

One Hundred And Fifty Lessons For Life

Author(s):

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In this wonderful book compiled by Ayatullah Nasir Makarim Shirazi, the reader learns many beautiful and beneficial narrations from the Ahlul Bayt (as) that teach us how to live a successful life based on the true Sunnah of the Prophet (S). The short but powerful traditions found within this short book serve as amazing examples of Islam's morals and attributes for those who wish to know some of this religion by means of a brief study. The original Arabic traditions are coupled with translation, as well as eloquent descriptions for the benefit of the reader.

Translator(s):

Monir Shafiei [4]

Category:

Hadith Collections [5]

Ethics [6]

Spirituality [7]

Featured Category:

Spirituality [8]

Translator Dedication

I dedicate this work sincerely to my parents, Zahra and Abolfazl, who did not spare any effort to help me succeed.

I also thank my husband, Ar-Ridha' Muhammad Husayni, who provided encouragement and help in all stages of my work.

I appreciate the valuable assistance of Mr. Ruin Naddaf in reviewing and editing this translation.

It is my earnest wish that this book would serve as a good reference for clarifying Islam's perspectives towards different issues in this world and the hereafter.

All success comes from Allah (S.w.T.).

Monir Shafiei 10.12.2000

Contents of This Book

In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful

Our greatest treasures of knowledge after the Holy Qur'an are the practices of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) and the valuable traditions of the household of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny).

Unfortunately, these traditions which are without dispute oceans of science and knowledge are yet to be well known. There are many traditions that in one short phrase speak volumes in terms of useful lessons which can solve many problems that we face today as a society. This book is a selection of such powerful and meaningful traditions together with a translation and a brief description.

It all started with the Friday weekly interpretation discussion meetings of the Assembly of Religion and Science inside the Imam Husayn Masjid in Tehran. A tradition was selected and everyone was to practice it throughout the week as a lesson. The traditions were so well received that it was decided to publish them.

This small book serves as an example of Islam's attributes for those who want to know Islam better through a short study. What is even more important in appreciating their worth is the practicing of these programs in our lives. Let us pray to God for success in understanding these traditions and then for being able to act on them.

Biography of the Author

The eminent scholar, Ayatullah al-`Uzma al-Hajj ash-Shaykh Nasir Makarim Shirazi was born in the year 1345 AH (1924 CE) in the city of Shiraz, Iran to a religious family who were well known for their great level of spirituality and noble ethical traits. His Eminence finished his elementary school studies in Shiraz and due to his eagerness to learn, his powerful memorizing capabilities, and other great talents, he was regarded as one of the extraordinary students from amongst his fellow classmates. Thus, he was able to complete two years of studies in one year!

The conditions that existed in Iran in those days obligated this young man, who possessed such a talent and great aptitude, to choose the path of University studies to increase his knowledge and attain advanced levels of secular studies. However through the hand of fate, the blessings of the Maintainer of the Universe, and his own internal desires, this young man developed an attraction to becoming better acquainted and delve deep into the genuine teachings of Islam. This attraction was intensified when after the spring of 1348 AH (1937 CE) (just after he finished his primary school), the Islamic Seminaries went thru a major transformation and had taken on a completely new form.

His Studies

His Eminence started his formal Islamic studies at the age of 14 in Madressah Agha Babakhan Shirazi and within a short period of time, was able to complete the introductory studies such as *Sarf*, *Nahw*, *Mantiq*, *Bayan*, and *Bad'i*, which were all needed to advance to the next level of Islamic studies.

After completing these sciences, he turned his attention towards the fields of Fiqh (Jurisprudence) and Usul al-Fiqh (Principles of Jurisprudence). Once again, due to the exceptional capabilities that he possessed, he was able to complete all courses in the introductory and intermediate levels of Islamic study in only 4 years—a task which normally takes 12 to 15 years. During this time, a group of students from the Islamic Seminary in Shiraz were also benefiting from the classes that he himself was teaching.

The positive criticisms and personal opinions of His Eminence on the classes being held in Qum, and regarding the need to include additional information in the texts currently being taught in various theological seminaries there, definitely played a role in the bright future that awaited him. While in religious gatherings in this city, his capabilities and genius, as well as meticulous and deep thought were witnessed by others; thus, no one was able to deny his God-given talents.

Although this brilliant star was only a mere 18 years old, through his deep penetrating knowledge and a

gift for written expression , he was able to write a commentary on the book *Kifayatul Usul* (one of the major books of *Ilmul Usul* that must be studied in the Theological Seminary). In this commentary he was able to bring to light the ambiguous issues mentioned in this classic book. At the age of 18, he formally entered the Theological Seminary of Qum. For the next five years, he was present in the religious gatherings and classes of some of the greatest teachers of those days, such as Ayatullah al-`Uzma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Muhammad Husain Burujerdi and other great personalities (may Allah be pleased with them all).

In 1369 AH (1950 CE) Ayatuallah Shirazi made his way to the Theological Seminaries of Najaf Al Ashraf. His purpose was to become better acquainted with the great scholars who were studying and teaching there, to learn more about their ideas and thoughts. . It was here that he was able to take part in the classes of some of the greatest teachers of that era such as: Ayatullah al-`Uzma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Muhsin al-Hakim, Ayatullah al-`Uzma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Abul Qasim al-Khu'i and Ayatullah al-`Uzma al-Hajj `Abdul Hadi ash-Shirazi and other great teachers (may Allah sanctify their spirits).

At the age of 24, His Eminence was granted the status of having complete Ijtihad from two of the great scholars of Najaf al-Ashraf. In addition, Ayatullah al-`Uzma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Muhsin al-Hakim even wrote a short, but comprehensive letter of commendation for His Eminence's notes on the lessons of Fiqh (The Book of Taharah).

His thirst for acquiring and gaining more knowledge continued with the great teachers in Najaf al-Ashraf. However, since he did not have the means to survive and continue his studies in this holy city, he was forced to return to Iran in the year 1370 AH (1951 CE). He made his way back to the holy city of Qum which was now the centre of gathering religious scholars. Once again, he joined the circle of scholars who later on, had a profound impact on his life.

After returning to Iran, Ayatullah Nasir Makarim Shirazi began teaching the intermediate and higher level of studies (Kharij) in Usul al-Fiqh and Fiqh. He has been teaching these classes for several decades in the theological seminary, classes which have been warmly accepted and appreciated by a large number of students. In addition, after teaching a large number of the important books of Fiqh, he went on to write summaries and notes of these great works. At present the classes of Kharij of Usul of this great personality are one of the most popular classes in the Hawza `Ilmiyyah of the Shi`a; close to 2,000 of the most dedicated and dynamic students who take part and benefit from his lectures!

From the beginning of his studies, he developed the habit of writing books in various fields of Islamic studies such as Theology, Islamic Awareness and the issue of *Wilayah* (of the Ahlul Bait). Moving ahead, he started to write on the Exegesis of the Qur'an, *Fiqh* and *Usul al-Fiqh* and is currently known and recognized as one of the greatest writers in the Muslim world.

Political Activities

His Eminence was also very active in the early days that culminated in the Islamic Revolution of Iran and it is because of this fact that he was thrown in the despotic ruler's jail many times. In addition, he was even exiled on three separate occasions to three different cities – Chanharat, Mahabad and Anarak. However after the Revolution, he was appointed to the first Council of Representatives and played a pivotal role in writing the first constitution.

The Religious Help and Support

Ayatullah Nasir Makarim Shirazi has been quite active in various fields of teaching and guiding the up-and-coming scholars in the Theological Seminary of Qum, and has embarked on various projects and endeavors, of which we mention just a few:

1. Religious Publications Centre for the Shi`a

From some time back, His Eminence felt the need for the Hawza `Ilmiyyah of Qum to have a general publication organization which would be able to defend the Shi`a from the works that were being published by those wishing to mislead the people, unfortunately whose number is great.

In addition, this is also something that the Muslims expected from such a great Islamic University such as the Hawza `Ilmiyyah, and thus people from different strata of the community starting from the great Mara`ja Taqlid of the Hawza and others also put forward this request that without doubt, a magazine should be published that would be able to answer the religious enquiries of the youth and give them the answers that they were looking for. In addition, such a publication would be able to fight against the books and magazines that were coming out aiming to mislead the people.

Due to the fact that at that time, there were some minds (within the Theological Seminary) that were not ready to accept such a publication, thus, His Eminence sought out serious and original-writing scholars capable of writing original articles to place the heavy responsibility on their shoulders of producing such a publication. In this regard, His Eminence, along with a group of other scholars and the assistance of the leaders of the Hawza `Ilmiyyah of Qum and the financial support of well wishers, launched the magazine, “Maktab-e-Islam”.

This magazine was definitely something which was unparalleled in the Shi`a world and maybe, compared to the various religious magazines being published at that time, from the point of view of its range of circulation was the number one magazine across the entire Muslim world. This magazine brought a fresh new path of direction to the great students and thinkers of the Hawzah.

At present, this publication has been going on strong for over 39 years, offering its valuable services to the Muslim world and the Shi`a communities. The magazine has found a special spot within the hearts of

the youth, university students, teachers and other noble personalities and it is through this publication that the light of Islam and Tashayya` has been spread from its focal point (Qum) to the entire world.

2. Organizing Gatherings to Offer Lessons in Theology and other Religious Teachings

His Eminence felt that the books that had been written in the field of Islamic Theology were not sufficient, nor were they, with the passing of time, able to answer the questions that were being raised. In addition, these books were also not adequate in addressing the needs of the current era. The traditional books of theology were written centuries ago where the questions that the materialists of today bring up were not mentioned. Also, the traditional books written in the past did not discuss the various world religions who were hoping to impose their values on the world. In addition, the older books brought up issues which were timely in their own day, like those in relation to the Asha`ris and Mu`tazili, but which may not be pertinent or applicable at the current time. .

Thus His Eminence, relying upon his literary talent and exceptional abilities, was able to present the Theological Islamic beliefs and the five Principles of Religion in an unparalleled way! Through organizing theological discussions with hundreds of people in attendance who were being made aware of these issues, a compact and concise book was compiled and published.

3. Islamic Council to Protect the Youth

His Eminence gave unparalleled lessons on Theology. He also taught other lessons and led discussions, educating his students in eight different subjects from amongst the different schools of thought throughout the world. Through these classes those being trained would be able to discuss and have debates with others, who are busy propagating other beliefs and schools of thought. They would be able to write books concerning their beliefs, and to be able to answer any questions or issues that they put forth.

Within a short period of time, these religious gatherings were able to produce students – each one of whom was firmly grounded and specialized in a particular field of study. and Even today, a group of active youth who are well known authors within the Hawza `Ilmiyyah, are busy with these studies.. As well, in order to save our dear youth from the clutches of corruption, His Eminence formed an organization called the *Educational Assembly for Protection of the Younger Generation*. One of the outcomes of this assembly is the publication of material that would be attractive to the youth, and his office made them available to the youth very promptly.

4. Struggles Against Deviant Thoughts

On one of his trips to the city of Shiraz, His Eminence came face to face with one of the Sufi groups in this city. A group of people in Shiraz requested him to write a book that would outline the principles of

these Sufis – one that would explain their beliefs in a polite and respectful manner. His Eminence, by making use of the resources available to him, sat down to write this book in the year 1953 CE which outlined their beliefs and thoughts, and he named it "*The Manifestation of Truth*".

The method in which he wrote this book caught the attention of the late Ayatullah al-`Uzma Burujerdi (may Allah be pleased with him) and after requesting His Eminence to see him, he congratulated the author for his valuable efforts. In relation to this book, Ayatullah al-`Uzma Burujerdi (may Allah be pleased with him) wrote the following commendation, "I have gone through this book in my spare time and did not find even the smallest of weak points in it. May Allah reward you for your troubles."

5. Establishing Organizations and Centres of Learning

In these regards, His Eminence had made the intention of establishing such organizations in the same number of Ma`sumin (peace be upon all of them) that we have (14) and with the praise of Allah up until now, he has been successful in establishing four such important schools within the Theological Seminary of Qum and two religious organizations for the welfare of the students who are living in the city of Mashad.

6. Writings

The number of publications of His Eminence currently lies at approximately 130 volumes of books which have all been printed – some of which have been reprinted more than 30 times! Some of these have even been translated into more than 10 living languages of the world and have been published in various parts of the world.

The commentary of the Qur'an authored by him, Tafsir-e-Namuna (The Ideal Commentary) has been translated into many languages, including `Arabic (al-Amthal Fi Tafsir al-Qur'an), and can be found in many homes. In addition to this commentary, he has also authored a thematic commentary of the Qur'an entitled Payam-e-Qur'an (The Message of the Qur'an) which has opened up a new chapter in the field of exegesis of the Noble Qur'an.

In addition, the books he has written on the theological beliefs have been a place where others can seek refuge from the assault of books written with false beliefs in them.

Of the books of Fiqh that he has written, we mention a few: Anwar al-Fuqahah, al-Qawa'idul Fiqhiyyah, Anwar al-Usul and the notes and commentaries on the complete text of `Urwatul Wuthqa which has been printed many times over.

His practical guide for Muslims (Tawdhahul Masail) has also been printed many times and has also been translated into `Arabic, Urdu, Turkish, Azari and English.

A complete list of other publications of this great scholar which have been translated into English and are

available is as follows. Most of these can be read on his website at www.makaremshirazi.org [9].

1. Ethical Discourses [40 Lectures on Ethics and Morality] – volume 1, 2 & 3 translated by Saleem Bhimji – published by the World Federation of KSIMC [www.world-federation.org] [10]
2. Khums: The Islamic Tax translated by Saleem Bhimji – published by the Islamic Humanitarian Service [www.al-haqq.com] [11]
3. Lessons in Islamic Beliefs – Tawhid, 'Adalah, Nubuwwah, Imamah, and Ma'ad translated by Laleh Bakhtiyar – published by Ansariyan Publications [www.ansariyan.org] [12]
4. Life Under the Grace of Ethics translated by Monir Shafiei – published by the Office of Ayatullah Makarim Shirazi [www.makaremshirazi.org] [9]
5. Message of the Qur'an – A Thematic Exegesis of the Noble Qur'an volume 1 of 10 translated by Saleem Bhimji – published by the World Federation of KSIMC [www.world-federation.org] [10]
6. One Hundred and Eighty Questions – volumes 1, 2 & 3 translated by Shahnawaz Mahdawi – published by the World Federation of KSIMC [www.world-federation.org] [10]
7. One Hundred and Fifty Lessons for Life translated by the office of Ayatullah al-'Uzma Shaykh Nasir Makarim Shirazi – published by Ansariyan Publications [www.ansariyan.org] [12]
8. Our Beliefs translated by the office of Ayatullah al-'Uzma Shaykh Nasir Makarim Shirazi – published by the Office of Ayatullah Makarim Shirazi [www.makaremshirazi.org] [9]
9. Philosophy of Islamic Rulings written in co-operation with Ayatullah Ja'far Subhani Translated by Sayyid Athar Rizvi – published by Ansariyan Publications [www.ansariyan.org] [12]
10. Summary of the Islamic Rulings translated by 'Ali Abdul Rasheed – published by the Office of Ayatullah Makarim Shirazi [www.makaremshirazi.org] [9]
11. Tafsir of the Noble Qur'an – Suratul Jinn translated by Saleem Bhimji – published by the Islamic Humanitarian Service and the World Federation of KSIMC [www.al-haqq.com] [11] & [www.world-federation.org] [10]
12. The tradition of Ghadir – The Expressive Evidence for Imamate translated by the office of Ayatullah al-'Uzma Shaykh Nasir Makarim Shirazi – published by the Office of Ayatullah Makarim Shirazi [www.makaremshirazi.org] [9]
13. The Noble Qur'an – Translation and Commentary – volume 1 – 4 translated by Mansoor Amini – published by the Office of Ayatullah Makarim Shirazi [www.makaremshirazi.org] [9]
14. The Islamic Laws translated by the office of Ayatullah al-'Uzma Shaykh Nasir Makarim Shirazi –

Lesson one: Thinking, reflection, meditation

Imam Ali (a.s) said:

"أَلَا لَا خَيْرَ فِي عِلْمٍ لَيْسَ فِيهِ تَفَهُّمٌ، أَلَا لَا خَيْرَ فِي قِرَاءَةِ لَيْسَ فِيهَا تَدَبُّرٌ، أَلَا لَا خَيْرَ فِي عِبَادَةِ لَيْسَ فِيهَا تَفَكُّرٌ"

Translation

Be aware! Knowledge without thinking has no profit! 1

Be aware! Recitation of the Qur'an without reflection is of little use!

Be aware! Worship lacking reflection has no effect!

Brief Description

Filling the brain with scientific formulas, logical rules and philosophical principles and other knowledge has little effect if it is not based on proper reflection, a clear world-view and familiarity with fundamentals of man's life.

Reciting holy verses of the Holy Qur'an has little effect when it is not accompanied by reflection and thinking about them. Similarly, other forms of worship devoid of the light of thinking and wisdom are like a spiritless body and unable to impart their high educational value.

1. Al-Kafi, Volume One, Page 36 and Tuhaful Uqul, Maani Al-Akhbar, page 226; Bihar Al-Anwar Volume 2, page 48-49, Aalamu Addeen, page 100, Mishkat Al-Anwar 137-138, Muniat Almureed 162.

Lesson Two: Measure of Deliberation

Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

"صَلَحُ حَالِ التَّعَايِشِ وَالتَّعَاشِرِ مِثْلُ مِكيَالِ ثُلثَاهُ فِطْنَةٌ وَ ثُلُثُهُ تَغَافُلٌ"

Translation

Improving the situation of life and association is possible through using a measure, two thirds of which is vigilance and one third of which is negligence. 1

Brief Description

No work project can be started without proper study, planning and vigilance, and yet a project cannot be completed in a timely manner without some bold decisions based on intuition, experience or outright risk-taking.

In other words, if we dive into endeavors without careful investigation, feasibility studies and work plans, we will not succeed. However, this should not mean that we get bogged down for months and years in trying to tie up all loose ends and going into unnecessary details to cover all possible uncertainties. In most cases, time is of essence for a successful outcome.

Hence the need to balance the vigilance for most part (two-third) with some non-vigilance or expediency (for the remaining one third).

1. From the book Tuhaful Uql, page 267; Bihar Al-Anwar Vol 75, page 241

Lesson Three: What About the Soul's Food?

Imam Hasan (a.s.) said:

"عَجِبْتُ لِمَنْ يَتَفَكَّرُ فِي مَأْكُولِهِ كَيْفَ لَا يَتَفَكَّرُ فِي مَعْقُولِهِ، فَيَجْنِبُ بَطْنَهُ مَا يُؤْذِيهِ وَ"

يُودِعُ صَدْرَهُ مَا يُرِيدِهِ.

Translation

I wonder about those who think about their body's food, but do not think about their soul's food. They keep undesirable food away from their belly, but fill up their heart with destructive subjects.¹

Brief Description

Our people are usually quite careful with their food and do not start eating unless they know what it is. They avoid anything that looks doubtful and some go to great lengths to ensure that the body receives good, clean, healthy diet.

Yet, when it comes to the food for the soul, these same individuals will throw caution to the winds. With eyes closed, unaware of the reality, they would have no hesitation in pouring down any mental food into their soul.

They harm their souls by accepting without question the speeches of unsuitable friends, misleading press reports and suspicious or poisonous propagation, and this is very surprising.

1. Safinat'ul-Bihar 84, article of taste. Bihar Al-Anwar, vol 1, page 218.

Lesson Four: Role of The Pen

Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

"مَا رَأَيْتُ بَاكِياً أَحْسَنَ تَبَسُّماً مِنَ الْقَلَمِ!"

Translation

I have not seen any weeper nicely smiling like a pen. 1

Brief Description

The pen divulges the feelings and interprets the wisdom of man.

The pen is founder of civilizations and rotates the wheels of society. The pen conveys the worries and pain of man through its continuous weeping. It can at the same time brighten the landscape with its smile when it touches upon life's beauty and love, desire for life and its mysteries.

But it is regretful that when this pen is in hands of an incompetent person, its tears will change to drops of blood, and its smile is a snicker on the utmost human credits.

1. from the book Lataef wa Zaraef

Lesson Five: Between Two Great Responsibilities

Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

الْمُؤْمِنُ بَيْنَ مَخَافَتَيْنِ: ذَنْبٌ قَدْ مَضَى لَا يَدْرِي مَا صُنِعَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ وَ عُمْرٌ بَقِيَ لَا يَدْرِي مَا يَكْتَسِبُ فِيهِ"

Translation

A faithful believer is always anxious concerning two things: for his past sins and how God will treat him for these sins; and for his remaining life and the uncertainty about how he will spend it. 1

Brief Description

The most manifest sign of belief is feeling responsibility, both for what has transpired and for the duties and obligations that should be fulfilled.

Those who possess these two feelings will always think about compensation for past negligence, as well as finding the best possible way for using future opportunities. These thoughts are instrumental in the

continuous development and progress of a man or a nation.

The ones who are oblivious of their past mistakes and have no intention or plans to improve the future lead a poor and miserable life.

1. Usul al-Kafi, volume two, page 7

Lesson Six: Causes for Destruction of a Society

"أَرْبَعٌ لَا يَدْخُلُ بَيْتاً وَاحِدَةً مِنْهَا إِلَّا خَرِبَ وَ لَمْ يَعْمُرْ بِالْبَرَكَاتِ: الْخِيَانَةُ وَ السَّرِقَةُ وَ شُرْبُ الْخَمْرِ وَ الزَّانَا"

Translation

If any one of the following four things enters a home it will ruin the home and divine blessing does not re-establish it: treachery, larceny, drinking, adultery¹

Brief Description

This is true for homes as well as for the entire society.

When treachery penetrates into a society, the spirit of confidence disappears.

When larceny, in its different forms, appears therein, peace will not be found anymore.

When alcohol drinking becomes popular among people, they will have weak thoughts, disabled children and useless youth.

Lastly, when they are stained with adultery, the foundation of families will be weakened and their next generation will be mischievous.

1. from Nahjul Fasahah,

Lesson Seven: Indolence and Poverty

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

"إِنَّ الْأَشْيَاءَ لَمَّا اِزْدَوَجَتْ اِزْدَوَجَ الْكَسَلُ وَالْعَجْزُ فَتَنَّا بَيْنَهُمَا الْفَقْرَ"

Translation

The day in which everything married with one another, “indolence” and “weakness” mingled with each other, and their child was called “poverty and indigence”.¹

Brief Description

Everything is earned through effort and endeavors and this is the reality that Islam has taught us.

Indolence, debility, weakness and escaping from hard work and difficult challenges are never compatible with the spirit of belief. They will produce nothing but poverty in all aspects, including economic, moral and spiritual poverty. The striving believers on the other hand shall be self-sufficient and contented in all respects.

1. Bihar al-Anwar, volume 78, page 59 and Tuhaful Uqul, p. 158

Lesson Eight: Rain of Knowledge On Hearts

Luqman, the wise, said:

"يَا بُنَيَّ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحْيِي الْقُلُوبَ بِنُورِ الْحِكْمَةِ كَمَا يُحْيِي الْأَرْضَ بِوَابِلِ السَّمَاءِ"

Translation

My son! God revives the hearts of men with the light of knowledge as he revives dead lands with blessings of rains from the sky! 1

Brief Description

The land of man's heart is like a garden in which all types of seedlings, seeds of flowers, plants and strong trees are dispersed. If it is irrigated on time, a pleasant and fruitful area will blossom.

The only means of irrigation for this land is the reviving drops of rain of science and knowledge. Hearts lacking knowledge have no light, no fruit, and they are dead. We should always, and in all conditions, keep alive our souls with the light of knowledge.

1. from Bihar al-Anwar, volume one

Lesson Nine: Source of Arrogance

Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

"ما مِنْ رَجُلٍ تَجَبَّرَ أَوْ تَكَبَّرَ إِلَّا لِدَلَّةٍ يَجِدُهَا فِي نَفْسِهِ"

Translation

No one boasts to others unless he harbors a feeling of inferiority in himself! 1

Brief Description

Recent psychological and psychoanalytic research has proved that arrogance and boasting is nothing more than an inferiority complex. Those who suffer from it resort to the practice of magnifying themselves artificially to compensate for their deficiencies. By doing so, they only add to their inferiority and dislike in the eyes of their community.

So clearly evident is this from the Imam's saying . The faithful people are always modest before others

due to their internal dignity.

1. Bihar al-Anwar, volume 73, page 225

Lesson Ten: Three Worthy Things Before God

The Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him and his progeny) said:

ثَلَاثُ تَخْرُقُ الْحُجُبَ وَتَنْتَهِي إِلَى مَا بَيْنَ يَدَيِ اللَّهِ: صُرِيرُ أَقْلَامِ الْعُلَمَاءِ، وَ وَطْئُ
أَقْدَامِ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ، وَ صَوْتُ مَغَازِلِ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ"

Translation

There are three things that remove the veils and approach God's dignity: 1

The sound of the movement of scientists' pen when writing!

The sound of the paces of warriors in the cause of religion in the battle field!

The sound of the spinning wheel of chaste women!

Brief Description

What a strange and meaningful interpretation! There are three voices which penetrate into the depths of existence and their vibrations reach up to the everlasting nature of the world and approach God's dignity: voice of knowledge and pen, although it may be low and slow, voice of holy war and self-sacrifice, and voice of attempt, endeavor and work although it may be seemingly small.

And actually, these three things, knowledge, holy war, and work constitute the foundation of an honorable human community.

1. from the book "Ashahab fil Hikam wal Adab", page 22

Lesson Eleven: Martyrdom of Imam Husayn

(a.s.)

The Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him and his progeny) said:

"إِنَّ لِقَاتِ الْحُسَيْنِ حَرَارَةً فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لَنْ تَبْرُدَ أَبَدًا"

Translation

The martyrdom of Imam Husayn (a.s.) creates a fire and heat in the hearts of believers which will never be extinguished. 1

Brief Description

There have been a lot of bloody wars in the world which have faded from memory with time and are forgotten over the years. However, the self-sacrifice of those who offered their lives in the way of God and for freedom of men and honor and virtue, shall not be forgotten because God, freedom, honor and virtue do not get old. Imam Husayn (a.s.) and his companions were the pioneers of the martyrs for faith.

1. Mustadrak'ul-Wasa'il, volume 2, page 217

Lesson Twelve: Two Signs of a Real Muslim

The Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him and his progeny) said:

"لَا تَنْظُرُوا إِلَى كَثْرَةِ صَلَاتِهِمْ وَصَوْمِهِمْ وَكَثْرَةِ الْحَجِّ وَالْمَعْرُوفِ وَطَنَطْنَتِهِمْ بِاللَّيْلِ وَلَكِنْ أَنْظُرُوا إِلَى صِدْقِ الْحَدِيثِ وَأَدَاءِ الْأَمَانَةِ"

Translation

Do not respect only the excessives prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, righteousness with others and vigil of some people (although they are important in their own right). Rather, consider their “honesty” and “trustworthiness”!¹

Brief Description

A quick study of Islam clearly establishes the fact that the two decisive signs of a real Muslim are that he is honest and trustworthy. Performance of prayers, fasting and pilgrimage are certainly important and carry a high educational value but they are not a conclusive proof of a true Muslim. To complete the picture, a true Muslim must possess honesty and trustworthiness.

1. narrated from the book Safinat'ul-Bihar

Lesson Thirteen: Fire of Anger

Imam Baqir (a.s.) said:

"إِنَّ هَذَا الْغَضَبَ جَمْرَةٌ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ تُوقَدُ فِي قَلْبِ ابْنِ آدَمَ"

Translation

Anger and wrath are the burning flame of fire which is kindled inside man's heart by Satan.¹

Brief Description

When an angry man performs something or makes a decision, in most cases he will later regret and feel sorry because a burning fire of anger causes him to disregard his wisdom and intellect. The nervous system and muscles may cause him to inflict irreversible damage.

We should control and extinguish this satanic flame with utmost precision and speed. Once anger turns into uncontrollable rage, it would be too late to prevent it from burning and ruining our lives and those of others.

Lesson Fourteen: Source of Wealth

The Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him and his progeny) said:

"أَطْلُبُوا الرِّزْقَ فِي خَبَايَا الْأَرْضِ"

Translation

Seek for your sustenance in the depths of the Earth.¹

Brief Description

This instruction was issued by the Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him and his progeny) at a time when the importance of mines and other resources underneath the earth was not known.

Such instructions illustrate the richness of knowledge imparted to us by Islam as well as its emphasis on making efforts to search far and wide so as to exploit for our benefit the abundant natural resources including the ones hidden in the depths of the earth.

1. narrated from Nahjul Fasahah, Fuqh AIQuran, Volume 2, page 22

Lesson Fifteen: The Worst Profession

The Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him and his progeny) said:

"شَرُّ الْمَكَاسِبِ كَسْبُ الرِّبَا"

Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

"إِذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ هَلَاكًا ظَهَرَ فِيهِمُ الرِّبَا"

Translation

The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) said: the worst profession is one which is mingled with usury.

Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) said: When God wills to perish a nation, usury becomes manifest among them.¹

Brief Description

Despite the brisk market of usurers in the present world and special dependence of this world on usury in different forms, it is evident that usury destroys financial and economic system of societies and results in the terrible consequence of accumulation of wealth in the hands of a limited number of people and institutions.

This unfair distribution of wealth is the source of many misfortunes and rampant moral corruption all over the world.

1. Wasa'il 'ush-Shi'a, volume 12, pages 426 & 427

Lesson Sixteen: Mastership and Captivity

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

"تَفَضَّلْ عَلَى مَنْ شِئْتَ تَكُنْ أَمِيرَهُ، وَاسْتَغْنِ عَمَّنْ شِئْتَ تَكُنْ نَظِيرَهُ، وَافْتَقِرْ إِلَى مَنْ شِئْتَ تَكُنْ أُسِيرَهُ"

Translation

If you do favor for someone, you will become his master!

If you are not in need of someone, you will be at par with him!

If you are in need of someone, you will become his captive!

Brief Description

This rule powerfully governs the social relations of individuals and nations. Bountiful hands are always masters and begging hands are always slaves. The needy people and nations have effectively made themselves into slaves through looking to others to provide for their needs. A true Muslim is one who attempts to base his relations with others on mutual, not one-sided, assistance. Receiving gratuitous support should be limited to weak and feeble persons.

Lesson Seventeen: Hypocrisy and Affectation

Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

"لَا تُرَاءِ بِعَمَلِكَ مَنْ لَا يُحْيِي وَلَا يُمِيتُ وَلَا يُغْنِي عَنْكَ شَيْئًا"

Translation

Do not do your good deeds for affectation and trying to impress people . You should realize that people have no power on life or death nor can they solve any problem for you. 1

Brief Description

All appearances of the life of those who have gotten used to pretension and hypocrisy become hollow and empty. They are contented with aspects of life that have little substance and spiritual meaning, leaning instead towards vain imaginations, illusions and empty religious rituals . They gain nothing save appearances! For this reason, Islam strongly criticizes this ugly attribute and says that your destiny is not under control of these people, so why this facade?

Lesson Eighteen: Envy

Imam As-Sadiq (a.s) said:

"الْحَاسِدُ مُضِرٌّ بِنَفْسِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يُضُرَّ بِالْمَحْسُودِ"

Translation

An envious person sustains a loss to himself before causing a loss to the one he envies.¹

Brief Description

The spirit of envy refers to not tolerating others enjoying a blessing, and trying to deprive them from that blessing, or causing a loss to them in other ways.

An envious person's tendency is to act as a destructive force , seeking failure of others, rather than a constructive force that seeks one's own improvement and success.

Envy is a severe moral disease . Psychologists assert that feelings of resentment and jealousy harbored by the envious persons play havoc with their emotional and physical health and their actions bring suffering and humiliation only to themselves. It is far better to concentrate on one's own success as opposed to trying to hold others back .

1. Bihar al-Anwar, volume 73, page 255, Mustadraku wassa'il, volum e 12, page 19, Kashf Arriba, page 53, Misbah Ash-shari'a, page 104

Lesson Nineteen: Those deprived from God's

mercy

Imam 'Ali (a.s) said:

"مَنْ وَجَدَ مَاءً وَ تُرَاباً فَافْتَقَرَ فَأَبْعَدَهُ اللَّهُ!"

Translation

Whoever has available water and land, and still he is poor and needy, should expect to be deprived from God's mercy!¹

Brief Description

It is clear from Islamic traditions that Muslims throughout the world should use all the available resources such as animal husbandry, agriculture, underground resources and mines, professions, industry and commerce for alleviating poverty.

With hard work and good governance, a nation that has even one of these resources should be able to fulfill its economic requirements. Those who remain needy despite access to many resources will be deprived of God's mercy. Becoming needy and dependent on others is against the teachings and spirit of Islam.

1. Bihar al-Anwar, volume 103, page 65

Lesson Twenty: The Worst Friends

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

"شَرُّ إِخْوَانِكَ مَنْ دَاهَنَكَ فِي نَفْسِكَ وَ سَاتَرَكَ عَيْبَكَ"

Translation

Your worst friends are those who flatter and talk with you superficially and conceal your faults. 1

Brief Description

Escaping the realities and concealing the truths neither solves any problem nor is it a service to anyone. Therefore, friends who refrain from constructive criticism and from urging corrective actions and, instead, hide their friend's faults for his false satisfaction, or misrepresent it as a goodness, have failed to be faithful in friendship. They have also committed a great treachery that may cause serious damage to the prestige, reputation, honor and prosperity of their friend.

1. Ghurar al-Hakam

Lesson Twenty One: Completion of work

The Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him and his progeny) said:

"إِسْتِمَامُ الْمَعْرُوفِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ إِبْتِدَائِهِ"

Translation

Completion and continuation of a good deed is better and more important than beginning it.

Brief Description

We often see useful projects and actions in the milieu of our social life which are left uncompleted. Their doers have started them under the influence of a sudden motive, but they have lost their enthusiasm very soon and have left them uncompleted. Islam admires faithful and diligent individuals who accomplish the useful work which they commence. 1

1. Nahjul Fasahah

Lesson twenty two: Everlasting Programs

Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

"إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمْ يَبْعَثْ نَبِيًّا إِلَّا بِصِدْقِ الْحَدِيثِ وَ أَدَاءِ الْأَمَانَةِ"

Translation

Allah instructed all prophets to invite people to honesty and trust.¹

Brief Description

A healthy society is based on a number of core values, the most important of which is the priceless asset of public confidence and trust.

This is when the spoken word and actions take place in an environment of mutual trust. The greatest enemy of this valuable treasure is lies and treachery.

In the societies in which lies and treachery are popular, people are afraid of each other, people feel lonely, not knowing who to turn to and end up bearing a heavy load of life alone.

This is the reason why invitation to honesty and trust has always been included in programs of all the divine prophets.

1. Safinat'ul-Bihar

Lesson Twenty Three: The Most Severe Punishment

The Holy Prophet of Islam ((peace be upon him and his progeny)) said:

"أَشَدُّ النَّاسِ عَذَاباً فِي الْقِيَامَةِ عَالِمٌ لَمْ يَعْمَلْ بِعِلْمِهِ وَ لَمْ يَنْفَعَهُ عِلْمُهُ"

Translation

One who knows something and does not observe it, and does not use his knowledge, his punishment in the hereafter would be the most severe . 1

Brief Description

In Islam, knowledge is always regarded as a tool for practical application and for improving the life of an individual and the society. Otherwise it has no value.

Those who commit a sin unknowingly carry a lesser responsibility than those who do so with knowledge. The responsibility to enlighten others in the society is also proportionate to the degree of one's knowledge.

1. Bihar al-Anwar, volume 2, page 38

Lesson Twenty Four: Calamity of Debt

The Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him and his progeny) said:

"إِيَّاكُمْ وَ الدَّيْنَ فَإِنَّهُ هُمْ بِاللَّيْلِ، وَ ذُلٌّ بِالنَّهَارِ!"

Translation

Avoid borrowing as far as you can, because it causes grief during the night and contempt during the day. 1

Brief Description

The lure of the material life and competition to acquire luxuries in the present times has caused people to borrow more and more . Many are trapped in the vicious circle of higher debts and increasing

repayments leading to more borrowings to finance repayments.

Since a person in debt is not a free man, we are instructed not to undertake debt other than for a dire necessity. Debt is even more dangerous at the country level. Highly indebted countries expose their citizens and future generations to severe economic hardships and to erosion of their freedom and spiritual independence.

1. Bihar al-Anwar, volume 103, page 141

Lesson Twenty Five: A Healthy Social Life

Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

"لَوْ أَنَّ النَّاسَ أَدَّوْا حُقُوقَ أَمْوَالِهِمْ لَكَانُوا عَائِشِينَ بِخَيْرٍ"

Translation

If people honor the rights of each other and fulfill requirements of the poor, they will enjoy a good and satisfactory life.¹

Brief Description

The above tradition emphasizes the wisdom of the Islamic obligations placed on the rich to pay to the poor out of their property and savings and the obligation on everyone to respect and honor the rights of others. It clarifies that this is not merely a matter of morality or religious compliance. Rather it is an extremely important social principle with a strong bearing on the peace and prosperity of society.

One only has to look at the turmoil in the world today to appreciate the value of this gem from the treasures of Islamic knowledge. Dangerous reactions of the poor masses caused by class exploitation and unfair concentration of wealth in the hands of a few are tearing at the fabric of societies today. Peace and love are in short supply, violence and misery abound.

1. Wasa'il 'ush-Shi'a, volume 6, page 2

Lesson Twenty Six: Key of Misfortunes

Imam Hasan Al-'Askari (a.s.) said:

"إِنَّ اللَّهَ جَعَلَ لِلشَّرِّ أَقْفَالًا وَ جَعَلَ مَفَاتِيحَ تِلْكَ الْأَقْفَالِ الشَّرَابَ، وَ الْكِذْبُ شَرٌّ مِنْ
الشَّرَابِ"

Translation

God has placed evils and maladies under locks, the key of which is wine, and lying is even worse than wine. 1

Brief Description

The greatest and most effective tool against evils and maladies is wisdom and intellect, and this is a strong lock set on them. When the lock of “wisdom” is opened by the key of “wine”, all evils and obscenities are let loose and a drunk person is vulnerable to committing all sorts of crime, sin and corruption.

While a drunkard commits a sin under the influence of the mind numbing drink, a liar pollutes the social environment knowingly . When lying permeates a society, it kills the spirit of trust and reliance leading to sins and corruption. Hence lying is even more dangerous than wine.

1. Wasa'il 'ush-Shi'a, second volume, page 223

Lesson Twenty Seven: Signs of the People of Paradise

Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

"إِنَّ لِأَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ أَرْبَعَ عِلَامَاتٍ: وَجْهٌ مُنْبَسِطٌ وَ لِسَانٌ فَصِيحٌ وَ قَلْبٌ رَحِيمٌ وَ يَدٌ مُعْطِيَةٌ"

Translation

The people of paradise have four signs: open face, eloquent and clear tongue, a merciful heart and bountiful hand. 1

Brief Description

The noblest human schools are those which train individuals to acquire good character and become valuable members of the society because society is the source of all blessings.

The signs which the above tradition attributes to the people of paradise are all concerned with factors that strengthen social relations and sow seeds of affection in the land of society.

Open and pleasant faces, soft and kind, with clear and eloquent tongues, with hearts yearning to help people, and hands not holding back assistance – Yes! these are the signs of the people of paradise.

1. Irshad al-Qulub

Lesson Twenty Eight: Signs of a Hypocrite

Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

Luqman said to his son:

"لِمُنَافِقٍ ثَلَاثُ عِلَامَاتٍ: يُخَالِفُ لِسَانُهُ قَلْبَهُ وَ قَلْبُهُ فِعْلَهُ وَ عِلَانِيَتُهُ سَرِيرَتَهُ"

Translation

There are three signs of the hypocrites : their tongue is not consistent with their heart, nor their heart with their deed , nor their outward with their inward. 1

Brief Description

Hypocrisy is a painful , loathsome trait originating from low personality and weak will. To make themselves look better than they are , their tongues will tell a different story from what is in their hearts, they will not walk their talk, will not practice what they preach. They are a weak people , afraid to reveal their true selves , lacking the will and determination to improve themselves. They appear in different garbs and are treacherous with everybody, even themselves. Even more dangerous are the societies that display a good looking exterior but have bad, rotting , interior. Their tongue and the mass media, is in stark contrast with what is going on in the heart of these societies.

1. Bihar al-Anwar book, volume 15

Lesson Twenty Nine: Counsel

Imam Ali (a.s.) said:

"اتَّعِظُوا بِمَنْ كَانَ قَبْلَكُمْ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَتَّعِظَ بِكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِكُمْ"

Translation

Take counsel from your predecessors before the posterity takes counsel from your life and destiny.¹

Brief Description

History is full of lessons, full of examples and advice . The consequences of injustice, oppression, stagnation and neglect of the needs of changing environment and times are all reflected in the mirror of history. Imam 'Ali., with his extensive knowledge of human history, warns us to take counsel and learn lessons from the actions and mistakes and fate of our predecessors rather than repeat the same mistakes and leave a trail of misfortunes for the posterity to learn from.

1. Nahjul Balaghah, sermon 31

Lesson Thirty: Speech and Silence

Imam Ali (a.s.) said:

"لَا خَيْرَ فِي الصَّمْتِ عَنِ الْحُكْمِ كَمَا أَنَّهُ لَا خَيْرَ فِي الْقَوْلِ بِالْجَهْلِ"

Translation

Neither the silence of a wise man nor the speech of an ignorant has any profit. 1

Brief Description

God has urged those who are informed and learned not to remain silent against deviations, misbehavior, injustices and divisive actions of enemies . They should radiate the light of guidance, truth and justice on the hearts through their warm and reasonable logic and expression. Everybody is considered informed and responsible for what he knows, although it may be little. On the other hand, those who do not have sufficient information should not mislead people through their improper interference. That silence and this speech both cause misfortune.

1. Nahjul Balaghah

Lesson Thirty One: Delight of Forgiveness

The Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him and his progeny) said:

"إِذَا قَدَرْتَ عَلَىٰ عَدُوِّكَ فَاجْعَلِ الْعَفْوَ شُكْرًا لِلْقُدْرَةِ عَلَيْهِ"

Translation

When you overcome your enemy, adopt forgiveness and pardon as the gratitude for this victory. 1

Brief Description

In Islam's view, any favor and grace, without any exception, should be reciprocated by gratitude. For the gift of empowerment over the enemy, one expresses gratitude by forgiving the enemy. Victories become rooted only when enemy's heart is purged of the spite and the root cause of the opposition is removed. Pardon will touch their hearts in a way that yesterday's enemy becomes today's friend. It is then that the victory is truly complete – outwardly and inwardly. Conversely, those who seek vengeance after victory not only deprive themselves from a great human virtue, but also endanger their victory.

1. Nahjul Fasahah

Lesson Thirty Two: Asceticism in its Real Sense

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

الزَّاهِدُ فِي الدُّنْيَا مَنْ لَمْ يَغْلِبِ الْحَرَامُ صَبْرَهُ وَ لَمْ يَشْغَلِ الْحَالِلُ شُكْرَهُ.

Translation

The real ascetic in the world is one whose endurance is not defeated by the temptations of unlawful wealth and who is not distracted from god's remembrance and duty of thanksgiving when he acquires lawful wealth. 1

Brief Description

Some uninformed people have given a negative twist to the definition of asceticism. They have interpreted asceticism as giving up divine graces and economic pursuits and living like the poor.

This is not the case. Asceticism in its real sense is what is narrated above from Imam 'Ali (a.s.). And it could be summarized in two phrases: “enduring hardship rather than resorting to illegal means of acquiring things” and “not forgetting responsibilities and gratitude in respect of lawful things”. With this correct interpretation, asceticism becomes a force for self-improvement and reforms in the society rather than a negative influence on progress and prosperity.

Lesson Thirty Three: The rank of those who refrain from sins

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

مَا الْمُجَاهِدُ الشَّهِيدُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَعْظَمِ أَجْرًا مِمَّنْ قَدَرَ فَعَفَّ

Translation

One who struggles in the way of God and is martyred is not higher in rank than the one who can commit a sin but refrains. 1

Brief Description

In the eyes of Islam, the most worthy striving is that against one's own unlawful desires. Moreover, when one lives in an environment where opportunities to commit sins are plenty and indulgence is commonplace. This requires a strong grounding in morality and control over one's self and is also necessary for the struggle against enemy to be worthy and fruitful – a battle fought with sincerity, solidarity, pure intention, free from any selfishness and personal interest.

Thus the Imam' is saying that those who succeed in the battlefield of desires, resist sins and remain chaste in contaminated environments, are not in a lower rank than the martyrs in the way of God.

Lesson Thirty Four: The Best People

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

خَيْرُ النَّاسِ قُضَاةُ الْحَقِّ

Translation

The best people are those who judge fairly.¹

Brief Description

Fair judgment in legal, social and moral matters is only possible for one who gives equal treatment to his own and others' interests and his personal affection and hatred do not prevent him from justice and righteousness.

This is possible only for those whose existence is radiated with the light of belief, human virtues and love and affection for humanity . The powerful waves of selfishness, profit motivation and lust cannot overcome their mind and conscience. Such people deserve to be called “the best people.”

1. Islam is the Center of Society

Lesson Thirty Five: Worship of Free Men

Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

الْعِبَادُ ثَلَاثَةٌ: قَوْمٌ عَبَدُوا اللَّهَ خَوْفًا فَتِلْكَ عِبَادَةُ الْعَبِيدِ، وَ قَوْمٌ عَبَدُوا اللَّهَ طَلَبَ
التَّوَابِ فَتِلْكَ عِبَادَةُ الْأَجْرَاءِ، وَ قَوْمٌ عَبَدُوا اللَّهَ حُبًّا لَهُ فَتِلْكَ عِبَادَةُ الْأَحْرَارِ.

Translation

Worshippers fall into three groups:

Those who worship Allah for the fear of hell; this is the worship of slaves.

Those who worship Allah for his reward; this is the worship of mercenaries.

Those who worship Allah out of love and affection for Him; this is the worship of free men. 1

Brief Description

Although the promises of divine reward and punishment are all true, and his reward is very valuable and his chastisement is very painful, there are some high minded free men who do not see anything save God, and do not seek anything save God, and the measure of their heart is full of love and kindness. They are looking beyond rewards and punishment; their motive for observing God's command is only love mingled with his cognition and knowing.

1. Wasa'il 'ush-Shi'a

Lesson Thirty Six: What Breaks Man's Back

Imam Al-Baqir (a.s.) said:

ثَلَاثُ قَاصِمَاتُ الظَّهْرِ: رَجُلٌ إِسْتَكْتَرَّ عَمَلَهُ وَ نَسِيَ ذُنُوبَهُ وَ أَعْجَبَ بِرَأْيِهِ

Translation

The three types of individuals who destroy themselves: the one who magnifies his good deed, the one who forgets his sins, and the one who is opinionated. 1

Brief Description

Those who magnify their deeds will sit back , well satisfied with their work. This attitude hinders them

from progress and development.

Those who forget their sins will continue with new sins everyday instead of compensating for their previous sins. Suddenly one day they will find themselves down in the depths of despair .

Those who rely only on their own opinion will deprive themselves of valuable and essential knowledge and thinking of brilliant minds. They will be repeatedly involved in mistakes and finally their backs will break under the burden of the resulting problems .

1. Wasa'il 'ush-Shi'a, volume 1, page 73

Lesson Thirty Seven: Be clean

The Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him and his progeny) said:

أَفْوَاهُكُمْ مِنْ طُرُقِ رَبِّكُمْ فَأَحَبُّهَا إِلَى اللَّهِ أَطْيَبُهَا رِيحاً فَطَيِّبُوهَا بِمَا قَدَرْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ.

Translation

Your mouth is one of your ways to God. The most favorite mouth before Allah is the one most fragrant .
So keep your mouth as fragrant as you can. 1

Brief Description

The outward meaning is that since man uses his mouth to vocalize God's remembrance and worship and recite divine verses , he should keep it clean and fragrant.

The hadith's inward meaning signifies that the mouth which is one of the ways of relating with the divine paths and Allah's servants, is more favored by Allah when it becomes fragrant with good, clean and kind speech and is free from bad utterances, insults, lies and harshness.

1. Wasa'il 'ush-Shi'a, volume 1, page 358

Lesson Thirty Eight: Consequences of Ignorance

Imam al-Jawad (a.s) said:

مَنْ عَمِلَ عَلَىٰ غَيْرِ عِلْمٍ أَفْسَدَ أَكْثَرَ مِمَّا يُصْلِحُ

Translation

One who acts without knowledge and information will more often be a corrupter rather than a reformer. 1

Brief Description

Loss caused by ignorance is not merely limited to inability to make significant achievements in life. Those who act without knowledge also risk making dangerous mistakes leading to corruption and destruction.

One finds cases where an ignorant person intends to do good for his child, but he leads him to misfortune; intends to serve Islam, but disgraces religion; intends to create peace among people, but aggravates disputes and hypocrisy. He generally ends up doing more harm than good.

1. Montahal-aamal

Lesson Thirty Nine: Foundations of Guidance

Imam al-Jawad (a.s.) said:

الْمُؤْمِنُ يَحْتَاجُ إِلَى ثَلَاثِ خِصَالٍ: تَوْفِيقٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ، وَوَاعِظٌ مِنْ نَفْسِهِ، وَ قَبُولٌ مِنْ مَن يَنْصَحُهُ

Translation

The believers require three qualities: divine success, a preacher from the heart and soul, and acceptance from advisers. 1

Brief Description

In this life, man travels a path which has much acclivity and declivity and faces innumerable dangers which threaten to derail him. To succeed and become a useful and effective individual in the society, he firstly needs a spiritual relation with God whereby he is supported by God's pure essence, and then an aware and informed conscience advising him inwardly, and then hearing ears imbibing the thoughts, guidance, advice and consultation of others.

1. Montahal-aamal, Mustadrak Alwasail, Volume 8, Page 329. Bihar Al-Anwar, Volume 72, page 329, Tuhaf AlUqul, page 457.

Lesson Forty: Mourning

Imam Al-Baqir (a.s.) says:

النَّيَّاحَةُ مِنْ عَمَلِ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ

Translation

Mourning is one of the deeds of the age of ignorance (one shall not complain about the difficulties, rather he shall try to solve them). 1

Brief Description

This short and meaningful tradition has an outward and an inward sense.

Its outward refers to the irrelevant actions being popular at the age of ignorance. When somebody died, mourner women were invited to lament on his death by reciting their special songs and deceitful and false poems. And the other meaning, which Imam Al-Baqir (a.s.) may refer to, is that mourning and

complaining for hard and difficult events and problems of personal and social life is useless and causes waste of energy and facilities. Instead one should spend that energy to solve the problems, seeking a remedy by the strength of intellect and thinking as well as continuous effort and tolerance.

1. Wasa'il 'ush-Shi'a, vol 3, page 272, volume 1, page 915, Men La Yahthuruhi AlFaqih, Vol 4, page 3

Lesson Forty One: Examine Yourself Everyday

Imam Al-Kadhim (a.s.) said:

لَيْسَ مِنَّا مَنْ لَمْ يُحَاسِبْ نَفْسَهُ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ

Translation

One who does not perform self-examination everyday is not among us. 1

Brief Description

Preventing loss and increasing profit in any worldly activity, however big or small, requires continuous monitoring and assessment through inspection, measurement and accounting. One can see how careful people are in calculation of their material wealth. And how sensitive are the weight-watchers about small changes in their weight. Yet, surprisingly, some of them do not look into their human, moral and spiritual accounts even once during their life. What a terrible negligence!

A responsible and vigilant Muslim is one who, as the Imam says, examines his account everyday without exception. If he has done a good deed, he tries to continue it, and if he has done evil, he repents for it.

1. Sayings of the Imams, volume one, page 214

Lesson Forty Two: Belief is Stronger than Iron

Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

إِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَ أَشَدُّ مِنْ زُبْرِ الْحَدِيدِ إِنَّ زُبْرَ الْحَدِيدِ إِذَا أُدْخِلَ النَّارَ تَغَيَّرَ وَإِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَ
لَوْ قُتِلَ ثُمَّ نُشِرَ ثُمَّ قُتِلَ لَمْ يَتَغَيَّرْ قَلْبُهُ.

Translation

The believers are stronger than iron parts because when iron is exposed to fire, it changes, but if the believers are killed and then revived and again killed, there would be no change in their mentalities.¹

Brief Description

Life is a series of problems and complicated matters. Weak people surrender to them very soon and escape from the field, whereas those who are strong on account of their belief stand firm to tackle the challenges.

They know that there will always be hindrances in complying with God's command, abstaining from sin, and achieving honors and credits. They realize that self-control, self-sacrifice and resistance against rebellious desires is required in order to succeed. True belief gives them immense strength to continue their endeavor fearlessly in the path of religion.

1. Safinat'ul-Bihar, volume 1, page 37.

Lesson Forty Three: Reality of unity and divine justice

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

التَّوْحِيدُ أَنْ لَا تَتَّوَهُمَهُ وَالْعَدْلُ أَنْ لَا تَتَّهَمَهُ

Translation

Reality of unity of God indicates that one shall not define His essence according to one's imaginations, and belief in His justice infers that one shall not accuse Him in any work. 1

Brief Description

The principle of God's existence is clear and manifest for us and any particle from particles of this world points to His dignity, power, knowledge and ability. On the other hand, the reality of His essence is hidden from us because He is an infinite existence and beyond our understanding. So we should consider His essence to be beyond whatsoever we may imagine and this is the reality of unity.

Events occur in the world whose underlying mystery is not always known to us. Belief in God's justice says to us that all of these events are backed by sound reasons and any suspicion in this regard is not in conformity with belief in His justice and wisdom.

1. Nahjul Balaghah, Bihar Al-Anwar, vol 5, page 52. Aalamu Aldeen, page 318, Khasa'is Al-A'ima, page 124. Mutashabah AlQur'an, vol 1, page 105.

Lesson Forty Four: Some Signs of Belief

Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

الْمُؤْمِنُ حَسَنُ الْمَعُونَةِ خَفِيفُ الْمَوْنَةِ، جَيِّدُ التَّدْبِيرِ لِمَعِيشَتِهِ لَا يَلْسَعُ مِنْ جُحْرٍ
مَرَّتَيْنِ

Translation

A believer provides valuable assistance, has low expenditure, and is prudent in life, and is never bitten twice from one hole (never inflicted twice from one source). 1

Brief Description

Belief has some scientific, moral and social manifestation and signs, without which it is only a meaningless name. The above tradition refers to four signs of it:

- 1- believers provide valuable assistance to their Muslim brothers because their help is accompanied with compassion, honesty and awareness.
- 2- they do not have a luxurious and costly standard of living and do not commit offenses to provide for it.
- 3- they are prudent and aware in life especially in economic affairs.
- 4- they take lesson from each event immediately and thus they are not inflicted twice from the same source.

1. Safinat'ul-Bihar, Alkafi, vol 2, page 241, Wasa'il Alshia, vol 15, page 193.

Lesson Forty Five: World Is Not The Final Purpose, Rather It Is A Means

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

الدُّنْيَا خُلِقَتْ لِغَيْرِهَا وَ لَمْ تُخْلَقْ لِنَفْسِهَا

Translation

World is created for another purpose, not for itself. 1

Brief Description

People sometimes have difficulty comprehending the nature of this world . They find one set of interpretations of verses and speeches commending the world and its material tools , introducing it as a house of commerce or farm of saints . And then they find verses and speeches blaming it and calling it dangerous, deceptive and source of conceit .

The above tradition clarifies the issue succinctly indicating that when the world and its material tools are used as a means of attaining human development and justice and prosperity for all, it is to be valued and commended. But when it is considered as an end in itself , just for immediate and inordinate fulfillment of desires, with no higher purpose, and causes rebellion, conceit and obstinacy, it becomes hateful and dangerous.

1. Safinat'ul-Bihar, Bihar Al-Anwar vol70, page 133, Sharh Nahj Albalagha, vol 20, page 181, Nahj Albalagha page 557

Lesson Forty Six: Man, what is your price?

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ ثَمَنٌ إِلَّا الْجَنَّةُ فَلَا تَبِيعُوهَا إِلَّا بِهَا.

Translation

(Be aware) no price is good enough for you except everlasting prosperity and paradise, so do not exchange it for any other price. 1

Brief Description

Usually when somebody is asked about the price of his life, he cannot name a price . No price is high enough.

However, in reality, he exchanges this precious life gradually, day by day , for a very small price indeed. And, lo and behold, he wakes up one fine day towards the end of his life, to find that he has sold off this priceless asset in exchange for a house or a car or a country villa, which he will soon leave behind in any case ... when death comes knocking at the door !

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) says that nothing whatsoever of the material treasures of this world is worthy enough to be exchanged with the capital of your life. The only thing worth selling your life for is God's satisfaction, human and spiritual development that leads to an everlasting prosperity in paradise. This is the thing to buy with your life ; it is worthy of every endeavor, attempt and sacrifice one can make.

Lesson Forty Seven: Truth and Falsehood

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

إِنَّ الْحَقَّ ثَقِيلٌ مَرِيءٌ، وَإِنَّ الْبَاطِلَ خَفِيفٌ وَبِئْسَ

Translation

Truth is heavy and difficult but pleasant, and falsehood is light and easy but painful and dangerous. 1

Brief Description

How eloquent and interesting is this one short sentence of Imam 'Ali (a.s.) to describe truth and falsehood! Usually truth has a harsh appearance and occasionally a bitter taste but has very pleasant results. It is easily absorbed by the body and society is strengthened thereby.

On the other hand, falsehood comes easily and sometimes tastes very sweet, but its effect is fatal . It is like a delicious but poisonous food whose destructive effect on the heart, stomach, and intestines becomes manifest when it is swallowed. The poison of falsehood also destroys different organs of society.

1. Bihar al-Anwar, volume 70, page 107

Lesson Forty Eight: Most valuable heritage of Arab

The Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him and his progeny) said:

أَصْدَقُ كَلِمَةٍ قَالَتْهَا الْعَرَبُ كَلِمَةٌ لُبَيْدٍ: أَلَا كُلُّ شَيْءٍ مَا خَلَا اللَّهَ بَاطِلٌ، وَكُلُّ نَعِيمٍ
لَا مَحَالَةَ زَائِلٌ

Translation

The most accurate and eloquent phrase that an Arab has stated is the speech of Lobaid (famous poet) where he says: be aware anything other than God is false and any grace would be finally lost. 1

Brief Description

Awareness of the eventual destruction of wealth and positions and end of graces admonishes man to observe truth and justice in gaining them and to be moderate in consuming them.

Eternity and everlasting are terms that can only be applied to God's majestic stature, just as indestructibility and morality are attributable only to His pure essence.

One should remember this reality in every phase of material life and keep away from arrogance.

1. Mesbahol Sharia, page 45, Bihar Al-Anwar, vol 67, page 294

Lesson Forty Nine: Those who Defraud and Cheat

Imam Ar-Ridha' (a.s.) said:

لَيْسَ مِنَّا مَنْ غَشَّ مُسْلِمًا أَوْ ضَرَّهُ أَوْ مَا كَرَهُ

Translation

One who defrauds or causes a loss to a Muslim or tricks him, does not belong to us. 1

Brief Description

Those who find their happiness in misfortunes of others and their profit in loss of others are neither human nor true Muslims. They lack that social character which gives man superiority over other creatures.

Losses can be inflicted openly or may be hidden through frauds and tricks and other forms of dishonesty. Islam forbids these, whatever the form, as is apparent from the disgust expressed in the above saying of Imam Ar-Ridha' (a.s.)

1. Safinat'ul-Bihar

Lesson Fifty: Slander

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

الْغَيْبَةُ جُهْدُ الْعَاجِزِ

Translation

Slander is the last effort of weak people. 1

Brief Description

Few sins can be found among the capital sins that indicate meanness, weakness, humiliation, and cowardice like slander does.

Slanderers falsely blame and ascribe faults to others and damage reputations to satiate the fire of their envy and malice . They are weak and mean persons who do not have the courage to confront their victims with their baseless and unfair criticisms and can only stab others in the back.

It is mentioned in one of the traditions that even if a slanderer repents and the repentance is accepted, he shall be the last one entering paradise. Otherwise, he would be the first one entering hell.

Lesson Fifty One: Signs of an Oppressor

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

لِلظَّالِمِ ثَلَاثُ عَلَامَاتٍ: يَظْلِمُ مَنْ فَوْقَهُ بِالْمَعْصِيَةِ وَ مَنْ دُونَهُ بِالْغَلْبَةِ، وَ يُظَاهِرُ
الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمَةَ

Translation

The oppressor has three signs: oppresses those who are higher than him through opposition and disobedience, and oppresses those who are inferior to him through violence and predominance, and cooperates with other oppressors. 1

Brief Description

When the ugly urge to oppress becomes ingrained and dominates one's mind, it shows up in different ways depending on the situation. If he cannot oppress overtly a strong opponent, the oppression takes subtle forms like disobedience and dereliction of duties. Against the weak, the oppressor resorts to open aggression, force, violence and injustice . Another sign of an oppressor is that he selects his friends and companions from among the unjust.

Lesson Fifty Two: There is no incurable disease

The Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him and his progeny) said:

مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ دَاءٍ إِلَّا جَعَلَ لَهُ دَوَاءً

Translation

God has not created any disease unless he has created a remedy for it. 1

Brief Description

The world in which we live is a series of actions and reactions. For every negative power there is a corresponding positive and corrective power which should be found and used. Continuation of our life is the effect of balance in these powers. There is neither an incurable corporeal disease, nor is there any social problem that cannot be solved. These who assume that certain complex problems have no solution or that some diseases have no cure, neglect this important fact that in essence there is no such thing as an incurable disease.

Therefore, one should not give up. One should persevere and keep on working on the life's intractable issues with patience and tenacity until a solution is found.

1. Nahjul Fasahah

Lesson Fifty Three: Why are Favors Lost?

Imam Al-Baqir (a.s.) said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَضَىٰ قَضَاءً حَتْمًا إِلَّا يُنْعَمَ عَلَى الْعَبْدِ بِنِعْمَةٍ فَيَسْأَلُهَا إِيَّاهُ حَتَّىٰ يُحْدِثَ
الْعَبْدُ ذَنْبًا يَسْتَحِقُّ بِذَلِكَ النَّقْمَةَ.

Translation

God has made an inevitable rule that he does not take back the favors bestowed on the people, unless they commit an offense causing deprivation from that favor. 1

Brief Description

God's graces are infinite but not unreasonable. He does not grant or take back anything unreasonably. When world's people use his favors for conceit, corruption, destruction and injustice, the same favors become the cause of their misfortune. Their favors are taken back and replaced with calamity. Their industries and technology turn destructive, and their society generates discord and discomfort, and even the speed devices become the cause of their retardation, because they have misused the graces.

1. Usool al-Kafi, , volume 2

Lesson Fifty Four: Martyrdom and Purity

The Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him and his progeny) said:

إِذَا مُتَّ عَلَى طَهَارَةٍ تَكُونُ شَهِيداً

Translation

When you pass away in purity, you shall be ranged with the martyrs. 1

Brief Description

The above tradition refers to part of instructions of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) to one of his companions saying: 'if you can, perform ritual ablution day and night, because if you die in this condition, you shall be considered a martyr'.

Besides the literal meaning which refers to performing ritual ablution, it refers to a more important aspect: living and dying with purity and innocence. The chaste ones, with guiltless hearts and minds that are free from dishonesty and vanity, who live a pure life and leave the world in this condition, surely will be ranged with martyrs because martyrdom is not limited to being killed in the battle field. There are also other such sayings among the traditions from the pure household of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny)

Lesson Fifty Five: Self Sacrificing Lovers

Imam Al-Baqir (a.s.) said:

إِنَّ أَصْحَابَ جَدِّي الْحُسَيْنِ لَمْ يَجِدُوا أَلَمَ مَسِّ الْحَدِيدِ

Translation

The devoted companions of my grandfather, Imam Husayn (a.s.) did not feel any pain under the strokes of sword and spear of enemy. 1

Brief Description

When man's affection for a goal reaches the stage of deep love , all of his feelings are so concentrated on it that any amount of inconvenience is tolerable for him. Not only tolerable, but it can even become painless. When Egyptian women, based on a figurative transient love on seeing Prophet Joseph's face, could lose their awareness and cut their fingers instead of fruits, it is not surprising that restless lovers in the path of God and self-sacrificing persons in the path of truth and virtue, would not feel pain and toil of heavy strokes of the enemy. First , one shall be a lover, then self-sacrifice and tolerance will inevitably follow.

1. Bihar al-Anwar, volume 45, page 80

Lesson Fifty Six: The Wise and The Fool

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

الْعَاقِلُ يَعْتمِدُ عَلَى عَمَلِهِ وَ الْجَاهِلُ يَعْتمِدُ عَلَى أَمَلِهِ

Translation

The wise man relies on his endeavor and action and the fool relies on his wishes. 1

Brief Description

The wise are positive and truth seeking individuals. So they always look for their high objectives in the external existence, and since attainment to them is not possible without endeavor and attempt, they focus their effort on their action.

The foolish and unaware , on the other hand, are drowned in a sea of wishes and imaginations, and seek for what they have lost in the world of imaginations, and since access to fancies does not require work and effort, negative tendencies are manifested in all aspects of their life. They live on their dreams, content with waiting for subjective victories in a tomorrow that never comes.

1. Ghurarol-Hekam

Lesson Fifty Seven: The Real Religious Men Are Few

Imam Husayn (a.s.) said:

النَّاسُ عِبِيدُ الدُّنْيَا وَ الدِّينُ لَعِقُ عَلَى أَلْسِنَتِهِمْ يَحُوطُونَهُ مَا دَرَّتْ بِهِ مَعَايشُهُمْ فَإِذَا مُحِصُوا بِالْبَلَاءِ قَلَّ الدِّيَانُونَ!

Translation

Most of the people are servants of the materialistic world and only pay lip service to religion. As long as they are enjoying a good life under the grace of religion, they support it. But when they are tested with

hardships, only a few are found to be religious. 1

Brief Description

Religion, particularly a religion like Islam, preserves the rights of society's people and supports their real and fair interests. However, sometimes religion is a barrier for personal and private interests of individuals. This is when those who are true to their religion are distinguished from those who only make empty claim to be religious.

Most people look at things from the viewpoint of their own interests . They advocate religion when it preserves their personal rights but when it conflicts with their private interests, they leave it totally or take a selective approach ...“ we believe in some and disbelieve in the others”.

The real religious people are those few who are faithful to their religion in every situation, and religion and belief dictate their priorities in life, not personal interests.

1. Bihar al-Anwar, volume 10, page 198

Lesson Fifty Eight: Justice Among Children

The Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him and his progeny) said:

إِعْدِلُوا بَيْنَ أَوْلَادِكُمْ كَمَا تُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَعْدِلُوا بَيْنَكُمْ

Translation

Observe justice among your children just as you would like that they render justice among you. 1

Brief Description

One of the capital mistakes is discrimination in treatment of children. Some people favour their older and so called senior child and others favor their younger child. Sometimes they exceed the bounds and reserve all of their kindness, property and affections for one of them, and deprive the others totally.

This provokes the fire of malice and envy in the hearts of the ones left out and in time this will develop

into enmity among them and vindictiveness towards their parents and they may even seek vengeance in the society.

1. Bihar al-Anwar, volume 23, Makarim AlAkhlāq, page 220

Lesson Fifty Nine: You Are Always Being Watched

Imam al-Jawad (a.s) said:

إِعْلَمْ أَنَّكَ لَنْ تَخْلُوَ مِنْ عَيْنِ اللَّهِ فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ تَكُونُ

Translation

You should know that you are never out of God's sight. Now how shall you be?1

Brief Description

The first sign of belief in God, the Almighty, is when one feels being under His constant and overall control, from never being out of His sight, and also feeling that His watchmen have surrounded us from all directions.

The higher degree of belief results in more and deeper feeling for this control so that man finds himself constantly in His presence. This feeling is the greatest motivator for correction of faults at the level of the individual and the society . It is also the most beautiful manifestation of belief and can rectify some of the most complex social disorders.

1. Tuhaful Uqul

Lesson Sixty: Neither Flattery, Nor Envy

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

الثَّنَاءُ بِأَكْثَرٍ مِنَ الْإِسْتِحْقَاقِ مَلَقٌ وَالتَّقْصِيرُ مِنَ الْإِسْتِحْقَاقِ عِيٌّ أَوْ حَسَدٌ

Translation

When praise and commendation is more than merited and deserved it is flattery and when less than merited it is either debility in expression or envy. 1

Brief Description

Undoubtedly, the worthy individuals and their good attributes and deeds should be praised and appreciated, and in this way we shall encourage and support them to carry on with their good work.

But praise should be proportionate to the merit . Otherwise, it would have negative and harmful consequences. If it is more than merit, it becomes flattery which hurts the dignity of the speaker and also causes self-conceit and self-admiration in the one who is flattered. And if it is less than merit, it discourages the good doers and shows that the speaker is either envious or weak in his power of expression.

1. Nahjul Balaghah

Lesson Sixty One: Help Your Brothers

Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

مَنْ كَانَ فِي حَاجَةٍ أَخِيهِ الْمُسْلِمِ كَانَ اللَّهُ فِي حَاجَتِهِ

Translation

Whosoever engages in fulfilling the requirements and needs of his Muslim brothers, God will fulfill his requests. 1

Brief Description

People often think that if they get involved in solving the problems of others, this would retard progress in their own life. Islam has a different viewpoint. The Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) says that if you engage in solving people's problems and fulfilling their requirements, God, whose power is beyond your power and all powers, helps you and solves your problems. We have been witnessed how the problems of those who help others get solved in wonderful ways and this is a divine bounty.

1. Bihar al-Anwar, volume 74, page 286, Wasa'il Al-Shia, vol 16, page 359. Mustadrak AlWasa'il, vol 12, page 414. Al-Amali, page 97. Awali Al-Laali, vol 1, page 375.

Lesson Sixty Two: Do Not Dwell On The Past

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

لَا تُشْغِلْ قَلْبَكَ الْهَمَّ عَلَى مَا فَاتَ فَيُشْغِلَكَ عَنِ الْأَسْتِعْدَادِ بِمَا هُوَ آتٍ.

Translation

Do not preoccupy your heart with grief for the past because you will lose out on preparation for the future. 1

Brief Description

One comes across two groups of people. Some of them waste their time regretting for the past mistakes and lose their remaining energies in this way. But others let bygones be bygones and only take some lessons from them for organizing the future and use all of their powers constructively to build a better today and tomorrow. Surely, they will be the ones who will succeed.

Lesson Sixty Three: The Universality of Islam

The Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him and his progeny) said:

لا يَبْقَى عَلَى ظَهْرِ الْأَرْضِ بَيْتٌ مَدْرٌ وَ لَا وَبَرٌ إِلَّا أَدْخَلَهُ اللَّهُ كَلِمَةَ الْإِسْلَامِ

Translation

There will not remain any house on the earth, not even mud houses and woollen tents, that will not be filled by Allah with the religion of Islam

Brief Description

Everyday this reality becomes more obvious , i.e., that the world has two alternatives: either it will accept Islam, or it will not accept any religion. And since being without a religion is against man's nature, it shall finally accept Islam. At present a wave of attention to Islam has permeated different parts of the world.

But this matter would be accomplished upon the advent of Imam Mahdi (may our soul be sacrificed for him). Thereupon, idolatry and polytheism would be removed from the earth and Islam will prevail throughout the world. The Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) has given the good tiding in the above tradition.

Lesson Sixty Four: Do Not Belittle Any Sin!

Imam Hasan Al-'Askari (a.s.) said:

مِنَ الذُّنُوبِ الَّتِي لَا يُغْفَرُ: لِيَتَنَى لَا أُؤَاخَذُ إِلَّا بِهَذَا!

Translation

One of the sins that would not be forgiven is for a man to say, “I wish my sin to be only this one.”¹

Brief Description

Minor sins are changed to major sins due to several factors, one of which is to consider them to be little and unimportant. This is one of the dangerous satanic temptations.

Those sins which man fears and considers as major sins are not so dangerous because one is always careful not to commit them. But when he assumes a sin to be minor and is not afraid of it, he is easily drawn to it again and again; minor sins change to major, keeping him away from happiness and prosperity for ever. Furthermore, every sin, however small, is significant in one respect : it exceeds the bound of rules of Allah, the Almighty.

1. Tuhaful Uqul, page 366. Wasa'il Al-Shia, vol 15, page 313. Mustadrak Alwasail, vol 11, page 351. Al-Khisal, vol1, page 24. Ghaibat Al-Tusi, page 207. Kashf Al-Gumma, vol 2, page 420. Al-Manaqib, vol4, page 429.

Lesson Sixty Five: Excellence of a Scholar

Imam Musa ibn Ja'far (a.s.) said:

فَضْلُ الْفَقِيهِ عَلَى الْعَابِدِ كَفَضْلِ الشَّمْسِ عَلَى الْكَوَاكِبِ

Translation

The excellence of a scholar over a votary is similar to excellence of sun over the stars.¹

Brief Description

The stars in the sky are themselves luminous but fail to provide luminosity to the Earth and to illuminate the path for us.

Sunlight and its bright and shiny rays, on the other hand, revive and energize the Earth and also light up

the path for all inhabitants of planets in the solar system . The sun thus enables others to distinguish the right path from the deviant one, the high road from crag. And it is this that distinguishes a scholar from a devotee. The latter is concerned only with saving himself whereas the former tries to also save others from drowning.

Just as planets need sunlight, votaries need a scholar.

1. Tuhaful Uqul, page 307.

Lesson Sixty Six: Mutual Rights

The Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him and his progeny) said:

يَلْزَمُ الْوَالِدِينَ مِنَ الْحُقُوقِ لَوْلَدِهِمَا مَا يَلْزَمُ الْوَلَدَ لَهُمَا مِنْ حُقُوقِهِمَا

Translation

In the same way as the children are to be held to account for disregarding parents' rights, parents are also accountable for not observing the children's rights.¹

Brief Description

Rights and duties always go hand in hand. And greater rights call for greater duty and responsibility.

The Holy Qur'an places heavy emphasis on duty to one's parents. While parents enjoy great rights vis-à-vis their children , they also bear a heavy responsibility to them. They shall at no time neglect to train their children, to help them improve bodily as well as spiritually and to keep them away from mental and moral taints. The tumult of their life shall not hinder them from this great duty.

1. Sayings of the Imams

Lesson Sixty Seven: Obedience Is Less Costly

Imam Al-Kadhim (a.s.) said:

إِيَّاكَ أَنْ تَمْنَعَ فِي طَاعَةِ اللَّهِ فَتُنْفِقَ مِثْلِيهِ فِي مَعْصِيَةِ اللَّهِ

Translation

Do not refrain from spending your wealth in obedience to God. Disobedience and sin will cost you twice as much. 1

Brief Description

There are some people who are stingy in paying, for example, for good hygiene, and they end up paying much more for treatment of the diseases they could have prevented with good hygiene.

It is a general rule that when a man refrains to spend on things that are essential to proper living, he would have to bear more costs on remedial actions and damage control .

Those who save expenses or time on training their children, will incur onerous costs on consequences such as the child's drug addictions or criminal acts . And those who refrain to pay for fulfilling requirements of society's deprived people, will pay the costs, sometimes several times higher, for dealing with the resulting turmoil .

1. Tuhaful Uqul, page 305

Lesson Sixty Eight: The World Is A Market

Imam Hadi (a.s.) said:

الدُّنْيَا سُوقٌ رِبْحٌ فِيهَا قَوْمٌ وَ خَسِرَ آخَرُونَ

Translation

The world is a market in which some gain and some lose. 1

Brief Description

This world is neither man's main home, nor his permanent residence . Rather it is a great house of commerce to which man is sent . He is given a capital in the form of his life span , physical and mental powers , guidance and intelligence , so that he may use these to accumulate valuable provisions to take back for his eternal prosperity and everlasting life.

Those who are active, diligent, vigilant, hard-working and far sighted know the tricks of this great commerce. They do not relent for a moment , always on the look out for opportunities to trade their temporary worldly goods to earn precious heavenly goods, merchandise with an eternal shelf life, and a bright destiny for themselves as well as their society. Unlike the losers, they do not spend their capital on futile , transitory and destructive worldly pursuits which result in leaving the world empty handed.

1. Tuhaful Uqul, page 361

Lesson Sixty Nine: The Most Dignified People

The Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him and his progeny) said:

إِنَّ أَعْظَمَ النَّاسِ مَنْزِلَةً عِنْدَ اللَّهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَمْشَاهُمْ فِي أَرْضِهِ بِالنَّصِيحَةِ لِخَلْقِهِ

Translation

The most dignified people on the day of resurrection are those who had engaged most in public service and benevolence. 1

Brief Description

One of the ways of service to God's people is respecting and protecting their interests and their benefits as one's own interest and benefit, and dealing with them sincerely and benevolently in their presence as

well as behind their back.

1. al-Kafi, volume 2, page 166. Wasail Al-Shia, vol 16, page 382. Mustadrak AIWasa'il, vol 12, page 387.

Lesson Seventy: Three Basic Social Principles

Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

النَّاسُ سَوَاءٌ كَأَسْنَانِ الْمِشْطِ وَالْمَرْءُ كَثِيرٌ بِأَخِيهِ وَ لَا خَيْرَ فِي صُحْبَةِ مَنْ لَمْ يَرَ
لَكَ مِثْلَ الَّذِي يَرَى لِنَفْسِهِ

Translation

People are equal (in social rights) with each other like the teeth of a comb! An individual becomes a great society together with his (religious) brothers. It is not right to associate with one who does not wish for you whatever he wishes for himself. 1

Brief Description

Three basic social principles are mentioned in the above tradition.

First, equal rights and justice for everyone irrespective of their color, race, language and social status.

Second, the relationship of an individual with the society and the society with an individual. Each individual counts and in co-operation with his brothers forms a great community.

Lastly, the necessity of respecting the others' interests as one's own interests as the basic element of true friendship and companionship. A society devoid of these three principles is neither an Islamic nor a humanitarian society.

1. Tuhaful Uqul, page 274.

Lesson Seventy One: Hastiness And Precipitance

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

أَلْحِدَهُ نَوْعٌ مِنَ الْجُنُونِ لِإِنَّ صَاحِبَهَا يَنْدَمُ فَإِنَّ لَمْ يَنْدَمْ فَجُنُونُهَا مُسْتَحْكَمٌ

Translation

Hastiness and precipitance is a kind of insanity and those having this attribute repent of their actions very soon, or (if they continue on this path) it shows that their insanity is perpetual and firmly ingrained in them.¹

Brief Description

Intellect and wisdom dictate that one avoids undue haste and precipitance because in this condition one often fails to adequately study all the relevant aspects to make a correct decision. And soon one has to repent for the consequences of his naive and impulsive actions.

Sometimes, man dissipates the worth of all of his good speeches by one hasty inappropriate remark, and loses his old intimate friends and that jolts him into sincere repentance .

As for those who do not desist even after observing the bad consequences of their hasty actions, they can be said to suffer from insanity that is ongoing and well entrenched.

1. Nahjul Balaghah

Lesson Seventy Two: True Asceticism

The Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him and his progeny) said:

أَلْزَهُدُ فِي الدُّنْيَا قَصْرُ الْأَمَلِ وَ شُكْرُ كُلِّ نِعْمَةٍ وَ الْوَرَعُ عَنْ كُلِّ مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ

Translation

Asceticism in this world is based on three things: curtailment of desires, thanksgiving for blessings, and avoiding the prohibited things. 1

Brief Description

Most people misunderstand the concept of Islamic asceticism and consider it as isolation and separation from material and social life. They define ascetics as those who practice seclusion from society and abstention from all material pleasures of social life.

True asceticism is in fact based on a corrective social concept as stipulated in the above tradition.

It includes protection of rights of others , keeping away from illegitimate and unlawful wealth, and using one's resources for worthy and humanitarian purposes (which is the real concept of thanksgiving) as well as minimizing one's desires for material things which , if unchecked, can lead man to dissociate from everything other than the pursuit of money, position and lust.

1. Tuhaful Uqul, page 58. Al-Kafi, vol 5, page 71. Wasa'il Al-Shia, vol 17, page 15. AlKhisal, vol 1, page 14.

Lesson Seventy Three: Trial Of Dignity

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

ثَلَاثٌ يُمْتَحَنُ بِهَا عُقُولُ الرِّجَالِ هُنَّ الْمَالُ وَ الْوَلَايَةُ وَ الْمُصِيبَةُ

Translation

There are three things based on which intellect of dignified individuals is tried: wealth, rank, and calamity. 1

Brief Description

Divine trials are the means of development and improvements and they do not have special tools.

Man may be tested by any means, but three of them are more important than the others:

- whether or not he loses his intellect and wisdom when he gains property and wealth?
- when a rank is awarded to him, whether his capacity is so fragile that he forgets everything?
- and when an unpleasing event happens to him, does he become impatient and ungrateful ?

1. Ghurar al-Hakam

Lesson Seventy Four: Correct Program For World And Hereafter

Imam Ar-Ridha' (a.s.) said:

إِعْمَلْ لِدُنْيَاكَ كَأَنَّكَ تَعِيشُ أَبَدًا وَ إِعْمَلْ لِآخِرَتِكَ كَأَنَّكَ تَمُوتُ غَدًا

Translation

Work for the world as if you would be alive forever, and work for the hereafter as if you would die tomorrow! 1

Brief Description

This tradition clarifies the attitude of Islam towards the matters concerned with material and spiritual life. A positive and responsible Muslim should observe discipline in the matters concerned with material life as if he would abide there forever. This clearly rejects the idea that one has to shun this world to be a true ascetic.

At the same time he should be extremely concerned about the state of his readiness for the life after

death. So much so that he should be convinced that if he were to die tomorrow, he would not be found wanting or deficient in any aspect. In other words, he should keep himself ready for death at any moment by ensuring that he has purified himself with the water of real repentance for his misdeeds and has settled his dues and made arrangements such that he leaves the world without any loose ends in matters of his obligations and rights of others.

1. Sayings of the Imams volume 2, page 277. Men La Yahtharuhu AlFaqih, vol 3, page 156. Wasa'il Al-Shia, vol 17, page 76.

Lesson Seventy Five: Effect Of Sin

Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

مَنْ يَمُوتُ بِالذُّنُوبِ أَكْثَرُ مِمَّنْ يَمُوتُ بِالْأَجَالِ وَ مَنْ يَعِيشُ بِالْإِحْسَانِ أَكْثَرُ مِمَّنْ
يَعِيشُ بِالْأَعْمَارِ

Translation

Those who die as a result of sin are more than those who die due to natural death, and those who have a long life as a result of beneficence are more than those who have a long life due to natural life.¹

Brief Description

It is proved today that the cause of most physical diseases lies in spiritual and emotional factors, and one of the most important causes of mental diseases is the heavy pressures imposed on man's soul by his conscience.

A sinner is judged in the court of conscience and suffers painful spiritual punishments and its reaction is manifested in the body and soul in the form of diseases and even death. On the contrary, the beneficent people are encouraged by their conscience and this spiritual encouragement empowers them and makes them cheerful and increases their life span. Hence, sin shortens life, and beneficence prolongs it.

1. Safinat'ul-Bihar. Mustadrak Alwasail, vol 11, page 327. AlAmali, page 305.

Lesson Seventy Six: Shi'as And Divine Bounties

Imam Al-Baqir (a.s.) said to one of his companions

أَبْلَغُ شِيعَتَنَا أَنَّهُ لَا يُنَالُ مَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ إِلَّا بِعَمَلٍ.

Translation

Declare to our Shias that no one receives divine favors and bounties except through action. 1

Brief Description

This speech of Imam Al-Baqir (a.s.) is a reply to those who suppose that they could reach the highest position before God only by adopting the name of Shiism and expressing love to the household of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny), while we know that in Islam the important thing is one's actions . The word "Shiite" is derived from the word 'moshaieat' meaning following somebody. Since the Shiites say that they are the followers of the household of Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny), they must also follow the practices of the Imams in their day to day life in order to be a true Shia and win divine blessings.

1. Usool al-Kafi, , volume 2, page 300. AlAmali, page 370.

Lesson Seventy Seven: With Whom We Shall Consult?

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

لَا تُدْخِلَنَّ فِي مَشُورَتِكَ بَخِيلًا يَعْدِلُ عَنِ الْفَضْلِ وَ يَعِدُكَ الْفَقْرَ وَ لاجِبَانًا يُضْعِفُكَ
عَنِ الْأُمُورِ وَ لَا حَرِيصًا يُزِينُ لَكَ الشَّرَّ بِالْجَوْرِ

Translation

Do not consult with misers because they prevent you from service to people and frighten you from poverty, and do not consult with timid people, because they weaken your will to perform important tasks, and do not consult with greedy persons, because they beautify injustice to you. 1

Brief Description

Consultation is one of the important Islamic instructions, but while consultation with the right persons helps in improvements and corrective actions, consulting those with certain weaknesses is harmful. Imam Ali recommends that we strictly avoid consulting, specially in important social affairs, with those who are miser or timid or greedy. One of them prevents man from munificence of divine graces, and the other weakens his resolve, and the third encourages man to violate rights of others out of greed.

1. Nahjul Balaghah, letter 53

Lesson Seventy Eight: The Best Favor

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

أَجَلُّ النَّعْمِ الْعَافِيَةُ وَ خَيْرُ مَا دَامَ فِي الْقَلْبِ الْيَقِينُ

Translation

The best favor is health and the best thing which could fill man's heart is belief in God. 1

Brief Description

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) has actually referred to the greatest material and spiritual favors. Physical health is the greatest divine favor in the material realm and it is indispensable for an active and a happy and prosperous life. And among spiritual favors, nothing is higher than the light of belief and faith. It is the most illuminating light for the path of life and the most effective remedy for diseases of ignorance, humiliation, inferiority and taint . It bestows tranquility to the heart and the soul!

Lesson Seventy Nine: A Hidden Imam

Imam al-Sadiq (a.s) said,

كَيْفَ يَنْتَفِعُ النَّاسُ بِالْحُجَّةِ الْغَائِبِ الْمَسْتُورِ؟ قَالَ كَمَا يَنْتَفِعُونَ بِالشَّمْسِ إِذَا
سَتَرَهَا السَّحَابُ

Translation

Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) was asked: “how can people enjoy the existence of an invisible and hidden Imam?”

He replied, “ just as they enjoy sunlight from behind the clouds.”¹

Brief Description

Sunlight is the source of all activity on this earth and no living creature can continue to live without it. The fact that it sometimes comes from behind the clouds does not diminish its utility. And the same applies to the light from a divine Imam and leader in the context of man’s spiritual and human life.

Sun hidden by a cloud, just like a light behind a translucent glass, sends out a considerable part of its light and removes the darkness of night and benefits the living plants and creatures. The spiritual blessings of the Imam (a.s.) illuminate the human world even from behind the hiding curtain, but just as the amount of sunlight entering a building depends on its openings, people’s share from the light of leadership is proportionate to the method and degree of their relation and connection with the Imam.

1. Bihar al-Anwar, volume 52, page 92

Lesson Eighty: Do Not Listen To All Utterances!

Imam al-Jawad (a.s.) said:

مَنْ أَصْغَى إِلَى نَاطِقٍ فَقَدْ عَبَدَهُ فَإِنْ كَانَ النَّاطِقُ عَنِ اللَّهِ فَقَدْ عَبَدَ اللَّهَ وَإِنْ كَانَ
النَّاطِقُ يَنْطِقُ عَنِ لِسَانِ إِبْلِيسَ فَقَدْ عَبَدَ إِبْلِيسَ

Translation

One who listens to an orator has worshipped him. Thus if the orator delivers God's message, he (the listener) has worshipped God, and if he talks from the tongue of Iblis, he has worshipped Iblis. 1

Brief Description

Utterance, whatsoever and from whoever it may be, has an effect, and listening to the utterances is usually accompanied with an impression in man's heart. Orators will say what suits their purpose. Some will be on the side of truth and others will try to inculcate falsehoods. Submission to each of these two groups is a kind of worship because the essence of worship is nothing else than submission.

Therefore, one should listen to truthful utterances and become truth worshippers and avoid purveyors of falsehoods and prevent their dark utterances from entering one's ears and reaching the depths of the soul.

1. Tuhaful Uqul, page 339. Al-Kafi, vol 6, page 434. Wasa'il Al-Shia, vol 27, page 127. Mustadrak AlWasail, vol 17, page 308.

Lesson Eighty One: Devilish People

The Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him and his progeny) said:

إِذَا رَأَيْتُمُ الرَّجُلَ لِأَيِّبَالِي مَا قَالَ أَوْ مَا قِيلَ فِيهِ فَإِنَّهُ لَبَغِيَّةٌ أَوْ شَيْطَانٌ

Translation

When you find that a person is indifferent to what he says or what is said about him, you shall know that he is either unchaste or devilish. 1

Brief Description

Drowning in various sins makes man indifferent to any and every accusation. He does not care about what he says about others and what is said about himself. Such persons are mean, shameless , devilish.

1. Bihar al-Anwar, volume 74, page 147. Al-Kafi, vol 2, page 323. Wasa'il Al-Shia, vol 16, page 34. Tuhafu AIUqul, page 44.

Lesson Eighty Two: Real Feast

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

إِنَّمَا هُوَ عِيدٌ لِمَنْ قَبَلَ اللَّهُ صِيَامَهُ وَ شَكَرَ قِيَامَهُ وَ كُلُّ يَوْمٍ لَا يُعْصَى اللَّهُ فِيهِ فَهُوَ
عِيدٌ

Translation

The day of feast following the month of fasting is the feast for those whose fasts are accepted and their worship is favored by God, and any day in which you do not commit a sin, is the day of feast (Eid). 1

Brief Description

Feast and happiness after one month of fasting in the blessed month of Ramadan is actually the feast of overcoming sensual desires, and of obedience of God's command. Thus, this is a day of feast only for those who have been victorious in fulfilling this great divine duty and understanding its true philosophy. However, for those shameless people who have not respected this great month and its educational program, it is nothing but a day of mourning and disgrace.

Lesson Eighty Three: What Has Real Value

The Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him and his progeny) said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَى صُورِكُمْ وَ لَا إِلَى أَمْوَالِكُمْ وَ إِنَّمَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ وَ أَعْمَالِكُمْ

Translation

God does not consider the faces and properties, rather he considers your hearts and actions.¹

Brief Description

While the criterion for evaluating dignity of individuals in most societies is material wealth and physical privileges, in Islam such evaluation bases are invalid and worthless. To ascertain what has real value, we need to look for that which is considered worthy by the Creator and this is none other than the purity of one's heart and deeds . Those who possess the twin treasures of pure thoughts leading to pure actions are the ones who will be victorious in the divine court.

1. Mohajjatol Beisae volume 6, page 312. Mustadrak AlWasail, vol 11, page 264. Aalamu AlDeen, page 201. AlAmali, page 535. Jami' Al-Akhbar, page 100. Sharh Nahjul Balaghah, vol 2, page 181. Makarim AlAkhlq, page 469.

Lesson Eighty Four: Two Things Cause Destruction Of People

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

أَهْلَكَ النَّاسَ إِثْنَانِ خَوْفُ الْفَقْرِ وَ طَلْبُ الْفَخْرِ

Translation

Two things destroy people: fear of poverty and seeking of fanciful honors! 1

Brief Description

If we consider the causes of increase in transgressions, larcenies, thefts, cheating and plundering , we find that the above two factors are at the root of these events. Some people, having everything, commit offenses only for the fear of poverty and the obsession for securing the future. And some others sacrifice their peace of mind and soul in order to acquire fanciful honors. Giving up these destructive traits allows man to enjoy inner peace and happiness.

1. Tuhaful Uqul. Mustadrak AlWasail, vol 12, page 91. AIKhisal, vol 1, page 68.

Lesson Eighty Five: A Good Deed Is Never Small

Imam As-Sajjad (a.s.) said:

لَا يَقِلُّ عَمَلٌ مَعَ تَقْوَىٰ وَ كَيْفَ يَقِلُّ مَا يُتَقَبَّلُ

Translation

A deed accompanied with sincerity and piety is not small, although it may look small. How is it possible for a deed favored by God to be small!?!1

Brief Description

The Holy Qur'an says: God only accepts the deeds which are accompanied with piety and pure intention. Thus, purity in intention and sincerity and piety should be the most important consideration . Such deeds are valuable even if in material terms the quantity etc is small , because they are favored by

God and thus can never be considered little. In summary, hollow, impure and hypocritical deeds are worthless no matter how numerous and large they are, whereas even something light and little performed with pure and sincere intention is worthy and weighty.

1. Tuhaful Uqul, page 201

Lesson Eighty Six: Sins And Apology

Imam Husayn (a.s.) said:

إِيَّاكَ وَ مَا تَعْتَدِرُ مِنْهُ فَانَّ الْمُؤْمِنَ لَا يُسِيئُ وَلَا يَعْتَدِرُ وَ الْمُنَافِقُ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ يُسِيئُ وَ
يَعْتَدِرُ

Translation

Do not sin so that you do not have to apologize for it. A believer does not sin and does not apologize, whereas a hypocrite sins everyday and apologizes everyday. 1

Brief Description

Everyone is apt to make mistakes, but there is a marked difference in how the believers and the hypocrites deal with this reality. The believers try to avoid sins in the first place to pre-empt the need for having to apologize. They know that insincere and routine apologies do not acquit anyone. But the hypocrites carry on sinning and apologizing in a never ending cycle. A sign of hypocrites is that outwardly they show repentance through the apology while inwardly they are unrepentant since they are not averse to repeating the sin

1. Tuhaful Uqul, page 177

Lesson Eighty Seven: The Worst Method Of Life

Imam Ar-Ridha' (a.s.) said:

أَسْوَأُ النَّاسِ مَعَاشاً مَنْ لَمْ يَعْشُ غَيْرَهُ فِي مَعَاشِهِ

Translation

The worst people, from an economic viewpoint, are those who do not offer livelihood to others from their own livelihood, and others are excluded from their life.¹

Brief Description

A healthy economy is one which strengthens social relations and embraces all members of the society. When wealth is concentrated in certain individuals or groups who refuse to allow the rest to benefit , a cancer takes root in that society that will eventually destroy its economic health to the detriment of all. Imam Ar-Ridha' (a.s.) refers to this as the worst type of livelihood and economic life.

1. Tuhaful Uqul, page 334.

Lesson Eighty Eight: Our Promises Are Our Debts

Imam Ar-Ridha' (a.s.) said:

إِنَّا أَهْلُ بَيْتِ نَرَى وَعَدْنَا عَلَيْنَا دَيْنًا كَمَا صَنَعَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (ص)

Translation

We are the household who consider our promises as our debts; as did the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny).¹

Brief Description

Debt is not only what man receives from someone as a loan . Those who make promises to others in fact undertake an obligation and accept a responsibility and have an undeniable moral duty to make good on the promise.

fulfilling the promise indicates dignity, belief, greatness, honesty and truthfulness and strengthens mutual trust and confidence among people. It revives the spirit of social cooperation. For all these reasons , Islam strongly emphasizes the need to fulfill all promises.

1. Tuhaful Uqul, page 33

Lesson Eighty Nine: Illegitimate Property

Imam Al-Baqir (a.s.) said:

إِنَّ الرَّجُلَ إِذَا أَصَابَ مَالًا مِنْ حَرَامٍ لَمْ يُقْبَلْ مِنْهُ حَجٌّ وَ لَا عُمْرَةٌ وَ لَا صَلَاةٌ رَحِمَ

Translation

Whenever a man gains a property in an illegitimate way, neither his Hajj and Umrah performed with that property is accepted, nor the uniting of kindred.¹

Brief Description

Islam cares not only about the results but also about how the results are achieved. Those who are contented with their good deeds, but do not think about the means by which they perform the good deed, neglect this reality that none of them is accepted by God, unless the means are pure and sacred.

Lesson Ninety: Be Self-Sufficient

Imam As-Sajjad (a.s.) said:

طَلَبُ الْحَوَائِجِ إِلَى النَّاسِ مَذَلَّةٌ لِلْحَيَاةِ وَ مَذْهَبَةٌ لِلْحَيَاءِ وَ إِسْتِخْفَافٌ بِالْوَقَارِ وَ هُوَ
الْفَقْرُ الْحَاضِرُ

Translation

Asking from people is abasement in life and destroys modesty and degrades man's dignity, and is a poverty which man brings upon for himself. 1

Brief Description

Some people subject themselves to poverty although they think that they are escaping from it. They do this by making themselves dependent and needy through unnecessary demands from others. In the process they also ruin their human dignity.

Islam instructs its followers to be self-sufficient as far as possible and avoid a life of dependency for having to depend on others is itself a form of poverty.

Lesson Ninety One: Woe Unto Such Person!

Imam As-Sajjad (a.s.) said:

يَا سَوَاتَاهُ غَلَبَتْ إِحْدَاتُهُ عَلَى عَشْرَاتِهِ!

Translation

Woe unto one whose units precede his tenfolds. 1

Brief Description

Holy Qur'an says:

مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ عَشْرُ أَمْثَالِهَا ۖ وَمَنْ جَاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا يُجْزَىٰ إِلَّا مِثْلَهَا وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ

Whoever brings a good deed, he shall have ten like it, and whoever brings an evil deed, he shall be recompensed only with the like of it, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly. (6: 160)

This verse clarifies the interpretation of the above tradition. Hopeless is the person who gives up so much reward from obedience of God's command and accumulates only the punishments for sins.

1. Tuhaful Uqul, page 203

Lesson Ninety Two: Sinful Ways Solve Nothing!

Imam Husayn (a.s.) said:

مَنْ حَاوَلَ أَمْرًا بِمَعْصِيَةِ اللَّهِ كَانَ أَفْوَتٌ لِمَا يَرْجُو وَ أَسْرَعُ لِمَا يَحْذَرُ

Translation

One who looks to performing something through disobedience to God, will lose whatsoever he desires sooner ; and, whatsoever he fears , will happen to him sooner. 1

Brief Description

Some people suppose that if they use unlawful means for obtaining their goals, they will attain their ends sooner. However, above tradition says that in fact such ways will expedite the loss of their ill-gotten objects and their fears will also materialize sooner. For example, he seeks tranquility from earning unlawful wealth, yet first of all he loses tranquility as a result of it and is involved in distress and anxiety which he had feared.

1. Tuhaful Uqul, page 977. Al-Kafi, vol 2, page 373. Wasa'il Al-Shia, vol 16, page 153.

Lesson Ninety Three: The Self-Conceited!

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

مَنْ رَضِيَ عَنْ نَفْسِهِ كَثُرَ السَّخَطُ عَلَيْهِ

Translation

He who is self-conceited will find a lot of people dissatisfied with him. 1

Brief Description

Self-love and self-concern in proper measure is necessary for survival, but if it exceeds the bounds, it becomes selfishness and self-conceit.

The self-conceited people never look at their own faults and consider themselves responsible, pure, faultless and important in the society. For this reason they have a lot of unreasonable expectations from people, and this causes widespread anger against them .

1. Nahjul Balaghah, Aphorisms, utterance no. 6. Sharh Nahjul Balaghah, vol 18, page 100. Gurar AlHikam, page 308.

Lesson Ninety Four: Nearer Kinsfolk

Imam Hassan al-Mujtaba (a.s.) said:

الْقَرِيبُ مَنْ قَرَّبَتْهُ الْمَوَدَّةُ وَإِنْ بَعْدَ نَسَبِهِ وَالْبَعِيدُ مَنْ بَاعَدَتْهُ الْمَوَدَّةُ وَإِنْ قَرَّبَ نَسَبُهُ

Translation

Near kinsfolk are those who are more affectionate, although they may be genealogically not as near as those who are less affectionate. 1

Brief Description

Kinship is one of the most important social relations in Islam . It enables formation of well-knit groups in the heart of great human society whose members cooperate closely and help each other in solving critical problems.

The criterion of relationship in Islam , as stated in the above tradition, gives much importance to affection and friendship, not merely the closeness of genealogical relationship.

1. Tuhaful Uqul, page 165. Al-Kafi, vol2, page 643. Wasa'il Al-Shia, vol 12, page 52.

Lesson Ninety Five: Throwing Off A Habit

Imam Hasan Al-'Askari (a.s.) said:

رَدُّ الْمَعْتَادِ عَنِ عَادَتِهِ كَالْمُعْجِزِ

Translation

Throwing off bad habits is like performing a wondrous act. 1

Brief Description

Habit is one of the great divine favors because it facilitates difficult human tasks and automates a lot of complicated and necessary aspects of living (such as speaking, walking, etc).

When a bad habit is acquired, it becomes a dangerous addiction and very difficult to shed. So much so that Imam Hasan Al-'Askari (a.s.) has compared the shedding of an entrenched habit to an amazing or wondrous act.

1. Bihar al-Anwar, volume 17, page 217

Lesson Ninety Six: Epic Of Karbala

Imam Husayn (a.s.) said:

لَا وَاللَّهِ لَا أُعْطِيهِمْ بِيَدِي إِعْطَاءَ الدَّلِيلِ وَلَا أَفْرُ فِرَارَ الْعَبِيدِ... إِنِّي لَا أَرَى الْمَوْتَ
إِلَّا سَعَادَةً وَ الْحَيَاةَ مَعَ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا بَرَمًا

Translation

I swear by God that I shall never join hands with them like those humbled, nor escape like the slaves. I consider death as nothing but prosperity, and life with the unjust as nothing but a source of blame and misfortune. 1

Brief Description

Karbala is the great and everlasting epic of man's history.

Ashura is an unforgettable day in the history of mankind and nations who want to live honorably and die honorably. The above two sentences from a speech of Imam Husayn (a.s.) are two clear signs of this

reality.

1. Naqta'el Hussein, page 246 & 256. Al-Irshad, vol2, page 97. Aalamu Alwara, page 242. Al-Manaqib, vol 4, page 86.

Lesson Ninety Seven: Who Is Wise?

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) was asked to describe a wise man. He replied:

الْعَاقِلُ هُوَ الَّذِي يَضَعُ الشَّيْءَ مَوَاضِعَهُ

Translation

The wise is one who puts everything in its right place.¹

Brief Description

A lot is said about the meaning and concept of wisdom, but the above definition says it all so succinctly in one short phrase. A better interpretation will be hard to find. Wisdom is nothing other than putting everything in its right place: giving everybody the place they merit, showing grief and happiness, friendship and enmity, mildness and harshness, kindness and severity according to the circumstances , adopting correct priorities in worship, work and healthy recreation . In short, doing the right thing in the right way at the right time.

1. Nahjul Balaghah

Lesson Ninety Eight: Cause Of Enmity

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

النَّاسُ أَعْدَاءُ مَا جَهِلُوا

Translation

People are enemies of things which they do not know (or understand). 1

Brief Description

We see some people who deny a lot of truths and rise against them while not being able to find any cause for it save ignorance and unawareness. This wise saying is specially true in religious matters. Take the case of people who are well versed professionals in other sciences but oppose and disbelieve when it comes to religious matters. If we analyze this, we find that they have not really understood the depth and philosophy of religion.

1. Nahjul Balaghah, Aphorisms, phrase 172

Lesson Ninety Nine: The Zealous

The Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him and his progeny) said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى يُحِبُّ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْغُيُورَ

Translation

God likes his zealous servants. 1

Brief Description

Zeal in this context refers to resolute determination , earnest dedication, fervent striving to protect divine bounties including everything from religion and chastity to water and land and well being of Islamic countries.

A zealous person is one who is fully committed and takes responsibility for protecting these things and

becomes very disturbed by any aggression and encroachment against them.

Zeal is one of the prominent attributes of the prophets and men of God. We read about Abraham (a.s.), the idol- breaker hero, 'surely Abraham was zealous'. Zeal is a powerful barrier against the advance of alien forces and ideologies.

1. Nahjul Fasahah, page 15

Lesson One Hundred: The Believer is Useful

The Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him and his progeny) said:

مَثَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِ مَثَلُ النَّخْلَةِ مَا أَخَذْتَ مِنْهَا مِنْ شَيْءٍ نَفَعَكَ

Translation

A believer is like a palm tree, whatsoever you take away from it is useful and profitable. 1

Brief Description

Palm tree is actually one of the very fertile trees. Its fruit is eaten as one of the best foods and sometimes its stone is burnt. Also, things like mats, hats, table-cloth are woven from its leaves.

Its wood is used in construction of simple buildings and also used as a bridge for passing through streams. A fragrant and useful essence is extracted from its blossom. In other words, there is not one part that is discarded as useless. discarded.

The believers are the same. Their thoughts are useful, their speeches are profitable, their meetings are educational, their religion is reforming and they are loyal in friendship, strong in their decisions. In short, everything about them is worthy.

1. Nahjul Fasahah, page 564

Lesson One Hundred One: The Best Hands

The Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him and his progeny) said

الْأَيْدِي ثَلَاثَةٌ: سَائِلَةٌ وَ مُمْسِكَةٌ وَ مُنْفِقَةٌ وَ خَيْرُ الْأَيْدِي مُنْفِقَةٌ

Translation

There are three types of hands: begging hands, keeping hands and bountiful hands, and the best hands are bountiful hands. ¹

Brief Description

Islam teaches its followers to aim for high aspirations , far reaching endeavors and strong affection. Therefore it recommends its followers to avoid begging and dependency on others as far as they can. Not only that, it discourages Muslims from hoarding and keeping everything they have for their own exclusive benefit. Rather, they are urged to share their bounties with others as much as they can, and so we read in the above tradition that the best hands are the bountiful hands.

1. Tuhaful Uqul, page 32

Lesson One Hundred Two: Worse Than Death

Imam Hasan Al-'Askari (a.s.) said:

خَيْرٌ مِنَ الْحَيَاةِ مَا إِذَا فَقَدْتَهُ أَبْغَضْتَ الْحَيَاةَ! وَ شَرٌّ مِنَ الْمَوْتِ مَا إِذَا نَزَلَ بِكَ أَحْبَبْتَ الْمَوْتَ!

Translation

Better than life is that which , if you lose it, you would hate life ! And worse than death is that which, if it happens to you, you would welcome death !1

Brief Description

Some people think that the highest worth is the worth of this material life while there are a lot of things more valuable than it. There are some moments in life in which man wishes for death, and there are truths for which he sacrifices himself without hesitation.

The martyrs who lay down their lives for the sake of their religion and justice and other virtues are those who understand the deep truth in the above tradition. When they found life unpleasant and death a window to a wider world, as well as God's satisfaction, they bade farewell to life and embraced death.

1. Tuhaful Uqul, page 368

Lesson One Hundred Three: Believers And Hypocrites

The Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him and his progeny) said:

إِذَا رَأَيْتُمُ الْمُؤْمِنَ صَمُوتًا فَادْنُوا مِنْهُ فَإِنَّهُ يُلْقِي الْحِكْمَةَ وَالْمُؤْمِنُ قَلِيلُ الْكَلَامِ
كَثِيرُ الْعَمَلِ وَالْمُنَافِقُ كَثِيرُ الْكَلَامِ قَلِيلُ الْعَمَلِ

Translation

When you find a believer silent, approach him because you will hear wise sayings. Believers talk less and are action oriented whereas hypocrites are talkative and inexperienced. 1

Brief Description

Man's power is not unlimited and everlasting. Therefore, when his energies are used in one direction, there will be less energy left for other things. So it is not surprising if talkative people are short on actions and experience.

The Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him and his progeny) always advocated positive and effective living, says that believers are those who emphasize deeds, not just words, while he considers the opposite attribute of all talk and no action as the sign of the hypocrites.

1. Tuhaful Uqul, page 296. Irshad AlQulub, vol 1, page 104. Sharh Nahjul Balaghah, vol 7, page 93.

Lesson One Hundred Four: The Best Heritage

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

خَيْرُ مَا وَرَثَ الْآبَاءُ لِلْأَبْنَاءِ الْأَدَبُ

Translation

The best heritage which fathers leave for their children is courtesy. 1

Brief Description

Courtesy refers to proper behavior in all encounters and relationships and is associated with respect and honor. Courtesy is concerned with interactions with fellow human beings as well as with God. In both cases, courteous behavior is one of the most valuable asset one can possess...it is the key to success in all fields.

On this account, Imam 'Ali (a.s.) has described courtesy as the highest heritage which a father leaves for his child. Courtesy is the source of affection, sincerity, friendship, and unity and an important factor in effectiveness of speech and progress in social objectives.

Lesson One Hundred Five: Respect Of Freedom Of Thought

The Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him and his progeny) said:

بِئْسَ الْقَوْمُ قَوْمٌ يَمْشِي الْمُؤْمِنُ فِيهِمْ بِالتَّقِيَّةِ وَالْكَتْمَانِ

Translation

When a believer is forced to hide his beliefs , he is living among bad people! 1

Brief Description

Dissimulation and concealment of one's ideas and beliefs usually arises when a selfish majority of the society prevent the righteous minority from expressing their thoughts freely. Surely, such a society will not be prosperous.

In an Islamic and humanitarian society, the righteous people should have the freedom to disclose their viewpoints for public comments and discourse.

No one should hinder them. Instead, there should be respect for freedom of thought and reformative thinking and facilities should be provided for imparting training and bringing good ideas to fruition.

Lesson One Hundred Six: Six Flaws Not Found

In Believers

Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

سِتَّةٌ لَا تَكُونُ فِي مُؤْمِنٍ: الْعُسْرُ وَالنَّكْدُ وَالْحَسَدُ وَاللَّجَاجَةُ وَالْكَذِبُ وَالْبَغْيُ

Translation

There are six things which do not exist in the believers: strictness, peevishness, envy, stubbornness, lies and injustice. 1

Brief Description

Those who are satisfied with being believers in name only are not real believers. The six ugly attributes specified above should not exist in a true believer. It is interesting to note that all these attributes are concerned with mutual relations and social interactions among the people. True believers are good natured , benevolent, truthful and just and it does not behoove those lacking such character to call themselves believers .

1. Wasa'il Al-Shia, vol 15, page 349. Aalamu Al-Deen, page 129. Tuhaful Uqul, page 377. Al-Khisal, vol 1, page 325. Al-Mahasin, vol 1, page 158.

Lesson One Hundred Seven: Do Not Sever All Relations With God

Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

اتَّقِ اللَّهَ بَعْضَ التُّقَىٰ وَإِنْ قَلَّ وَدَعْ بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ سِتْرًا وَإِنْ رَقَّ

Translation

Be god-fearing and fear although it may be little, and maintain a curtain between yourself and Him, although it may be thin. 1

Brief Description

There are some people who sever all relations between themselves and God . They burn all bridges behind them and close all doors for their return to God as they proceed along the path of sins and mistakes.

Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.), in this pearl of wisdom, advises us not to do that and to maintain a link however flimsy so that one can return one day and find an open door to enter for repentance.

1. Tuhaful Uqul, page 268

Lesson One Hundred Eight: True Worship

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said to Kumayl:

يا كُمْيَلُ! لَيْسَ الشَّأْنُ أَنْ تُصَلِّيَ وَ تَصُومَ وَ تَتَصَدَّقَ، الشَّأْنُ أَنْ تَكُونَ الصَّلَاةُ
بِقَلْبٍ نَقِيٍّ وَ عَمَلٍ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ مَرْضِيٍّ وَ خُشُوعٍ سَوِيٍّ

Translation

O, Kumayl, it is not sufficient merely to pray and fast and pay alms. It is more important that your prayer (and other deeds) are performed before God with a pure heart and humility. 1

Brief Description

The intention and spirit behind the deed, the manner in which it is accomplished and its quality determine its real value, not its appearance and quantity. Imam 'Ali (a.s.) emphasizes to Kumayl that one should pay attention to the spirit of a deed instead of its appearance and quantity, because the final

aim of these good deeds is man's education, development and improvement which depends on the sincerity with which he performs them .

1. Tuhaful Uqul, page 117. Mustadrak Alwasail, vol 4, page 94. Bisharat Al-Mustafa, page 28.

Lesson One Hundred Nine: Do Not Forget Your Own Faults

Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

إِذَا رَأَيْتُمُ الْعَبْدَ يَتَفَقَّدُ الذُّنُوبَ مِنَ النَّاسِ نَاسِيًا لِدَنْبِهِ فَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّهُ قَدْ مُكِرِبِهِ

Translation

When you see someone searching for people's sins and censuring them, but ignoring his own sins, you shall know that he is involved in divine punishment.¹

Brief Description

There are a lot of people who are very insolent, vocal and ingenious in criticizing others while they forget and ignore their own state. As the popular proverb says: they see a thorn in the foot of others, but do not see a branch in their own eyes!

Curtains of conceit and unawareness have covered the eyes of such people because they are drowned in sin, self-conceit and selfishness, and are wandering among deviated paths. Those on the right path take care of their own faults before censuring others.

1. Tuhaful Uqul, page 271

Lesson One Hundred Ten: Great Torment

Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

مَنْ سَاءَ خُلُقُهُ عَذَّبَ نَفْسَهُ

Translation

One who is ill-humored torments himself. 1

Brief Description

It is usually said that ill-humored individuals who are peevish with everybody, torment and annoy their friends and relatives, while they themselves suffer the greatest torments because they embitter life's honey and make pure water unpleasant for themselves.

Ill-humored people have a short life and an uneasy spirit, their body is in pain, and are prone to more sufferings than others.

Good temper is one of the qualities which Islam has emphatically recommended to its followers . It has been referred to as an important factor for attainment of the eternal paradise.

1. Tuhaful Uqul, page 270

Lesson one Hundred Eleven: The Holy Quran is Evergreen

Imam Ar-Ridha' (a.s.) said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى لَمْ يَجْعَلِ الْقُرْآنَ لِزَمَانٍ دُونَ زَمَانٍ وَ لَا لِنَاسٍ دُونَ نَاسٍ فَهُوَ فِي كُلِّ

زَمَانٍ جَدِيدٍ وَ عِنْدَ كُلِّ قَوْمٍ غَضٌّ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ

Translation

God has not confined the Holy Qur'an to a specific time or for a specific nation, and so it is new at all times and fresh for all nations. 1

Brief Description

Imam (a.s.) gave the above reply to one who had asked why Qur'an does not get old by repeated study, recitation and publication? This saying points to the reality that Qur'an is not a product of the material world and man's transient and variable thoughts. So the dust of obsolescence does not cover it. It does not age with time. Rather, it has originated from God who is All-knowing, Omniscient, Eternal. The more it is read, the more it reveals, the more relevant and interesting it becomes with the passage of time. This in fact is one of the signs of Qur'an's greatness and grandeur.

1. Safinat'ul-Bihar, volume two, page 413

Lesson One Hundred Twelve: Beware Of Sensuality

Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

إِحْذَرُوا أَهْوَاءَكُمْ كَمَا تَحْذَرُونَ أَعْدَاءَكُمْ فَلَيْسَ شَيْءٌ أَعْدَى لِلرَّجَالِ مِنْ إِتِّبَاعِ
أَهْوَائِهِمْ وَ حَصَائِدِ أَلْسِنَتِهِمْ

Translation

Beware of sensual desires in the same way as you watch out for your (obstinate) enemies because man has no enemies greater than following sensual desires and the outcomes of his tongue! 1

Brief Description

Undoubtedly, internal enemies are more dangerous than external foes. Therefore, obstinate desires which affect man inwardly, are considered as the most dangerous enemy for man. Sensuality blinds the eye and deafens the ear. It extinguishes the light of wisdom, distorts the face of truth and finally leads him to the precipice of corruption.

1. Safinat'ul-Bihar, volume 2, article 'Sensual Desire'

Lesson One Hundred Thirteen: The Only Way Of Proximity To Allah

Imam Al-Baqir (a.s.) said to Jaber Jofi:

بَلِّغْ شَيْعَتِي عَنِّي السَّلَامَ وَاعْلَمِهِمْ أَنَّهُ لَا قَرَابَةَ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَلَا
يُتَقَرَّبُ إِلَيْهِ إِلَّا بِالطَّاعَةِ لَهُ

Translation

Convey my greetings to my Shias and be it known that there is no kinship (family relationship) between us and Allah and the only way of proximity to Him is by submission to His commands.¹

Brief Description

There are those who think that claiming to be a shia and a friend of the household of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) is sufficient for their salvation and prosperity. As if such claims would entitle them to inclusion among the relatives of the Imams and thus they too would have a special relationship with God , and everything would be well arranged through recommendation and mediation. The truth of the matter is that the only relation of consequence in the relations of creatures to their Creator is their obedience and fulfillment of duties.

Whosoever submits to His command is the closest to Him , and whosoever disobeys is the farthest,

whoever he may be.

1. Bihar al-Anwar, volume 15, page 164. AlAmali, page 296. Bisharat Al-Mustafa, page 188.

Lesson One Hundred Fourteen: Ill-Gotten Wealth

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

مَنْ يَكْسِبُ مِنْ غَيْرِ حَقِّهِ يَصْرِفُهُ فِي غَيْرِ أَجْرِهِ

Translation

He who acquires wealth illegitimately, will spend it in ways which confer no divine reward. 1

Brief Description

It is a common belief that some types of properties are unsuitable for spending on public welfare or charity. The above tradition is a good proof for this public belief. And one can verify it because one can see cases where some individuals have intended to participate in a good cause using their property, but they have either stopped half way or their project, though completed, is not effective or even counter-productive. On the other hand one finds a lot of faithful and virtuous individuals who have accomplished a lot of good work with their meager resources.

1. Tuhaful Uqul, page 63

Lesson One Hundred Fifteen: The Most Truthful And Wise

The Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) said:

لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ صَدِيقٌ وَفَارُوقٌ وَصَدِيقُ هَذِهِ الْأُمَّةِ وَفَارُوقُهَا عَلِيُّ ابْنُ أَبِي طَالِبٍ (ع).

Translation

Every nation has a man who is truthful and esteemed, and the one who is truthful and a distinguished from my nation is 'Ali Ibn Abi Taleb. 1

Brief Description

For completion of the program of a genuine religion, an everlasting religion like Islam, there should be someone familiar with all aspects and details of that religion and be able to distinguish between truth and falsehood (deserving the name of distinguished).

Islam needed such a man after the demise of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny), the most part of whose mission was spent in different conflicts with obstinate enemies. That person had to be someone very truthful, honest, eloquent and frank so that he could remove any ambiguities and doubts that crop up among people in the absence of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny).

This rank, as per the above explicit statement, was allocated to Imam 'Ali (a.s.).

1. Safinat'ul-Bihar, volume 2, page 221. Uyoon Akhbar Ar-Ritha. Vol 2, page 13. Al-Qisas, page 173.

Lesson One Hundred Sixteen: Simple Life And

Cooperation In House-Keeping

Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

كَانَ عَلِيُّ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ يَحْتَطِبُ وَيَسْتَقِي وَيَكْنِسُ وَكَانَتْ فَاطِمَةُ تَطْحَنُ وَتَعْجِنُ
وَ تَخْبِزُ!

Translation

'Ali (a.s.) collected wood (for his home) from the desert and fetched water and did the cleaning, and Fatima (a.s.) made flour, and kneaded it and baked bread.¹

Brief Description

A world of magnificence of spirit and high human rank is hidden in this short tradition in respect of the great leader of Islam, Imam 'Ali (a.s.) and the role model for women, Fatima (a.s.) . Their life was very simple and independent but full of sincerity, purity, co-operation and assistance. Work was not a dishonor. Cooperation and understanding was considered a basic privilege and non-adornment was much admired. This lifestyle is no longer found in the homes these days and, consequently, tranquility and peace have disappeared.

1. Safinat'ul-Bihar, volume 2, page 195. Al-Kafi, vol 5, page 86. Men La Yahthruhu Alfaqih, vol 3, page 169. Wasa'il Al-Shia, vol 17, page 40. Awali Al-Laali, vol 3, page 200.

Lesson One Hundred Seventeen: One Hour Of Justice

The Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) said:

عَدْلُ سَاعَةٍ خَيْرٌ مِنْ عِبَادَةِ سَنَةٍ!

Translation

One hour of justice is better than one year of worship. 1

Brief Description

Worship is the same relation of creature with creator and 'possible' with 'necessary' and paying attention to this relation and connection. Those worships are important educational lessons which have an effective role in correcting man's spirit and mind.

However, we read in the above tradition, that one hour of justice is better and higher than one year of (recommended) worship. These expressions show the critical importance of justice and meditation, both having a common origin. Wherever there is no justice, there is no thinking, meditation and wisdom.

1. Nahjul Fasahah, page 490

Lesson One Hundred Eighteen: Real Physician

The Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) said:

الطَّبِيبُ اللَّهُ وَ لَعَلَّكَ تَرْفِقُ بِأَشْيَاءٍ تُحْرِقُ بِهَا غَيْرَكَ

Translation

The real physician is God, and the things useful for you may be harmful for others. 1

Brief Description

The events happening in man's life are sometimes due to his wrong policies, choices or will and there are a lot of painful events like these.

Sometimes seemingly unpleasant events occur due to none of the above factors. Such adversities may in fact be medicines administered by God (who is the real physician) to treat his servants. Although these drugs may be bitter, they are a much needed wake-up call, a means of remedial attention to

man's weaknesses and for removal of his conceit.

1. Nahjul Fasahah, page 406.

Lesson One Hundred Nineteen: Successors Of The Prophet

The Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) said:

لَا يَزَالُ هَذَا الدِّينُ عَزِيزاً مَنِعاً إِلَىٰ اثْنَيْ عَشَرَ كُلُّهُمْ مِنْ قُرَيْشٍ

Translation

This religion will always remain honorable and protected from the enemies under the leadership of twelve persons , all of whom belong to the Quraish. 1

Brief Description

Clear and explicit traditions are narrated in respect of the twelve successors of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) in the most creditable books of the Sunnites including 'Sahih Bukhari', 'Sahih Muslim'. 'Aahih Tirmidhi', 'Sahih Abu Dawood', 'Masoud Ahmad' and many others. The total number of these traditions narrated by Shias and Sunnites are estimated to be 271!

It is interesting to note that the profile of successors per these traditions fits only the twelve Shia Imams. Neither the first four caliphs nor the Umayyid or Abbasid caliphs meet the specifications of this tradition.

1. Tisiral Vosoul, written by Zobeidi Shafei

Lesson One Hundred Twenty: Sinful Feast

Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

لَا يَنْبَغِي لِلْمُؤْمِنِ أَنْ يَجْلِسَ مَجْلِساً يُعْصَى اللَّهُ فِيهِ وَ لَا يَقْدِرُ عَلَى تَغْيِيرِهِ

Translation

It is unjust for believers to participate in a feast where sin is performed and they do nothing to change the situation. 1

Brief Description

Even if one does not commit the sin and does not cooperate with participants of the feast, participation in a sinful feast is itself a sin . It amounts to endorsing a sin unless one participates in order to remedy the situation and perform the critical duty of enjoining good and forbidding evil.

Furthermore, when a person keeps observing sinful scenes with indifference and without protest, it darkens his spirit and decreases his sensitivity so that sins no longer appear so bad to him and this can lead him to commit sins.

1. Usul al-Kafi, , volume 2, page 374. Wasa'il Al-Shia, vol 16, page 260.

Lesson One Hundred Twenty One: Do Productive Works

Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

إِزْرَعُوا وَ اغْرَسُوا وَ اللَّهُ مَا عَمِلَ النَّاسُ عَمَلًا أَحَلَّ وَ لَا أُطِيبَ مِنْهُ

Translation

Cultivate and plant trees. By God, people have not done any action more lawful and purer than this. 1

Brief Description

Man's life is based on productive works, including agriculture and various forms of business and industry. Most industries would not be meaningful without agriculture because they gain their raw materials from it. In addition, agriculture is less prone to frauds and trickery because its results are governed mainly by natural factors and sincere efforts of men. On this account, cultivation and tree planting is called the most pure and pleasant work in the above tradition.

1. Safinat'ul-Bihar, volume 1, page 549. Mustadrak Alwasail, vol 13, page 26.

Lesson One Hundred Twenty Two: Lifespan

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

مَوْتُ الْإِنْسَانِ بِالذُّنُوبِ أَكْثَرُ مِنْ مَوْتِهِ بِالْأَجْلِ وَحَيَاتُهُ بِالْبِرِّ أَكْثَرُ مِنْ حَيَاتِهِ
بِالْعُمْرِ

Translation

Early death of men is more often due to sin than for natural reasons, and long life of individuals is more often due to their righteousness than for natural reasons. 1

Brief Description

Undoubtedly, a lot of sins and bad habits have a direct impact on shortening life (as in the case of drinking, gambling, jealousy, envy and vindictiveness) . Many also shorten it through indirect means such as the resulting social disorders, lack of public security and occurrence of wars (as in the case of usury, injustice and oppression). On the other hand, righteousness could lead to a long life due to its deep effect on the peace of spirit and conscience.

Therefore, sin, besides its harmful spiritual effects, is also very effective in shortening man's life, whereas righteousness prolongs life in addition to generating other benefits and spiritual rewards.

1. Safinat'ul-Bihar, page 489

Lesson One Hundred Twenty Three: Cooperation With Satan!

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

لَا تَسُبَّنْ إِبْلِيسَ فِي الْعَلَانِيَةِ وَأَنْتَ صَدِيقُهُ فِي السِّرِّ

Translation

Do not curse Satan publicly, while you are his friend inwardly. 1

Brief Description

Some people proclaim their disdain and distance themselves verbally from things like poverty, hypocrisy, Satan and such like, while in practice they are drowned in them.

We know of rich men who live like the poor for the fear of becoming poor if they spent more. We know hypocrites who repeatedly curse the hypocrites, when their own life is full of hypocrisy.

We know devilish people who say publicly: 'I take refuge in God from Satan, the outcast'. And yet , they are his friends inwardly and give much importance to their devilish activities. Their words are devoid of substance and contradict their inner reality.

1. Turasol-Aemeh page 289. Sharh Nahjul Balaghah, vol 20, page 329.

Lesson One Hundred Twenty Four: Take Counsel To Be Guided!

Imam Hasan (a.s.) said:

مَا تَشَاوَرَ قَوْمٌ إِلَّا هُدُوا إِلَىٰ رُشْدِهِمْ

Translation

Nations in which consultation with each other is practiced, are always guided to their welfare and benefit. ¹

Brief Description

Group work always produces synergistic benefits, improvement and development. When many heads come together, their collective experience and knowledge can be tapped to facilitate planning, problem solving, productivity, creativity and innovation.

Those who have become self-opinionated and obstinate often suffer from mistakes and losses. Everyone has unique mental powers. One mind may produce a brain wave that would never occur to another. When the bright ideas of many minds combine, they would produce a light that can illuminate any darkness. Let us all decide to adopt the practice of always consulting with informed and intelligent persons.

1. Tuhaful Uqul, page 164

Lesson One Hundred Twenty Five: Salam, Islamic Salutation

Imam Husayn (a.s.) said:

لِلسَّلَامِ سَبْعُونَ حَسَنَةً تَسَعُ وَ سِتُّونَ لِلْمُبْتَدِي وَ وَاحِدَةً لِلرَّادِ

Translation

Salam (salutation) has 70 rewards, 69 parts of which are for one who salutes and one part of which is for one who returns the salutation. 1

Brief Description

Among the salutations of various nations, ‘Salam’, the Islamic salutation and greeting, has a special luminosity, because it indicates both welcoming and peace, pleasure and friendship, and also a wish for peace from God for the other party. For this reason, salutation of the people of paradise is Salam, and angels of mercy receive the virtuous and good-doers with Salam. Unfortunately, some egoistic Muslims think that not saluting (or not being the first to salute) reflects their high status and saluting reduces their rank. Thus they deprive themselves of the great reward mentioned in the above tradition especially for those who show humility by taking the initiative to salute first.

1. Tuhaful Uqul, page 177. Mustadrak Alwasail, vol 8, page 357.

Lesson One Hundred Twenty Six: Non Conformity Of Belief With Action

Imam ‘Ali Ibn Husayn (a.s.) said:

أَلَا وَ إِنَّ أَبْغَضُ النَّاسِ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَنْ يَقْتَدِي بِسُنَّةِ إِمَامٍ وَ لَا يَقْتَدِي بِأَعْمَالِهِ

Translation

The most hated people before God are those who have accepted leadership of an Imam but do not follow his actions. 1

Brief Description

One of the major faults of man is non conformity of his belief and actions. He says he believes in something, but no trace of that belief is observed in his actions.

He believes in God, but he does not practice the discipline required in his daily life to make his deeds consistent with that belief. He believes in the great court of God, but has not prepared himself to face it.

He believes in Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) as the greatest Prophet and Imam 'Ali (a.s.) as the highest leader, but he does not demonstrate any similarity with them by his actions. In short, his belief points in one direction, and his action in another.

1. Tuhaful Uqul, page 202

Lesson One Hundred Twenty Seven: Divine Chastisement

Imam Al-Baqir (a.s.) said:

إِنَّ لِلَّهِ عُقُوبَاتٌ فِي الْقُلُوبِ وَالْأَبْدَانِ: ضَنْكَ فِي الْمَعِيشَةِ وَوَهْنٌ فِي الْعِبَادَةِ وَ مَا
ضُرِبَ عَبْدٌ بِعُقُوبَةٍ أَكْبَرُ مِنْ قَسْوَةِ الْقَلْبِ!

Translation

God chastises man (for sins and disobedience) through the spirit and the body: indigence in livelihood, indolence in worship, but God has not punished any servant with something worse than hardheartedness. 1

Brief Description

Divine chastisements are indeed reflections of man's actions as well as the consequences of his sins. Sometimes they appear as an unpleasant situation in material life and sometimes in spiritual matters such as the lack of enthusiasm for worship and invocation to God. But the worst punishment meted out

is that of making a person hard-hearted. The heart becomes devoid of humanitarian feelings, philanthropy and sympathy, and leads to perpetration of cruelty and many other sins.

Lesson One Hundred Twenty Eight: A Forgotten Reality

Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

لَمْ يَخْلُقِ اللَّهُ يَقِيناً لَأَشَكَّ فِيهِ أَشْبَهُ بِشَكِّ لَا يَقِينَ فِيهِ مِنَ الْمَوْتِ!

Translation

God has not created a certainty as doubt-free as death, but (going by man's attitude towards death) it seems as if it is a doubtful thing in which there is never any certainty. 1

Brief Description

What a strange phrase, and what a clear interpretation of man's lack of attention to the inevitable end of his life .

Man can have doubts about anything and may not believe in any religion, but he cannot doubt the fact that sooner or later his life will end and meet he must with death.

Yet, surprisingly, his lifestyle conveys the impression that he is unconcerned and unaware of death as if he was immortal!

Thus, he does not prepare himself for receiving it with faith, good deeds, purity and virtue. Let us be realistic and accept that one is bound to die and it can happen at any time. That being the case, we must keep ourselves pure and prepared at all times to avoid regret and shame when death does catch up with us.

Lesson One Hundred Twenty Nine: Place Of Knowledge And Wisdom

Imam Al-Kadhim (a.s.) said:

إِنَّ الزَّرْعَ يَنْبُتُ فِي السَّهْلِ وَ لَا يَنْبُتُ فِي الصَّفَا فَكَذَلِكَ الْحِكْمَةُ تَعْمُرُ فِي قَلْبِ
الْمُتَوَاضِعِ وَ لَا تَعْمُرُ فِي قَلْبِ الْمُتَكَبِّرِ الْجَبَّارِ!

Translation

Cultivation grows on soft land, not on the stones! Similarly knowledge and wisdom sprout on the heart of modest people, not on the heart of the unjust arrogant persons! 1

Brief Description

The first step in acquiring knowledge is humility: humility towards truth, humility towards the teacher and anyone who knows more than us and could teach us something.

For this reason, ignorance and arrogance usually go hand in hand. Arrogant ones never admit their ignorance, and if a reality happens to be different from that which serves their pride and arrogance, they would deny it and oppose it. They do not accept the truth from anyone and remain engulfed in their ignorance.

Lesson One Hundred Thirty: Heavy Duties Of Imam

Imam Ar-Ridha' (a.s.) said:

الإمامُ أمينُ اللهِ في أرضِهِ وَ خَلْقِهِ وَ حُجَّتُهُ عَلَى عِبَادِهِ وَ خَلِيفَتُهُ فِي بِلَادِهِ وَ
الدَّاعِي إِلَى اللهِ وَ الذَّابُّ عَنْ حَرِيمِ اللهِ.

Translation

The Imam is the trustee of God on earth and among His people, and His proof for the servants and His representative in the cities and summoner towards Him and protector of divine sanctuaries. 1

Brief Description

In this tradition, which is part of a detailed tradition on the concept of Imamate, reference is made to five aspects of the heavy and important duties of an Imam :

- 1- Imam is a treasurer and trustee of revelation and protector of all sciences, commands and knowledge of religion.
- 2- Imam is a living proof of divine religion.
- 3- Imam is a divinely appointed supervisor and authority and God's representative among people.
- 4- Imam is the one who calls people towards goodness and forbids evil and is the greatest emissary of religion.
- 5- Imam is a protector of divine sanctuaries against the invasion of enemies .

To carry out such tasks requires someone who has access to divine knowledge and is infallible. True Imams are the ones with these qualities and nobody except God can appoint them.

1. Tuhaful Uqul, page 328. Al-Kafi, vol 1, page 198. Al-Ihtijaj, vol 2, page 434. AlAmali, page 677. Ayoon Akhbar Ar-Ridha, vol 1, page 219. Kamalu Al-Deen. Vol 2, page 677.

Lesson One Hundred Thirty One: Piety Opens All Doors

Imam Muhammad At-Taqi (al-Jawad) (a.s.) said:

لَوْ كَانَتْ السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ رَتْقًا عَلَى عَبْدٍ ثُمَّ اتَّقَى اللَّهَ تَعَالَى جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لَهُ مِنْهَا مَخْرَجًا

Translation

If the doors of heavens and Earth are closed to someone, and he then adopts piety, God shall provide relief to him. 1

Brief Description

Sometimes in life all doors are closed to man and wherever he turns, he finds himself surrounded by problems and difficulties.

Such events in fact present an opportunity . They are a wake-up call, reminding him of realities of life and coaxing him to change direction , take corrective actions and return to the right path prescribed by God. At this time, if he reverts to God with sincerity and full concentration and seeks assistance from His pure essence, divine assistance shall be given to him, breezes of God's mercy would embrace him and the closed doors would be opened in wonderful ways.

1. Noural Absar, page 150

Lesson One Hundred Thirty Two: Beware Of Mean People!

Imam 'Ali Ibn Muhammad At-Taqi (a.s.) said:

مَنْ هَانَتْ عَلَيْهِ نَفْسُهُ فَلَا تَأْمَنُ شَرَّهُ

Translation

Beware of malady of one who does not assume a dignity for himself! 1

Brief Description

In fact, one of the most important factors preventing corruption and malevolence is dignity or at least a feeling of dignity. Dignified people or those who assume a dignity for themselves even though others do not consider them dignified, tend to avoid evils and bad deeds in order to preserve their status . But those who feel that they do not have any reputation, respect and dignity, would heed nothing. Hence the need to be wary of such people!

For this reason, one of the important goals of education especially for children is to inculcate in them the awareness of dignity and a feeling that they possess a special dignity.

1. Tuhaful Uqul, page 362.

Lesson One Hundred Thirty Three: Greater Jihad

Imam Hasan Al-'Askari (a.s.) said:

أَشَدُّ النَّاسِ إِجْتِهَاداً مَنْ تَرَكَ الذُّنُوبَ

Translation

The strongest warrior for the faith among people is one who gives up the sins. 1

Brief Description

We know that struggle against one's rebellious and sensual desires that lead to sins is called the 'greater jihad' in Islam, being more important and valuable than struggle with enemies. This warfare is the means

of purification of the soul and requires a strong will to achieve victory .

In societies stained with sin, the value of this warfare is more obvious and its importance in achievement of social objectives cannot be denied.

Victories of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) in Medina were actually the direct result of purification of souls and spiritual struggles of his companions.

1. Bihar al-Anwar, volume 78, page 373

Lesson One Hundred Thirty Four: Occultation Of Imam Al- Mahdi (a.s.)

Imam Mahdi (a.s.) said:

أَمَّا الْحَوَادِثُ الْوَأَقِعَةُ فَارْجِعُوا فِيهَا إِلَى رُؤَاةِ أَحَادِيثِنَا

Translation

In regards to the various events happening during the major occultation, refer to the narrator of our traditions. 1

Brief Description

Human societies cannot be optimally organized without proper leadership. For this reason, God has never left his servants without a leader. Divine leaders have always existed among them.

Even during the occultation of Imam Mahdi (a.s.), may our soul be sacrificed for him, first special deputies, and after termination of their period, common deputies were selected by him for leadership of people.

The leadership continues to be provided by those determined and faithful men who are well versed in the knowledge of Islam's holy book, the Qur'an, as well as the teachings and practices of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) and the school of the Prophet's household. Anyone who does not

possess such credentials , under whatever name and title , who assumes himself to be worthy of such a rank, must be rejected.

1. Cited in various Hadith Books

Lesson One Hundred Thirty Five: Source Of Evils

The Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) said:

اجْتَنِبِ الْخَمْرَ فَإِنَّهَا مِفْتَاحُ كُلِّ شَرٍّ

Translation

Avoid wine which is the key of all evils. 1

Brief Description

Many books and articles have been written in respect of the harmful effects of wine, including fatal effects on the nervous and digestive systems and the heart, arteries, liver, kidneys and other organs of body. Its painful social and economic consequences and shocking statistics have been investigated by thousands of scientists and contemplative minds. However, no phrase could be found as short , yet so comprehensive , as the valuable tradition of our Prophet which , in one short sentence, says it all.

1. Nahjul Fasahah, page 1

Lesson One Hundred Thirty Six: Fulfilment of Obligations

Imam Al-Sajjad (a.s.) said:

مَنْ عَمِلَ بِمَا افْتَرَضَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ فَهُوَ مِنْ أَعْبَادِ النَّاسِ

Translation

Whoever fulfill his obligations, will be among the most devout worshippers.¹

Brief Description

Worship is neither restricted to serving the people, nor to praying and fasting. Rather, the greatest worship is that one should fulfill his obligatory duties in all areas of life. Which worship is higher and more manifest than the one which could change a society into a flower garden where goodness and prosperity abound. fulfillment of obligations has a wide scope that includes obligations related to worship as well as to society, humanity, economic and other necessities of life. Those who are neglectful of their necessary obligations and yet consider themselves as highly devoted to Islam are under a serious delusion.

1. Wasa'il 'ush-Shi'a'. Volume 11, page 206. Al-Kafi, vol 2, page 81.

Lesson One Hundred Thirty Seven: Inhabitants Of Stars

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

هَذِهِ النُّجُومُ الَّتِي فِي السَّمَاءِ مَدَائِنٌ مِثْلُ الْمَدَائِنِ الَّتِي فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرْبُوطَةٌ كُلُّ

مَدِينَةٌ إِلَى عَمُودٍ مِنْ نُورٍ

Translation

These stars in the heaven are cities like the cities of earth. Each of the cities is connected (with the other cities) through a column of light. 1

Brief Description

It is very selfish to suppose that our earth is the only inhabitable planet and millions of other celestial planets are all underutilized, silent and without any inhabitant.

Today, we know of detailed scientific studies into the conditions required for life to exist on other planets which suggest that millions and millions of these may be inhabited and it is likely that many of them may enjoy more developed civilizations because life had started there thousands or millions of years before it did on the earth. Such scientific knowledge did not exist fourteen centuries ago and hence the above tradition of Imam 'Ali (a.s.) is nothing less than a miracle.

1. Safinat'ul-Bihar, volume 3, page 574. Tafseer Al-Qummi, vol 2, page 218.

Lesson One Hundred Thirty Eight: Holy Qur'an And The Law Of Gravity

Imam Ar-Ridha' (a.s.) said to one of his companions:

أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ يَقُولُ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا فَقُلْتُ: بَلَى قَالَ: ثُمَّ عَمَدٌ، لَكِنْ، لَا تَرَوْنَهَا!

Translation

Does God not say that heaven is erected upon an invisible pillar? I said: yes. He said: so there is an invisible pillar that you do not see . 1

Brief Description

Nowadays, it has been proved that celestial bodies are fixed in their circuits thanks to the balance of gravity and repulsive forces. Gravity attracts them towards each other like a great chain, and repulsive force separates them from each other and their complete balance enables them to revolve in their circuit without any change and deviation, suspended in the immense space on this invisible pillar. Was there any interpretation more eloquent than the above for expressing this reality in that time when these mysteries were not yet solved? And isn't this one of the scientific miracles of our great leaders.

1. Borhan interpretation of Holy Qur'an, volume 3, page 278

Lesson One Hundred Thirty Nine: Mystery Of Mountains!

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

وَوَدَّ بِالصُّخُورِ مَيِّدَانَ أَرْضِهِ

Translation

Shaking and movement of the Earth is prevented by mountains. 1

Brief Description

Nowadays, it has been confirmed that just as the gravity of the moon effects the ebb and flow of seas (producing high tides twice a day, raising the water level one meter or more and even 15 meters in some parts) it also causes up and down movement of 30 centimeters in the solid crust of the earth.

But solidity of earth's crust due to existence of mountains, the roots of which are connected to each other creating a stabilizing network round the earth, prevents any noticeable movement.

Just imagine ! If there were no mountains and earth's crust was not solid, and in a state of continual flux and reflux, what would happen to our quiet and peace on this earth?

This is just another example of Islamic leaders mentioning scientific facts 14 centuries ago which science has discovered much later.

1. Nahjul balaghah, sermon 1. Al-Ihtijaj, vol 1, page 198. Sharh Nahjul Balaghah, vol 1, page 57.

Lesson One Hundred Forty: Microscopic Creatures

Imam Ar-Ridha' (a.s.) said:

إِنَّمَا قُلْنَا «الطَّيْفُ» لِلْخَلْقِ اللَّطِيفِ... وَ مَا لَا يَكَادُ عِيُونُنَا تَسْتَبِينُهُ لِدِمَامَةِ خَلْقِهَا،
لَا تَرَاهُ عِيُونُنَا وَ لَا تَلْمَسُهُ أَيْدِينَا!

Translation

We say God is All-subtle due to His creation of very fine, minute creatures; so small that we cannot see them and our hand does not feel them.¹

Brief Description

What you see above is a small part of a long tradition which Fat'h Ibn Yazid Gorgani has narrated from Imam Ar-Ridha' (a.s.), in which it is described that 'these animals are so tiny that they are never felt, and are scattered among the waves of the seas and barks of trees, and deserts and plains'.

This is a miraculous tradition from our Imam dating back about one thousand years which means hundreds of years before the discoveries of microbiology founder Louis Pasteur (1822–1895 AD).

1. Al-Kafi, volume one, page 106. Al-Tawheed, page 185. Uyoon Akhbar Ar-Ridha, vol 1, page 127.

Lesson One Hundred Forty One: Only A Name From Islam

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

يَأْتِي عَلَى النَّاسِ زَمَانٌ لَا يَبْقَى فِيهِمْ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ إِلَّا رَسْمُهُ وَ مِنَ الْإِسْلَامِ إِلَّا إِسْمُهُ،
مَسَاجِدُهُمْ، يَوْمئِذٍ عَامِرَةٌ مِنَ الْبِنَاءِ، خَرَابٌ مِنَ الْهُدَى

Translation

A day will come for people when only letters and drawings from the Holy Qur'an and Islam in name only will remain among them. Muslims' mosques will be improved in building structure and ruined as regards the guidance they provide. 1

Brief Description

We cannot say whether this interesting prediction has already materialized fully in this present time or is yet to happen in future. But surely we are witnessing some examples of it here and there. It is surprising that in such cases the Muslims complain about their backwardness when they themselves have caused it by their mistaken notion that it is sufficient to adopt Muslim names and pay a nominal lip service to Islam, and that Qur'an is there only for decorative purposes.

They have not accepted Qur'an's real role as a "book" of unbeatable value for education , training and application in day to day life. Nor have they accepted Islam as a "school" that must engage and permeate their practical and intellectual lives. Can you find a real Islamic society (which follows Islam in substance , not just in form), which has been backward or has not enjoyed an honorable status in the world ?

1. Nahajul Balagha

Lesson One Hundred Forty Two: Criterion For Assessment Of Intellect And Ignorance

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

اللِّسَانُ مِغْيَارُ إِطَاشَةِ الْجَهْلِ وَ أَرْجِحَةَ الْعَقْلِ

Translation

The tongue is the criterion for assessment of insolence or ignorance and the scale of intellect and wisdom. 1

Brief Description

The tongue is the most important window to man's soul , the key to understanding his personality, and the best means for assessment of the degree of his intellect . Through a simple and seemingly unimportant rotation , this tongue of ours unveils the curtains and reveals the inner realities of man's soul.

For this reason, many Islamic instructions are focused on correction of tongue and we are admonished frequently by our great leaders to be careful in what we say. It is true that complete correction of tongue is not possible without correction of soul and mind, but we can avoid a lot of painful consequences of inappropriate movements of tongue through silence and self-control in our speech.

1. Tuhaful Uqul, page 143. Sharh Nahjul Balaghah, vol 7, page 88. Giraru Al-Hikam, page 211.

Lesson One Hundred Forty Three: Higher Than Favor

Imam Hadi (a.s.) said:

الشَّاكِرُ أَسْعَدُ بِالشُّكْرِ مِنْهُ بِالنِّعْمَةِ الَّتِي أُوجِبَتِ الشُّكْرَ لِأَنَّ النِّعْمَ مَتَاعٌ وَ الشُّكْرَ
نِعْمٌ وَ عُقْبَى

Translation

One who is grateful for a favor derives more prosperity from his gratefulness than from the favor, because favors pertain to life in this world whereas gratitude is the capital of this world and the other world. 1

Brief Description

Gratitude is more than mere appreciation by tongue ; it includes actions that demonstrate appreciation in practical terms and it involves using each favor in a proper way. Such gratitude for a favor results in blessings and prosperity far greater than that provided by the favor itself. Using the favors for seeking God's pleasure and meeting His servants' needs is a capital that earns honor in this world as well as eternal prosperity in the hereafter, while a favor itself may confer only a material blessing.

In other words, when one receives a favor, he receives something useful for this world and if he shows gratitude for it in appropriate ways, he then receives something additional which is even better : additional rewards both for this world and the hereafter.

1. Tuhaful Uqul, page 362

Lesson One Hundred Forty Four: Revival Of Doctrine Of The Prophet's Household

Imam Ar-Ridha' (a.s.) said:

مَنْ جَلَسَ مَجْلِسًا يُحْيِي فِيهِ أَمْرُنَا لَمْ يَمُتْ قَلْبُهُ يَوْمَ تَمُوتُ الْقُلُوبُ

Translation

One who participates in a meeting in which our doctrine is revived, his heart shall not die when the hearts die! 1

Brief Description

It is clearly inferred from the above sentence that the followers of the Prophet's household are duty bound to revive the ideas and practices of the pure household by understanding their doctrine, perceiving the spirit of their speeches, and becoming familiar with their instructions . They should not allow their meetings to degenerate into channels of amusements and gossip or harping on their needs and personal problems and desires . Instead, they should concentrate on higher human and social concerns with efforts directed at inculcating correct Islamic values, beliefs and practices. Such meetings will revive hearts and awaken the thoughts.

1. Turasul-Aiemma, page 443. Wasa'il Al-Shia, vol 14, page 502. Al-Amali, page 73. Mishkat Al-Anwar, page 257.

Lesson One Hundred Forty Five: Trust In Respect Of Keeping Secrets

The Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him and his progeny) said:

إِذَا حَدَّثَ الرَّجُلُ بِحَدِيثٍ، ثُمَّ التَفَتَ فَهِيَ أَمَانَةٌ

Translation

When somebody says something and looks around himself, his speech is a trust and secret (and we shall try to keep it). 1

Brief Description

Trust has different forms in Islam, including faithfulness in keeping people's secrets. This is considered

so important in Islam's view that disclosing a person's secret is considered as one of the capital sins. Moreover, for something to count as a secret, it is not necessary that the speaker has said that it is a secret and requested that it be kept a secret. Rather, the least sign or hint is sufficient for understanding this reality. If, before speaking, somebody looks around himself to see if another person is within hearing distance, this would be adequate to give rise to the trust so that it becomes obligatory to treat what he says as a secret of a Muslim brother.

1. Nahjul Fasahah, page 38

Lesson One Hundred Forty Six: Signs Of A Believer

Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) said:

إِذَا سَرَّتْكَ حَسَنَتُكَ وَ سَاءَتْكَ سَيِّئَتُكَ فَأَنْتَ مُؤْمِنٌ

Translation

When your good deed makes you happy and your bad deed disturbs you, you are a believer. 1

Brief Description

Islam says that all men are born with a pure primordial nature, which believes in and loves to do good. Taints and sins begin to gradually affect his spirit and soul and change his nature and in time turn it totally. When you see that a man is interested in goodness and hates bad deeds, you know that the spirit of belief and first pure nature still exist in him.

What a miserable lot are those who, instead of being disturbed by their bad deeds, take pleasure in them, or who are resentful of their deeds of self-sacrifice, righteousness, forgiveness and justice. They are the unbelievers.

1. Nahjul Fasahah, page 41

Lesson One Hundred Forty Seven: First Prerequisite For Any Work

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said to Kumayl:

مَا مِنْ حَرَكَةٍ إِلَّا وَ أَنْتَ مُحْتَاجٌ فِيهَا إِلَى مَعْرِفَةٍ

Translation

There is no movement or work that does not need insight, familiarity and knowledge for its performance.¹

Brief Description

If we reflect on the wide scope of the words 'no movement' used above, we will understand how all-encompassing the religion of Islam is. It is not merely a series of worship rituals and invocations or a set of beliefs without practical applications. Rather it provides a complete code of life for all personal and social concerns and endeavors, and its starting point is intelligence and knowledge of realities. It considers all movement and effort as fruitless or at best ineffective if it lacks adequate knowledge and correct guidance.

1. Safinat'ul-Bihar, volume one, page 15. Mustadrak Al-Wasail, vol 17, page 267. Bisharat Al-Mustafa, page 24.

Lesson One Hundred Forty Eight: Importance of A Guest

The Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) said:

إِذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ خَيْرًا أَهْدَىٰ إِلَيْهِمْ هَدِيَّةً. قَالُوا وَ مَا تِلْكَ الْهَدِيَّةُ؟ قَالَ: الضَّيْفُ

Translation

When God wills happiness and prosperity for a nation, he will bestow on them a gift. They asked: 'what is that gift'. He replied: a 'guest'. 1

Brief Description

That is true. Guest is a gift from God, a valuable and honorable gift. However, material world in which all affections are lost, has no value for a guest. It treats him as troublesome and strange and unwelcome. So it rarely happens that someone invites another or gets invited unless there is a selfish reason relating to business or wealth or politics.

In Islamic countries and families in which religious customs are still alive, a guest is honored and respected as a divine gift notwithstanding the absence of family relationship or any ulterior motives.

1. Bihar al-Anwar, volume 15, page 241. Jami' Al-Akhbar, page 136.

Lesson One Hundred Forty Nine: Respect And Affection

Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

لَيْسَ مِنَّا مَنْ لَمْ يُؤَفِّرْ كَبِيرَنَا وَ لَمْ يَرْحَمْ صَغِيرَنَا

Translation

One who does not respect the elders and does not show affection to the children, does not belong to us. 1

Brief Description

Human societies are like an extensive caravan which is continuously moving. The infants are born and children grow up and adults become old and the old die and nobody is excepted from passing these

stages.

The older ones are more experienced and have deeper insight . The conscientious ones among them have contributed to society through numerous services during their life. All this supports the argument that they should be respected by the youth and adolescents.

And since children are at the beginning stage of their life, tender, innocent and impressionable, they should be treated with love and affection . Foundations of their character and prosperity should be constructed lovingly by the adults . These are the ways and customs of a humanitarian and progressive society.

1. Usool al-Kafi, , page 253

Lesson One Hundred Fifty: Provide For Yourself In The Next World In Advance

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ خَيْرٍ يَبْقَ لَكَ ذُخْرُهُ وَ مَا تُؤَخَّرُهُ يَكُنْ لِغَيْرِكَ خَيْرُهُ

Translation

Whatever you send in advance shall be reserved for you, and whatever you postpone, its benefit would be only for the others (and its responsibility is your burden).¹

Brief Description

Those who amass wealth madly, employing every means , howsoever illegitimate or unjust, fail to understand that they can neither consume all this wealth during their lifetime nor can they take it with them when they die. On the contrary, they will leave it for others to enjoy while they are left carrying a heavy responsibility and accountability for it in the divine court. What a loss! What a contrast to those who acquire only legitimate wealth and send it in advance as provisions for their next world by spending it in Allah's way.

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