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34) Kinds of Sustenance

"واعلَم يا بُنَيَّ اَنّ الرزقَ رِزقَانِ: رِزقٌ تَطلِبُه ورِزقٌ يَطلِبُكَ، فَإن انتَ لَم تَأتِهِ اتَاكَ، ما اقبَحَ الخُضُوعَ عِندَ الحَاجَةِ، والجَفَاءَ عِندَ الغِنى، اِنّما لَكَ مِن دُنياكَ مَا اصلَحتَ بِهِ مَثواكَ، وَاِن كُنتَ جَازِعاً على مَا تَفَلَّتَ مِن يَدَيكَ، فاجْزَع على كُلِّ مَا لَم يَصِل اِلَيكَ.

استَدِل على مَا لَم يَكُن بِما قَد كَانَ فانَّ الأمُورَ اشبَاهٌ، ولا تَكُونَنَّ مِمَّن لا تَنفَعُه العِظَةُ إلا اِذا بَالغتَ في اِيلامِهِ، فانَّ العاقِلَ يَتّعِظ بِالآداب وَالبَهائِمُ لا تَتَّعِظُ إلا بِالضَرب.

اِطرَح عَنكَ وَارِداتُ الهُمُومِ بِعَزائِمِ الصَبرِ وحُسنِ اليَقِين.

مَن تَرَكَ القَصدَ جَارَ، والصَاحِبُ مُناسِبٌ والصَدِيقُ مَن صَدَقَ غَيبُهُ، والهَوى شَرِيكُ العَمى، ورُبَّ بَعيْدٍ اَقرَبُ مِن قَرِيبٍ وَقَرِيبٍ اَبْعَدُ مِن بَعيدٍ، والغَرِيبُ مَن لَم يَكُن لَهُ حَبِيبٌ.

مَن تَعَدّى الحَقَّ ضَاقَ مَذهَبُهُ، ومَن اقتَصَر عَلى قَدرِهِ كَانَ اَبقَى لَهُ، وَاَوثَقُ سَبَبٍ اَخَذْتَ بِهِ سَبَبٌ بَينَكَ وَبَينَ الله سُبحَانَهُ، ومَن لَم يُبالِكَ فَهُوَ عَدُوُّكَ.

قَد يَكُونُ اليَأسُ اِدراكاً اِذا كانَ الطَّمَعُ هَلاكاً، لَيسَ كُلُّ عَورَةٍ تَظْهَرُ، وَلا كُلُّ فُرصَةٍ تُصابُ، وَرُبَّما اَخْطَأَ البَصِيرُ قَصْدَهُ واَصابَ الأعْمى رُشْدَهُ، اَخِرّ الشَّرَّ فَاِنَّكَ اِذا شِئْتَ تَعجَّلتَهُ وقَطِيعَةُ الجَاهِلِ تَعدِلُ صِلَةَ العَاقِلِ، مَن آمَنَ الزَمانَ خَانَهُ ومَن اَعظَمَهُ اَهانَهُ، لَيسَ كُلُّ مَن رَمى اَصابَ، اِذا تَغَيَّرَ السُّلطانُ تَغَيَّرَ الزَمانُ، سَلْ عَن الرَّفِيقِ قَبْلَ الطَّرِيق، وعَن الجَارِ قَبْلَ الدّارِ، اِيّاكَ اَنْ تَذْكُرَ مِنَ الكَلامِ مَا كَانَ مُضْحِكاً وَاِنْ حَكَيْتَ ذلِكَ عَنْ غَيرِكَ"

“My son, be aware that there are two kinds of sustenance: sustenance that you seek and sustenance that seeks you – even if you do not come to it, it comes to you. How ugly it is to abase yourself for your

need and to be churlish when free of need! Only that much of your world is yours by which you set right your abode in the Hereafter. If you are grieved over what has slipped out of your hands, then grieve (as well) over all that which has not come to you. Seek an indication for what has not yet occurred through that which has already occurred, for affairs are similar (to each other). Do not be of those whom advice does not benefit unless you inflict suffering on them, for the intelligent one learns through good discipline and education, while animals only learn by being beaten.

Drive away from you incoming anxieties through resolute patience and the goodness of certainty. He who abandons moderation has deviated from the right path. A companion is like a relation. A true friend is one who observes the rights of friendship in one's absence. Desire is the partner of blindness (of the heart). Often the distant one is closer than the near one, and the near one is more distant than the distant one.

A real stranger is the one who has no friend. The path of one who transgresses the truth becomes narrow. One who restricts himself to his own capacity retains it. The firmest cord that you take hold of is the cord between you and Allah, the Exalted. One who has no concern for you is your enemy. When greed is destruction, then giving up hope (of what one desires) is an attainment.
Not every hidden defect becomes apparent nor is every opportunity seized. Sometimes a person possessing sight misses his objective, while a blind person attains the right path. Put off doing evil because you can hasten to it whenever you wish. Cutting off relations with an ignorant person equals establishing relations with the wise. He who feels secure against (the deception of) time has been deceived by it, and he who attaches great importance to it has been belittled by it. Every one who shoots does not hit the target. When the ruler changes, times also change. Make enquiries about the travelling companion before (embarking on) the journey, and about the neighbor before (purchasing) the house. Beware of uttering speech that causes laughter even though you report it from someone else.

Commentary

In this portion of the letter, Imam 'Ali (as) refers to numerous pieces of wisdom, some of which will be dealt with here:

1. All Kinds Of Sustenance:

Every creature, in order to survive, needs sustenance which is allocated by God.

> وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ رِزْقُهَا"769"

"And there is no animal in the earth but on Allah is the sustenance of it."

And since the physiological structure and the dietary planning of these creatures are different, God has

provided them with appropriate forms of sustenance.

"عِيالُهُ الخَلائِق، ضَمِنَ اَرزاقَهُم وقَدَّرَ اقواتَهُم"

"The dependants of God are His creatures. He has guaranteed their sustenance and determined their provisions."[1]

It is a fact that sustenance is predetermined, but since the world is governed by laws and for every action there are some means and agents and man's choices are among these means and agents[2], therefore man's struggle[3] to get the sustenance is as sacred as the religious holy wars.[4]
But since the distribution of sustenance is both qualitatively and quantitatively determined by God's special reasoning, sometimes some creatures receive so much sustenance that "a hundred wise men are puzzled at the rationale behind such distribution"[5]

Imam ‘Ali (as) in some sections of Nahj al-Balaghah refers to these two types of sustenance and stresses the following fact: Since this is a universal fact, an effort to earn sustenance through wrong and illegal methods is pure stupidity.

Imam (as) in the chapter on Hikam of Nahj al-Balaghah says:

"يابْنَ آدَمَ، الرِزقُ رِزقَانِ: رِزقٌ تَطلِبهُ وَرِزقٌ يَطْلُبُكَ، فان لَم تَأتِهِ أَتَاكَ، فَلا تَحمِل هَمَّ سَنَتِكَ عَلى هَمِّ يَومِكَ، كَفاكَ كُلُّ يَومٍ عَلى مَا فِيهِ، فإن تَكُن السَنَةُ مِن عُمرِكَ فإنَّ الله تَعالى سَيؤتِيكَ في كُلِّ غَدٍ جَدِيدٍ مَا قَسَمَ لَكَ، وإن لَم تَكُن السَنَةُ مِن عُمرِكَ فَمَا تَصنَعُ بِالهَمِّ فِيمَا لَيسَ لَكَ، ولَن يَسبِقَكَ الى رِزقِكَ طَالِبٌ، ولَن يَغلِبَكَ عَلَيهِ غَالِبٌ، ولَن يُبطِئ عَنكَ مَا قَد قُدِّرَ لَكَ"

"O son of Adam! There are two types of sustenance: the sustenance that you seek and the sustenance that seeks you. So do not impose the anxieties for the year ahead on the anxiety of today. What each day holds is sufficient for you. If the following year is part of your life, then Allah will give you in every new tomorrow what is apportioned for you. But if the following year is not part of your life, then what will you do with worrying about what is not yours? No seeker will precede you to your sustenance nor will anyone take it from you, and what has been destined for you will not held back from you."[6]

In another occasion of the same book, Imam ‘Ali (as) says:

"يابْنَ آدَمَ، لا تَحمِل هَمَّ يَومِكَ الّذي يَأتِيكَ عَلى يَومِكَ الّذي قَد اتَاكَ فانَّهُ اِن يَكُ مِن عُمرِكَ يَأتِ الله فِيهِ بِرِزقِكَ"

"O son of Adam! Do not impose the anxiety for the day which is to come on the anxiety of your present day. This is because if it is to be a part of your life then Allah will give you your sustenance in it".[7]

And in his letter, on "the sustenance you seek" and "the sustenance that seeks you", Imam ‘Ali (as) says:

"واعلَم يَا بُنَيَّ اَنَّ الرِزقَ رِزقَانِ: رِزقٌ تَطلِبهُ ورِزقٌ يَطلِبُكَ فاِن انتَ لَم تَأتِهِ أتَاكَ"

"*My son! Know that sustenance is of two types: the sustenance that you seek, and the sustenance that seeks you –even if you do not come to it, it will come to you."*

Examples:

There are many cases where sustenance has been after specific individuals. Here we will introduce the examples mentioned under this portion of Imam ‘Ali's letter by Ibn Abi al-Hadid:
a) ‘Imad al-Dawlah Abu al-Hassan ‘Ali b.Buwayh after defeating Ibn Yaqut entered Shiraz. He was a poor man with no wealth. On the way, his horse's leg was caught in a hole. He had to dismount and his servants freed the horse's leg. They saw a large opening in the ground. He ordered his men to dig the place and they found great treasures of Ibn Yaqut's.

b) One day ‘Imad al-Dawlah, was lying on his back in Ibn Yaqut's house in Shiraz when he saw a snake on the ceiling. He ordered his men to kill it but it ran away, taking refuge in the wooden planks of the church. He ordered his men to remove the planks. There, to their surprise, they found fifty thousand dinars of Ibn Yaqut's treasure.

c) ‘Imad al-Dawlah, after entering Shiraz and establishing the foundations of his reign desired to have clothing for himself and for his household. His men told him the tailor of Ibn Yaqut, a truly religious and benevolent man, was available. But he was a deaf man. He ordered the tailor to his presence. When ‘Imad told the tailor he wished for some clothes, the man trembled, saying: By God, My lord, I do not have more than four boxes of Yaqut's treasures. Emad was surprised and ordered his men to fetch the boxes. The boxes were filled with gold, jewelry and valuable cloth."[8]

2. How Improper It Is To Be Humble When In Need And Be Indifferent When In Free Of Need:

Humility, stubbornness, kindness and indifference should be based on self-esteem and submission to Allah and to righteousness and not on hypocrisy and financial considerations. There are a lot of people who are meek when in need and aggressive when free of need. The Holy Qur’an describes the attitudes of such people in different verses:

In Surah Yunus, God says:

"هُوَ الّذي يُسَيّرِكُم في البَرّ والبَحرِ حَتّى اِذا كُنتُم في الفُلكِ وجَرَينَ بِهِم بِرِيحٍ طَيّبَةٍ وفَرِحُوا بِها جَاءَتها رِيحٌ عَاصِفٌ وجَاءَهُم المَوجُ مِن كُلّ مَكانٍ وظَنُّوا اَنّهُم اُحِيطَ بِهِم دَعَوا الله مُخلِصِينَ لَهُ الدّينَ لَئِن انجَيتَنا مِن هَذِه لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ

"...الشَّاكِرِينَ فَلَمَّا انجَاهُم اِذا هُم يَبغُونَ في الأرضِ بِغَيرِ الحَقّ

"He it is who makes you travel by land and sea; until when you are in the ships, and they sail on with them in a pleasant breeze, and they rejoice, a violent wind overtakes them and the billows surge in on them from all sides, and they become certain that they are encompassed about, they pray to Allah, being sincere to Him in obedience: if thou dost deliver us from this, we will most certainly be of the grateful ones. But when He delivers them, lo! They are unjustly rebellious in the earth"[9]

The same issue is brought up in Surah al-'Ankabut [Qur'an 29]:

"فَإِذَا رَكِبُوا فِي الْفُلْكِ دَعَوُا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ فَلَمَّا نَجَّاهُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ إِذَا هُمْ يُشْرِكُونَ"

"So when they ride in the ships they call upon Allah, being sincerely obedient to Him, but when He brings them safe to the land, lo! They associate others with Him"[10]

And in Surah al-'Alaq [The Clot], the inordinate character of man when not in need is described as follows:

"كَلَّا إِنَّ الْإِنسَانَ لَيَطْغَى أَنْ رَآهُ اسْتَغْنَى780"

"Nay! Man is most surely inordinate, because he sees himself free from want."

These verses clearly show to us that some people's humility or stubbornness is not based on yielding to justice and keeping one's self-esteem in the face of humiliation; rather they are hypocrites and money-mongers. Thus, when they attain what they desire and feel no need, they will forget their beneficent God, resorting to injustice and aggression. But when they feel endangered and in need of God's assistance, they become humble in front of their creator. This group of people lacks self-esteem and obedience to Allah. A respectable human being never will approve this kind of attitude towards life.

Although these verses depict the attitude of those who become humble in front of God when in need but become stubborn when they are free from want, they are good examples for Imam 'Ali's statements. Such people are aggressive not only in front of God, but also in their dealing with people, as well. Imam 'Ali's reproach in his letter includes these people.
In other words, Imam 'Ali's statement is general. It includes everybody, both high-standing people and common ones. The poet says:

"خُلقَانِ لا اَرضاهُمَا لِفَتَى ـ تِيهُ الغِنَى ومَذَلَّةُ الفَقرِ ـ فاِذا غَنِيتَ فَلا تَكُن بَطِراً ـ واِذا افْتَقَرتَ فِتِه عَلى الدَّهرِ"

"There are two traits which do not suit a true gentleman: pride in possessing wealth, and humiliation in poverty. Thus, when you are wealthy do not be haughty and when you become poor, consider this world less important than it really is."[11]

3. What In This World Which Could Rebuild Our Hereafter Would Be Worth Of Noting:

Everything in this world including wealth, position, women, children, ornaments, residence, clothing, food and drinks will come to an end. Only that aspect of this world will remain which is divine.

The Holy Qur'an in this respect says:

"مَا عِنْدَكُمْ يَنفَدُ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ بَاقٍ وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّ الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنثَى وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهُ حَيَاةً طَيِّبَةً وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ"

"What is with you passes away and what is with Allah is enduring; and we will most certainly give to those who are patient their reward for the best of what they did. Whoever does good whether male or female, and he is a believer, We will most certainly make him live a happy life, and We will most certainly give them their reward for the best of what they did."[12]

Elsewhere the Holy Qur'an says:

" الْمَالُ وَالْبَنُونَ زِينَةُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَالْبَاقِيَاتُ الصَّالِحَاتُ خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَابًا وَخَيْرٌ أَمَلًا"

"Wealth and children are an adornment of the life of this world; and the ever–abiding, the good works, are better with your Lord in reward and better in expectation.[13]

Thus, that part of the world's good which is being consumed in this world and has no flavor of divinity attached to it would be a nuisance for man and its pleasure is little and worthless. But what has been used here in this world for God's sake and satisfaction will give a definite reward to man in the Hereafter.[14] In this regard the Prophet (S) has stated:

"یابنَ آدَمَ، لَیسَ لَکَ مِن مَالِکَ اِلاّ مَا اکَلتَ فَافنَیتَ او لَبِستَ فَابْلَیتَ، او تَصَدَّقتَ فَابْقَیتَ"

"O son of Adam! From your wealth nothing is left except that which you ate and consumed, or that which you wore and is now thread–bare, or that which you gave away as charity and it remains (for you)."

He has also said:

"اِذا مَاتَ ابنُ آدَمَ انقَطَعَ امَلُه اِلا عَن ثَلاثٍ: صَدَقَةٌ جَارِيَةٌ، عِلمٌ يُنتَفَعُ بِهِ ووَلَدٌ صَالِحٌ يَدعُوا لَهُ"

"When the son of Adam dies, his hopes are severed from all but three things: the charity that continues to circulate [*the good works done for people, e.g. books, hospitals, roads, mosques, etc...*]*;*[15] *the knowledge and learning from which people benefit, and a righteous child who will pray for him".*[16]

And Imam ‘Ali (as) in this connection says in Nahj al-Balaghah:

"شَتّانِ مَا بَينَ عَمَلَين: عَمَلٌ تَذْهَبُ لَذَّتُه وتَبقَى تَبِعَتُه وعَمَلٌ تَذْهَبُ مَؤنَتُهُ ويَبقَى اَجرُهُ"

"What a difference between these two deeds: a deed whose pleasure passes away but its (*evil*) *consequences remain: and a deed whose difficulties come to an end, but its rewards remain!"*[17]

Imam ‘Ali (as) has said in his letter:

"اِنّما لَكَ مِن دُنياكَ مَا اَصلَحتَ بِهِ مَثواكَ"

Do Not Worry Over The Past Events:

Change is interwoven in the very structure of life in this world. One sort of change is gaining things and losing them. Sometimes we lose objects which we love extremely and at times we get things we did not anticipate. Some people become disturbed upon losing things or obtaining what which entails misery for them. On the other hand, the elite become neither overjoyed nor depressed on what they get or lose. This is because firstly, everything is fatal: only Allah is everlasting:

كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ788 ـ كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ وَيَبْقَى وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ"789"

“Everything is perishable but Him”.
“Every one of it must pass away; and there will endure for ever the person of your Lord, the Lord of glory and honor."

Regarding this, a poet says:
Do not get hurt with the presence or absence of any goods;
Since any existing thing is perishable at the end.
Secondly, with a simple calculation, the elite calm themselves over lost or unattainable desires. They think these lost assets are like other lost ones or they are similar to thousand other desires which will never materialize. Since they do not worry over what is unattainable, they do not bother on losing them.

Thirdly, they consider this significant principle: "Be happy with what you presently have and do not

frown." They contend that showing discomfort is in contrast with the Principle of submission to God's will. Among these honored ones is the one who was 70 years of age and:

"790"وَلَم يَقُل شَيئٌ كَانَ، لَيتَهُ لَم يَكُن وَلا شَيئٌ لَم يَكُن، لَيتَهُ كَانَ

"For what happened he never said: I wish it had not happened; and for what did not happen, he never said: I wish it did happen".

It is for this reason that Imam ‘Ali (as), in his letter, commands us to:

"وَاِن كُنتَ جَازِعاً مَا تَفَلَّتَ مِن يَدِكَ فَاجْزَع عَلى كُلِّ مَا لَم يَصِل اِلَيكَ"

"If you are grieved over what has slipped out of your hands, then grieve (as well) over all that which has not come to you".

4. Base Your Reasoning For Future Actions On The Events Of The Past:

One of the ways to carry out reasoning is logical exemplification or what the jurisprudents call "*qiyas*" or "deduction."

By exemplification we mean proving a case because of its similarity to or identity with other cases. An example follows: In the same way that a house needs a builder, the sky and the earth, too, need a creator. Another, example: In the same way that wine is forbidden because it causes drunkenness, any alcohol, too, is forbidden because it brings about intoxication.

In any case, we see in history that the oppressors and tyrants are ruined or pleasure seekers finally become miserable or those who do not respect their parents will not prosper, we come to the conclusion that if we carry out these acts, we too will suffer.

As we have already seen, in the books on traditions this issue is interpreted as "getting experience" or "learning your lesson". Imam ‘Ali (as) refers to this topic in different occasions: Some examples are here:

a) "791"اِنَّ لِلبَاقِينَ بِالمَاضِينَ مُعتَبَراً، اِنَّ لِلآخِرِ بِالاوَّلِ مُزدَجَراً

"There are lessons from the past generations for those who remain. There are deterrents for the later people from the earlier ones."

b) "وَصدِّق بِمَا سَلَفَ مِنَ الحَقِّ واعتَبِر بِمَا مَضَى مِنَ الدُّنيا لِمَا بَقِيَ مِنهَا فَانَّ

"بَعضُها يُشبِهُ بَعضاً وآخِرُها لاحِقٌ بِاوَّلِها وكُلّها حائِلٌ مُفارِق

“Confirm what has preceded of the truth. Take lessons from what has past of this world for what remains of it, for they (*events*) *resemble one another, their end reaches their beginning and all of it is transient and unstable”.* 18

c) "فاعتَبِروا بِمَا اصابَ الأمَمَ المُستَكبِرينَ مِن قَبلِكُم مِن بَأسِ الله وَصَولاتِه وَوَقائِعِهِ

"وَمَثُلاتِهِ واتَّعِظُوا بِمَثاوِي خُدُودِهم ومَصارِعِ جُنُوبِهِم

“Take lessons from the chastisement of Allah, His assaults, His onslaughts and His exemplary punishments that befell the arrogant nations before you. Pay attention to their residence in the graves”. 19

d) "مَن لَم يَعتَبِر بِغِيَرِ الدُّنيا وصُرُوفِها لَم تَنجَع فِيهِ المَواعِظ"

“One who does not take lessons from the ups and downs and the changes of the world will not benefit from any admonition, either”. 20

e) "Only one who has taken lessons from his past will take lessons from his remaining life span."21
It is for this reason that Imam ‘Ali (as) in his honorable letter writes:

"استَدِلّ عَلى مَا لَم يَكُن بِمَا قَد كَانَ فإنَّ الامُورَ اشبَاهٌ"

“Seek an indication for what has not yet occurred through that which has already occurred, for affairs are similar (*to each other*)*”.*

5. The Wise Listen To Advice Through Good Manners, But The Beasts Do So Through Punishment:

One of the advantages of man over the beast is his capacity to be advised through education. It is man who, through his being equipped with the power of wisdom and free will, can go through a path which may make him enjoy human virtues and can keep him away from committing wrong doings.22

This state of taking advice and enjoying good manners is a criterion for man's values and is the best heritage and the most excellent garment for him.

But people are different in accepting advice: Some take advice with a small signal given them and do a lot of good deeds within a short time. Some are late and lazy in taking advice and do not adopt it unless punished or reproached. They behave like beasts that must be hit to go the right way. Imam (as), on this issue, writes in his sacred letter:

"وَلا تَكُونَنَّ مِمَّن لا تَنفَعُهُ العِظَةُ اِلّا اِذا بَالَغتَ في اِيلامِهِ فاِنَّ العَاقِلَ يِتَّعِظُ بِالاداب والبَهائِمُ لا تَتَعِظُ اِلاّ بِالضَرب"

"Do not be of those whom advice does not benefit unless you inflict suffering on them, for the intelligent one learns through good discipline and education, while animals learn only by being beaten".

Elsewhere, Imam ‘Ali (as) has stated:

"عُقوبَةُ العُقَلاءِ التَلويحُ، عُقُوبةُ الجُهّالِ التَصريحُ"

"The punishment of the wise is through a hint but that of the ignorant is through explicit speech".[23] However, there are some who will never take advice. This is not because they are not created as such; rather, this indifference of theirs toward taking advice is due to their wrong education or their getting accustomed to bad habits and performing sins so much so that they are not ready to employ their wisdom and to go the right path. If they wish, however, they could develop and change as it is said of an illegitimate child:

"اِنَّ وَلَدَ الزِنَا يَستَعمِلُ اِن عَمِلَ خَيراً جُزِيَ بِهِ واِن عَمِلَ شَرّاً جُزِيَ بِهِ"

"An illegitimate child performs his deeds; if he does good, he will be rewarded for it and if he does wrong he will be punished for it".[24]

The Holy Qur’an talks about these people as creatures worse than beasts.[25] They are also likened to salty land where nothing can grow but inferior herbage.[26] Our poets have said:

Education to an unworthy person is like a nut on the dome.
Another poem depicts the same thing:
The rain which is unanimously believed to be delicate
In the garden it causes tulips to grow, but in the salt marsh it causes thorns to grow.
All of the above cases depend upon these people's capability for performing vice. This is not taken to mean that they lack the necessary will to adopt the right way.[27]

6. Avoid Worries And Sorrows Through Patience And Real Conviction:

If we believe that God performs everything based on wisdom and expedience and also contend that

what He does is either pure benevolence or its goodness exceeds its badness, then we, as true believers, will anticipate all miseries willingly and will never show signs of impatience.
Of course, there are some calamities which are created due to people's mismanagement. In these cases they are to be blamed. Examples are:
One who has been careless in driving his car and has caused the death and injuries of others.
One who has lost his life through addiction; and one who has lost his wealth because of gambling or extravagance.

These people should not blame the others because they deserve the hardships they are facing.
But sometimes some events occur which are beyond our control, such as the following:
A strong earthquake might destroy his life and his building despite the fact that the building was designed in accordance with safety codes; some type of cancer might kill a friend or a relative of theirs; sometimes a flood or a tornado could bring about irreparable damages.
These extraordinary events, which are beyond our control and are among the general principles of this world are based on some valid divine wisdom. We might assume these happenings are harmful for us. But if our conviction is that God will not carry out a useless act and that these happenings are in our favor, we will suffer them with patience.

Thus, as Imam ‘Ali (as) has stated in his letter

"اِطرَح عَنكَ وَارِدَاتِ الهُمُومِ بِعزَائِمِ الصَبْرِ وحُسْنِ اليَقِينِ"

“Drive away incoming anxieties from you through resolute patience and the goodness of certainty”,

A patient believer will not allow worries and sorrows to bother him and what he sees in God is only beauty.

7. Putting Aside Moderation Is Injustice And Deviation From Rightousness:

In general, moderation in affairs is desirable and in accordance with justice and being extravagant and parsimonious are considered to be unjust. Our religious leaders have commanded us to observe the principle of moderation in livelihood, work, worship, food consumption, rest, struggle, and the like.

The Qur’an, in describing the attributes of the true believers says:

"وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا أَنفَقُوا لَمْ يُسْرِفُوا وَلَمْ يَقْتُرُوا وَكَانَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ قَوَامًا"

"And they who when they spend, are neither extravagant nor parsimonious, and keep between these the just mean"[28]

Upon his death bed, Imam ‘Ali (as) advises his son:

"اقتَصِد يَا بُنَيَّ في مَعِيشَتِكَ واقتَصِد فِي عِبَادَتِكَ"

"My son! Be moderate in livelihood and worship"[29]

On another occasion, Imam ‘Ali (as) said:

"مَن اقتَصَدَ في الغِنَى والفَقرِ فَقَد استَعَدَّ لِنَوائِبِ الدَّهرِ"

"One who is moderate in the face of poverty and affluence is prepared for the hardships of the world."[30]

The Islamic scholars in ethics consider good manners between the two extremes of extravagance and dissipation; bravery between timidity and boldness; generosity between dissipation and avarice, economy between extravagance and severity; modesty between pride and meanness; and chastity between sensual desire and lack of sexual drive. By the right path is meant moderation; any deviation of it brings about injustice and the subsequent descent to hell. This right path is narrower than a hair and sharper than a sword.[31]

Our poets have written:
Do not resort to gluttony to the extent that it is poured out of your mouth,
Nor eat too little so that you lack the needed energy.
A true walker is not the one who speeds up at one moment and gets tired the other moment;
Rather, a good walker is the one who goes slowly but steadily.
Imam ‘Ali (as) in his letter emphasizes:

"مَن تَرَكَ القَصْدَ جَارَ"

“He who abandons moderation has deviated from the right path”.

8. Your Companion Is Like Your Relative:

With regards to the previous discussions about the role of companions, we understood that a companion is a means of one's solace and help at the time of depression and an important factor in shaping one's character. And in this way the message of Imam ‘Ali (as) in his statement:

"والصَاحِبُ مُنَاسِبٌ"

"The companion is like a relative" becomes obvious. This is because where a relative has blood relation with one, a companion has spiritual relation with him.

"صُحبَةُ الوَلِي اللّبيبِ حَياةُ الرُّوحِ"

"Association with a wise friend is a means of life for the spirit."[32]

It is as though they possess one soul in two bodies.

"الأصْدِقَاءُ نَفسٌ وَاحِدٌ في جُسُومٍ مُتَفَرّقَةٍ"

"Friends are one soul in different bodies"[33]

The companion whom Imam Hasan (as) had in mind, has the following traits:

"فاصحَب مَن اِذا صَحِبتَهُ زَانَكَ وِاذا خَدَمتَهُ صَانَكَ وِاذَا اَرَدتَ مِنهُ مَعونَتَه اَعانَكَ وِان قُلتَ صَدَّقَ قَولَكَ وِان صِلتَ شَدَّ صَولَكَ وِان مَدَدتَ يَدَكَ بِفَضلٍ مَدّها وِان بَدَت عَنكَ ثَلمَةٌ سَدَّها وِان رآى مِنكَ حَسَنَةً عَدَّها وِان سَألتَهُ اَعطَاكَ وِان سَكَتَّ عَنهُ ابتَداكَ وِان نَزَلَتْ بِكَ اِحدَى المُلِمَّاتِ واسَاكَ مَن لا تَأتِيكَ مِنهُ البَوائِقُ ولا تَخْتَلِفُ عَليكَ مِنهُ الطَرائِقُ ولا يَخذُلكَ عِندَ الحَقائِقِ وِان تَنَازَعتُما مُنقَسَماً آثَرَكَ"

"Then associate with one who, if you associate with him he adorns you, if you serve him, he protects you, if you desire help from him, he aids you, if you speak, he confirms your speech, if you attack he supports your attack, if you stretch out your hand with favour, he stretches out his hand, if a breach appears in you, he fills it, if he perceives a good deed from you, he esteems it, if you ask him he gives it, if you are silent (*about it*)*, he anticipates* (*your request*)*, and if a misfortune befalls you, he assists you. Misfortunes do not come to you from him, nor does changeability befall you from him, and he does not fail to aid you in the realities* (*of affairs*)*; and if the two of you are in contention, he gives preference to you over himself."*[34]

Such an associate deserves being treated as a relative. We should carry out for him those responsibilities that we are supposed to perform for our relatives.

9. A True Friend Is The One Who Respects You In Your Absence:

A genuine friend is the one who respects you in your absence. He should not boast of his friendship in front of you nor should he act hypocritically in your absence. Imam ‘Ali (as) in the Hikmah section of Nahj al-Balaghah emphasizes:

"لا يَكُونُ الصَدِيقُ صَدِيقاً حَتّى يَحفَظَ اخَاهُ في ثَلاثٍ: في نَكبَتِهِ وغَيبَتِه ووَفَاتِه"

"A friend is not a friend until he safeguards his brother in three situations: in his adversity, in his absence and at his death."[35]

Imam Sadiq (as) gives the following advice to Muhammad ibn Muslim and his companion:

"وإن غَابَ فَاحفَظهُ في غَيبَتِهِ"

"When he is absent, then safeguard him in his absence."[36]

Imam ‘Ali (as), in his letter, emphasized the same principle:

"وَالصَدِيقُ مَن صَدَقَ غَيبُهُ"

“A true friend is one who observes the rights of friendship in one’s absence”.

10. Sensuality Is Like Blindness:

As we saw before, one of the factors which hinders man's realism is sensuality. Imam ‘Ali (as) says:

"فامَّا اتِبَاعُ الهَوى فَيَصُدّ عَنِ الحَقّ"

"Following desires hinders man from the truth."[37]

It is also said:

"حُبُّ الشَيئِ يُعمِ ويُصِمّ"

"(Too much) love for something makes a man both blind and deaf."

It is for this reason that Imam ‘Ali (as) wrote in his letter:

"والهَوى شَرِيكُ العَمَى"

"Desire is the partner of blindness (of the heart)."

In the same manner a sensual person is deprived of the ways to distinguish the right way. Imam ‘Ali (as) has stated in this connection:

"اوصِيكُم بِمُجانَبَةِ الهَوى فاِنَّ الهَوى يَدعُوا الى العَمَى وهُوَ الضَلالُ في الآخِرَةِ والدُّنيا"

"I recommend that you keep away from desire because it causes blindness and it is straying from the right path both here and in the hereafter."[38]

Imam ‘Ali (as) in this respect has said:

"اِنَّكَ اِن اَطَعتَ هَواكَ اصَمَّكَ واَعمَاكَ واَفسَدَ مُنقَلَبَكَ واردَاكَ"

"If you obey your desire, it will make you both blind and deaf and will ruin your hereafter and destroy you."[39]

He has also stated:

"One who follows his desire will be both blind and deaf."[40]

11. Close Strangers And Strange Relatives:

It can not be denied that in the school of the Prophets (as) the criterion for relationship is based on religious bonds. Otherwise mere blood relationship or belonging to a special tribe, race or family does not establish a credible relationship. For this reason God did not consider Noah's son as one of his family since his ideas were different from those of his father.

"إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ مِنْ أَهْلِكَ"

[41]

"He said: O Nuh! Surely he is not of your family."

Another example applies to Abu Lahab, the Prophet's uncle, who tormented the Prophet (S) and was therefore condemned by the Qur’an. Surah al-Lahab was revealed to the Prophet (S) in this case:

"تَبَّت يَدا اَبي لَهَبٍ وتَبَّ"

"Perdition overtake both hands of Abu Lahab, and he will perish"

On the other hand, although Salman was an Iranian, the Prophet (S) considered him one of his family members. The Prophet (S) has said:

"سَلمانُ مِنَّا اَهلَ البَيتِ"816"

“Salman is from us, the Ahl al-Bayt (*the Prophet’s family*)*”.*

It is on this basis that in our Islamic traditions there are some characters that carry the titles “Shi’ah” or “Muslim” but in behavior and in practice they do not look like the Prophet (S) or his household. They are expelled from the Muslim ranks, however. Examples are the following:

a) The Great Prophet (S) says:

"مَن غَشَّ مُسلِمَاً فَلَيس منّا"

“He who deceives a Muslim is not of us.”

b) Imam Sadiq (as) says:

"لَيسَ بِولِيٍ لي مَن اكَلَ مَالَ مُؤمِن حَراماً"

"One who unlawfully consumes a believer's property is not my friend".

c) The Great Prophet (S) has said:

"اَلا وَمَن اَكرَمَهُ النّاسُ اتِقّاءَ شَرّه فَلَيسَ مِنَّي"

"Indeed, one whom people respect in order to guard against his evil, is not of me”.

d) Imam ‘Ali (as) has said:

"لَيسَ مِن شِيعَتِنَا مِن يَظلِم النَاسَ"

"One who does injustice to people is not one of our Shi’ah."

e) The Great Prophet (S) said:

"مَن سَمَعَ رَجُلاً يُنادِي يا لَلمُسلِمِينَ فَلَم يجَبهُ فَلَيسَ بِمُسلِم"

"One who hears a person calling: 'O Muslims, help me,' and does not respond is not a Muslim."

f) Imam Baqir (as) told one of his followers named Jabir:

"واعلَم يَا جَابِر بأنَكَ لا تَكونُ لَنا وَلِيًّاً حَتّى لَو اجتَمَع عَلَيكَ اَهلُ مِصرِكَ وقَالُوا انتَ رَجُلُ سُوءٍ لَم يُحزِنكَ ذَلِكَ وَلَو قَالُوا اِنَّكَ رَجُلٌ صَالِحٌ لَم يَسُرَّكَ ذَلِكَ وَلَكِن اعرض نفسك على كِتَابِ الله"

"Know Jabir, that you will not be our friend until, if the inhabitants of your city gather against you and say: 'You are an evil man', you will not be grieved by that, and if they say: 'You are a virtuous man', you will not be made happy by that. Rather, you should judge yourself in accordance with the Book of Allah (*to discover the criteria for virtue and evil*). *"*

g) Imam Kadhim (as) said:

"لَيسَ مِنَّا مَن لَم يُحاسِب نَفسَهُ فَي كَل يَومَ"

"One who does not evaluate himself every day is not of us."

h) Imam 'Ali Ibn Musa Al-Reza (as) has been reported to have asked one of his friends: How do people interpret this verse: ***"O Nuh! He is not of your family..."***.[42] One of the attendants said that people think this verse means that Noah's son was not his real son.

Imam Reza (as) answered:

"كَلا لَقَد كَانَ اِبنُهُ ولَكِن لَمّا عّصَى الله نَفَاهُ عَن اَبِيهِ كَذا من كانَ مِنَّا لَم يُطِعِ اللهَ فَلَيسَ مِنَّا"

"No, it is not the case. He was really Noah's son, but when he disobeyed God, He negated his kinship with his father. In the same way, one who is of us but does not obey God is not one of us."

Thus, it is in accordance with what Imam 'Ali (as) has written in his sacred letter:

"وَرُبَّ بَعيدٍ اَقرَبُ مِن قَرِيبٍ وقَرِيبٍ اَبعَدُ مِن بَعِيدٍ"

"Often the distant one is closer than the near one, and the near one is more remote than the distant one". There might be some strangers who are closer to us than our relatives and some relatives who are more distant from us than strangers. And the Holy Qur'an, in this concern, says:

"يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ مِنْ أَزْوَاجِكُمْ وَأَوْلَادِكُمْ عَدُوًّا لَكُمْ فَاحْذَرُوهُمْ"

"O you who believe! Surely from among your wives and your children there is an enemy to you; therefore beware of them."[43]

And verses 22 and 23 of Sura al–Bara'ah [Tawbah] have similar content:

"... يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا آبَاءَكُمْ وَإِخْوَانَكُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ إِنْ اسْتَحَبُّوا الْكُفْرَ عَلَى الْإِيمَانِ"

"O you who believe! Do not take your fathers and brothers for guardians if they love unbelief more than belief; and whoever of you takes them for a guardian, these it is that are the unjust."

12. A Stranger Is One Who Has No Friends:

It is true that the word "stranger" is generally used for those who are away from their country; but a true stranger or lonely man is one who is deprived of friends and associates. For this reason a person who is away from his country is also called a stranger because there he lacks friends and associates.

Thus, if a person lacks friends in his own country, he can be said to be a stranger. If a man has appropriate friends in a foreign country, he is not still considered a stranger. For this reason, Imam 'Ali (as) has said:

"لَيسَ بَلَدٌ بِأحَقَّ بِكَ مِن بَلَدٍ، خَيرُ البِلادِ مَا حَمَلَكَ"

"No country is more suitable for you than another; the best country for you is the one in which you are accepted."[44]

In Imam 'Ali's conception, the poor and the deprived people are also considered stranger in their own homeland since they are generally deprived of people's association with them:

"والمُقِلُّ غَرِيبٌ في بَلدَتِهِ"

"A poor person is a stranger even in his own city"[45]

On the basis of this principle, Imam 'Ali (as) in his letter states:

"وَالغَرِيبُ مَن لَم يَكُن لَهُ حَبِيبٌ"

"A stranger is the one who has no friend."

By this statement, he wants to emphasize the significance of having friends. Imam 'Ali (as) has said: He

who does not have friends is a miserable person; and even more miserable than him is the one who easily loses his friends.

13. An Aggressor To The Truth Will Meet Several Hurdles:

The truth is defined as "a constant thing which coincides with reality." And since the Creator of the world is true and genuine and not whimsical and fantasy, God's religion and his Commandments are true and not satanic and absurd concepts. Thus, if anybody goes the right path in life, all the world rise in his support and will help him and will make him prosper. On the contrary, if anybody goes the opposite direction of the flowing river he will meet obstacles and will get destroyed.
This is an issue which is confirmed by both science and experience and by the Book (Qur'an), Traditions, and the lives of the Prophets and God's men.

The Holy Qur'an, on the occasion of the victory of the rightful army over the army of falsehood says:

"وَلَقَدْ سَبَقَتْ كَلِمَتُنَا لِعِبَادِنَا الْمُرْسَلِينَ إِنَّهُمْ لَهُمْ الْمَنصُورُونَ وَإِنَّ جُندَنَا لَهُمْ الْغَالِبُونَ"

"And certainly Our word has already gone forth in respect of Our servants, the apostles. Most surely they shall be the assisted ones, and most surely Our host alone shall be the victorious ones."[46]

The Qur'an, in another connection, emphasizes:

"كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَأَغْلِبَنَّ أَنَا وَرُسُلِي إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ"

"Allah has written down: I will most certainly prevail, I and My apostles. Surely Allah is Strong, Mighty."[47]

Elsewhere, concerning the true religion of Islam, which will finally prevail over the distorted religions, the Qur'an says:

"هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَى وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ"

"He it is who sent his Apostle with guidance and the religion of truth, that He might cause it to prevail over all religions, though the polytheists may be averse."[48]

Concerning the obvious fact that truth includes such powers as falsehood cannot defeat and anybody who decides to trespass its borders will be destroyed, the Holy Qur'an states:

"بَلْ نَقْذِفُ بِالْحَقِّ عَلَى الْبَاطِلِ فَيَدْمَغُهُ فَإِذَا هُوَ زَاهِقٌ"

"Nay, We cast the truth against falsehood, so that it breaks its head, and lo! It vanishes.[49]

And, in this connection, Imam ‘Ali (as) says:

"مَن اَبدَى صَفحَتَه لِلحَقِّ هَلَكَ"825

"He who displays his hostility to the truth will be destroyed".

Elsewhere he has stated:

مَن صَارَعَ الحَقَّ صُرِعَ

"He who endeavours to overpower the truth, will be overpowered."[50]

Imam ‘Ali (as) has also said:

"قَلِيلُ الحَقِّ يَدفَعُ كَثِيرَ البَاطِلِ كَمَا اَنَّ القَلِيلَ مِنَ النّارِ يُحرِقُ كَثِيرَ الحَطَبِ"

"Little truth will defeat much falsehood in the same way that a little fire will burn much firewood."[51]

In this connection, Imam Sadiq (as) has said:

"(لَيسَ مِن بَاطِلٍ يَقُومُ بِازَاءِ الحَقِّ اِلاّ غَلَبَ الحَقُّ البَاطِلَ وذلِكَ قَولُهُ: (بَلْ نَقْذِفُ بِالْحَقِّ عَلَى الْبَاطِلِ فَيَدْمَغُهُ"

"No falsehood can rise against truth without getting smashed by the truth. God, on this issue says:

Nay, we cast the truth against the falsehood, so it breaks its head, and lo! It vanishes [***Qur'an 21:18***].[52]

On the basis of this issue, Imam ‘Ali (as) in his letter says:

"مَن تَعَدّى الحَقَّ ضَاقَ مَذْهَبُه"

“The path of one who transgresses the truth becomes narrow”.

This is because this world, which is based on truth and justice, predisposes us to go the right path. Or

else encountering hurdles and hardships is inevitable.
The result is one's destruction. Baba Tahir Oryan, the Iranian poet, writes:
Don't engage in a work which entails hurdles,
And because of it the world looks a place of torture;
This is because after you, the readers will read your account,
And you'll become ashamed when they read yours.

14. Appreciation And Demanding In Accordance With One's Capabilities Are Two Potent Agents Of Success And Eternity:

There are two factors which determine one's success in life and his freedom. The first one is one's evaluation to find out his real position in the community and his self-esteem.
Second, upon having evaluated himself and having found his real status, he should try to accept responsibilities based on his innate capacities and not to exceed his limits: for instance, if he is not a philosopher, he should not pretend to be able to solve the problems of creation, or if he is not qualified to accept positions dealing with judicial, political, military and economic problems he should not accept such a post in the first place, and if he gets a chance to deliver a sermon, he should not go beyond his limits. It is natural that if he failed to recognize his true status in life, and consequently, if he accepted jobs he was not qualified for, he would betray himself and would deserve all the curses which would be levelled against him.

Imam's Guidelines In This Respect:

Both in Nahj al-Balaghah and Ghurar al-Hikam, Imam ‘Ali (as) has provided us with necessary guidelines. Here are some examples:

1. "رَحِمَ الله اِمرَءً عَرَفَ قَدرَهُ وَلَم يَتَعَدَّ طَورَهُ"

"May God have mercy on one who knows his own capacity and does not exceed it."[53]

2. "العَالِمُ مَن عَرَفَ قَدْرَهُ وَكَفَى بِالمَرءِ جَهْلاً اَن لا يَعْرِفَ قَدْرَهُ"

"A scholar is the one who recognizes his own worth. It is sufficient ignorance for a person that he does not know his worth."

3. "هَلَكَ مَن لَم يَعْرِف قَدْرَهُ"

"One who is not aware of his capacity will be destroyed."

4. "مَنْ جَهِلَ قَدْرَهُ عَدَا طَورَهُ"

"One who is ignorant of his capability will exceed his limits."

5. "مَنْ عَرَفَ قَدْرَهُ لَم يَضِعْ بَينَ النّاسِ"

"One who knows his capacity will not lose his self esteem among people."

6. "مَنْ وَقَفَ عِندَ قَدْرِهِ اَكرَمَهُ النّاس"

"One who does not go beyond his limits is respected by all."

Based on the above guidelines, Imam ‘Ali (as) in his letter has indicated:

"مَن اِقتَصَرَ عَلى قَدْرِهِ كَانَ ابْقَى لَهُ"

“One who restricts himself to his own capacity retains it.”

This means his self-respect will not be lost and his life will be more fruitful.

15. The Safest Means Between God And God's Servant:

In his life, man needs means to attain his objectives. But since these objectives are physical, they do not carry much significance because they are perishable anyway. In establishing relations with God, however, more attention should be used since this kind of rapport with God ends up in one's prosperity.

Thus, we will observe that Imam ‘Ali (as) in his Nahj al-Balaghah pays special attention to this issue enumerating these means in the following manner:

"اِنَّ اَفضَلَ مَا تَوسَّلَ بِهِ المُتَوَسِّلُونَ اِلى الله سُبحانَه وتعالى الإيمانُ بِهِ وبِرَسُولِه والجِهادَ في سَبِيلِهِ فانَّه ذُروَةُ الإسلامِ وكَلِمَةُ الإخلاصِ فانَّها الفِطْرَةُ واِقامَ الصَّلوةِ فانَّها المِلَّة واِيتَاءُ الزَّكوة فانَّها فَرِيضَةٌ واجِبةٌ وصَومُ شَهرِ رَمضانَ فإنَّه جُنَّةٌ مِنَ العِقابِ وحَجَّ البَيتِ واعتَمارُه فانَّهُما يَنفِيانِ الفقرَ ويَرحَضانِ الذَّنبَ وصِلَةَ الرَّحِمِ فانَّها مَثرَاةٌ في المَالِ ومَنساةٌ في الاجَلِ وصَدَقَةُ السرِّ فانها تُكَفِّر الخَطِيئَةَ وصَدَقَةُ العَلانِيةِ فانَّها تَدفَعُ مِيتَةَ السُّوء وصَنائِعَ المُعروف فانَّها تَفي مَصارِعَ الهَوانِ"

"The most excellent means by which those seeking access to Allah, the Exalted, seek access to Him is faith in Him and in His Messenger, Jihad in His way for it is the peak of Islam, the declaration of sincere belief (the unity of Allah and the prophethood of the Muhammad (as)), for it is the original nature (on

which Allah has created mankind), *the establishment of prayer for it is* (*the basis of*) *religion, giving the Zakat for it is an obligatory duty, fasting in the month of Ramadan for it is a shield from Allah's punishment, Hajj of the House* (*of Allah*) *and its 'Umrah, for they both repel poverty and wash away sins, establishing the ties of kinship for it increases wealth and defers death, giving charity secretly for it effaces sins, giving charity openly for it repels an evil death, and good deeds for they protect from situations of humiliation."*[54]

In verse 256 of Surah al-Baqarah [The cow] the safest approach from the above-mentioned ways is introduced as disbelief in the Shaitan and belief in Allah

"فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَى لَا انفِصَامَ لَهَا"

"Therefore, whoever disbelieves in the Shaitan and believes in Allah, he indeed has laid hold on the firmest handle, which shall not break off."

And in the Surah al-Luqman, verse 22, it is mentioned that submitting to Allah and engaging in good works are as two safest means to approach to God.

"وَمَنْ يُسْلِمْ وَجْهَهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَى"

"And whoever submits himself wholly to Allah and he is the doer of good* (*to others*)*, he indeed has taken hold of the firmest thing upon which one can lay hold".

Although the above ways and approaches are among the safest ways to get near to Allah, in traditions there are some suggestions to the effect that the safest way to attain God's path is to love the Prophet's Household and to believe in the guardianship of Imam 'Ali (as) and his progeny.[55] The reason for this fact is that the comprehension of the Book (Qur'an) and the genuine religion is not possible without resort to *wilayah* (guardianship) and the guidance of the Proptet's Household. In this connection Zurarah narrates from Imam Baqir (as):

"بُنِيَ الإسلامُ على خَمسَةِ اشيَاءٍ: على الصَّلوةِ والزَكَاةِ والحَجُّ والصَومِ والولايَةُ قال زُرَارَة فقلت: وأيُّ شَيءٍ مِن ذَلِكَ افضَلُ؟ فقال: الولايَةُ افضَلُ، لأنَّها مِفتَاحُهُنَّ والوالِي هُوَ الدَّلِيلُ عَلَيهِنَّ"

"Islam is based on five foundations: prayers, zakat, Hajj, fasting and guardianship." Zurarah then asked which one of these was the most excellent. Imam Baqir (*as*) *replied: "Guardianship because it is the key to the other four principles and the guardian is the guide to all of them."*[56]

Thus Imam 'Ali's sentence means:

"وَاوثَقُ سَبَبٍ اخَذْتَ بِهِ سَبَبٌ بَينَكَ وبَينَ الله"

"The safest resort to hold is to have relations with God."

The firmest cord that you take hold of is the cord between you and Allah, the Exalted

16. One Who Betrays You When You Are In Need Is Your Enemy

As we have already seen, a true friend is the one who participates in his friend's sorrows and happiness. One who does not forget his friend at critical occasions and makes use of his capabilities in solving his friend's problems:

"اَن يَرَى زَينَكَ زَينَهُ وشَينَكَ شَينَهُ، اَن لا تُغَيّرهُ عَلَيكَ وِلايَةٌ ولا مَالٌ، لا يَمنَعْكَ شَيئاً تَنالُهُ مَقدِرَتُهُ، اَن لا يُسلِمَكَ عِندَ النَكَبَاتِ"

"A true friend is the one who sees your virtue as his virtue and your dishonor as his dishonor, whose wealth and social status will not change his affections towards you, who does not spare you anything and will not betray you in misfortunes."[57]

Then how can a man be your friend when he does not care about your sufferings and does not put forth energy to solve them? These are an enemy's actions. For this reason Imam ‘Ali (as) says:

"وَمَن لَم يُبالِكَ فَهُوَ عَدُوكَ"

"One who has no concern for you is your enemy."

17. Where Greed Leads To One's Destruction, It Is Better To Give Up Hope (Of What One Desires):

The desire for happiness in life is for life's continuity. But sometimes a fulfilled desire such as gaining wealth, wife, or children may lead to one's destruction. In such cases it is better for his desires to change into despair. For this reason, Imam ‘Ali (as) emphasizes in his letter:

"قَد يَكُونُ اليَأسُ اِدراكاً اِذا كَانَ الطَمَعُ هَلاكاً"

"*When greed is destruction, then giving up hope* (*of what one desires*) *is an attainment.*"

In this case, this is better than the attainment of the desire. The lesson from this illuminating utterance we get is that we should do without greed in the first place, and secondly be happy under such

circumstances and not be full of sorrows.

18. Not Every Hidden Defect Becomes Apparent Nor Is Every Opportunity Seized:

For this sentence of Imam ‘Ali's there are two interpretations:
a) Since not every hidden defect is revealed and not every opportunity is attainable, we should not be sorry for people's hidden defects not having been revealed; neither should we be sorry for not having taken the lost chances. This is because the option is not always at our disposal.
b) Since this is the case, we should never try to reveal people's hidden defects; rather, we should always try to keep them hidden because Allah loves people's secrets not to be revealed. And we should not miss our chances because we might not get them any more.[58]
Although both interpretations are possible, the second one is more inclusive.

19. Sometimes a person possessing sight misses his objective, while a blind person attains the right path.

It is assumed that reasoning and sight lead to realism and blindness and ignorance deprives one of the comprehension of the truth. But this is not always true. Sometimes a wise and seeing man might not be able to recognize the truth but an ignorant and blind person reaches his goal. It is said:
"A good trained horse sometimes trots and a sword might be blunt." It is also said: “The arrow hit the target in the darkness”.

Imam ‘Ali (as) wants to generalize this fact that we should not exclusively rely on wisdom and external factors; rather, we should always rely on God's specific benevolence. This is because it is He who leads means and factors towards goodness.

20. Hurry In Carrying Out Good; Do Not Hasten To Perform Evil Since There Is Plenty Of Time For That:

Since the road to salvation, which is the same as the right path, is but one, therefore we should hurry in performing good doings. We should not procrastinate doing it because we might miss the chances.

But since there are different ways to perform evil, there is no need to hasten.[59] It is for this reason that Imam ‘Ali (as), in his letter, says:

"أخِّر الشَرَّ فَانَّكَ اِذا شِئتَ تَعَجَّلتَه"

“*Put off doing evil because you can hasten to it whenever you wish”* (in contrast to goodness for which you might not find time). It is for this reason that we see maxims such as:

"اِبدأ بِالحَسَنَةِ قَبْلَ السَيِّئَةِ فَلَستَ بِمُستَطِيعٍ لِلحَسَنَةِ في كُلِّ وَقتٍ وانتَ عَلى الإساءَةِ مَتى شِئتَ قَادِرٌ"

"Carry out good before getting involved in vices because you might not find another chance to do good; but for doing vices, you will always have a chance."[60]

Based on this philosophy, the sacred Shari'ah commands us to be better and faster than others in doing good:

فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ

"..therefore hasten to do good works..", [61]

and among the traits of the true believers is the haste in doing good

أُوْلَئِكَ يُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَهُمْ لَهَا سَابِقُونَ"838"

"These hasten to good things and they are foremost in attaining them".

21. Cutting Off Relations With An Ignorant Person Equals Establishing Relations With The Wise

Since association with people has both good and adverse effects on man's thoughts, ethics and actions, the beloved distinguished figures of Islam have always encouraged people to associate with the good ones and to avoid connections with the bad ones. Among the points these scholars have emphasized is their persuading people to sit with the scholars and the wise and to avoid association with the stupid ones.

The great Prophet (S), concerning the association with the wise and scholars says:

"لا تَجلِسُوا اِلاّ عِندَ كُلِّ عَالِمٍ يَدعُوكُم مِن خَمسٍ اِلى خَمسٍ: مِنَ الشَكِّ اِلى اليَقِينِ ومِنَ الرِيَاءِ اِلى الاخْلاصِ، ومِنَ الرَغْبَةِ اِلى الرَهْبَةِ، ومِنَ الكِبَرِ اِلى التَواضُعِ ومِنَ الغِشِّ اِلى النَصِيحَةِ"

"Do not associate but with a learned man who will invite you from five affairs into five other affairs: From skepticism towards conviction; from hypocrisy towards sincerity; from inclination towards this world to its rejection; from pride towards humbleness; and from deception towards sincere counsel."[62]

Imam 'Ali (as) has said:

"اَكثَرُ الصَوابِ والصَلاحِ في صُحبَةِ أُولي النُّهَى والألبابِ"

"Association with the men of thought and wisdom will bring about more of what is correct and good."[63]

He has also said:

"صَاحِبِ الحُلَمَاءَ وَالعُقَلاءَ وَجَالِس العُلمَاءَ والحُكَمَاءَ"

"Associate with the people of forbearance and intellect, and sit with the scholars and wise ones".[64]

Elsewhere, Imam ‘Ali (as) has said:

"يَنبَغِي لِلعَاقِلِ اَن يُكثِرَ مِن صُحبَةِ العُلَماءِ والأبْرارِ ويَجْتَنِبَ مُقَارَنَةَ الأشْرارِ وَالفُجَّارِ"

"It befits the person of intellect to be frequently in the company of the learned and the righteous ones, and to avoid association with the evil and sinful ones."[65]

In avoiding association with the ignorant and unwise ones, Imam ‘Ali (as) advises us:

"اِحذَر مُجَالَسَةَ الجَاهِلِ كَما تَأمَنُ مِن مُصَاحَبَةِ العَاقِلِ"

"Be wary of associating with the ignorant one just as you are safe and secure in the companionship of the wise."[66]

Imam ‘Ali (as) has said as well:

"اِذا احبَبْتَ السَلامَةَ فاجْتَنِب مُصاحَبَةَ الجَهُولِ"

"If you wish for safety and well-being, then avoid the companionshiop of the ignorant."[67]

Imam ‘Ali (as) has also stated:

"صُحبَةُ الأحمَقِ عَذَابُ الرُّوحِ"

"Companionship with the foolish is the torment of the soul."[68]

Imam ‘Ali (as) has also said:

"عَدوٌّ عَاقِلٌ خَيرٌ مِن صَدِيقٍ جَاهِلٍ"

"An intelligent enemy is better than an ignorant friend."[69]

Imam al-Hasan al-Askari (as) has said in this regard:

"صَدِيقُ الجَاهِلِ فِي تَعَبٍ"

"A fool's friend is in fatigue."[70]

This is what Imam 'Ali (as) means when he says:

"وَقَطِيعَةُ الجَاهِلِ تَعْدِلُ صِلَةَ العَاقِلِ"

"Cutting off relations with an ignorant person equals establishing relations with the wise".

It is now clear because cutting off relations with an ignorant person and establishing relations with a wise one makes a man safe from subsequent calamities.

An Iranian Poet says:
It is good to be a friend of the good,
The wise enemy is better than a foolish friend;
A wise enemy makes you flourish, but,
An unwise friend will destroy you.

22. Do Not Disregard The Deception Of Time:

Experience shows us that the world is not always in our favor.

It is time that sometimes brings about glory and sometimes misery.

The treacherous world has many tricks in store.

Thus, when the time is in our favor, we should not get proud and be indifferent to gain virtues and to gather spiritual assets and to help others. This is because our status might drastically change within a short time and our security might get into danger. Thus, at the time of prosperity we should act in such a way that if our conditions changed, we would not be sorry for not having done what we could have done.

We would like to be like that vizier's son from the Barmaki family who upon losing his ministerial position had to work in a public bath. One day he was bathing Muhammad Ibn Zayd Damishqi while the latter was reciting a poem. Upon hearing the poem, the vizier's son fell and became unconscious: The poem

says:

"وَنَفرَحُ بِالمَولُودِ مِن آلِ بَرمَكٍ ولا سِيَما لَو كَانَ مِن وَلَدِ الفَضْلِ"

“We are delighted at the birth of a son in the Barmaki family, especially if he is from the progeny of al-Fadl”.

Mohammad Ibn Zayd complained to the bath-owner that he had employed an epileptic worker. He replied that this worker had not done that before. When he came to his senses he said he got unconscious because of the poem. They asked him the reason. He replied: Do you know for whom this poem is written? Zayd replied: It is about the son of Fadl Ibn Yahya al-Barmaki. When he was born the poets wrote numerous poems but Fadl did not like them. Fadl asked me to write a poem on the spot. I wrote this poem which he appreciated. He gave me a thousand dinars as a reward. The bath-worker asked Muhammad: "Do you know where the son, for whom this poem was written, is now?" He replied "No." The worker said "That son is me".

Then Muhammad Ibn Zayd made a suggestion: He said, "Since that reward changed my life and I became prosperous and since I don't have any children, I am ready to give you all my wealth." The vizier's son is reported to have said: "I should live unknown, because if they know me they might assassinate me."[71]

The poet says:
Since the world does not turn in anybody's favor,
Suppose the sun were yours and the moon mine;
A partridge told a nightingale that the spring is not for ever,
Why are you happy or sad, flowers be yours and the herbs be mine,
There is not trace of either Kyani's or Sassanid's crown
What are you complaining of, Afsar, let the crown be yours and the hat mine.
Parvin E'tesami, the Iranian poetess says:
Many a harvest of hopes in an instant,
May change into ash by the burning lightning;
Do not rely on the victorious star,
Don't feel secure against the conspiracy of the time.
Another poet says:
My dear! Think about the ups and downs of days,
When affluent, think about the days you lack everything;
A breeze may disturb your book of Time,
Think about the leaf of your time book being turned over.

It is on the basis of this observation that Imam 'Ali (as) in his letter writes:

"مَن آمَنَ الزَّمانَ خَانَه"

"

“He who feels secure against (the deception of) time has been deceived by it.”

We should be more careful as Imam ‘Ali (as) commands us to:

> "خُذُوا مِن مَمَرِّكُم لِمَقَرِّكُم ولا تَهتِكُوا استَارَكُم عِندَ مَن يَعلَمُ اَسرَارَكُم ... لله آبائُكُم فَقَدِّمُوا بَعضاً يَكُن لَكُم ولا تُخَلّفُوا كُلاً فَيَكُونَ عَلَيكُم"

"Take from your place of passage for your abode of permanence, and do not tear the curtain of your secrets before One Who knows your secrets.... May God bless your fathers! Send some of your wealth ahead to the other world to be saved for you. Do not leave all of it behind (for heirs) so that it will be to your loss."[72]

23. One Who Magnifies The Times, Will Be Humiliated By It

Sometimes a man is put in favorable conditions and starts considering his new position very significant and is carried away by such conditions. But he should be aware that such magnifying of the times is not worth while considering and it is in contrast with human virtues. Magnifying time causes a man to perform actions which would bring about God’s anger. It is for this reason that in the instructions of the prophets and God’s men the world and its manifestations are humiliated.
Imam ‘Ali (as) says:

> "واللهِ لَدُنياكُم هَذِهِ اَهوَنُ في عَينِي مِن عُراقِ خِنزِيرٍ في يَدِ مَجْذُومٍ"

"I swear by God that this world of yours is more insignificant in my view than a pig’s bone in the hand of a leper."[73]

Imam ‘Ali (as) elsewhere considers this world more worthless than mucus from a sheep’s nose.
Imam ‘Ali (as) considers this world of less value than a chewed leaf in the mouth of a grasshopper:

> "وَاِنَّ دُنياكُم عِندِي لأَهْوَنُ مِن وَرَقَةٍ في فَمِ جَرادَةٍ تَقضِمُها"

It is for this reason that Imam (as) in his letter emphasizes:

"وَمَن اَعظَمَهُ اَهانَه"

“And he who attaches great importance to it (*the times*) *has been belittled by it”.*

This is because one who magnifies the world is made fearful of it. Such a person would carry out his whims and desires limitlessly and this leads to aggression and injustice and the commission of sins. At the final analysis, such a person is destroyed.

24. An Archer Does Not Always Hit The Target:

It is not the case that in our lifetime every attempt of ours will meet with good results. There are some factors which might nullify our activities. Some simple-hearted people might lose interest under such circumstances and get disappointed and at times pessimistic. But they have forgotten that such is the nature of life in this world. They should not get hopeless and should first of all continue with their trial and stick to the maxim:

Said the Prophet if you knock at a door,
Ultimately there is some one who will answer it.
Secondly, perhaps at that moment it was not to his best interest to have his desires fulfilled. It is for this reason that Imam ‘Ali (as) in his book emphasizes:

"لَیسَ کُلُّ مَن رَمَی اَصابَ"

“Every one who shoots does not hit the target.".

25. The Disturbances In Governments May Affect The Times:

As we have explained in the book "The factors leading to the progress of Islam and the Muslim failure", both of the government and the nation have mutual effect on each other. But the influence of the government due to its being a source of power is more than the nation.

A qualified government could within a short time make a nation which is in the worst intellectual, cultural, economic, political, ethical and social conditions move towards prosperity. An example is the attempts of the great Prophet (S) to improve the Arab nation. Another example is the success of Imam Khomeini in changing his nation from the status of being west-stricken to the status of a progressive nation to be set as a model for all Muslim nations.

On the contrary, a corrupt government can make a civilized nation suffer a lot. Examples are the government which failed through the weakness of the governors such as the Roman Empire, ancient Iran, and the failure of the Muslim governments in Spain, Turkey and the Arab countries and the failure of communism.

Thus, the change of governments has a tremendous impact on the fate of nations and the principle of Imamate and leadership in Islam indicates this impact.

And up to the time when a successor was not appointed for the Prophet (S), religion was "complete" and assets were inexhaustible. This is a good example for the deep influence of the government over a nation.

It is for this reason that Imam ‘Ali (as) in his letter has emphasized:

"اِذا تَغَيَّر السُلطَانُ تَغَيَّرَ الزَّمانُ"

“When the ruler changes, the times also change”.

We read in history that whenever corrupt and pleasure-seeking governors are in power they lead the society in the same direction. On the contrary, when an honest and honorable government is in power people are inclined to acquire knowledge and are willing to help the citizens. Naturally, these changes have effects on abundance or shortage of assets, on the prosperity and welfare, on the security of people, on the increase or decrease of crimes, on the spread of diseases, on the abundance of rain or drought, and on the longevity of people.

26. Attention To Fellow-Voyagers And Neighbors

As we have already seen, fellow-voyagers and neighbors are two factors which can affect our happiness.

Concerning friends, Imam ‘Ali (as) says:

"لَيسَ شَيئٌ اَدعَى لِخَيرٍ وَانجَى مِن شَرٍّ مِن صُحبَةِ الأخيارِ"

"There is nothing that is more conducive to good and safeguards more against evil than the companionship of good people."[74]

Elsewhere Imam ‘Ali (as) has stated:

"صَاحِبُ السُوءِ قِطعَةٌ مِنَ النّارِ"

"An evil companion is a fragment of fire"[75]

Since travelling entails great discomforts, a good friend can help us and make the voyage pleasant. On the other hand, traveling with a bad-tempered person would destroy the pleasures of a trip. For this

reason, Imam ‘Ali (as) in his letter has said:

"سَل عَنِ الرَفِيقِ قَبلَ الطَريقِ"

“Make enquiries about the travelling companion before (embarking on) the journey."

Imam ‘Ali (as) considers the respecting of the neighbors on the same level as paying respect to one's mother. At the end of his life, Imam ‘Ali (as) wrote in his will:

"الله الله في جِيرانِكُم فَاِنَّه وَصِيةُ نَبِيّكُم مَا زَالَ يُوصِي بِهِم حَتّى ظَننا اَنّه سَيُورّثَهُم"

"For God's sake, treat your neighbors kindly, since they are the subject of love and concern for your Prophet. He always recommended that we should respect them. This concern was so great that we thought he would allocate some portions of one's heritage for them."[76]

On the other hand, the Prophet (S) of has declared:

"لا اِيمانَ لِمَن لَم يَأمَن جَارُهُ بَوائقَه"

"One whose neighbor is not safe from his troubles, has no faith.”[77]

One's neighbor should be considered as one's own family. He should help them in bad times, keep their secrets and pay them full respect.[78]

Somebody came up to the Prophet (S) and said: I want to purchase a house. Where should the location be: in Jahnieh or Maznieh or Thaqif, or Quraysh? The Prophet (S) answered:

"الجَارُ ثُمَّ الدَار، الرَفِيقُ ثُمَّ السَفَر"

"First the neighbor, then the house; First the fellow-traveler, then the journey."[79]

On the basis of this issue, Imam ‘Ali (as) writes in his letter:

"وَعَنِ الجَارِ قَبلَ الدَار"

“..and (make enquiries) about the neighbor before (purchasing) the house."

Once Imam Sadiq (as) heard that one of his neighbors, due to his poverty, wished to sell his house. The

man had asked for two kinds of prices. One price was higher because of the house being next to Imam Sadiq's residence. Imam Sadiq (as) asked the man to come to him and paid him the price, telling him: “Since you are satisfied with our neighborhood we do not wish to miss you."[80]

For this reason it is said:

"الرَفِيقُ اِمّا رَحِيقٌ اَو حَرِيق"

"A friend is either exquisite nectar or fire."

"جَارُ السُوءِ كَلبٌ هَارِشٌ وَافعَى نَاهِش"

"An evil neighbor is a vicious dog and a snake that bites."[81]

27. Avoid Telling Jokes

Islam is not a religion of aggression or severity and a believer should have a good countenance. If a joke does not imply telling lies or disrespect to others, it is harmless because the great Prophet (S) and other Islamic leaders made use of jokes and laughter.[82]

But since telling jokes and involving in laughter include telling lies, ridicule and insulting others, and since they lower one's dignity, Islam generally does not approve it and recommends that the true believers avoid performing it.

Imam Sadiq (as) has said:

"اِيّاكُم والمِزَاح فَاِنَّهُ يَذهَبُ بِماءِ الوَجْهِ ومَهَابَةِ الرِجَالِ"

"Beware of joking since it destroys a person’s self-respect and dignity"[83]

He has also said:

"لا تُمازِح فَيُتَجَرّؤُ عَلَيكَ"

"Do not jest so that people become emboldened against you."[84]

Imam ‘Ali (as) has stated:

"دَعِ المِزَاحَ فَاِنَّه لقاحُ الضَغِينَةِ"

"Avoid joking since it is creates rancour."[85]

He reproaches laughter, saying:

"مَن كَثُرَ ضَحِكُهُ ذَهَبَت هَيبَتُه"

"One who laughs too much loses his dignity."[86]

He has also added:

"مَن كَثُرَ ضَحِكُهُ مَاتَ قَلبُهُ"

"One who laughs excessively, his heart dies."[87]

He has said as well:

"كَثرَةُ ضَحِكِ الرَجُلِ تُفسِدُ وَقَارَه"

"A person's excessive laughter destroys his gravity."[88]

On the basis of this issue, Imam 'Ali (as) in his letter emphasizes:

"ايّاكَ اَن تَذكُرَ مِنَ الكَلامِ مَا كانَ مُضْحِكاً وَاِن حَكَيتَ ذَلِكَ عَن غَيرِكَ"

" *Beware of uttering speech that causes laughter even though you report it from someone else".* Avoid meaningless sentences and jokes, even if you report them from the others.[89]

1. . Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon 91.
2. . Qur'an 53:39.
3. . Bihar, vol. 103, p.9.
4. . Bihar, vol. 103, p. 13; vol.78, p.339.
5. . Ghurar al-Hikam
God provides the retarded ones with sustenance,
In such a way that a hundred wise ones will wonder. [Sa'di].
6. . Nahj al-Balaghah, Hikmah 379.
7. . Nahj al-Balaghah, Hikmah 267.
8. . Ibn Abi al-Hadid's commentary on Nahj al-Balaghah, vol. 16, p. 115.
9. . Qur'an 10:22-23.
10. . Qur'an 29:65.
11. . Ibn Abi al-Hadid's commentary of Nahj al-Balaghah, vol. 16, p. 116.
12. . Qur'an 16:96-97.

13. . Qur'an 18:46.
14. ."The love of desires, of woman and sons and hoarded treasures of gold and silver and well bred horses and cattle and tilth, is made to seem fair to men; this is the provision of the life of this world; and Allah is He with Whom is the good goal of life" [Qur'an 3:14].
15. . Ibn Abi Al-Hadid's commentary, vol.16, p.116.
16. . Irshad al-Qulub, Daylami.
17. . Nahj al-Balaghah, Hikmah 121.
18. . Nahj al-Balaghah, Letter No. 69.
19. . Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon 192.
20. . Ghurar al-Hikam.
21. . Op. Cit.
22. . From the definitions which are offered for "adab" or "good manners", we have adopted the sense: "Enjoying human virtues and good manners and adopting correct methods of life and keeping away from ethical vices" (Dehkhoda's encydopedia, vol.5, pp.1545-1551, Kashshaf Istilahat al-Funun vol.1, pp.54 – 53. Mahmud Adil's Majma' al-Bahar, vol.1, pp.51-52)
23. . Ghurar al-Hikam.
24. . Safinah al-Bihar, vol. 560.
25. . "Allah has set a seal upon their hearts and upon their hearing and there is a covering over their eyes". [Qur'an 2:6]. "They have hearts with which they do not understand and they have eyes, with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear; they are cattle, nay, they are in worse errors; these are the heedless ones". [Qur'an 7:179].
26. . "And as for the good land, its vegetation springs forth abundantly by the permission of its Lord, and as for that which is inferior (its herbage) Comes forth but scantily". [Qur'an 7:58].
27. . Sa'di, in Chapter 7 of Gulistan narrates two stories, then adds some poems:
Although the source of silver and gold is stone
We may not find silver and gold in every stone;
The sun shines over everything in the world,
Somewhere it makes a bag and somewhere else it creates fragrant leather;
When the nature of a man is good,
He will be influenced by education;
No polishing will have effect
On the iron which is a bad nature;
Do not wash a dog in the seven seas
Because when it becomes wet, it becomes nastier
If Jesus's donkey is taken to Mecca,
When it comes back, it is still a donkey.
28. . Qur'an 25:67.
29. . Bihar, vol.78, p.99.
30. . Ghurar al-Hikam.
31. . In this regard refer to the book called Towards the Eternal world, p.350.
32. . Ghurar al-Hikam.
33. . Op. cit.
34. . Bihar, vol.44, pp.139-140.
35. . Nahj al-Balaghah, Hikmah 134.
36. . Bihar, vol.74, p.225.
37. . Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon 42.
38. . Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, vol.2, p.345.
39. . Ghurar al-Hikam.
40. . Op. cit.

41. . Qur'an 11:46.
42. Qur'an, 11:46.
43. . Qur'an 64:14.
44. . Nahj al-Balaghah, Hikmah 442.
45. . Nahj al-Balaghah, Hikmah 3.
46. . Qur'an 37:171 – 173.
47. . Qur'an 58:21.
48. . Qur'an 9:33.
49. . Qur'an 21:18.
50. . Bihar, vol.77, p.420.
51. . Ghurar al-Hikam.
52. . Bihar, vol.5, p.305.
53. . Ghurar al-Hikam.
54. . Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon 110.
55. . Refer to the Tafsir al-Burhan, vol.3, pp.278-279.
56. . Usul al-Kafi, vol.2, p.18.
57. . Part of a tradition from vol.2, p.639 of Usul al-Kafi.
58. . Mulla Muhammad Baqir Lahijani's commentary and translation of Nahj al-Balaghah, p.281.
59. . Abduh's commentary of Nahj al-Balaghah, vol.3, p.62.
60. . Ibn Abi Al-Hadid's commentary of Nahj al-Balaghah, vol.16, p.120.
61. . Qur'an 2:148.
62. . Bihar, vol. 74 P 189.
63. . Ghurar al-Hikam.
64. . Op. cit.
65. . Op. cit.
66. . Ghurar al-Hikam.
67. . Ghurar al-Hikam.
68. . Op. cit.
69. . Bihar, vol.78, p.351.
70. . Bihar, vol.78, p.374.
71. . Bohayre History, p.138, narrated from the Advice of History, vol. 3, p. 244.
72. . From Sermon 194 of Nahj al-Balaghah.
73. . Nahj al-Balaghah, Hikmah 236.
74. . Ghurar al-Hikam.
75. . Op. cit.
76. . Nahj al-Balaghah, letter 47.
77. . Wasa'il, vol.8, p.487.
78. . On the neighbors' rights, Imam Zayn al-'Abidin (as) has stated:
"The right of your neighbor is that you should guard him in his absence and honor him in his presence and help him when he is wronged. You do not pursue anything of his that is shameful; if you know of any evil from him, you conceal it. If you know that he will accept your counsel, you counsel him in what is between you and him. You do not forsake him in difficulty, you release him from his stumble, you forgive his sin, and you associate with him generously. And there is no strength save in God. (Trans. W. Chittick).
79. . Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, vol.2, p.80.
80. . The biography of Imam Sadiq (as).
81. . Ibn Abi Al-Hadid's commentary on Nahj al-Balaghah, vol.16, p.121.
82. . An old woman came to the great Prophet (S). The Prophet (S) told her: Old ladies will not enter the paradise. Upon hearing this, the woman began to cry. Then the Prophet (S) continued: the Old women become young when entering into

paradise [Mizan al-Hikmah, vol.9, p.140].

83. . Al-Kafi, vol.2, p.665.

84. . Op. cit.

85. . Ghurar al-Hikam.

86. . Op. cit.

87. . Op. cit.

88. . Op cit.

89. . For this refer to Al-Mahajjah, vol.5, p.231; Mizan al-Hikmah, vol.9, under the topic of jokes and laughter.

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