بن محمد الصادق عليهم السلام مجلس المنصور
يوما وعنده رجل من الهند يقرأ كتب الطب ، فجعل أبو عبد الله الصادق جعفر
بن محمد بن محمد عليهما السلام ينصت لقراءته فلما فرغ الهندي قال له: يا أبا
عبد الله: أتريد مما معي شيئا؟ قال: لا ، فإن ما معي خير مما معك ، قال وما
هو؟ قال: أداوي الحار بالبارد ، والبارد بالحار ، والرطب باليابس ، واليابس
بالرطب ، وأراد الأمر كله إلى الله عز وجل ، وأستعمل ما قاله رسوله صلى الله

عليه وأله وأعلم أن المعدة بيت الداء والحمية هي الدواء ، وأعود البدن ما اعتاد
، فقال الهندي: وهل الطب إلا هذا؟

In another narration that is quoted on the authority of the Noble Prophet (S) and another similar one on the authority of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) we read, "There are two forms of knowledge: knowledge of the body and knowledge of the religion."¹¹³

العلم علما علم الأبدان وعلم الأديان

There is another narration on the authority of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) in which we read, "Knowledge is of three kinds: Knowledge of jurisprudence, knowledge of medicine for physical health, and knowledge of speech."¹¹⁴

العلم ثلاثة: الفقه للأديان والطب للأبدان والنحو للسان

In a narration from Imam Sadiq (a.s.) it has been narrated that, "The people of each city need three things. There will be no prosperity for that city if these three do not exist there: The first thing that a city needs is a pious knowledgeable jurist. The second thing is a wise professional and trustworthy doctor. And the third is a just ruler to act in the benefit of the people and to rule justly."¹¹⁵

The jurists also say that when there are no doctors in a society it is necessary for some people to go and study medicine. Once enough people attend to this important issue, then the rest of the people are not obliged to do the same. The same thing holds true for other issues that are needed by the public.

A narration has been quoted on the authority of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.), "Amongst the calamities of this world is poverty. Illness is even harder than poverty. Yet even worse is the illness of the heart. Amongst the blessings of this world is wealth. Physical health is even better than wealth. Yet even better is the piety of the heart."¹¹⁶

What is meant by the heart here is not that heart-shaped organ in the body. However, the intention concerning the heart is the spirit which is mentioned on many occasions in the Quran and the various narrations. A question that may be asked now is "Why has the spirit been referred to as the heart?" The answer to this question would be: "The reason that the spirit has been referred to as the heart is that in the Arabic word Qalb which is translated into heart also means change. And our spirit is always changing from one state to another state. Thus various states such as happiness, sadness, anger, eagerness, or lethargy, etc. occur for the spirit." The Quran also states,

"Verily in this is a Message for any that has a heart and understanding or who gives ear and earnestly witnesses (the truth)." The Holy Quran: Qaf 50:37.

Thus, illness of the spirit is worse than physical illness. Illness of the soul is for man to have doubts in his beliefs and have bad morals and attributes. Then the narration goes on to say, "...Amongst the blessings of this world is wealth. Physical health is even better than wealth..."¹¹⁷

إلا وأن من النعم سعة المال ، وأفضل من سعة المال صحة البدن

Man must recognize the worth of his physical health as Imam Sadiq (a.s.) narrated the following on the authority of God's Prophet (S), "Two blessings are taken for granted¹¹⁸: security and health."¹¹⁹

Yet even better is the piety of the heart. The Holy Quran also states,

"...And take a provision (with you) for the journey, but the best of provisions is right conduct. So fear Me, o ye that are wise." The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2: 197.

Piety is defined as protecting oneself. When people want to explain the meaning of piety, they cite the case where one guards himself when he wants to cross a path covered with thorns. Likewise, a pious man should guard himself from committing sins and doing whatever is against God's Commands.

There are two forms of piety: the piety of the soul and the piety of the body. The piety of the soul implies keeping the soul away from doubt in beliefs, associating partners with God, denial of God, belief in superstitions and false ideas. The piety of the body implies keeping and protecting the body, the organs and the limbs from committing sins. For example, keeping one's eyes from the sins related to the eyes, keeping the ears from committing sins related to hearing, etc.

The next point mentioned is that neglect is the sleep for the spirit.

ونومها غفلتها

Sleep of the soul is to ignore and not to pay attention to God and its alertness is thinking about God. In the same way that man is ignorant of everything around him and does not pay attention to things while he is asleep, the sleeping of the soul also takes place when he is ignorant of God. Thus awakening of the spirit would happen when man is aware and thoughtful of God and pays attention to His Glorified Essence.

Discourse 12: On the Lord's recommendations to the Noble Prophet (S)

Introduction

God's Noble Prophet (S) stated, "My Lord recommended me to do nine things and I recommend you to do these nine things.

- Being sincere both in private and in public.
- Being fair both at times of anger and happiness. Frugality both at times of poverty and being wealthy. Bestowing things on those who have deprived you. Forgiving those who have oppressed you.
- Establishing ties of kinship with those who have broken such ties. Thinking while silent.
- Mentioning God when talking.
- Taking moral lessons when you look at things.

The above nine issues are very important virtues and moral traits.

Being sincere both in private and public

One should be sincere in every deed which he does whether it be in public or private. Every act which man does such as praying, fasting, enjoining others to do good, admonishing others against evil, etc. should be done sincerely for God's sake with pure intentions, since God has commanded us to do them. The same holds true for acquiring knowledge. Man must attain knowledge for God's sake and act accordingly. He should have a similar intention when trying to guide others.

The next point mentioned is "being fair both at times of anger and happiness." This implies that we should remain fair even when we are angry. The same holds true for when we get lustful. Controlling lust and remaining just is a real struggle and one must try hard not to do any unfair acts.

Waging a Holy War against the soul is the best waged war

The greatest form of holy war is that with one's own self. Imam Musa ibn Ja'far Al-Kazim (a.s.) said, "The greatest form of holy war is fighting with one's own selfish desires."¹²⁰ Of course, it takes a lot of heroism to be able to control ourselves. Therefore, forcing ourselves to act justly at the time when we become lustful or angry is a very hard task. If one acts justly at such times, does not violate any Divine Decrees, and does not say something which is against God's pleasure, then he has acted like what God the Sublime has recommended His Prophet (S) to do.

Someone went to see the Noble Prophet (S) and asked, "O Prophet of God! Please advise me." The Prophet (S) stated, "I advise you not to get angry." Then the man asked that the Prophet (S) to give him another piece of advice. The Prophet (S) repeated the following thrice, "I advise you not to get angry."¹²¹ Thus, one of the things which we must consider at the time of anger is acting justly.

Considering truth and Justice at the time of satisfaction and Happiness

One should not forget about justice at times when he is pleased with someone. It has been said in the Holy Quran,

"O ye who believe! Let not your riches or your children divert you from the remembrance of Allah. If any act thus, the loss is their own." The Holy Quran: Al-Munafiqun 63:9.

The next point mentioned is "frugality both at times of poverty and wealth." Thus, I must consider acting both economically and moderately at times of being wealthy and being poor.

The next point mentioned is "bestowing things on those who have deprived you." In other words, I should do good to the one who has not done so to me.

The next point mentioned is "forgiving those who have oppressed you." Therefore, if someone has oppressed me, I should not take revenge from him. On the contrary, I should forgive him as the Noble Quran says,

"Those who spend (freely), whether in prosperity, or in adversity; who restrain anger, and pardon (all) men;- for Allah loves those who do good" The Holy Quran: Al-i-Imran 3: 134.

The next point mentioned is "establishing ties of kinship with those who have broken off such ties." Therefore, I should make bonds of relationship with the ones who have cut off the bonds of relationship with me.

And the next one is "thinking while silent." When man thinks about the extent of this world and its many wonders, he will realize the Glory of the Nourisher and the endless Divine Power. This is one form of paradise-worthy thought. Another form of paradise-worthy thought is to think about this world, its unloyalty, and its temporary nature. Then man realizes nothing will last forever. Neither youth will remain nor happiness. Neither comfort will last nor health. Rather everything is temporary and will soon pass away. Because of this we must not let this world cheat us and we must not be satisfied and happy with it. Rather we must treat it as an intermediate step in our journey to the Hereafter.

Therefore, if we attain knowledge or we do other things, our intention must be only for God's sake and for the intention to send something ahead of us for the Hereafter. Other paradise-worthy forms of thinking are thinking about scientific issues. That means that we should be very attentive to our teachers and try to learn our lessons well. We should think over them until we deeply understand them.

It has been quoted on the authority of Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Babooyeh al-Qumi who was one of the great Shite scholars that he used to say the following after he enjoyed studying hard and understood what he had studied, "Where are the kings and their offspring to enjoy the experience which I have attained?" This means that this joy is superior to and higher than the joy which is gained from rulership and kingdom.

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated, "Pondering over the wonders of creation is like a bright mirror for us, and taking moral lessons is a warning well-wisher for man..."¹²² We may conclude from this that one should always fend off bad thoughts from himself and he should always think about praiseworthy and admirable things.

The next point mentioned is "mentioning God when talking." This means that one should always include God's remembrance in what he says.

He may recite the Quran, say supplications, enjoin others to do good deeds, admonish others against evil deeds, teach or study. We should be careful to do all these for the sake of God.

Another form of God's remembrance is to say God's praises and glorifications by saying La illaha illallah when he thinks about the Majesty of God, or say Alhamdu lillah rabil Alameen when he thinks about God's blessings. He should say Astaqfirallh Rabbi va atubo elayhe when he remembers his mistakes. Thus whatever he says should be related to God the Glorified and be for His Sake.

It has been narrated that one day the Prophet (S) stated to his companions, "When you say 'Subhanallah, Valhamdulillah, Va La Ilaha illallah, Allahu Akbar', the angels will plant a sapling for you in Paradise." Then one person asked, "O Prophet of God! Then we will have lots of trees in Paradise if that is so." The Prophet (S) replied, "Yes. That will be the case if you do not send any fires ahead of you to burn them down." Then they asked the Prophet (S), "What would be that fire?" The Prophet (S) replied, "The fire would be the sins that you commit."

We also read the following in the Holy Quran,

"O ye who believe! Celebrate the praises of Allah, and do this often; And glorify Him morning and evening." The Holy Quran: Al-Ahzab 33:41-42.

The "praises of Allah" mentioned here have been reported to be saying, "Subhanallah, Walhamdulillah, Wa La Ilaha illallah, Allahu Akbar Wa La Quwata Illa Billah al-Alial Azeem."¹²³ The expression of such words of remembrance of God are only effective if said sincerely.

However, others have said that what is meant here by "praises of Allah" mentioned here is just a general state of remembering God under all circumstances. This means that whenever we say something or do something, we should check and see whether that is done for the sake of God or not. One should also be careful that what he listens to, thinks about, writes about or where he goes should all be for the sake

of God. In short, all your actions and thoughts should be directed towards God and you should always be "taking moral lessons when you look at things."

Discourse 13: On social worship

Introduction

God the Blessed the Sublime asked Moses (a.s.), "O Moses! Have you done a sincere act for me up until now?" Moses (a.s.) replied, "Yes. I have prayed. I have fasted and I have praised you also." God the Blessed the Exalted replied, "But the benefits of praying are for you yourself. It will enable you to cross over the Bridge. Fasting is an armor against the Fire and praising Me will bring you certain ranks in Paradise." Moses (a.s.) cried and said, "O Lord! Please guide me to a sincere act for you." God the Blessed the Exalted states, "Have you ever clothed a naked one? Have you ever given a thirsty person something to drink? Have you ever honored and respected a knowledgeable person? Any of these acts would be considered sincere acts for Me."¹²⁴

There are two forms of worship namely individual worship and social worship. Individual worship is that form of worship which benefits the individual who performs that act of worship like praying, fasting, praising God, reading the Quran and the like. However, social worship is that form of worship which the society benefits from. The following narration on the authority of God's Prophets (a.s.) is in this regard, "The following two attributes are the best of attributes, Belief in God, and being beneficial to the people. And the worst two attributes are associating partners with God, and harming and offending the servants of God."¹²⁵

Therefore, of the two types of worship being individual worship and social worship, the second one is important in many respects since man needs others to live. That is why it is very important to be beneficial for the people and try to fulfill their needs.

It has also been narrated on the authority of the Holy Master of the Martyrs Imam Al-Husayn (a.s.), "Be aware that the need of the people for you is one of the greatest Divine Blessings. So, never become tired of this blessing because this blessing will be taken away from you (and will be granted to someone else) and the blessing will be changed to misery for you."¹²⁶

The Holy Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) also says, "God the Blessed the Exalted has servants to whom He has allocated some of His Blessings from which other people are to benefit. They will have these blessings for as long as others benefit from them. Once they fail and do not let others benefit from these blessings, they will be taken away from them by God and turned over to others."¹²⁷

Thus, now that it has become clear that there are two forms of worship, it is noteworthy that social worship is also in two forms as follows:

1-The first form of social worship is that with a temporary effect such as clothing the naked, giving water

to the thirsty ones, feeding the hungry people or helping others in any way we can. These are all types of worship with a temporary effect. Once the possessor of wealth does not help others, it might be taken away from him.

2. The second form of social worship is that which has a permanent effect like guiding the people and the society. Guiding someone is the highest form of social worship. This is entrusted to the scholars. Therefore, students should study hard to learn and guide the people after they graduate. This issue is of such an importance that in a narration the Seal of the Prophets Muhammad (S) said to the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.), "O Ali! If God guides one man with your help it is better than all which the sun shines upon."¹²⁸

The issue of guiding the people and enjoining them to good and admonishing them against evil, and guiding the stray ones has been stressed so much in Islam that we read the following in the Holy Quran,

"Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong: They are the ones to attain felicity." The Holy Quran: Al-Imran 3: 104.

God also says,

"Ye are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah. If only the People of the Book had faith, it were best for them: among them are some who have faith, but most of them are perverted transgressors." The Holy Quran: Al-Imran 3: 110.

There has also been a narration on the authority of Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) who said, "Whoever opens the doors leading others to guidance and guides someone will receive the same rewards given to the doers of those good deeds. Whoever misguides others to deviation, will receive the same type of chastisement which the misguided ones receive."¹²⁹ Thus, we may conclude that man must first attend to improve himself and then try to guide others.

Discourse 14: Four important pieces of advice from the Prophet (S)

Introduction

It has been narrated on the authority of God's Prophet (S) to say, "Four things are meant for doing four acts. They are not meant for doing four other acts. Wealth is meant for giving charity. It is not meant to be hoarded up. Knowledge is meant to be acted on accordingly. It is not meant for arguing about. Man is made to worship God, not to engage himself in lustful acts. The world is meant to learn from. It is not meant for us to build."¹³⁰

Therefore, man should try to acquire knowledge and oblige himself to act accordingly. This means that he must act according to what he understands from religious laws. Once he is perfected in acquiring knowledge and acted accordingly, then he may try to help educate others so that they make progress. Therefore, there are two actions related to knowledge. The first one is acquiring it, and the second one is teaching it to others.

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) said the following in this respect, "One who places himself in the rank of the leader of the people must first teach himself before he teaches others. He must first teach others through his own good morals before he tries to teach them using his tongue. One who first teaches himself and acquires good morals himself deserves to be respected more than one who tries to teach others and educate them before having taught himself."¹³¹ Therefore one should first try to acquire knowledge and act accordingly before he tries to guide others.

It has been narrated on the authority of the Noble Prophet (S) who stated, "Nothing is a better gift to be bestowed by a Muslim upon his brother than giving him a piece of advice and wisdom which guides him or saves him from going astray."¹³²

It has also been narrated on the authority of the Holy Prophet (S), "If a man only guides one person, it is better than all the things upon which the sun shines."¹³³

In another narration on the authority of Imam Al-Baqir (a.s.) we read, "God the Blessed the Exalted would grant anyone who guides the people the recompense of all the people who act accordingly to the person who taught them without reducing their reward. Likewise, all the sins committed as a result of someone's bad teachings will be recorded for the one who deviates the people without reducing the sins of the wrongdoers themselves."¹³⁴

Thus we read in the afore-mentioned narration that knowledge is meant for acting on accordingly, and not for arguing about. There are two forms of arguing. The first form which is very detestable is when you try to force your own opinion on others, although you may not be right! Should one have a right position, he need not insist a lot. It may even be proper for him to remain silent. There is another narration in this regard on the authority of Imam Hassan Al-Askari (a.s.) in which we read, "Do not dispute (with others) lest you will lose splendor and do not joke (with everyone) lest you will be disrespected."¹³⁵ In another narration on the authority of Imam Hassan Al-Askari (a.s.) we read, "Modesty is to accept to sit in a place other than in the first row of a meeting, to greet whoever you meet, and to avoid disputing even if you are right."¹³⁶

However, there is another form of arguing which is parise-worthy. This is holding debates about religious issues with people who oppose Islam in order to attract them to the religion, as we read in the following verse of the Holy Quran,

"Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His

Path, and who receive guidance." The Holy Quran: Al-Nahl 16: 125.

One can cite the debates and discussions held by great scholars such as Sheikh Mofid, Sheikh Toosi, Sheikh Sadooq held with the Sunni scholars or Jews such as the debates held by Imam Al-Ridha (a.s.) with the learned men from different nations as reported in Uyun Akhbar Al-Ridha in which the Imam (a.s.) proved the truthfulness of Islam for them.

Of course, it is not only necessary to avoid arguing regarding religious matters and scientific discussions. It also holds true in our day to day affairs, since arguing or disputing is generally one of the unpariseworthy attributes.

The next issues that we read in the afore-mentioned narration on the authority of God's Prophet (S) is, "...Man is made to worship God, not to engage himself in lustful acts. The world is meant to learn from. It is not meant for us to build up."¹³⁷ Thus, this world is to take moral lessons from and it is not meant for man to build it up. This means that man must take moral lessons from all this world including the earth, the animals, the creatures, the plants and all things which he sees within it. To take moral lessons means that man in whatever he looks at, thinks about and concentrates his thought on makes him delve deeper and recognize God through it. When a monotheist looks at things, he notices the effects of God's Knowledge and Power in them.

It has been stated in Nahjul Balaqah, "Pondering over the wonders of creation is like a bright mirror for us, and taking moral lessons is a warning well-wisher for man. The best criteria for having behaved yourself is not to like for others whatever you dislike for yourself."¹³⁸

Therefore, taking moral lessons from what we see is a means of advice for man, since by observing the creatures and thinking about them man's knowledge about God will be completed. And as a result of watching these creatures and deeply pondering over them and noticing their changes, permutations and different states, we find out the decline, transience and lack of credibility of this world.

Another conclusion we can make by thinking about the creatures is the temporary nature of this world. Moreover, it makes no difference whether we think about the things of our own time, or of the past and take moral lessons. An example of taking moral lessons from thinking about the things in our own time is expressed in the following narration which expresses the questions that comes into our mind whenever we pass by a ruined house, "Where have those who built you gone? And where have those who lived in you gone? Why don't you talk?"¹³⁹ It has been also narrated that, "One day Harun told Bohlul, 'Please advise me!' Bohlul stated, 'Look at these palaces and the past Kings' mansions besides which their graves are located.'" Thus, whether man thinks about the changes taking place during his own lifetime or about the history of the past, he notices that this world is ephemeral. The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) says, "Offer your soul the news of the past and see who they were, what they did, what happened to them, and where have they gone?"

Also it is said in the Holy Qur'an,

"How many were the gardens and springs they left behind, And corn-fields and noble buildings, And wealth (and conveniences of life), wherein they had taken such delight! Thus (was their end)! And We made other people inherit (those things)!" The Holy Quran: Ad-Dukhan 44:25-28.

One of the wise sayings of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) is, "There are many things to learn moral lessons from, but few who take moral lessons."¹⁴⁰

Masoodi and a group of historians have reported the following, "They slandered the Holy Imam Ali Al-Hadi (a.s.) in the presence of Mutevakil and told him that a lot of weapons and letters from the Shiites from Qum were in the Imam's house and that the Imam (a.s.) is planning to rebel against him. Thus, Mutevakil sent a group of his agents to search the Imam's house at night but they found nothing there.

They saw that the Imam (a.s.) was sitting on the ground in his room. He (a.s.) was wearing a woolen cloak and had closed the door. He (a.s.) was reciting the Quran and reciting supplications of God the Blessed the Exalted. They arrested the Imam (a.s.) and took him into the court near Mutevakil and reported as follows, 'We rushed into his house. We found nothing and found him sitting down, facing the Qibla (prayer direction) and reciting the Quran.' Mutevakil who was drinking wine and had a cup of wine in his hand had the Imam (a.s.) sit beside him and offered him (a.s.) to drink wine. Imam Al-Hadi (a.s.) stated, 'I swear by God that not even a sip of wine has ever entered my flesh and blood. Please excuse me from doing this.' Then Mutevakil agreed but told the Imam (a.s.) to recite a poem for him. Then the Imam said, 'I do not read much poetry.' Mutevakil said,

'There is no way out and you must recite a poem for me.' Then the Imam (a.s.) recited some poems about the temporary nature of this world and the death of the kings and their baseness after their deaths. Upon hearing these poems Mutevakil cried so much that his tears ran down his cheeks and the people present there also cried. Then Mutevakil dropped his glass of wine and his party ended."

Thus, man can take moral lessons from the history of the past ones and he can see what the ending of the good ones and the ending of the wicked ones has been, and use this to correct himself. Because of this fact they say, "History is the Messenger of the Past ones for the Future ones." History is like a letter which the past ones have written for the people of the future. Of course, we must note that the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated, "Take moral lessons from the past ones." This has also been expressed by other Divine Leaders (a.s.). They have all advised us to take moral lessons from the historical accounts of the previous nations which have been expressed in the Holy Quran since these accounts differ from other accounts and are perfectly true.

The Quran says,

"This is the true account: There is no god except Allah. and Allah. He is indeed the Exalted in Power, the Wise." The Holy Quran: Al-Imran 3:62.

The Quran also says,

"There is, in their stories, instruction for men endued with understanding. It is not a tale invented, but a confirmation of what went before it, – a detailed exposition of all things, and a guide and a mercy to any such as believe." The Holy Quran: Yusuf 12:111.

Thus we must be very careful in the field of commentary of the Quran, especially regarding the stories expressed therein, since they contain amazing facts from which we may draw a lot of great conclusions.

Discourse 15: On four precious jewels

Introduction

God's Prophet (S) said, "There are four precious jewels each of which is the basis of nobility if found in man. These precious jewels are the intellect, belief in religion, modesty and good deeds. What destroys the intellect is anger. What destroys the belief in religion is jealousy. What destroys modesty is greed. What destroys good deeds is gossiping."¹⁴¹

The Intellect

The Intellect is the first precious jewel which is very valuable if it exists in a man, since man's nobility and virtue are due to it and man can attain angelic ranks by means of it. In other words, the Intellect is the ruler of man's being if it fends off whims, lust and anger, guides him to good deeds, and prevents him from doing bad deeds. Although many Prophets have been sent to guide man, the Intellect is the Prophet within us. Therefore, the intellect from within should be coupled with the religious laws and instructions brought to us by the Prophets from the outside. It has been narrated that God's Prophet (S) said, "The first thing which God created is the intellect."¹⁴²

However, there are things which destroy other things. What destroys the intellect is anger. Should anger ever rule over man, darkness will overtake him. He will not be able to see the truth since then his intellect is overpowered. Man may then commit many sins, tell lies, do acts of oppression, gossip or make false accusations. Although anger is the worst enemy of the intellect, man is also empowered by the good attribute of patience with which he can block his wrath and selfishness.

The characteristic of patience is one of the most praise-worthy attributes and good morals which may appear within us. There is a narration in this respect on the authority of Imam Al- Baqir (a.s.) who said, "Nothing has ever been mixed with other things with as much grace and beauty that knowledge is mixed with patience."¹⁴³ God the Sublime has also praised the Prophets for their patience and has described them this way as we read,

"For Abraham was, without doubt, forbearing (of faults), compassionate, and given to look to Allah." The Holy Quran: Hud 11:75.

Religion and Belief

The second precious jewel is belief in religion. This means that if man has a strong belief in the beginning and the final ending, Resurrection and Divine Justice and absolutely believes in them he will reach the state of having certitude. However, jealousy regarding religious brothers destroys one's belief in the religion. This jealousy might reach such a state that it may jeopardize one's faith. An example of this can be found in the account of Abel and Cane which has been described in detail in the Quran and the narrations. The true root of this crime was jealousy.

Modesty

The third precious jewel is the attribute of modesty which prevents man from committing sins and doing bad deeds. However, modesty will be destroyed by greediness. Whoever is entrapped by greediness will lose his modesty.

Good deeds

The fourth precious jewel which can be found in man's being is good deeds. This jewel is very precious. There are many examples of good deeds. For example, if one says his prayers with all its due rituals and rites, fasts, gives some of his property in charity for the sake of God, he has done a good deed which shall be rewarded by God the Blessed. However, good deeds are destroyed by gossiping. There are several narrations which indicate that, "If one gossips about his Muslim brother then his deeds will not be accepted until forty days."¹⁴⁴ Are there any more dangerous things than this one? Gossiping is one of the major sins that has been admonished against in the the Holy Quran,

"... And spy not on each other behind their backs. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Nay, ye would abhor it...But fear Allah. For Allah is Oft- Returning, Most Merciful."
The Holy Quran: Al-Hujurat 49: 12.

Of course, it is clear that man hates to do this.

Like other bad attributes, gossiping has the quality that it has a bad effect on man's soul and is the cause of the debasement of the soul. It will push us away from the truth. This by itself is a very dangerous effect of gossiping. There are also very bad social consequences of gossiping. If the people get used to gossiping about each other and destroying each other's respect and honor in the society, then they will become each other's enemies. The feelings of friendship and love will be lost. Then they will lose unity and the feeling of cooperation. Such a nation will easily get defeated by its enemies. Therefore, gossiping is a danger which threatens the whole society and the nation.

Discourse 16: On gratitude and submission

Introduction

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated, "Life consists of two days. One day life is in your favor, and on another day it is not in your favor. So do not become too proud on the day when life is in your favor. And be patient on the day life is not in your favor."¹⁴⁵

What is meant by day? What is meant here by saying that life consists of two days? Is its intention of two days two usual days as we know of? Or does it refer to two periods of times which do not have a limit? It seems that the second meaning is what is meant here as it is usual in Arab literature, the traditions and the Quran. For example, we read the following verse in the Quran,

"He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in Six Days..." The Holy Quran: Al-Hadid 57:4.

The intention of the Quran from "Days" in this verse is a period, although it comes to mind that it refers to only six days, but one may ask himself how the heavens and the Earth were created in only six days when it has taken a very long time. Thus the word day here refers to a period of time, not just a simple day as we also read in the Holy Quran,

"...Verily a Day in the sight of thy Lord is like a thousand years of your reckoning." The Holy Quran: Al-Hajj 22:47.

And we read in another verse,

"... in a Day the measure whereof is (as) fifty thousand years:" The Holy Quran: Al-Ma'arig 70:4.

Thus day or the Arabic word Yoam here means a period of time which does not have a definite time and the above narration means that there are two periods in our life. In one period we are lucky and attain a high rank and wealth, while in another period we may lose everything and be in a distressful situation. We can neither prevent the lucky day from coming nor can we prevent the unlucky things from happening to us.

In relation to the lucky day of life, the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) says, "On the day which is a man's lucky day when everything is in his favor, they even ascribe other people's good attributes to him. However, on his unlucky day, they will even take away all of his good credits from him."¹⁴⁶

It has been recorded in books on history, "Before the Abbasid Harun Ar-Rashid Abbasi destroyed the Barmakites and during the time of their good luck and apparent power when they were very close to Harun ar-Rashid, Harun used to say the following about Ja'far ibn Yahya Barmakee, 'Ja'far has the totality of all good attributes. He has the generosity of Abdullah ibn Ja'far. He has the bravery of Amer ibn Tufayl. He has the patience of Ahnaf ibn Qays. He has the eloquency and clearness of speech of

Subhan ibn Va'el.¹ He considered him to possess all the good attributes that everyone else had. However, during their unlucky times, Harun denied all their good attributes, destroyed them all and made everyone forget them."¹⁴⁷

It has been reported that someone said, "The following was written in Harun's expense book: The price of the pleasant scent which Harun had bestowed to Ja'far was one hundred thousand dirhams while the cost of the black oil with which Harun burnt Ja'far was only seven dirhams."¹⁴⁸ We read in a verse from the Quran,

"...take warning, then, O ye with eyes (to see)!" The Holy Quran: Al-Hashr 59:2.

We read in the commands of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) to Imam al-Hassan Mujtaba (a.s.), "O my dear offspring! Know and beware that the One who is the Owner of death is the same is the Owner of life. And the One who creates also deadens. And the One who made them also resurrects them. And the One who tests the people with calamities and hardships is the One who blesses them. And this world only lasts due to the will of God the Sublime, and the Hereafter is where there shall be rewards and chastisements."¹⁴⁹ This implies that everything which exists whether good or bad is from God. All good and bad things are from God and end in God. Everything is decreed and destined. Whatever happens to us is from God whether it looks good to us or it looks bad to us.

The people of Iran believed that there are two creators during the Era of Ignorance. They believed in Yazdan and Ahreman. They considered Yazdan to be the god of all goodness who has created all good things including property and wealth, life, blessings and happinesses. And they believed that Ahreman was the god of all badness and calamities who has created all bad things such as: darkness, snakes, crocodiles, illnesses and sadness.

In short, they believed that this world has two creators: one who is the creator of light and the other one who is the creator of darkness; They considered all goodness to be rooted in light and all badness to originate in darkness.

The intention of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) and the verses and narrations is that everything that exists is all due to Divine Destiny and originate from God whether they things are considered to be good or bad by us. That is why the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) said, "Life consists of two days. One day life is in your favor, and on another day life is not in your favor." Of course, the period of time life is in our favor may be more or less than the period of life that life is not in our favor. We also may experience different things during either of these two periods.

It has been narrated on the authority of Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (a.s.), "One is caught in between three things: calamities, destiny and blessings. It is incumbent upon him to be patient in the face of calamities sent from God. It is incumbent upon him to submit to the destiny determined for him by God. It is also incumbent upon him to be grateful for the blessings sent to him by the Honorable God the Exalted."¹⁵⁰

ثلاث خصال العبد بينهن

حدثنا أبي رضي الله عنه قال: حدثنا سعد بن عبد الله ، عن أحمد بن أبي عبد الله عن أبي القاسم عبد الرحمن بن حماد ، عن أبي عمران عمرو بن مصعب العرزمي ، عن أبي حمزة الثمالي قال: سمعت أبا جعفر عليه السلام يقول: العبد بين ثلاثة: بلاء وقضاء ونعمة. فعليه في البلاء من الله الصبر فريضة ، وعليه في القضاء من الله التسليم فريضة ، وعليه في النعمة من الله عز وجل الشكر فريضة

It has also been narrated on the authority of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.), "One's true nature is manifested during the vicissitudes of life."¹⁵¹

It is in these states that if a man does his duties well one may conclude that he is a good man. And if he fails to do his duties right then it becomes clear that he is not good. The duties are gratitude which are not fulfilled unless one really knows God the Blessed and recognizes that all the blessings are sent from God. He must properly use the blessings. For example, one should use his tongue to say prayers, recite the Quran, say supplications, enjoin others to do good and admonish them against doing evil, etc. One's tongue should not be used to make sins. One should tell the truth using his tongue and not lie. One should speak well about the people with his tongue and not put the people down with it.

Therefore, gratitude regarding the tongue is to use it as God has decreed, and not use it to do what God has forbidden to do. The same holds true for the ear. One should only listen to what God has allowed, and not listen to what God has forbidden. The same holds true for the hand which God the Sublime has granted us. One should not use it to oppress others. He should use it to do good deeds. The same holds true for the legs. One should use them to go to places of worship and acquiring knowledge. One should not use them to go to places where he may commit sins. Therefore, every blessing must be used in its proper place. Moreover, God's blessings are unlimited as we read in the Holy Quran,

"...But if ye count the favours of Allah, never will ye be able to number them..." The Holy Quran: Ibrahim 14:34.

If man wishes to use the unlimited Divine blessings in their proper place, he will surely need to acquire religious knowledge. He should also be patient at times of hardships and calamities. He should be patient whether he is angry or is at war. Being patient and not committing sins is referred to as piety. There is no escape from Divine destiny. One must totally submit to it.

Discourse 17: On humbleness, forgiveness and benevolence

Introduction

God's Prophet (S) said, "The best deeds are three: being humble towards people when you have a high rank, forgiving when you are in power, and bestowing without mentioning."¹⁵²

Being humble is a very good characteristic about which God the Blessed the Exalted has stated the following in the Holy Quran,

"And the servants of Allah Most Gracious are those who walk on the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them, they say, "Peace!" The Holy Quran: Al-Furqan 25:63.

One meaning of "they say Peace" is that they do not offend them. Another meaning is that they greet them. Another probable meaning is that they say farewell to them. This means that they tell them goodbye and pass them by without bothering with them.

Several accounts have been reported about the humbleness of God's Prophet (S) and the Immaculate Imams (a.s.) in the literature. It was not only they themselves who were the best of God's creatures and were this way, but their companions, followers and students were very humble too.

The opposite of humbleness is haughtiness. If a person is humble before God, God will raise his rank. Likewise, God will decrease the rank of the haughty ones.

Abu Abdullah As-Sadiq (a.s.) said, "God would raise the rank of whoever is humble, and would decrease the rank of whoever is haughty."¹⁵³

This sentence makes us understand that all the attributes must be for God's sake and if one acts humbly towards God, God will raise his rank, and God will decrease the rank of the haughty ones.

It has been stated in a narration, "Those who are proud towards the God-worshippers, the Prophet (S) and the Immaculate Imams (a.s.), will enter the Resurrection Desert like ants on the Resurrection Day and the people will walk over and smash them."¹⁵⁴ Likewise, we read the following in the Quran regarding the advice given by Loqman to his son,

"And swell not thy cheek (for pride) at men, nor walk in insolence through the earth; for Allah loveth not any arrogant boaster." The Holy Quran: Luqman 31: 18.

The next point we read in the above is "forgiving when you are in power." This means that the one who has been insulted by someone else should forgive the one who has insulted him. It is not important for the weak person to forgive. Rather the forgiveness of the one who has power is important. Much has been reported about the attributes of perseverance, patience and forgiving of the Companions of the Imams (a.s.). The case for the Holy God's Prophet (S) and the Immaculate Imams (a.s.) is clear.

Malik Ashtar Nakhaee was one of the companions of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.). The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) said the following about him "The position of Malik near me is similar to the position of me near the Prophet of God (S)."155

Malik was very brave. That is why he was appointed as the Chief of the Army in the Battle of Siffin by the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.). Malik lived a very simple life, and wore simple clothes. The following has been reported about him, "One day Malik was passing through the bazaar. One who did not know him threw some dirty vegetables at him so as to mock him. Malik looked down and left there without saying a word. The ones who were there told that person, 'Do you know what you have done? This person whom you have insulted is Malik Ashtar Nakhaee who is the Chief of the Army of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.).'

The man's body started shivering. He followed Malik until he found him praying in a mosque. He waited until he finished saying his prayers. Then the man fell to Malik's feet begging for being forgiven, started to cry and said, 'Please forgive me. I did not recognize you.' Malik Ashtar told him, 'I swear by God that I only came to this mosque to pray to God to forgive you since I have already forgiven you.'"156

When we think it over, we realize that forgiveness is the ultimate form of bravery. It is even superior to Malik's bravery at the battlefield. The Prophet (S) and the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) have stated, "The bravest of the people is the one who rules over himself."157

The next point in the above is "bestowing without mentioning it." We also read about this in the following verse of the Holy Quran,

"O ye who believe! cancel not your charity by reminders of your generosity or by injury..."

The highest rank of bestowing is the form of bestowing without mentioning it. Such a form of bestowing and sacrifice is one of the attributes of God's Prophet (S) and the members of his Holy Household about whom the Quran says,

"..., but give them preference over themselves, even though poverty was their (own lot)..."

The Holy Quran: Al-Hashr 59:9.

Discourse 18: On fountains of Eloquence

Introduction

The sayings of Ali (a.s.) are superior to the sayings of the people and are inferior to God's sayings. This does not contradict with the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (S) since Ali's sayings are the same as Muhammad's sayings since the Prophet Muhammad (S) himself has taught him. There is a narration in which we read that the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) said, "God's Prophet (S) taught me one-thousand gates of knowledge each of which opens up to one-thousand other gates."158 There is

another one in which we read, "I heard God's Prophet (S) say, 'I am the city of knowledge, and Ali is its portal. Whoever wishes to gain knowledge should go through that portal.' 159

For example, one may refer to the following narration regarding the eloquency of the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.). We read in Al-Khisal Tradition No. 9-15:

Abu Muhammad al-Hassan ibn Hamzih al-Alavi – may God be pleased with him – narrated that Yusuf ibn Muhammad al-Tabary quoted Sahl abi Umar, on the authority of Vaki'a, on the authority of Zakariya ibn Abi Za'edeh, on the authority of Amer al-Sha'abi, "The Commander of the Faithful Imam Ali (a.s.) said nine sayings which amazed many eloquent ones. You wonder what jewels of wisdom are include in these pearls which none of the masters of eloquence could not even say some thing similar to them. Three of these are in the form of supplications; three are words of wisdom and the other three are about culture. The three words of wisdom are as follows: 'The value of each person is based on what he has learned. Whoever recognizes himself shall not be destroyed. Man is known by what he says.' The three sayings which are about culture are: 'Whoever treats someone well will become his master. You become a slave of whoever who you ask to fulfill your needs. You are equal to whoever you are not needy of.' And the three which are in the form of supplications are as follows: 'O My God! It is enough of an honor for me to worship Thee. It is enough of a source of pride for me to be nourished by You. You are just as I wish. Thus, make me just as perfect as you wish.'" 160 161

تسع كلمات تكلم بهن أمير المؤمنين عليه السلام

14-9 حدثنا أبو محمد الحسن بن حمزة العلوي رضي الله عنه قال: حدثني يوسف ابن محمد الطبري ، عن سهل أبي عمر قال: حدثنا وكيع ، عن زكريا بن أبي زائدة عن عامر الشعبي قال: تكلم أمير المؤمنين عليه السلام بتسع كلمات ارتجلهن ارتجالا ، فقأن عيون البلاغة وأيتمن جواهر الحكمة ، وقطعن جميع الأنام عن اللحاق بواحدة منهن ، ثلاث منها في المناجاة ، وثلاث منها في الحكمة ، وثرث منها في الأدب ، وأما اللاتي في الحكمة فقال: "قيمة كل امرئ ما يحسنه" ، وما هلك امرء عرف قدره ، والمرء مخبوء تحت لسانه". وأما اللاتي في الأدب فقال: "امنن على من شئت تكن أميره ، واحتج إلى من شئت تكن أسيره ، واستغن عمن شئت تكن نظيره". فأما اللاتي في المناجاة فقال: "إلهي كفى لي عزا أن أكون لك عبدا وكفى بي فخرا أن تكون لي ربا أنت كما أحب فاجعلني كما تحب".

Khalil ibn Ahmad Nahvi who was one of the learned men said, "What the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) said, "The value of each person is based on what he has learned' is the highest motivation for man to become inclined to knowledge and perfection.."

We work hard to earn knowledge only when we recognize its worth. All the high-ranking scholars from the time of the Divine Leaders until now have only reached a high rank after suffering hardships and poverty and struggling towards their goal. The Late Aqa Husayn Khansary who was referred to as the master of all masters in his own time and was in the first rank and to whom everybody referred was very poor when he started his studies in Isfahan. But he suffered and worked very hard in spite of poverty until he attained the highest rank of knowledge in the country.

It is due to the amount of attempt, knowledge and tolerance in hardships that men reach excellent ranks. It has been narrated in a narration from God's Holy Prophet (S), "O 'Abuzar! You should benefit from five things before five things happen: use your youth before you get old; use your health before you get ill; use your wealth before you get poor; use your spare time before you get too busy; and use your life before your death."162

يا أبا ذر خمساً قبل خمس شبابك قبل هرمك ، وصحتك قبل سقمك ، وغناك
قبل فقرك ، وفراغك قبل شغلك وحياتك قبل موتك

These blessings of health, free time, youth, needlessness and life are all the resources that God the Sublime has granted us. Man may attain knowledge and perfection by these means. Thus we should try to make good use of these blessings to attain high ranks.

The most valuable saying which encourages man and makes him eager to learn knowledge and attain perfection is this very same statement of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) who said, "Whoever recognizes himself shall not be destroyed."

The meaning of the sentence may be that when man knows his true worth since God the Blessed has sent his soul from the Divine world, he will decide to attain perfection and promotion and nearness to God's Threshold. Thus, he tries to reach excellent positions. The Prophet (S) said, "The one who knows himself, has known his Lord."163 Also the Quran states,

"As also in your own selves: Will ye not then see?" The Holy Quran: Az-Zariyat 51:21.

The other meaning of this narration is that when man thinks about himself and the soul and he realizes that his physical existence and mobility depend on the existence of his soul, and that all these physical powers which God has placed in the body from the apparent and inner abilities, all are wonderful blessings which show the wisdom and power of their Creator. For example, the fact that everything

which man sees, hears or talks about all are amazing issues which indicate the certain Divine Wisdom.

Also, the existence of the inner abilities of thought, memory, imagination and the utmost blessing of the Intellect which distinguishes man from other animals are all reasons for having a Wise Creator. So, when man recognizes his soul, body, physical powers and organs, he recognizes his Creator who is God – the Wise Creator.

The third meaning of the narration is as follows, "The physical well-being and existence of our body depends on the soul which we cannot see. Likewise, the existence of everything depends on God which we cannot see."

Discourse 19: On honesty and the really honest ones

Introduction

Let's start the discussion with the following verse of the Holy Quran,

"O ye who believe! Fear Allah and be with those who are true (in word and deed)." The Holy Quran: At-Tauba 9: 119.

One of the biggest praise-worthy attributes and admired good morals is the graceful characteristic of honesty. This characteristic is the chief of all good morals and good attributes as some of the scholars of ethics say. Moreover, it is a sign of man's manliness since it is due to the power and strength of man's soul. Dishonesty, on the other hand, is a result of man's weakness.

Many good human attributes are rooted in honesty. It is truthfulness as a result of which many good attributes appear in man and guide him towards good deeds and praise-worthy works.

In the Holy Quran God the Blessed the Sublime states,

"O ye who believe! Fear Allah and be with those who are true (in word and deed)."1 The Holy Quran: At-Tauba 9: 119.

Also He states in another verse,

"O ye who believe! Fear Allah, and (always) say a word directed to the Right:" The Holy Quran: Al-Ahzab 33:70.

There are also many narrations which have been stated about the virtues of truthfulness including this one on the authority of the Holy Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) who states, "Indeed the Honorable God the Exalted has brought no Prophet save to preach his nation to truthfulness, honesty and righteousness."¹⁶⁴

Also it has been stated in another narration that Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) stated to one of his companions, "Do you know why God's Noble Prophet (S) was so kind to the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.)?" They replied, "O the son of God's Prophet (S)! Will you tell me?" The Imam (a.s.) stated, "Due to two attributes. one of which was truthfulness and the other was righteousness."¹⁶⁵

There is another narration on the authority of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.), "Righteousness and truthfulness guide man to all goodness and goodness lead man to Paradise."¹⁶⁶ Therefore, we may conclude that the characteristic of truthfulness includes all good attributes and its conclusion is that it leads man to Heaven.

There is another narration on the authority of Imam Muhammad Al- Baqir (a.s.), "The one who is truthful, his acts will become pure. God will increase the share of the daily bread of the one whose heart, insight and intentions are good. Anyone who is good to his family and who makes bonds of relationship with them will have a long life."¹⁶⁷

On the basis of this narration, righteousness includes all good and admired attributes and when man gets used to it, then he is righteous with his Lord, it means when He says,

"Thee do we worship, and Thine aid we seek." The Holy Quran: Al-Fatiha 1:5.

he says the truth and he truly worships God. It is at this state that one would worship God in all circumstances and say, "O God! I beseech you to help me".

When man's intention is right, there will be sincerity in it. He would then do all his deeds and acts of worship only for the sake of God. This means that good intention becomes apparent when it is accompanied by truthfulness with God, the Prophet and the Divine Leaders. And consequently one shows obedience due to his honesty. Moreover, it has been written in a narration on the authority of Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.), "Do not trust the one who elongates the period of bowing down and prostration in prayers? Do not trust him because he may do it out of habit and if he puts it aside, he becomes frightened. Trust those who are honest in speech and return what they are entrusted with."¹⁶⁸

Now, we must see how the prayer which is so important and is called the ascension of the believer by means of which man reaches the state of Divine Nearness should be. This prayer is the pillar of the religion upon which all religious affairs are based as God says in the Quran,

"...for Prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds; and remembrance of Allah is the greatest (thing in life) without doubt. And Allah knows the (deeds) that ye do." The Holy Quran: Al-Ankabut 29:45.

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) states, Prayer is the means of nearness to God for every pious one."¹⁶⁹ It has also been narrated on the authority of Abi Basir, "I heard Aba Ja'far Al-Baqir (a.s.) say, 'The first thing which one is questioned about on the Resurrection Day is his prayers.'¹⁷⁰ Why then does

the Holy Imam Al-Baqir (a.s.) says, "Do not trust the one who elongates the period of bowing down and prostration in prayers"? The answer to this is as follows. This refers to prayers which have become the habit of the one who say it. This implies that one may say the prayer without having a right intention and without wholehearted attention. This does not refer to a prayer said with a right intention and wholehearted attention which contains everything including honesty and truthfulness. Therefore, the Imam (a.s.) says that we should not trust the people with such prayers is due to the fact that these prayers may be not sincerely done.

Telling lies is contrary to truthfulness and is extremely bad to do. There are various degrees of telling lies. The worst form of telling lies is ascribing lies to the Prophet (S) or telling lies about God which are considered to be major sins and will void one's fasting. There is a narration on the authority of Imam Al-Hadi (a.s.), "Telling lies will ruin one's faith."¹⁷¹

It has been also stated in a narration from Imam Al-Hadi (a.s.), "They have put all badness in a house and locked its door. The key to that door is drinking wine. However, telling lies is even worse than drinking wine."¹⁷²

Telling lies is a bad characteristic. Should it become common in a society, the people cannot trust each other any more. When the people in the society cannot trust each other, kindness, friendliness and unity decreases amongst them and they will separate from each other. However, if honesty and truthfulness is common in a society and no wrong acts are done within it, kindness, friendliness and unity increases amongst them and consequently it becomes a powerful nation who is never defeated by the enemy.

All which we stated (meaning these good ethical virtues) are important when attracting the people's attention and encouraging them and of course when all deeds are done sincerely for God's sake and belief in God becomes firm among them. This society and nation unites and becomes strong and it is in such a condition that the enemy can no longer defeat them as God says in the Holy Quran,

"So lose not heart, nor fall into despair: For ye must gain mastery if ye are true in Faith." The Holy Quran: Al-Imran 3: 139.

God the Blessed the Sublime states in the Holy verse which came in the beginning of this discourse,

"O ye who believe! Fear Allah and be with those who are true (in word and deed)." The Holy Quran: At-Tauba 9: 119.

And of course, there must be "those who are true" so that God the Sublime asks the believers to be with them. This is based on what is found in the narrations. What is certainly found from all the written texts is that the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.), the Holy Fatima Zahra (a.s.) and the Immaculate Imams (a.s.) are the real and the true examples of the truthful ones since they are chaste. Moreover, there is a narration in which we read, "Be with Ali (a.s.) and his companions."¹⁷³

And the wish of God the Sublime is to be along with them. This means following and obeying them and believing in their kindness and accepting their Trusteeship and considering their influence in our affairs.

Discourse 20: On spreading Justice as a goal of the appointment of Prophets

Introduction

The act of spreading justice all around the world is one of the goals of the appointment of the Prophets (a.s.) to the Prophethood rank. God the Blessed the Sublime has stated in the Quranic verse,

"We sent aforetime our apostles with Clear Signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance (of Right and Wrong), that men may stand forth in justice;..." The Holy Quran: Al-Hadid 57:25.

What is uprising for justice like? It may be stated that the meaning of justice in this Noble verse is the very same Divine Laws. It refers to the Divine Laws which in religion are like the system of the Just world. It has expressed all the goodness and all the badness; and it has commanded mankind to do all the good deeds and to avoid all the bad acts. And it has been enjoyed for man to do good to others as well as the good ones; and also to punish the bad ones. Religious laws are Divinely ordained and everyone must obey them. Of course, the rulers have a higher responsibility. They should not only be just themselves, they should also attempt to establish justice in the society in which they rule.

Amongst the statements of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) is this one in which he (a.s.) states, "Justice is a very good attribute which every one must have. However, this justice is much more suitable than the rulers' orders; and piety is excellent and of much more importance than the learned ones."¹⁷⁴

God the Blessed and the Sublime has stated in the Zul-Qarnayn story in the Holy Quran,

"They ask thee concerning Zul-qarnain. Say, 'I will rehearse to you something of his story.' Verily We established his power on earth, and We gave him the ways and the means to all ends." The Holy Quran: Al-Kahf 18:83-84.

And goes on to say,

"Until, when he reached the setting of the sun,..." The Holy Quran: Al-Kahf 18:86.

Zul-Qarnayn entered a city where some people resided. Then God the Blessed the Sublime addressed him asking, "O Zul-Qarnayn! How would you treat these people?" He replied as we read,

"He stated: 'Whoever doth wrong, him shall we punish; then shall he be sent back to his Lord; and He will punish him with a punishment unheard-of (before). But whoever believes, and works

***righteousness, he shall have a goodly reward, and easy will be his task as We order it by our Command. Until, when he came to the rising of the sun, he found it rising on a people for whom We had provided no covering protection against the sun."* The Holy Quran: Al-Kahf 18:87-90.**

In that city he observed some poor and helpless people who complained that in that part of the city there resided some Bedouin people who committed acts of aggression and corruption. They asked him to set up a barrier between them and the oppressors so as to protect them from being bothered and harmed. Zul-Qarnayn agreed and decided to fulfill their request. The people wanted to prepare the means for doing this themselves, but he told them that there was no need for them to do so. He stated that he would use the wealth and blessings that God had granted to him and would pay for all expenses.

He only asked them to help him with their bodily strength in doing this task. Then Zul-Qarnayn built a barrier and thereby blocked the transgressors from attacking them. The aggressors could no longer continue their acts of aggression and corruption against the people. One of the benefits of telling the Quranic story of Zul-Qarnayn is that this would be a good moral lesson for all the kings and commanders up until the Resurrection Day. So, all those responsible for managing the affairs of the people should be just – that is the same thing as doing good to the good ones and punishing the bad ones.

1. Nahjul Balaghah, Letter No. 31.
2. Nahjul Balaghah, Letter No. 31.
3. Unlike most of the people who struggle to do the recommended acts, but forget about the obligatory acts.
4. Bihar ul-Anwar, 78/373.
5. Bihar ul-Anwar, 2/221.
6. Bihar ul-Anwar, 78/121.
7. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 425.
8. Bihar ul-Anwar, 21/135.
9. Al-Jamal by Sheikh Mofid, 415.
10. It is recorded in other narrations that the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) himself got control over the river.
11. Ansab ul-Ashraf, 2/298.
12. Tuhuf al-Uqool.
13. Bihar ul-Anwar, 1/19.
14. Bihar ul-Anwar, 38/332.
15. Kafi.
16. Amali by Sheikh Sadooq.
17. Kafi, 4/575.
18. Tafsire Minhaj al-Sadeqeen 4/230.
19. Tafsire Minhaj al-Sadeqeen 4/230.
20. Ibid.
21. Bihar ul-Anwar, 23/327.
22. Al-Khisal, Narration No. 3-12.
23. في بعض النسخ..ومشى باليل
24. الخصال صدوق 3-12
25. Kanz ul-A'mal 9/277.
26. Bihar ul-Anwar, 62/291.

27. Tahzib al-Ahkam, 1/53.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Mustadrak al-Va'sael, 1.
33. Bihar ul-Anwar, 8/64.
34. Bihar ul-Anwar, 12/76.
35. Kafi, 2/234.
36. Ibid.
37. Al-Khisal, Narration No. 3–12.
38. Mustadrak al-Va'sael, 11/225.
39. Al-Khisal, Narration No. 3–83.
40. Al-Khisal, Narration No. 3–83.
41. Al-Khisal, Narration No. 1–22.
42. Miraj al-Sa'adat 166.
43. Tuhuf ul-Uqool, 292.
44. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 129.
45. Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 193.
46. Al-Khisal, Narration No. 2–62.
47. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 424.
48. Al-Khisal, Narration No. 2–62.
49. Al-Khisal, Narration No. 2–62.
50. Bihar ul-Anwar, 81/173.
51. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 21.
52. Bihar ul-Anwar, 51/258.
53. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 131.
54. Nahjul Balaghah
55. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 131.
56. Bihar ul-Anwar, 67/362.
57. Elm ul-Yaqeen fi Usool e-din, 1/381.
58. Al-Khisal, Narration No. 4–16.
59. Nahjul Balaghah, Letter 31.
60. Nahjul Balaghah, Letter 31.
61. Mafatih ul-Jinan, Ziyarate Jame'a
62. Bihar ul-Anwar, 0/372.
63. Al-Khisal, Narration No. 4–16.
64. Bihar ul-Anwar, 93/300.
65. Kafi, 2/468.
66. Kafi, 2/468.
67. Kafi, 2/62.
68. Bihar ul-Anwar, 93/282.
69. Kafi, 2/454.
70. Bihar ul-Anwar, 93/282.
71. Al-Khisal, Narration No. 4–16.
72. Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 89.
73. Takhmis al-Azriay by Sheikh Jaber Kazemi 130.
74. Bihar ul-Anwar, 71/44.

75. Al-Khisal, Narration No. 4–16.
76. Bihar ul-Anwar, 77/152.
77. Al-Khisal, Narration No. 3–56.
78. Al-Khisal, Narration No. 3–56.
79. Bihar ul-Anwar, 78/364.
80. Al-Khial, Narration No. 4–98.
81. Al-Khial, Narration No. 4–98.
82. I testify that there is no god but God. He in the Only. There are no partners for Him. I also testify that Muhammad is His servant and Prophet.
83. Bihar ul-Anwar, 94.
84. Al-Khial, Narration No. 4–98.
85. Bihar ul-Anwar, 454/10.
86. Ghurar ul-Hikam
87. Al-Khial, Narration No. 4–98.
88. Kafi, 2/352.
89. Iqbal ul-A'mal, 289.
90. Uyun Akhbar Al-Ridha, 28–48.
91. Uyun Akhbar Al-Ridha, 1/230.
92. Irshal al-Qulub 89/1.
93. Kafi, 2/74.
94. Kafi, 2/122.
95. Uyun Akhbar Al-Ridha, Narration No. 23–1.
96. Jame'a al-Asrar va Manba al-Anwar 383.
97. Denied and not thanked for.
98. Al-Khisal, Narration No. 2–5.
99. Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 108.
100. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 388.
101. Mustadrak ul-Vasa'el 16/319.
102. Mustadrak ul-Vasa'el 1/357.
103. Kanz ul-A'mal 9/277.
104. Kafi, 5/567.
105. Kanz ul-A'mal, 9.
106. Bihar ul-Anwar, 39/193.
107. Bihar ul-Anwar, 37/74.
108. Bihar ul-Anwar, 43/272.
109. Towheed, Sheikh Sadooq
110. Towheed, Sheikh Sadooq
111. Uyun Akhbar Al-Ridha, Narration No. 31–322.
112. Al-Khisal, 19–3. 19–3 الخصال صدوق
113. Bihar ul-Anwar, 1/220. 220\1 بحار الأنوار
114. Tuhuf ul-Uqool, 208.
115. Tuhuf ul-Uqool, 208.
116. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 388.
117. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 388.
118. Denied and not thanked for.
119. Al-Khisal, 2–5.
120. Bihar ul-Anwar, 65/70.
121. Bihar ul-Anwar, 73/274.

122. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 365.
123. Noor ul-Saqalayn, 4/287.
124. Ithna Asharia, Chapter 3.
125. Tuhuf ul-Uqool, 25.
126. Bihar ul-Anwar, 78/121.
127. Bihar ul-Anwar, 28/72.
128. Bihar ul-Anwar, 32/448.
129. Vasa'el ash-Shia, 11/436.
130. Ithna Asharia, 159.
131. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 73.
132. Bihar ul-Anwar, 2/25.
133. Bihar ul-Anwar, 32/488.
134. Kafi, 1/35.
135. Tuhuf ul-Uqool, 486.
136. Tuhuf ul-Uqool, 296.
137. Ithna Asharia, 159.
138. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 365.
139. Kafi, 2/54.
140. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 297.
141. Ithna Asharia
142. Bihar ul-Anwar, 1/97.
143. Tuhuf ul-Uqool, 292.
144. Mustadrak al-Vasa'el, 7/322.
145. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 396.
146. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 9.
147. Moravij az-Zahab, Vol.3, pp.384-389.
148. Zinat ul-Majalis, 164.
149. Nahjul Balaghah, Letter 31.
150. Al-Khisal, 3-17.
151. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 217.
152. Ithna Asharia, Babe Thalasiat 89.
153. Bihar ul-Anwar, 109/101.
154. Kafi, 2/311.
155. Bihar ul-Anwar, 42/176.
156. Bihar ul-Anwar, 42/157.
157. Bihar ul-Anwar, 70/76.
158. Kanz ul-A'mal, 1/22.
159. Bihar ul-Anwar, 81/69.
160. هو سهل بن زنجلة بن أبي الصغدي الرازي أبو عمر الخياط قال في التقريب صدوق وذكره في تهذيب من جملة رواة وكيعين الجراح الرواي عن زكريا بن أبي زائدة. وما في النسخ من "سهل بن نحره" أو "سهل بن بحره" تصحيف من عليه بكذا: أنعم عليه بن من غير تعب
- 161.
162. Bihar ul-Anwar, 81/173.
163. Bihar ul-Anwar, 2/32.
164. Kafi, 104/2.
165. Kafi, 2/104.
166. Jame'al Akhbar, 100.
167. Kafi, 2/105.
168. Kafi, 2/105.

169. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 136.
170. Kafi, 3/268.
171. Kafi, 2/339.
172. Kafi, 2/339.
173. Tafsir-i-Nur al-Saqalayn 2/280.
174. Irshad ul-Qoloob 1/193.

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