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Responsibility 17: Acquiring the Noble Ethical Traits Part 1

The next responsibility is to acquire the noble ethical traits (Makarimul Akhlaq) and a believer must struggle to attain these virtuous qualities.

The noble ethical traits and worthwhile qualities that a Shi'a of Imam al-Zaman (ajtf) must possess are many some of which include: silence, knowledge, forbearance, fellowship with the people, never going to extremes in the faith or in life, and other things.

Jabir b. 'Abdullah al-AnSari said to Imam Muhammad b. 'Ali al-Baqir (as):

يَاابْنَ رَسُولِ اللّٰهِ مَا أَفْضَلُ مَا يَسْتَعْمِلُهُ الْمُؤْمِنُ فِي ذٰلِكَ الزَّمانِ؟ قَالَ حِفْظُ اللِّسَانِ وَ لُزُومُ الْبَيْتِ

"O' son of the Messenger of Allah! What is the best action for a true believer during that time (the period of occultation)?" The Imam replied: "Protecting one's tongue (watching what he says) and staying at home (protecting one's self from corruption)."[1]

The meaning of protecting the tongue is to keep quiet and may refer to using dissimulation (taqiyyah) when necessary; staying at home means that one keeps away from corruption, refrains from sins and acts with caution with the transient world and the over-indulgence of pleasures contained within it.

The narrator of the following tradition asked Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) for guidance in regards to the best actions during the period of occultation, to which the Imam replied:

إِقْرَأْ عَلى مَنْ تَرى أَنَّهُ يُطِيعُنِي مِنْهُمْ وَ يَأْخُذُ بِقَوْلِي أَلسَّلاَمَ وَ أُوصِيكُمْ بِتَقْوى اللّٰهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَ الْوَرَعِ فِي دِينِكُمْ وَ الإِجْتِهَادِ لِلّٰهِ وَ صِدْقِ الْحَدِيثِ وَ أَدَاءِ الأَمَانَةِ وَ طُولِ السُّجُودِ وَ حُسْنِ الْجِوَارِ فَبِهٰذَا جَآءَ مُحَمَّدٌ ﷺ أَدُّوا الأَمَانَةَ إِلى مَنِ ائْتَمَنَكُمْ عَلَيْهَا بَرًّا أَوْ فَاجِراً فَإِنَّ رَسُولَ اللّٰهِ ﷺ كَانَ يَأْمُرُ بِأَدَآءِ الْخَيْطِ وَ الْمَخِيطِ

“Convey my salutations to the Shi’a whom you know to be obedient to me and who acts upon my words.

I also advise you to maintain consciousness of Allah, the Glorious and Noble, piety in relation to your religion struggle in the way of Allah, truthfulness in speech and giving back a trust (when you have been entrusted with something), prolonging the prostrations and to be a good neighbour since these (are all things) that Muhammad (blessings of Allah be upon him and his family) brought.

Give back the trust that someone has given to you to keep whether he be a good person or an open sinner, because certainly the Messenger of Allah (blessings of Allah be upon him and his family) used to command the return of the trust even if it be (something as small as) a thread and needle.”2

Imam Ja’far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) also said:

إِنَّا لَنُحِبُّ مَنْ كَانَ عَاقِلاً فَهْماً فَقِيهاً حَلِيماً مُدَارِياً صَبُوراً صَدُوقاً وَفِيًّا إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ خَصَّ الأَنْبِيَآءَ بِمَكَارِمِ الأَخْلاَقِ فَمَنْ كَانَتْ فِيهِ فَلْيَحْمَدِ اللَّهَ عَلى ذَلِكَ وَ مَنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ فِيهِ فَلْيَتَضَرَّعْ إِلى اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ وَلْيَسْأَلْهُ إِيَّاهَا. قَالَ قُلْتُ: جُعِلْتُ فِدَاكَ وَ مَا هُنَّ؟ قَالَ ﷺ: هُنَّ الْوَرَعُ وَ الْقَنَاعَةُ وَ الصَّبْرُ وَ الشُّكْرُ وَ الْحِلْمُ وَ الْحَيَآءُ وَ السَّخَاءُ وَ الشَّجَاعَةُ وَ الْغِيْرَةُ وَ الْبِرُّ وَ صِدْقُ الْحَدِيثِ وَ أَدَاءُ الأَمَانَةِ

“Surely we love that person who is intelligent, has understanding; deep knowledge of the religion, forbearing, compassionate, patient truthful and trustworthy. Surely Allah, the Glorious and Noble, graced the messengers with the noblest of ethics so whoever has these traits in himself should praise Allah for this and whoever does not possess them should beseech Allah, the Glorious and Noble, and plead for them from him.”

The companion continued: “I said to the Imam, may I be sacrificed for you, what are they?” The Imam replied: “They are to keep away (from sin), to be satisfied (with what one has), patience, thankfulness, forbearance, chastity, benevolence, courage, dignity, righteousness, truthfulness in one’s speech and returning the entrusted.”3

1. Kamal ad-Din wa Tamam an-Ni’mah, vol. 2, pg. 330
2. al-Kafi, vol. 2, pg. 636, no. 5; Wasa`il ash-Shi’a, vol. 12, pg. 6, sec. 1, no. 10496
3. al-Kafi, vol. 2, pg. 56, sec. on Makarimul Akhlaq, no. 3

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