

One Hundred and Fifty Life Lessons

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Naser Makarem Shirazi

Translated by
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This text, compiled by Ayatullah Nasir Makarim Shirazi, is an exposition and brief commentary of 150 ahadith (traditions) from the Prophet (S) and the Ahl Al-Bayt (‘a) that are amazing examples of Islam’s morals and attributes for those who wish to know some of this religion by means of a brief study.

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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 *Badi`*, 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) Ayatullah 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 [11].

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] [12]]
2. Khums: The Islamic Tax translated by Saleem Bhimji – published by the Islamic Humanitarian Service [www.al-haqq.com] [13]]
3. Lessons in Islamic Beliefs – Tawhid, 'Adalah, Nubuwwah, Imamah, and Ma'ad translated by Laleh Bakhtiyar – published by Ansariyan Publications [www.ansariyan.org] [14]]
4. Life Under the Grace of Ethics translated by Monir Shafiei – published by the Office of Ayatullah Makarim Shirazi [www.makaremshirazi.org] [11]]
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] [12]]
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] [12]]
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] [14]]
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] [11]]
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] [14]]

10. Summary of the Islamic Rulings translated by ‘Ali Abdul Rasheed – published by the Office of Ayatullah Makarim Shirazi [www.makaremshirazi.org] [11]]

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] [13]] & [www.world-federation.org] [12]]

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] [11]]

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] [11]]

14. The Islamic Laws translated by the office of Ayatullah al-’Uzma Shaykh Nasir Makarim Shirazi – published by the Office of Ayatullah Makarim Shirazi [www.makaremshirazi.org] [11]]

Introduction To The Text

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 al-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.

Nasir Makarim Shirazi,

Qom, 1976

The Month of Shawaal, 1397

Lesson 1: Thought, Contemplation, And Reflection

Tradition

"أَلَا لَا خَيْرَ فِي عِلْمٍ لَيْسَ فِيهِ تَفَهُُّمٌ، أَلَا لَا خَيْرَ فِي قِرَاءَةِ لَيْسَ فِيهَا تَدَبُّرٌ، أَلَا لَا خَيْرَ فِي عِبَادَةٍ لَيْسَ فِيهَا تَفَكُّرٌ"

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) is narrated to have said:

“Know that there is no benefit in knowledge without thought.

Know that there is no benefit in the recitation of the Quran without contemplation.

Know that worship without reflection is without effect.”¹

Brief Commentary

Filling the mind with various sorts of scientific formulas, logical precepts, philosophical principles, and other types of knowledge is of extremely little value unless it is accompanied by proper thinking. If one simply memorizes facts without considering their greater meaning, then this will be of no benefit for them.

Similarly, the effects of reading the Holy Quran become almost insignificant if not accompanied by contemplation and attention into the depths of meaning found within its verses. Finally, worship without reflection is like a set of physical movements with no real purpose and it lacks the loftier effects that such worship can have on the human soul.

¹. Al-Kafi, Volume 1, 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 2: The Measure Of Reflection

Tradition

"صَلَاحُ حَالِ التَّعَايُشِ وَ التَّعَاشِرِ مِلءُ مِكْيَالِ ثَلَاثَةِ فِطْنَةٍ وَ ثُلُثُهُ نَخَافُ"

Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) is narrated to have said: “The reformation of life is completed through a measure that is two thirds caution and one third a lack of care and attention.”¹

Brief Commentary

Nothing can ever be completed without careful study, planning, and cautiousness. At the same time, nothing can ever be completed without a lack of care as well. Yet, how can this be since such a statement appears to be a complete contradiction? The answer is that if we want to do something without study, proper planning, and attention, then we would be unable to take that to completion.

At the same time, if we wanted to plan for all the possible things which could happen or all the things which could go wrong, then we would become bogged down with all the possibilities, and even simple tasks would end up taking years upon years of difficult planning and thought. In a nutshell, over thinking and over planning play a role similar to a lack of thought and a lack of proper planning. One needs to have these two elements in the proper proportions in order to achieve their goals.

¹. Tuhaf al-‘Uqul, p. 267. Bihar Al-Anwar Vol 75, page 241

Lesson 3: They Pay So Much Attention To The Food They Eat, But...

Tradition

"عَجِبْتُ لِمَنْ يَتَفَكَّرُ فِي مَأْكُولِهِ كَيْفَ لَا يَتَفَكَّرُ فِي مَعْقُولِهِ، فَيُجَنِّبُ بَطْنَهُ مَا يُؤْذِيهِ وَ يُودِعُ صَدْرَهُ مَا يُرْدِيهِ."

Imam al-Hasan (‘a) is narrated to have said: “I am surprised at those who reflect on the food that they eat and yet do not think at all in regards to the food of their soul. They stay away from unhealthy foods, but they fill their heart with various destructive matters.”¹

Brief Commentary

Just as the Imam (‘a) has mentioned, people are very careful in regards to what they eat. They will only eat foods which they trust and if there is even a ten percent chance of illness or food poisoning, they won’t even think of eating that food. Some people go beyond this and follow all sorts of nutritional rules which they believe will improve their health. In a nutshell, people care deeply about the foods that they eat.

Yet, when it comes to the food pertaining to their soul, they take in whatever they find, regardless of how it will affect them. Even if they are about to take in something which has a 95% chance of illness and spiritual poisoning, they do not pay any attention to the danger. If people slander and backbite others in their presence, they sit and listen without any fear. This is in reality the equivalent of eating a plate of completely rotten and spoiled food; it is going to make them extremely ill even though they may not realize it right away.

What we must understand is that various things which relate to the spirit naturally have an effect on the spirit, and the spirit grows or diminishes as a result of what we take in. This is exactly like when we eat food and our bodies either grow strong from it, or become ill as a result. It is truly amazing that people pay such detailed attention to the food related to their physical bodies, but are so utterly careless when it comes to the food of their soul.

1. Safinat al-Bihar, Section on Food, Bihar Al-Anwar, vol 1, page 218.

Lesson 4: The Role Of The Pen

Tradition

!مَا رَأَيْتُ بَاكِياً أَحْسَنَ تَبَسُّماً مِنَ الْقَلَمِ

Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) has said: “I have not seen anything weeping as beautifully as a pen when it smiles.”1

Brief Commentary

The pen is an amazing means of the expression of various human emotions and points of wisdom. It can be said that the pen is what gave rise to the concept of civilization and it is what allows society to function in such a smooth fashion.

The pen expresses the pain that people feel and it also expresses the vitality and life that is within them. It is the medium that expresses love, excitement, sorrow, and the very beauty of life. At the same time, if this pen falls into the hands of unworthy individuals, it weeps blood rather than ink, and its smile transforms into a cruel smirk which helps unseat the highest of human values and morals.

[1](#). From the book: Lata'if wa Zara'if.

Lesson 5: In Between Two Great Responsibilities

Tradition

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

Imam al-Sadiq ('a) has stated: "A faithful person is always worried about two things. The first includes the past sins for which he does not know how God will act in regards to them, while the second is for what is left of his life, during which he is uncertain of how he will behave."[1](#)

Brief Commentary

The clearest sign of faith is a sense of responsibility towards one's actions, as well as the duties that one must abide by. Someone who senses these two responsibilities will always be thinking of ways to fulfill them as well as making up for past lapses. Such a person will always have this thought in mind of how they can best act in light of their duties and how they can make use of the time that they have left.

[1](#). Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 7.

Lesson 6: The Destruction Of Society

Tradition

"الرَّبْعُ لَا يَدْخُلُ بَيْتًا وَاحِدَةً مِنْهَا إِلَّا خَرَبَ وَ لَمْ يَعْمُرْ بِالْبِرْكَةِ: الْخِيَانَةُ وَ السَّرِقَةُ وَ شُرْبُ الْخَمْرِ وَ الزِّنَا"

"There are four things in a home, which, even if one of them is present, will cause God's blessings to be

removed and result in its utter destruction. These are treachery, thievery, the consumption of alcohol, and acts against chastity.”¹

Brief Commentary

This is something which not only applies to a home, but it also applies to a society as well. For example, when treachery becomes commonplace and permeates society, then the spirit of trust leaves it. When thievery becomes commonplace in society, then that society will be robbed of peace and security. When the use of alcohol becomes commonplace, people will not think properly, children will be born with various problems, and the youth will not utilize their time and energy in the best manner. When the society becomes affected by a lack of chastity, then the foundations of the family will be shaken and future generations will be pulled towards corruption.

¹. From Nahj al-Fasahah.

Lesson 7: Laziness And Poverty

Tradition

"إِنَّ الْأَشْيَاءَ لَمَّا ازْدَوَجَتْ اِزْدَوَجَ الْكَسَلُ وَالْعَجْزُ فَتَنَجَا بَيْنَهُمَا الْفَقْرُ"

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) is narrated to have said: “On the day that all things were paired, laziness and weakness were joined with one another and they gave birth to poverty.”¹

Brief Commentary

Everything in this world is gained through hard work and struggle, and this is a reality that Islam has taught us. Laziness, the lack of desire, and escape from the hardships and difficulties that one faces in life is something that is not in concordance with faith. These are things that will bring about poverty and not just financial poverty, but poverty in one’s morals and spiritual state as well. People of faith should try their utmost to be independent from all perspectives and not rely on others for assistance.

¹. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 78, p. 59; Tuhaf al-’Uqul, p. 158.

Lesson 8: The Descent Of Knowledge Upon The Hearts

Tradition

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

Luqman, the famous sage, is reported to have said: “Oh my son, God enlivens the hearts of the people through the light of knowledge and understanding, just like the dead earth is brought to life with the rains that descend from the skies.”¹

Brief Commentary

The heart is much like a fertile orchard which has various trees and plants growing within it. It possesses different herbs, fruit bearing trees, and flowers. If these plants are watered and taken care of in the proper way, then all of the plants will reach their full potential and beauty. The means through which this orchard is watered is through the rain of knowledge and understanding. It is for this same reason that the hearts of those without knowledge are completely barren and dead, unable to give fruit or anything else of value. In all situations, we must strive to enliven ourselves with the light of knowledge and understanding.

¹. From the book Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 1.

Lesson 9: The Root Of Arrogance

Tradition

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

Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) is narrated to have said: “There is no person who acts arrogantly towards others except for a weakness which he senses within himself.”¹

Brief Commentary

Today, it has been shown through psychological studies that the root of arrogance and prideful behavior can be found in a feeling of inferiority that people possess within themselves. People who suffer from this inferiority complex try to use this misguided technique to show themselves as being superior to others. Yet, this type of behavior only adds to their inferiority because people recognize them for who they are. Over time, this kind of behavior increases the people's hate and disgust for them. This psychological issue has been mentioned over a thousand years ago by Imam al-Sadiq ('a). On the other hand, people who have faith are affected by a particular inner state which inclines them towards modesty and humbleness.

1. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 73, p. 225.

Lesson 10: Three Valuable Things In The View Of God

Tradition

ثَلَاثُ تَخْرُقُ الْحُجُبَ وَتَنْتَهِي إِلَى مَا بَيْنَ يَدَيِ اللَّهِ: صَرِيرُ أَقْلَامِ الْعُلَمَاءِ، وَوَطْئُ أَقْدَامِ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ، وَصَوْتُ مَغَازِلِ الْـ
مُحْصَنَاتِ

The Prophet (S) is narrated to have said: "There are three things which tear the veils and reach God Almighty's presence: The sound of the scholar's pen as he begins to write, the sound of the footsteps of the warriors (Mujahids) on the battlefield, and the sound of the weaving machine of the chaste women. 1

Brief Commentary

There are three sounds which extend to the very source of creation and continue on for eternity. The first of these sounds is that of the pen, even though it simply whispers through the night and has virtually no sound. The second is the sound of the warrior's footsteps as he maneuvers towards the enemy in defending himself and his society, while the third is the sound of hard work and struggle, even if it may seem to be very simple at first glance. A sound society is composed of these three important elements: knowledge, a struggle against one's enemies, and hard work and effort.

1. From the book "Ashahab fil Hikam wal Adab", p. 22.

Lesson 11: The Martyrdom Of Imam Al-Husayn (A)

Tradition

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

The Prophet (S) is narrated to have said: "The martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn (‘a) has created a fire and heat in the hearts of the believers which can never be extinguished."¹

Brief Commentary

There have been many different wars throughout history and almost without exception, they have been all but forgotten just a few months or years after they ended. Yet, if someone fights in the way of God and struggles in the path of liberating his fellow human beings, then this is something that can never be forgotten. This is because fighting for the sake of God, as well as concepts like freedom, honor, and dignity are things which never get old, nor are they ever forgotten. Imam al-Husayn (‘a) and his companions fought for these very concepts and it is for this reason that their memory will live on forever.

¹. Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, vol. 2, p. 217.

Lesson 12: Two Signs Of A True Muslim

Tradition

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

The Prophet (S) is narrated to have said: "Do not look only at the number of prayers, fasting sessions, Hajj pilgrimages, night vigils, or good acts (towards others) of the people (even though these things are important). Rather, look at their truthfulness and trustworthiness."¹

Brief Commentary

When one looks at the Islamic traditions, it becomes clear that there are two definite signs of a true Muslim: truthfulness and trustworthiness. Even though acts of worship such as prayer, fasting, and the Hajj pilgrimage are all very important and instrumental in the growth of human beings, these should not be considered the only signs of faith. They must be accompanied with the attributes of truthfulness and trustworthiness.

1. Taken from the book: Safinat al-Bihar.

Lesson 13: The Fire Of Wrath

Tradition

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

Imam al-Baqir (‘a) is narrated to have said: “Anger and wrath are burning flames from Satan which are lit in the innermost sections of the heart of man.”1

Brief Commentary

It is extremely rare for someone to perform an action while in a state of rage and not be regretful of what has taken place later on. This is because rage and anger cause the intellect and the process of correct decision making to completely fall by the wayside. In fact, the entire human system is so affected by anger and rage that, in certain cases, people do things which they regret for the rest of their lives. When a person becomes angry, they must quickly contain their anger and work to extinguish it as soon as possible. If they do not do this, the fire of this rage may consume both themselves, as well as those who are around them.

1. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 73, p. 278, Al-Kafi , vol. 2, p. 302.

Lesson 14: The Sources Of Wealth

Tradition

"أَطْلُبُوا الرِّزْقَ فِي خَبَايَا الْأَرْضِ"

The Prophet (S) is narrated to have said: "Seek your sustenance in the hiding places of the earth."¹

Brief Commentary

During a time when the concept behind mining for minerals was not very common, the Prophet (S) instructed the Muslims that if they wished to seek their sustenance, they should look within the depths of the earth. Such instructions show both the wisdom of Islamic teachings, as well as the importance of struggle in the way of gaining a lawful and honorable sustenance.

¹. Narrated from the book Nahj al-Fasahah, Fuqh Al-Quran, vol. 2, p. 22.

Lesson 15: The Worst Of Professions

Tradition

"شَرُّ الْمَكَاسِبِ كَسْبُ الرِّبَا"

The Prophet (S) is narrated to have said: "The worst wealth which one can gain is that of usury (Riba)."

"إِذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ هَلَاكًا ظَهَرَ فِيهِمُ الرِّبَا"

Imam al-Sadiq ('a) is narrated to have said: "Whenever God wishes to destroy a nation, usury becomes conspicuous amongst them."¹

Brief Commentary

In spite of the widespread prevalence of usury in our world today and the seemingly addictive dependence of the world economy upon it, there is no question that usury as a system ends up destroying the society in which it is allowed to exist. Usury causes wealth to accumulate in an unnatural way in the hands of a few individuals and this unjust division is the root of various societal and ethical ills.

Lesson 16: Rulership And Slavery

Tradition

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

Imam 'Ali ('a) is narrated to have said: "Do good towards whomever you like and you will rule over them. Be self-sufficient over whomever you like and you will become equal to them. And be dependent on whomever you like and you will become their slave."

Brief Commentary

When it comes to the social interactions of people, this is a rule which holds completely true in regards to their relationships with one another. Those who consistently give are always at an advantage, while those who consistently receive are always at a disadvantage. This also applies to nations as well, for if a nation is one that primarily receives from others, then it is treated much as an inferior and slave.

Those nations that give are treated as the masters and leaders of those who receive. A true Muslim is one who establishes a social relationship with others based on both giving and receiving, and not simply based on one of these aspects. Those who receive aid should be those who are disabled and truly unable to work or provide for themselves.

Lesson 17: Religious Falsity And Posturing

Tradition

"لَا تُرَاءِ بِعَمَلِكَ مَنْ لَا يُحْيِي وَلَا يُمِيتُ وَلَا يُعْنِي عَنْكَ شَيْئاً"

Imam al-Sadiq ('a) is narrated to have said: "Do not perform good actions for the sake of posturing and showing off to people who neither have the power of life or death, nor the power of solving any problems for you."¹

Brief Commentary

Those who become used to showing off and posturing in front of others end up living lives that are completely empty and devoid of any substance. Due to this manner of living, their lives begin to lack all felicity and happiness. They only possess the very outer aspects of religion and religiosity, and they suffice with dry rituals when it comes to their religious practices. It is for this same reason that Islam has severely criticized this type of behavior and it has mentioned that since these people have no power over one's destiny, why should they behave in such a way? Such a thing is not only illogical but it is also of no benefit to anyone.

1. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 72, p. 300.

Lesson 18: Jealousy

Tradition

"الحاسِدُ مُضِرٌّ بِنَفْسِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَضُرَّ بِالْمَحْسُودِ"

Imam al-Sadiq ('a) is narrated to have said: "The jealous one ends up harming himself before harming the object of his jealousy."1

Brief Commentary

Jealousy is a state where one cannot bear to see others enjoying certain blessings. As a result, such an individual will go as far as to try to take away that blessing and if they end up failing, then they will try to hurt that person in other ways. In reality, a jealous person is always trying to take things away from others instead of trying to improve themselves towards reaching a higher level. There is no doubt that jealousy is a serious moral disease with very serious social and spiritual consequences. From the perspective of psychological and spiritual well-being, a jealous person ends up harming themselves to a greater extent than the individual whom they are jealous of. It is better that such a person should try their best to grow and progress beyond what they see in others rather than simply trying to pull them down to their own level.

1. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 73, p. 225, Mustadraku Wasa'il, vol. 12, p. 19, Kashf Arriba, p. 53, Misbah Ash-Shari'a, p. 104.

Lesson 19: The Ones Who Are Far From God's Mercy

Tradition

"!مَنْ وَجَدَ مَاءً وَ تُرَاباً فَأَفْتَقَرَ فَأَبْعَدَهُ اللَّهُ"

Imam 'Ali ('a) is narrated to have said: "One who has land and water available to him and is poor and needy in spite of this, is truly far from the mercy of God."¹

Brief Commentary

From the Islamic sourcebooks, it is clear that Muslims are duty bound to put to use all of the resources which they have at their disposal in a responsible and conscientious way. This includes things such as animal husbandry, farming, mining of underground resources, the establishment of factories, trade, etc... One of the teachings of Islam is the full utilization of the resources which we have been blessed with. If we make a habit of using these resources with one hundred percent efficiency, then this will cause our worldly life to be full of blessings and prosperity.

At the same time, this isn't just something which deals with our worldly life alone. If we make a habit of working hard and successfully using the resources that God has blessed us with, then this will extend into our spiritual and religious life as well. As a result, we will find that our religious life is one filled with great blessings and closeness to our Creator as well.

¹. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 103, p. 65.

Lesson 20: The Worst Friends

Tradition

"شَرُّ إِخْوَانِكَ مَنْ دَاهَنَكَ فِي نَفْسِكَ وَ سَاتَرَكَ عَيْبِكَ"

Imam 'Ali ('a) is narrated to have said: "Your worst friends are those who flatter and praise you and hide from you your defects."¹

Brief Commentary

Fleeing from reality and covering the truth can never help us resolve the various issues that we face in our day to day lives. It is for this same reason that when our friends hide the realities they see within us, rather than helping us through constructive criticism, they are doing us the biggest disservice. Usually, this is done in order to gain the friend's favor or it is seen as a positive attribute, where one only mentions the good things about a friend and hides all of the negatives. The truth is that such actions are actually disloyalty to one's friends, even if they do not recognize it as such. In some cases, this kind of harmful behavior ends up costing these friends dearly later on in life.

1. Narrated from the book Ghurar al-Hikam.

Lesson 21: The Completion Of One's Actions

Tradition

"إِسْتِمَامُ الْمَعْرُوفِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ إِبْتِدَائِهِ"

The Prophet (S) is narrated to have said: "Completing and following through with good actions is better and more important than simply initiating them."1

Brief Commentary

In our social or religious lives, we oftentimes begin performing good actions with great zeal and eagerness. Yet, as time passes, we sometimes lose focus and leave the work unfinished. Islam encourages people to work hard and develop a level of determination where they begin various good actions and then push through and take them to completion. We should have a greater focus on finishing what we have started rather than simply beginning new things...

1. Narrated from the book Nahj al-Fasahah.

Lesson 22: Everlasting Plans

Tradition

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

Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) is narrated to have said: “God ordered all of his prophets to invite the people of the world to truthfulness and the giving back of trusts.”¹

Brief Commentary

A healthy society must necessarily possess certain foundations and the most important of these is that of public trust. This includes trust related to speech, as well as trust related to action. Naturally, the biggest enemy to these two things is lying and treachery. If we look at a society where lying and treachery has become commonplace, then we find that people fear one another and they feel alone and isolated.

Everyone bears their burdens alone and this is a society filled with isolated and disconnected people. It is for this reason that inviting people to truthfulness and safeguarding what people have entrusted are two of the most foundational parts of the prophetic message which God has sent down to humanity.

¹. Narrated from the book Safinat al-Bihar.

Lesson 23: The Severest Of Punishments

Tradition

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

The Prophet (S) is narrated to have said: “He who knows something and does not act upon it and benefit from his knowledge will be punished more severely than others on the Day of Judgment.”¹

Brief Commentary

From Islam’s perspective, knowledge is a tool used primarily for action. Through actively utilizing knowledge, we can improve our own lives and the lives of those around us. Without this important element, knowledge will be of no use to us. Those who lack knowledge have a lesser amount of culpability than those who know but still choose to act improperly. When someone knows and acts contrary to their knowledge, this is a heavy responsibility for which they will be asked about on the Day

of Judgement. Everyone is responsible to the same degree as the level of their knowledge. The one who has more knowledge is duty-bound to apply this greater amount, while the one who has less knowledge is duty-bound to apply this lesser amount.

[1](#). Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 2, p. 38.

Lesson 24: The Calamity Of Debt

Tradition

"إِيَّاكُمْ وَالدَّيْنَ فَإِنَّهُ هَمٌّ بِاللَّيْلِ، وَ ذُلٌّ بِالنَّهَارِ"

The Holy Prophet (S) is narrated to have said: "Stay away from taking loans as much as possible, for it brings sorrow during the nights and abjectness during the days."[1](#)

Brief Commentary

The glitter of the modern-day lifestyle and the never-ending race for gathering up newer and better things has caused a great number of people to place themselves into debt. Unfortunately, this debt is without any real need or purpose and it causes great difficulties in their lives. Someone who is indebted is not really a free individual and it is for this reason that we have been instructed in Islam not to take loans unless there is a pressing need for it. What we have mentioned about individuals also applies to societies and nations as well. A nation should be wary of becoming indebted to others, for such debt can cause them to become slaves and it can chip away at their independence and freedom.

[1](#). Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 103, p. 141.

Lesson 25: A Healthy Social Life

Tradition

"لَوْ أَنَّ النَّاسَ أَدَّوْا حُقُوقَ أَمْوَالِهِمْ لَكَانُوا عَائِشِينَ بِخَيْرٍ"

Imam al-Sadiq ('a) is narrated to have said: "If the people were to honor the mutual rights of one another and to help those in need, then their lives would become pleasant and satisfying for them."[1](#)

Brief Commentary

The aforementioned tradition is telling us that if we pay attention to the rights of others and the needy are taken care of, then the very quality of our lives will dramatically change for the better. This shows that the financial rights of people cannot be considered as just an ethical or moral issue. It is in reality an important foundational aspect of social life which brings about widespread societal health and peace.

The dangerous situation that we have at hand today, where society has been divided into varying classes, shows how important this issue really is. As long as the people of this world believe that 'might makes right,' this issue will never be resolved; people will have to understand that just because they are momentarily powerful, this does not allow them to usurp the rights of others. Eventually, the 'chickens will come home to roost' and a great price will have to be paid.

[1.](#) Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, vol. 6, p. 2.

Lesson 26: The Key To Misfortune

Tradition

"إِنَّ اللَّهَ جَعَلَ لِلشَّرِّ أَفْقَالًا وَ جَعَلَ مَفَاتِيحَ تِلْكَ الْأَقْفَالِ الشَّرَابَ، وَ الْكُذْبُ شَرٌّ مِنَ الشَّرَابِ"

Imam Hasan al-'Askari ('a) is narrated to have said: "God has created a lock for all the evils and the key to this lock is found in wine (alcohol). And (yet), lying is worse than wine."[1](#)

Brief Commentary

The greatest preventative tool against the evils found in this world is the faculty of the intellect. This is a most secure 'lock' that has been placed upon these evils. This 'lock' can easily be opened with the 'key' of alcohol, and once it has been opened, all of these evils come rushing out. When a person is in a drunken state, they will say and do almost anything, and even the greatest of sins do not seem so evil any longer.

Even though the drunken person commits sins due to a lack of proper judgment and thinking, the individual who lies with full awareness destroys the bonds that society has been established upon. When such trust is broken in the society, this gives rise to an unbelievable level of sin, deviation, and widespread corruption. It is for this reason that lying is considered even more dangerous than alcohol.

[1.](#) Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, vol. 2, p. 223.

Lesson 27: The Signs Of Those Bound For Heaven

Tradition

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

Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) is narrated to have said: “The people of paradise have four signs: ‘A smiling and open face, an expressive tongue, a heart full of love and affection, and a generous and giving hand.’”¹

Brief Commentary

The most authentic of religions are those which see human beings as the very heart of society and cause that society to give rise to valuable individuals. This is because the social sphere is the root of all spiritual and material blessings found on this earth. The aforementioned tradition has brought forward four signs of those who are heaven bound. It is interesting to note that all of these signs are related to issues that are socially relevant and not anything which is of a worship-based nature.

The first sign is a relaxed and open face, which is full of joy and affection. The second is a tongue which expresses love and speaks good words to the people in a clear and eloquent way. The third sign is a heart which beats for other people, while the fourth is a hand which does not refrain from helping others. These are the signs of those who are heaven bound.

¹. From the book Irshad al-Qulub.

Lesson 28: The Signs Of The Hypocrites

Tradition

"لِمُنَافِقٍ ثَلَاثٌ عِلَامَاتٌ: يُخَالِفُ لِسَانُهُ قَلْبَهُ وَ قَلْبُهُ فِعْلَهُ وَ عَلَانِيَتُهُ سَرِيرَتَهُ"

Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) is narrated to have said: “Luqman said to his son- ‘The hypocrites have three signs: Their tongues are not in concordance with their hearts, and their hearts are not in concordance with their

actions, and their outer is not in concordance with their inner.”¹

Brief Commentary

Hypocrisy is a dangerous disease which arises from a deficiency of one’s personality and a weakness of willpower. People who attempt to show themselves as something they are not and whose inner aspects do not match up with their outer aspects are typically weak people devoid of courage and willpower. They behave treacherously with others, as well as with themselves. There is no one more dangerous than them in the society because they manifest something which is nonexistent within themselves. They show a very beautiful outer appearance, while their inner reality is corrupt and polluted.

¹. Taken from the book: Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 15.

Lesson 29: Taking Lesson And Guidance

Tradition

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

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) is narrated to have said: “Take lesson from your predecessors before those who proceed you take lesson from you.”¹

Brief Commentary

History is full of lessons for humankind. It is full of guidance, words of wisdom, and good counsel. It is also full of examples of oppression, controversy, disunity, civilizational decline, and a lack of awareness toward one’s environment and time period. In the midst of all this, Imam ‘Ali (‘a) is telling us to take lesson and guidance from the people who lived before us and not allow ourselves to become a lesson on how things should not be done by those who will come after us. Life will quickly pass us by and we must take advantage of the time that we have on this earth.

¹. Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon 31.

Lesson 30: Speech And Silence

Tradition

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

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) is narrated to have said: “There is no benefit in the silence of the knowledgeable, just as there is no benefit in the speech of the ignorant.”¹

Brief Commentary

God has taken a covenant from those who know that they should not remain silent when they see people committing sins or when they witness deviations taking place. They must use logic and reasoning in order to guide the people to the truth. Everyone is responsible to the degree of their knowledge. Similarly, those who do not know should not interfere in such matters or else they will simply make a bad situation worse. It is wrong for the knowledgeable to be silent, just as it is wrong for the ignorant to speak in regards to what they do not know.

¹. Nahj al-Balaghah, Words of Wisdom.

Lesson 31: The Pleasure Of Forgiveness

Tradition

"إِذَا قَدَرْتَ عَلَىٰ عَدُوِّكَ فَاجْعَلِ الْعَفْوَ شُكْرًا لِلْقُدْرَةِ عَلَيْهِ"

The Prophet (S) is narrated to have said: “When you become victorious over your enemy, make forgiveness and pardon the tax that is due upon such a victory.”¹

Brief Commentary

From the Islamic perspective, every blessing has its own kind of tax and this is something which applies to every blessing which God has given to us. In line with this concept, the tax of power is forgiveness and pardon. Such a tax becomes due when the heart of the enemy is purified from the hatred and animosity that he previously held. When the original root of that opposition is eliminated, then that is the time when the tax must be paid.

When this forgiveness is freely given, you will see the same person who hated you yesterday has suddenly become your closest friend and ally. It is at this time that true victory has been achieved, where

one is victorious both in the physical realm, as well as the inner and unseen realms. At the same time, those who quickly seek out revenge are not only deprived of this great virtue, but they also put their victory in danger as well.

[1.](#) From the book The Words of Muhammad (s).

Lesson 32: The True Meaning Of Asceticism (Zuhd)

Tradition

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

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) is narrated to have said: “The true ascetic in this world is he whose resistance (against what is unlawful) is not overcome by the allure of unlawful wealth, while the lawful wealth does not take him away from the remembrance of God and his duty of being thankful towards him.”[1](#)

Brief Commentary

Some people have distorted the meaning of the term ascetic (Zahid) and they have transformed the concept into a very negative form. They have redefined this term as referring to someone who distances themselves from all things material, and who steps away from all economic activities and lives like the needy and poverty stricken. This is while such a concept is an incorrect one and true asceticism is that which was lived by the Ahl al-Bayt themselves.

The aforementioned tradition can be divided into two main points. The first is that one must resist and close their eyes to all forms of unlawful wealth. The second is that one should never forget the responsibilities that come with lawful wealth. If we were to define asceticism in this manner, then this is an asceticism which is progressive and positive for the society at large. This is the opposite of false asceticism, which is undoubtedly a negative and destructive force for the society.

[1.](#) From the book Tuhaf al-‘Uqul.

Lesson 33: Being Of The Same Rank As The Martyrs

Tradition

مَا الْمُجَاهِدُ الشَّهِيدُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَعْظَمَ أَجْرًا مِمَّنْ قَدَرَ فَعَفَاً

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) is narrated to have said: “The one who fights in the way of God and is martyred is not greater than the one who had the ability to sin but kept himself pure.”¹

Brief Commentary

According to Islam, the greatest struggle is the struggle that one performs against their own rebellious desires, and this is particularly true in a polluted social environment. Even when people are fighting against a dangerous enemy who seeks to destroy them, this fight will never be successful unless the defenders possess sincerity and unity. If the defenders are entangled in selfishness and disunity, they can never overcome their enemy.

It is for this same reason that Imam ‘Ali (‘a) has mentioned that those who fight against their desires and lusts and keep themselves pure in a corrupt environment are no less in rank than those who are martyred fighting in the way of God. In the *Nahj al-Balaghah*, it has even been mentioned that such people are placed in the ranks of the heavenly angels.

¹. Narrated from the *Nahj al-Balaghah*, Words of Wisdom.

Lesson 34: The Best Of The People

Tradition

خَيْرُ النَّاسِ قُضَاءُ الْحَقِّ

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) is narrated to have said: “The best of the people are those who judge with truth.”¹

Brief Commentary

Proper judgment in issues related to society, the law, and morality are only possible in a person who leaves aside his personal biases and grudges, and who looks out for the true interests of the people. Such a thing is only possible in someone who possesses the light of faith and human virtue. Furthermore, he must truly feel for the people in a way unaffected by personal interests and biases. These are the ones who are worthy of being considered the ‘best of the people.’

1. Taken from the book: Islam Dar Qalbe Ijtima’ (Islam in the Heart of the Society).

Lesson 35: The Worship Of The Free Ones

Tradition

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

Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) is narrated to have said: “The worshippers are of three groups. There are those who worship God out of fear of the hellfire, and this is the worship of the slaves. Then there are those who worship God for the rewards (which are offered), and this is the worship of the wage earners. Then there is the worship of those who worship God out of their love and affection for him and this is the worship of the free ones.”¹

Brief Commentary

God’s promise is true in that he will reward some and punish others based on their actions. His reward will be extraordinary in scope, as will his punishment. In spite of this, the ‘free ones’ see through these rewards, looking at God alone. They seek nothing but God and they fill their heart only with his love. Their eyes are looking at something much greater than simple reward and punishment and their goal in life is to truly worship God and become closer to him. For them, their worship of God is based on their love and understanding of him.

1. Taken from the book: Wasa’il al-Shi’ah.

Lesson 36: What Breaks The Back

Tradition

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

Imam al-Baqir (‘a) is narrated to have said: “There are three things which break a person’s back: Counting one’s good actions as being immense in scale, forgetting one’s sins, and being obstinate in one’s personal opinions.”¹

Brief Commentary

Those who count their good deeds as being immense in scale will surely become satisfied with them, no matter how few or how small they happen to be. This acts as a preventative factor for further growth and progress. Those who forget their sins will soon commit new ones, until they have destroyed themselves.

Those who only rely upon their own opinions are deprived of the collective intellect of their society. They are deprived of many forms of knowledge which others oftentimes possess. As a result, they are soon overtaken by their mistakes and destroyed with the passing of time.

¹. Wasa’il al-Shi’ah, vol. 1, p. 73.

Lesson 37: Have A Pure Mouth

Tradition

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

The Prophet (S) is narrated to have said: “Your mouths are one of the pathways towards God and the most beloved mouth in front of God is the one which is the best smelling. So make your mouths sweet smelling as much as possible.”¹

Brief Commentary

This tradition, which has been narrated in the book Wasa’il al-Shi’ah, has both an inner meaning and an

outer meaning in regards to our mouths. The outer meaning relates to the fact that we use our mouths to remember God through reciting the verses of the Quran or through reciting various supplications. Therefore, we have to be careful to keep our mouths clean and pleasant smelling.

The inner meaning of this tradition is referring to the fact that we use our mouths as a means of communication with others. Just as we can speak words of positive import to others, we can also say negative things which hurt them. These negative forms of speech, such as lying, insulting, slandering, and backbiting pollute our mouths in a spiritual way. As our mouths become more and more polluted, we become less able to use them to connect with our Creator (as well as with others). Keeping our mouths physically and spiritually clean is one of the important pathways to becoming closer to our Lord.

[1.](#) Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, vol. 1, p. 358.

Lesson 38: The End Results Of Ignorance

Tradition

مَنْ عَمِلَ عَلَىٰ غَيْرِ عِلْمٍ أَفْسَدَ أَكْثَرَ مِمَّا يُصْلِحُ

Imam al-Jawad ('a) is narrated to have said: "He who acts without knowledge and awareness will destroy more than what he fixes."[1](#)

Brief Commentary

One of the issues related to ignorance is that it prevents human beings from reaching the true meaning and full potential of their lives. Yet, it is not only limited to this and it also tends to bring about a great deal of corruption and destruction as well. In a certain situation for example, an individual may intend to help their child, but they will only hurt them. They may want to serve the cause of Islam and humanity, but they will only disgrace the religion and the human race. They may want to resolve a conflict that has erupted, but they will only make things worse. In everything that they do, they make things worse, rather than make them better as a result of their lack of knowledge and awareness.

[1.](#) Muntahi al-Amal.

Lesson 39: The Foundations Of Guidance

Tradition

الْمُؤْمِنُ يَحْتَاجُ إِلَى ثَلَاثِ خِصَالٍ: تَوْفِيقٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ، وَوَاعِظٌ مِنْ نَفْسِهِ، وَقَبُولٌ مِمَّنْ يَنْصَحُهُ

Imam al-Jawad (‘a) is narrated to have said: “Faithful believers are in need of three things: Divine favor, counsel which arises from the heart, and the acceptance of other people’s advice.”¹

Brief Commentary

Human beings tread a path that is full of ups and downs, and filled with many dangers. In order to transform oneself into an effective and beneficial member of society, one must first develop a spiritual connection with his Lord. This connection will awaken his conscience within him, which will in turn guide and advise him in his day to day affairs. In addition to this inner guiding voice, such a person will also need to listen to the advice and counsel of others as well, in order to draw upon their collective experience and wisdom. This collective experience and wisdom will prove to be invaluable when dealing with new or complex situations.

¹. Muntahi al-Amal, Mustadrak Al-Wasa’il, vol. 8, p. 329, Bihar Al-Anwar, vol. 72, p. 329, Tuhaf Al-Uqul, p. 457.

Lesson 40: The Lamentation Of Ignorance

Tradition

لِنَيْاحَةٍ مِنْ عَمَلِ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ

Imam al-Baqir (‘a) is narrated to have reported a saying of the Prophet (S) which no one had mentioned before him. He said: “Lamentations are one of the actions from the age of ignorance (the time before the rise of Islam).”¹

Brief Commentary

This tradition is brief but it contains both an inner and an outer meaning. The outer meaning pertains to the actions which people used to perform and were prevalent during the age of ignorance (the era before

Islam). When someone would pass away, the women would begin crying and lamenting their death in a way where they would say false things about the individual. In reality, they would make up lies about the person and this was an inappropriate and deviant form of mourning.

Another possible meaning which Imam al-Baqir (‘a) may have intended is that when one faces personal or social problems, lamenting over them is useless and a waste of time and energy. Instead of sitting down and crying over our problems, we should rather utilize our intellects and persevere in resolving whatever issues we have at hand.

[1](#). Wasa’il al-Shi’ah, vol. 1, p. 915 & vol. 3, p. 272, Man La Yahdhuruh Al-Faqih, vol. 4, p. 3.

Lesson 41: Account For Your Actions Every Day

Tradition

لَيْسَ مِنَّا مَنْ لَمْ يُحَاسِبْ نَفْسَهُ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ

Imam al-Kazim (‘a) is narrated to have said: “He who does not account (his actions) each day is not from us.”[1](#)

Brief Commentary

The only possible way to prevent harm to ourselves and work towards further progress is to sit down each day and account for all of what we have done and said. Growth is not possible except through such detailed accounting and this includes both the young, as well as the old. It is actually surprising that people spend so much time accounting for their financial state, and they spend so much time looking after their physical well-being, and yet, when it comes to their moral and spiritual accounting, they are completely negligent. It is possible for someone to spend virtually no time accounting for their spiritual state during the span of their entire lifetime. This is an extremely frightening state of being.

On the other hand, a responsible and aware Muslim is one who lives by the words of Imam al-Kazim (‘a) in the aforementioned tradition. He always accounts for the actions and deeds of every single day. If he has done something good, he attempts to further it in scope, and if he has done something bad, he asks God to forgive him for his lapse. Over a lifetime, such accounting will increase the good that one does and decrease the evil at an exponential level.

[1](#). From the book Aqwal al-A’immah, vol. 1, p. 214.

Lesson 42: Faith Is More Powerful Than Iron

Tradition

إِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَ أَشَدُّ مِنْ زُبْرِ الْحَدِيدِ إِنْ زُبِرَ الْحَدِيدُ إِذَا أُدْخِلَ النَّارَ تَغَيَّرَ وَإِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَ لَوْ قُتِلَ ثُمَّ نُشِرَ ثُمَّ قُتِلَ لَمْ يَتَغَيَّرْ قَلْبُهُ

Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) is narrated to have said: “People with faith are stronger than pieces of iron for when iron is placed into a fire, it changes, but if the believers are killed, brought back to life, and then killed again, no change will be found in their hearts.”¹

Brief Commentary

Life is composed of various difficulties and complicated issues. People who have low levels of resistance are quickly brought down to their knees in the face of these difficulties. Yet those who have strong faith are filled with a spirit of resistance and perseverance. Such people will never surrender in the face of difficulties and they will persevere until the very end.

People who possess faith understand that when one is walking on the path of obedience to God, away from all types of sins, then such a path will naturally have its share of problems and difficulties. Anything worthwhile in life has its own share of difficulties and cannot be easily reached. One must be prepared with a spirit of hard work, perseverance, and self-sacrifice in order to reach such high ranks. One must stand up against their own rebellious desires, and by standing firm against these desires, they will be certain to achieve a decisive victory.

¹. From the book Safinat al-Bihar, vol. 1, p. 37.

Lesson 43: The Reality Of Monotheism And Divine Justice

Tradition

التَّوْحِيدُ أَنْ لَا تَتَوَهَّمَهُ وَالْعَدْلُ أَنْ لَا تَتَّهَمَهُ

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) is narrated to have said: “The reality of God’s oneness is that you should not limit his

essence to your imagination, and faith in his justice is that you should not accuse him in regards to anything.”¹

Brief Commentary

God’s existence is clear and manifest for us in this world and even the smallest things are a reminder and a proof of his greatness. At the same time, the reality of his essence (Dhat) is hidden to us because he is an existence without any limitations and therefore, he is higher than our limited understanding. Due to this reason, we must consider his essence to be higher than anything which we can possibly imagine.

The second issue discussed in this tradition is God’s justice where it is explained that everything which takes place in this world happens based on precise rules and due to very exact reasons. Therefore, we should never look at anything which happens with a negative viewpoint and imagine that God has done something improper or wrong. Such a view of God is not in concordance with faith and belief in his perfection.

¹. Nahj al-Balaghah, Words of Wisdom, Bihar Al-Anwar, vol. 5, p. 52, Aalam Al-deen, p. 318, Qasa’is Al-A’imma, p. 124, Mutashabah Al-Qur’an, vol. 1, p. 105.

Lesson 44: Several Signs Of Faith

Tradition

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

Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) is narrated to have said: “A believing individual’s help is valuable, his expenses are little, he lives prudently (living according to plan), and he is never bitten from the same hole twice.”¹

Brief Commentary

Faith has various signs which can be intellectual, moral, and social in nature. This tradition has mentioned four such signs which are present in those who have faith. The first sign states that those who have faith help their fellow human beings and their help is of great value. The reason behind this is that those who have faith act based on love, awareness, and complete sincerity towards others. This type of help is exponentially greater than help based on other motivations.

The second sign is that such people live a simple lifestyle far away from show and ostentation. Showy lifestyles naturally bring about a pressure which causes people to engage in sinful behavior in order to

reach their financial goals. The third sign is that such people live their lives according to plan and this also relates to financial matters as well. The fourth sign is that whenever something goes wrong, they quickly learn their lessons and due to this reason, they are never harmed by the same thing twice.

[1.](#) Safinat al-Bihar, Al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 241, Wasa'il Al-Shia, vol. 15, p. 193.

Lesson 45: The Worldly Life Is Not The Goal-- It Is Simply The Means!

Tradition

الدُّنْيَا خُلِقَتْ لِغَيْرِهَا وَ لَمْ تُخْلَقْ لِنَفْسِهَا

Imam 'Ali ('a) is narrated to have said: "The world has been created for another purpose and not for its own sake."¹

Brief Commentary

Some people become confused when they see some verses of the Quran and various traditions praising the world and mentioning how it is the 'marketplace of the saints,' while other traditions mention the complete opposite, censuring the world and considering it a dangerous and deceptive realm. Such verses and traditions seem to be in contradiction with one another.

Yet, this tradition clears up this misunderstanding and explains that if the world is taken as a means for reaching human perfection and growth, then it becomes something positive and beloved. At the same time, if it becomes an end in itself and the means of sin, arrogance, and rebellion against God, then it becomes the most hated and dangerous thing possible.

[1.](#) From Safinat al-Bihar, vol. 1, Bihar Al-Anwar vol. 70, p. 133, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah, vol. 20, p. 181, Nahj Al-Balaghah p. 557.

Lesson 46: The Value Of Human Beings

Tradition

إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ لِإِنْفُسِكُمْ تَمَنُّ إِلَّا الْجَنَّةُ فَلَا تَبِعُوهَا إِلَّا بِهَا.

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) is narrated to have said: “Know that you are worthy of only the everlasting felicity of paradise; therefore, do not sell yourself short for anything less.”¹

Brief Commentary

If someone was asked how much they felt their life was worth, they would typically consider it as being priceless. The reality is that our lives are so precious that we can’t even fathom an amount we would be willing to sell it for. Unfortunately, the truth is that most people sell their lives for things of meager value every single day. At the end of their lives, they see that they have given away their entire lifespan for things like a home, a car, and a few other trinkets. Such people have, in reality, exchanged the very essence of their lives for things of little to no value. Interestingly enough, they realize that they must soon leave even these inconsequential things which they have spent their entire lives working for.

Here, Imam ‘Ali (‘a) is telling us that there is nothing in this world that is worth our souls. There is nothing that we can gain in this world that is worth the value of our lives. The only thing which is worth this grand amount is the pleasure of God and the perfection and completion of ourselves as human beings. Even if we were to exchange the entirety of our lives for the pleasure of God and the reward of paradise, it would be well worth it. In fact, such an exchange is the only thing which can be considered a proper trade for our life’s work.

¹. Nahj al-Balaghah, Aphorism 456.

Lesson 47: Truth And Falsehood

Tradition

إِنَّ الْحَقَّ ثَقِيلٌ مَرِيءٌ، وَإِنَّ الْبَاطِلَ خَفِيفٌ وَبِئْسَ

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) is narrated to have said: “The truth is heavy and difficult, yet it is refreshing and agreeable, while falsehood is light and easy, while being painful and dangerous.”¹

Brief Commentary

This description of truth and falsehood by Imam ‘Ali (‘a) is extremely brief in terms of words yet exceedingly eloquent. The tradition mentions that while truth may initially seem difficult to deal with, it is in reality one of the best things for the people to hear. Truth acts like a healing balm which cures society of its many ills and problems.

At the same time, falsehood can be easier to deal with initially and so people may prefer to hear what is a lie rather than what is the truth. Yet, by its very nature, falsehood acts like a poison which damages and destroys whatever it comes into contact with. It can be compared to a food which looks delicious but is actually filled with poison. It may taste good with those first bites, but very soon, the destructive effects of the poison will be felt and the person will suffer greatly as a result.

¹. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, p. 107.

Lesson 48: The Most Valuable Legacy Of The Arabs

Tradition

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

The Prophet (S) is narrated to have said: “The most correct and far reaching sentence which the Arabs have mentioned can be found in the words of Lubayd (a famous Arab poet) when he said: ‘Know that everything except God is void and useless and every blessing will eventually slip through your hands.’”¹

Brief Commentary

The finite nature of wealth and social position, as well as their inevitable loss, teaches us that we should be careful to earn them in lawful and just ways, and we should also be careful to spend them in moderate and lawful ways. We should understand that the only infinite existence is that of God and we all exist due to his mercy. This thought should be enough to keep us humble while we are living the life of this world.

¹. Misbah al-Shari’ah, p. 45, Bihar Al-Anwar, vol. 67, p. 294.

Lesson 49: I Am Weary And Disgusted Of Them

Tradition

لَيْسَ مِنَّا مَنْ غَشَّ مُسْلِمًا أَوْ ضَرَّهُ أَوْ مَا كَرَهُ

Imam al-Rida' ('a) is narrated to have said: "He who cheats, harms, or tricks another Muslim is not from us."¹

Brief Commentary

Those who find happiness in the dispossession of others and consider their own benefit to be in such things cannot be considered as true Muslims; rather, they cannot even be considered proper human beings. What makes human beings superior to other animals is found in their social behavior and those people who seek their benefit in the harm of others are lacking in this important human element. In some cases, people may try to harm others openly and in a direct fashion, while in other cases, they may attempt to do so quietly and in a hidden way. Islam has forbidden all such types of behavior which harm others. Imam al-Rida' ('a) has said: "I am a stranger to those who commit such actions."

¹. Safinat al-Bihar, Chapter about Ghash (adulteration).

Lesson 50: The Efforts Of The Weak

Tradition

الْغَيْبَةُ جُهْدُ الْعَاجِزِ

Imam 'Ali ('a) is narrated to have said: "Backbiting is the last resort of the weak."¹

Brief Commentary

Amongst the greater sins, there are a few sins which showcase the sinner's weakness and wretched nature- backbiting is one of these sins. Those who gather together in order to seek out the faults of others and to make public their shortcomings are guilty of this grave sin. The fact of the matter is that most people are not without fault and virtually everyone has some point of weakness that they suffer

from.

The question remains as to why anyone would behave in such a manner? The answer is that these people act in this way in order to soothe their feelings of jealousy and enmity which they have against others. The only people who would engage in such behavior are those who are so weak that they cannot even strike out against others in a direct fashion and so they engage in this cowardly and indirect type of attack.

They are only capable of stabbing people in the back by backbiting them. It has been mentioned in the traditions that if the one who backbites ends up repenting of his sin, then he will be the last of the people to enter paradise, and if he does not repent, then he will be the first of those to enter the hellfire.

[1.](#) Nahj al-Balaghah, Words of Wisdom.

Lesson 51: The Signs Of The Oppressors

Tradition

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

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) is narrated to have said: “An oppressor has three signs– He oppresses those who are above him through opposition and disobedience, he oppresses those who are below him through domination and compulsion, and he cooperates with the oppressors.”[1](#)

Brief Commentary

The one who possesses a spirit of oppression will always exhibit facets of this spirit through his actions. When he is supposed to obey the commands of those above him, he rebels and disobeys them. When he finds people who are employed by him or under his command, he acts in a forceful way and puts them under pressure. The third sign is that he cooperates and collaborates with those who are oppressors as well.

You will find that his friends and close associates all possess the characteristics of oppressors as well. In a nutshell, such an individual is an oppressor in all aspects of his life and character, and it can clearly be seen that the attribute of oppression has taken over his entire being.

[1.](#) Nahj al-Balaghah, Words of Wisdom.

Lesson 52: There Is No Disease Without A Cure

Tradition

ما أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ دَاءٍ إِلَّا جَعَلَ لَهُ دَوَاءً

The Prophet (S) is narrated to have said: “God has not created any pain (or disease) except that he also created its cure.”¹

Brief Commentary

The world that we live in is composed of various actions and reactions, and everything which lies on one extreme possesses a relationship with something which lies on the other extreme. For example, when we have the phenomenon of cold in this world, there also exists warmth and heat. When there is anger, there is also calm. In this same way, there is a cure to be found for every disease that exists; the only issue is it must be sought out and found, just as a warm blanket is sought out in the face of the cold.

This does not only apply to problems of the physical body; it also applies to social and spiritual problems as well. Some people believe that various things are unsolvable and so when they see an issue, they just leave it alone, thinking that it must be tolerated with no possible solution. These people are negligent of the reality that every pain and every disease possesses its own cure, and in fact, there is no disease which cannot be cured in this world, be it physical, mental, emotional, social, or spiritual. Therefore, we must persevere and work hard when faced with the pains and problems of life and seek a way towards their resolution and cure.

¹. Nahj al-Fasahah.

Lesson 53: That Which Destroys Blessings

Tradition

إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَضَى قَضَاءً حَتْمًا أَلَّا يُنْعَمَ عَلَى الْعَبْدِ بِنِعْمَةٍ فَيَسْلُبُهَا إِيَّاهُ حَتَّى يُحْدِثَ الْعَبْدُ ذَنْبًا يَسْتَحِقُّ بِذَلِكَ النَّفِيمَةَ

Imam al-Baqir (‘a) is narrated to have said: “God has made a decisive rule that he will never take away a blessing which he has given to people unless they commit a sin which causes the loss of that

blessing.”¹

Brief Commentary

The blessings of God are without end but it cannot be said that they are without calculation and accounting. God never gives to the people without proper calculation and he never takes away from them without cause as well. When the people begin to use the blessings of God as a means of corruption, arrogance, and oppression, then those same blessings are transformed into the means for their destruction. It is at this time that the blessing is removed and a calamity comes in its place.

When such a thing happens, things like industry and technology (which are positive phenomenons) are turned into destructive elements. The society begins to fall apart and such blessings become the means for worry and anxiety. Even things which help the people and allow them to do things more efficiently become the means for their regression. This is all caused by the improper use of God’s blessings.

¹. Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2.

Lesson 54: Martyrdom And Purity

Tradition

إِذَا مِتَّ عَلَى طَهَارَةٍ تَكُونُ شَهِيدًا

The Prophet (S) is narrated to have said: “If you leave this world in a state of purity, you will be counted as being amongst the martyrs.”¹

Brief Commentary

This tradition is part of the commands which the Prophet (S) gave to his companion Anas. He said to him: “If you are able to be in a state of purity (Wudu) day and night, then be as such. This is because if you were to leave this world in such a state, then you would be a martyr.” The tradition is primarily referring to the state of ritual purity known as Wudu but it also refers to a more important reality and that is the living of a pure life and the dying of a pure death.

Those whose thoughts, bodies, and lives are pure and they end up dying in this state are without a doubt in the same ranks as the martyrs. Other traditions from the Ahl al-Bayt also emphasize this same reality.

Lesson 55: The Self-Sacrificing Lovers

Tradition

إِنَّ أَصْحَابَ جَدِّي الْحُسَيْنِ لَمْ يَجِدُوا أَلَمَ مَسِّ الْحَدِيدِ

Imam al-Baqir (‘a) is narrated to have said: “The self-sacrificing companions of my grandfather Imam al-Husayn (‘a) did not feel any pain under the striking of the swords and the piercing of the spears of the enemy.”¹

Brief Commentary

When an individual begins to love something intensely, all of his senses will be focused on the object of his love. It is for this reason that any difficulty that he faces will be considered as nothing at all; in reality, he will not even feel any of these difficulties while he is in that state. When the women of Egypt saw Prophet Joseph (‘a), they all cut their hands under the effect of this attraction and love. They were so taken in that they could not even feel themselves cutting deep into their hands, while this is something that should have caused them immense pain under normal conditions. This shows us that those who are taken in by the love of God will not feel the immense pain of any sacrifice that they undertake in his way.

1. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 45, p. 80.

Lesson 56: The Wise And The Foolish

Tradition

الْعَاقِلُ يَعْتَمِدُ عَلَى عَمَلِهِ وَالْجَاهِلُ يَعْتَمِدُ عَلَى أَمَلِهِ

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) is narrated to have said: “The wise lean upon their hard work and actions while the foolish lean upon their hopes and desires.”¹

Brief Commentary

People with wisdom live based on a code of positivity and the seeking of the truth, and it is for this reason that they go after their goals with solid planning and they do not simply rely on their imagination and dreams. Since it is not possible to reach such goals without hard work and struggle, one must truly persevere and be constant in their efforts.

The foolish on the other hand sit around floating in their hopes and dreams. They do not put any effort forward and they only imagine the things that they want to do and who they want to be. They gain pleasure out of these thoughts and since there is no effort required for conjuring up such ideas, they never end up doing anything. In spite of this, they are always in expectation of victory over their imaginary goals, but without hard work and effort, they will never be able to achieve any of their dreams.

1. Ghurar al-Hikam.

Lesson 57: The Truly Religious Are Few In Number

Tradition

!النَّاسُ عِبِيدُ الدُّنْيَا وَالدِّينُ لَعِقُّ عَلَى أَلْسِنَتِهِمْ يَحُوطُونَهُ مَا دَرَّتْ بِهِ مَعَايِشُهُمْ فَإِذَا مُحِصُوا بِالْبَلَاءِ قَلَّ الدِّيَانُونَ

Imam al-Husayn (‘a) is narrated to have said: “Many of the people are slaves of this world and religion is something present only upon their tongues. As long as their lives are going well under the protection of their religion, they support it, but on the day when difficulties come and they are tested, the truly religious are few in number.”1

Brief Commentary

Religion, particularly the religion of Islam, is a protector of the rights of the people in society. It supports what is truly in their best interests and it enacts justice in the society. In some situations, religion can go against the personal interests of various people. It is here that the truly religious and those who are simply posing as being religious are recognized.

What we mean by this is that some people are only after their own personal interests and they are only religious as long as it benefits them materially. As soon as upholding the religion becomes a cause for material loss, they completely leave it. The truly religious are those who are loyal to their religion

regardless of whether it is to their material benefit or loss at that point in time. Faith is their major driving force and not personal material interest.

[1](#). Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 10, p. 198.

Lesson 58: Justice And Fairness Amongst One's Children

Tradition

إُعْدِلُوا بَيْنَ أَوْلَادِكُمْ كَمَا تُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يُعْدِلُوا بَيْنَكُمْ

The Prophet (S) is narrated to have said: “Be fair when it comes to your children just as you would like them to be fair when it comes to you.”[1](#)

Brief Commentary

A major problem amongst people is that they make differences between their children. In some families, the eldest child is treated differently and considered as being superior to the rest. In other cases, the youngest child is treated as being better than the rest. In these situations, the parents give all of their love, affection, and care to one of their children and create differences in how the rest are treated. This gives rise to anger and animosity among the siblings and they become enemies of one another. In addition, they can hold grudges against the parents and these grudges end up manifesting later on in life when the parents have become old and are in need of their children's help.

[1](#). Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 23, Makarim Al-Akhlaq, p. 220.

Lesson 59: You Are Always Being Watched!

Tradition

إِعْلَمْ أَنَّكَ لَنْ تَخْلُوَ مِنْ عَيْنِ اللَّهِ فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ تَكُونُ

Imam al-Jawad (‘a) is narrated to have said: “Know that you are never outside the sight of God, so be

careful of how you behave.”¹

Brief Commentary

The first effect of faith in God is a feeling of constantly being under his watch. This isn't just a sense of physically being watched, but it also relates to one's inner state such as one's thoughts, feelings, and intentions. There is nothing that he does not see and this is the most comprehensive sense of being seen that could possibly exist.

As one's faith grows stronger, the sense of this observation also increases, becoming more comprehensive and deeper in scope. This continues until an individual sees themselves as being perpetually under watch. This state is the greatest and most powerful means of self and social reformation, and it is the most beautiful manifestation of faith. This is also the state which can cure the worst social ills present in our society today.

¹. Taken from the book: Tuhaf al-'Uqul.

Lesson 60: Neither Envy, Nor Flattery

Tradition

النَّناءُ بِأَكْثَرِ مِنَ الاسْتِحْفاقِ مَلَقٌ وَ التَّقْصِيرُ مِنَ الاسْتِحْفاقِ عَيٌّْ أَوْ حَسَدٌ

Imam 'Ali ('a) is narrated to have said: “Praising someone beyond what they are worthy of is flattery and praising them less than what they deserve is either an inability to express oneself or it is envy.”¹

Brief Commentary

There is no doubt that we should praise those who perform worthy actions or possess worthy attributes. Such people should be encouraged in the path that they have chosen and they should be given this support. At the same time, this must be done in the correct manner and in the correct amount. If it is done excessively, then it is considered flattery and this is something which brings down the praiser's character and it also causes the rise of egoism and conceit in the one being praised. If such an action is performed at less than what the person is worthy of then it also has negative consequences because the individual becomes discouraged and it is a sign of either envy or an inability to express oneself.

¹. Nahj al-Balaghah, Words of Wisdom.

Lesson 61: Be In The Service Of Your Brothers

Tradition

مَنْ كَانَ فِي حَاجَةٍ أَخِيهِ الْمُسْلِمِ كَانَ اللَّهُ فِي حَاجَتِهِ

Imam al-Sadiq ('a) is narrated to have said: "He who helps fulfill the needs of his religious brothers will find that God will help him in fulfilling his needs."¹

Brief Commentary

People typically think that if they were to help others resolve their problems, then they would fall behind and not progress in their own lives. Islam has explained that the reality is other than this and the Prophet, in the aforementioned tradition, has explained to us that if we help our brothers in religion, then God will in turn help us with the problems that we face. God is the one who holds true power and he is able to help us with any issue that we have. This is something which many have experienced in their own lives as well.

Whenever they help others overcome their problems, they are helped in resolving theirs. In some cases, this help comes in strange and unexpected ways, and there is no doubt that this is a form of divine mercy and help.

¹. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 74, p. 286, Wasa'il Al-Shi'a, vol. 16, p. 359, Mustadrak Al-Wasa'il, vol. 12, p. 414, Al-Amali, p, 97, Awali Al-Laali, vol. 1, p.375.

Lesson 62: Mistakes In Life

Tradition

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

Imam 'Ali ('a) is narrated to have said: "Do not busy your heart with sorrow over what has passed or else you will not be sufficiently prepared for what is to come (in the future)."¹

Brief Commentary

There is virtually no one who has never committed any mistakes in their lives or who has not had missed opportunities. In reality, people can be divided into two main groups: There are those who are always sorrowful over what has taken place in the past and they expend a great deal of energy reminiscing over what could have been.

The second group is composed of those who consider what is past to be past and they basically let go of what took place beforehand, only taking lesson from these events for their future. They then mobilize all of their energy and power towards building their today and their future life. There is no doubt that the best method of living is in what Imam 'Ali ('a) has mentioned in this tradition.

¹ Narrated from Ghurar al-Hikam, p. 289.

Lesson 63: Islam As The Religion Of The World

Tradition

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

The Prophet (S) is narrated to have said: “There will be left no home on this earth, even homes made of earth or woolen tents, except that God will have allowed Islam to enter into them.”¹

Brief Commentary

Every day it is becoming more manifest that the religion of Islam is the best religion on the face of this earth. People are realizing that either they must leave religion completely aside or they must accept Islam as the true and final religion sent down by God. Since religion is an integral part of human nature and our intrinsic selves, it follows that people can't simply leave aside religion altogether. The only real option that they have left amongst the various religions is that of Islam. This phenomenon can be seen in our modern day world by the ever-increasing rates of people who accept Islam as their religion. Islam has spread to virtually every nation on this earth and mosques can be found even in far-flung regions and cities throughout the world.

With that said, it must be mentioned that the completion of this transformation will only take place with the appearance of Imam Mahdi ('a). On that day, polytheism and idol worship will be completely destroyed and Islam will manifest itself all throughout the world. This is the reality which the Prophet (S) has given glad tidings of in the above tradition.

Lesson 64: Do Not Consider Any Sin As Being Small In Nature

Tradition

!مِنَ الذُّنُوبِ الَّتِي لَا يُعْفَرُ: لِيَتَنَى لَا أُؤَاخِذُ إِلَّا بِهَذَا

Imam Hasan al-'Askari ('a) is narrated to have said: "Among the sins that will not be forgiven is the sin where an individual says: 'How I wish this was my only sin.'" ¹

Brief Commentary

In Islam, it is possible for lesser sins to be transformed into greater sins. One such way is when an individual considers the lesser sins as being small and inconsequential in nature. This is in fact one of the dangerous insinuations which Satan can make to man where he tells people that their sins are actually nothing to worry about because they are of no account. In certain cases, greater sins, which create fear and worry in people, can actually pose a lesser risk because people quickly recognize them and work to avoid them wholeheartedly.

With lesser sins, there is always the risk that a person may discount them and see them as being trivial in nature. When such sins are committed repeatedly, they are then transformed into greater sins. Such sins are the cause of great torment and difficulty for people, both in this world and the next. They become greater sins because, in a way, one is breaking the sanctity of God by repeatedly and purposefully disobeying him and doing what he has made forbidden.

¹. Tuhaf al-'Uqul, p. 366, Wasa'il Al-Shi'a, vol. 15, p. 313, Mustadrak Al-Wasa'il, vol. 11, p. 351, Al-Khisal, vol. 1, p. 24, Ghaibat Al-Tusi, p. 207, Kashf Al-Gumma, vol. 2, p. 420, Al-Manaqib, vol. 4, p. 429.

Lesson 65: The Superiority Of Knowledge

Tradition

فَضْلُ الْفَقِيهِ عَلَى الْعَابِدِ كَفَضْلِ الشَّمْسِ عَلَى الْكَوَاكِبِ

Imam al-Kazim (‘a) is narrated to have said: “The superiority of the scholar over the worshipper is like the superiority of the sun in relation to the stars.”¹

Brief Commentary

The stars that are found in the skies possess light in and of themselves but they are not able to illuminate much else besides themselves. For example, their light is not able to illuminate our homes and our walkways on this earth. This is while the sun is so powerful that its rays illuminate the earth and everything which exists upon it. It not only possesses intrinsic light, but it also lights the way for billions of human beings, as well as other creatures. This is a light which completely illuminates the roads for us and shows us where we need to go in our lives.

This metaphor can aptly be applied to the differences between a scholar who possesses knowledge and a worshipper who is devout but lacks such knowledge. The worshipper is only attempting to save himself but the scholar is one who is attempting to save countless numbers of individuals. This is truly a monumental difference between these two categories of believers. We should also keep in mind that if it were not for the scholars, then the worshippers could not exist either. It is through the light of the scholars that people are able to find their way and become devout worshippers of God.

¹. Tuhaf al-’Uqul, p. 307.

Lesson 66: Mutual Rights

Tradition

يَلْزَمُ الْوَالِدَيْنِ مِنَ الْحُقُوقِ لِوَالِدَيْهِمَا مَا يَلْزَمُ الْوَالِدَ لَهُمَا مِنْ حُقُوقِهِمَا

The Prophet (S) is narrated to have said: “Just as the children are responsible if they don’t uphold the rights of their mothers and fathers, the mothers and fathers are also responsible if they do not uphold the rights of their children.”¹

Brief Commentary

In this world, wherever we find a right that has been enjoined, we will also find a responsibility which has been attached to it. Rights and responsibilities have been created alongside one another, and as the

rights increase in scope, so the responsibilities become heavier in relation as well. Just as parents have a great right upon their children (a right mentioned in the Quran as being of the same rank as the right that God has upon us), similarly, the children also have a great right upon their parents.

Parents must never be negligent in teaching and educating their children, not even for a moment. They must do everything possible in order to build up their children physically and spiritually, and protect them from intellectual and ethical corruption. The busyness and entanglement of day to day life is no excuse and it should not prevent the parents from fulfilling their great responsibilities towards their children.

1. Narrated from the book Aqwal al-A'immah.

Lesson 67: Spend In The Way Of God's Obedience So That You Do Not Spend In The Way Of Sin!

Tradition

إِيَّاكَ أَنْ تَمْنَعَ فِي طَاعَةِ اللَّهِ فَتُنْفِقَ مِثْلَيْهِ فِي مَعْصِيَةِ اللَّهِ

Imam al-Kazim ('a) is narrated to have said: "Do not abstain from spending money in the way of God's obedience, for if you do, you will inevitably spend twice as much in the way of sin and error."1

Brief Commentary

There are some people who are so stingy when it comes to money that even when they become ill, they refuse to spend anything on treating themselves. As a result, their condition worsens and they are then forced to spend two or three times that amount in curing themselves. This is in fact a general rule that if someone doesn't spend the necessary money on their basic expenses, they will in turn be forced to spend much more when an issue comes up later.

Those who refrain from spending time or money for the education and training of their children end up paying a backbreaking price later on in life. Such neglect can bring out issues in their children like deviancy, criminality, and drug addiction. The parents will end up suffering a hundred fold for their initial neglect, which could have been remedied with just a small amount of time and effort. Similarly, if a person neglects to help the poverty stricken of their society, they will end up paying several times that to prevent various things which arise from such poverty...

Lesson 68: The Largest Marketplace

Tradition

الدُّنْيَا سُوقٌ رِيحٌ فِيهَا قَوْمٌ وَ خَسِرَ آخَرُونَ

Imam al-Hadi ('a) is narrated to have said: "The world is a marketplace wherein one group profits, while another group loses."¹

Brief Commentary

This world is not the real home of human beings – it is neither a final abode, nor is it a permanent home. It is in reality a grand marketplace where people invest their resources and then gain a return on what they have worked so hard for. Their resources include their intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and psychological wealth. These are the resources that we accumulate and which then lead us towards everlasting felicity and happiness in the next world.

Those who are active, hard working, and aware are cognizant of the existence of this grand marketplace and they are always busy working in order that they can 'purchase' valuable goods with the resources they have at hand. Their goal is to transform what they possess into ever more valuable goods which are everlasting, and they do this for the felicity of both themselves, as well as their society. This is in contradiction to those who sell their resources for goods of ever lessening value (or in some cases, things which are of a purely corrupted and destructive nature). The end result is that those who have 'traded' well will leave this world with a load of true wealth that will last forever, while those who have 'traded' improperly will leave this world with nothing in their disposal but loss and regret.

Lesson 69: The Highest Ranking People

Tradition

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

The Prophet (S) is narrated to have said: “The most eminent of the people on the Day of Judgement will be those who took the most steps in advising (and seeking the best for) the creation of God.”¹

Brief Commentary

Serving and helping the people is considered as one of the greatest acts of worship in Islam. In fact, one of the ways in which we can serve God is to consider the benefit and interests of the people as one’s own benefit and interest. Just as one will consider their personal interests with the utmost care and consideration, likewise one should consider the interests of the people in the same way. One should seek the best for the people both in their presence, as well as in their absence.

¹. Al- Kafi, vol. 2, p. 166, Wasail Al-Shi’a, vol 16, p. 382, Mustadrak Al-Wasa’il, vol. 12, p. 387.

Lesson 70: Three Important Social Principles

Tradition

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

Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) is narrated to have said: “The people (in relation to their social rights) are equal to one another much like the teeth of a comb. An individual becomes many in number due to his (religious) brothers. And it is not worthy for one to sit with an individual who does not want for you what he wants for himself.”¹

Brief Commentary

Three important principles have been mentioned in this tradition. The first is that all human beings are equal to one another in their rights, no matter their race, language, or social class. The second principle is that individuals are connected to one another in the society and the society relates back to the individual as well. In this way, an individual and his brothers are what really compose a society overall. The third principle manifests the necessity of wanting for others what one wants for himself. This is considered a primary principle of the friendship which exists among the people. A nation in which these three principles are not primary and active is neither an Islamic nation, nor a nation of true human beings.

¹. Tuhaf al-’Uqul, p. 274.

Lesson 71: To Be Hot Tempered And Rash

Tradition

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

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) is narrated to have said: “Being hot tempered and rash is a type of insanity, for the possessor of these attributes quickly becomes regretful over what he has done and if he does not become regretful, then his insanity has (indeed) become permanent.”¹

Brief Commentary

Human intellect and understanding necessitates that people should abstain from hastiness and rash behavior. When people act in such a manner, they are left unable to properly analyze or judge a given situation. They are soon left regretful over their hasty decision-making and they realize that they clearly made a mistake. This is a mistake which most likely would not have been made if they had left aside haste and properly gauged the situation at hand.

In some cases, someone can be rash in their speech and with just a few words, they can lay waste to a lifetime of careful planning and work. With just these few words, they can lose a number of their friends whose friendship they had cultivated over many years of their lives. Such a person will be left with only regret and sorrow for their hasty and rash speech. Yet, if such an individual does not become regretful even after tasting the fruits of their haste, then it is clear that they have been afflicted by a state of insanity.

¹. Nahj al-Balaghah, Words of Wisdom.

Lesson 72: The True Ascetics

Tradition

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

The Prophet (S) is narrated to have said: “Asceticism in this world is found in three things– the cutting short of desires, thankfulness for the blessings, and abstinence from the unlawful.”¹

Brief Commentary

A great number of people do not have a proper understanding of asceticism in Islam and they in fact see it as a life isolated from society and from all things related to money and wealth. Due to this idea, they see such a life as one full of hardship and something related to obscure mysticism; they see it as being contrary to progress and societal growth. This is while true asceticism is actually a progressive program of life and it can be instrumental in the building of the overall society. This narration mentions how true asceticism is actually found in the cutting short of desires, being thankful for one's blessings, and abstinence from what is unlawful.

1. Tuhaf al-'Uqul, p. 58, Al-Kafi, vol. 5, p. 71, Wasa'il Al-Shi'a, vol. 17, p. 15, Al-Khisal, vol. 1, p. 14.

Lesson 73: Examining One's Character

Tradition

ثَلَاثٌ يُمْتَحَنُ بِهَا عُقُولُ الرِّجَالِ هُنَّ الْمَالُ وَالْوَلَايَةُ وَالْمُصِيبَةُ

Imam 'Ali ('a) is narrated to have said: "There are three things through which the intellect of great men is tested: wealth, position, and calamities."1

Brief Commentary

The tests of God are a means of allowing human beings to grow and reach perfection in their day to day lives. These tests are never set in stone and they are administered in a multitude of different ways. At the same time, there are three things that are the most important when it comes to the people and these are issues related to wealth, social position, and calamities. How will an individual react when given a sum of wealth; will they lose control and begin to act in all sorts of extravagant and excessive ways?

How will a given person act when given a high-ranking social position; will they forget who they really are and become arrogant and prideful? How will someone act when faced with a calamity or difficulty in life? Will they sit in a corner and become utterly despondent, losing their sense of thankfulness towards God? These are the three most important things which human beings are tested with in their lives.

1. Ghurar al-Hikam, Root Section: Thulath.

Lesson 74: The Way Of Working For This Life And The Next

Tradition

إِعْمَلْ لِدُنْيَاكَ كَأَنَّكَ تَعِيشُ أَبَدًا وَ إِعْمَلْ لِآخِرَتِكَ كَأَنَّكَ تَمُوتُ غَدًا

Imam al-Rida' (‘a) is narrated to have said: “Work towards the life of this world as if you will live forever and work towards the next as if you will die tomorrow.”¹

Brief Commentary

The aforementioned tradition details how Islam views our material and spiritual lives both in this world and the next. A Muslim should be living his life in this world in such a firm and established way that it seems as if he is going to live in this world forever. This statement completely destroys the ideology of false asceticism which some people have tried to attribute to Islam.

Similarly, when it comes to spiritual issues and our level of preparedness, it is necessary to be so exact and detailed that if we were to die tomorrow, we would not have any deficiencies or regrets. This means that we would have washed ourselves from any mistakes with a true repentance and we would have paid back in full anything we owed to the people in terms of their rights. If we live in such a way, then it will be possible for us to die tomorrow in a way where we are left without any regrets and sorrows over what we should have done.

¹. Wasa'il al-Shi'ah (according to the section Aqwal al-A'immah, vol. 2, p. 277), Man La Yahdharuh Al-Faqih, vol. 3, p. 156.

Lesson 75: The Effects Of Sin

Tradition

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

Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) is narrated to have said: “Those who die due to their sins are more than those who

die due to their natural life spans. And those who live due to their good actions are more than those who live due to their natural life spans.”¹

Brief Commentary

Today, it has been proven that a considerable number of physical diseases have their primary roots in various spiritual problems. Similarly, one of the most important factors of psychological disease can be found in issues related to the conscience and these issues are caused by the commission of sins and the negative effects of these sins on the soul. A sinful person is in reality ‘convicted’ by his soul and he is likewise punished for what he has done. The effects of this punishment can be witnessed on the soul, as well as the physical body. The effects of these sins can even be seen in how and when a person dies!

Similarly, good actions have their own specific effects on the conscience and the soul. These positive actions bring about spiritual wealth and energy and they in turn have an effect on the physical body as well. As a result, they also have an effect on how long a person lives. In conclusion, it can be said that the sins shorten one’s lifespan, while good actions lengthen it.

¹. Safinat al-Bihar, Mustadrak Al-Wasa’il, vol. 11, p. 327, Al-Amali, p. 305.

Lesson 76: The True Shias

Tradition

أَبْلَغُ شِيَعَتَنَا أَنَّهُ لَا يُنَالُ مَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ إِلَّا بِعَمَلٍ.

Imam al-Baqir (‘a) is narrated to have said to one of his companions: “Tell our Shias (followers) that no one will reach divine blessings and mercy except through their actions.”¹

Brief Commentary

These words of Imam al-Baqir (‘a) are an answer to those who imagine that it is enough to simply mention that one is a Shia or express affection towards the family of the Prophet in order to achieve salvation. Such people believe that one can achieve the greatest rank before God simply through such lip service, while we know that Islam is based upon action, and the true Shias are those whose actions are based on the teachings of the Prophet (S) and his Ahl al-Bayt (‘a). Therefore, we should realize that the real Shia of the Prophet (S) and his Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) are those who are truly following in their footsteps, and that words and expressions of love alone are not enough.

Lesson 77: With Whom Should We Consult?

Tradition

لَا تُدْخِلَنَّ فِي مَشُورَتِكَ بَخِيلًا يَعْذِلُ عَنِ الْفَضْلِ وَيَعِدُّكَ الْفَقْرَ وَلا جَبَانًا يُضْعِفُكَ عَنِ الْأُمُورِ وَلا حَرِيصًا يُزَيِّنُ لَكَ الشَّرَّ بِالْجَوْرِ

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) is narrated to have said: “Do not consult with miserly people for they will restrain you from serving God’s creation and they will make you fearful of poverty. Do not consult with cowardly people for they will weaken your will towards doing important things, and (similarly) do not consult with greedy people for they will present oppression as something (positive and) beautiful.”^{[1](#)}

Brief Commentary

To consult with others is an important concept that is greatly encouraged in Islam. At the same time, consultation requires certain prerequisites for it to be beneficial. For example, consulting with people who have clear defects in certain respects will result in receiving defective advice. Such advice will actually end up harming you instead of helping. It is for this reason that Imam ‘Ali (‘a) has emphasized that one should not select any of these three categories of people for advice and consultation. The emphasis on this increases as the issue being consulted upon grows in importance.

The aforementioned tradition mentions that the miserly, the cowardly, and the greedy are among those who are not to be consulted with and the reasoning is that they all impart their own particular worldview to the advice that they give. Since their worldview is twisted and incorrect, their advice will similarly be twisted and incorrect as well. Such people will transform generosity into miserliness, courage into cowardice, and a sense of satisfaction into greed and the willingness to oppress others in order to reach one’s goals.

[1](#). Nahj al-Balaghah, Letter 53.

Lesson 78: The Best Of Blessings

Tradition

أَجَلُ النَّعْمِ الْعَافِيَّةُ وَ خَيْرُ مَا دَامَ فِي الْقَلْبِ الْيَقِينُ

Imam 'Ali ('a) is narrated to have said: “The best blessing is health and soundness, while the best thing which can fill one’s heart is faith in God.”¹

Brief Commentary

In this tradition, Imam 'Ali ('a) has pointed out the greatest physical and spiritual blessings which one can have. Physical health is not only the greatest material blessing but it is the root of all other blessings as well. It is through means of our physical health that we are able to do everything else. Without physical health, such things like prayer, fasting, charity, and other good works would also not be possible for us.

When it comes to spiritual issues, the greatest blessing that one can have is a heart filled with faith in God. This is something which allows us to see the world as it is and which lights the way in front of us even in the depths of darkness. It is through faith that the disease of ignorance and sin are eliminated and one’s heart and body are made calm and peaceful.

¹. Tuhaf al-'Uqul, p. 206, Al-Tamhees, p. 61.

Lesson 79: The Hidden Imam

Tradition

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

Someone asked Imam al-Sadiq ('a): “How do the people benefit from the existence of a hidden Imam?” The Imam ('a) answered: “In the same way that one benefits from the sun when it is hidden behind the clouds.”¹

Brief Commentary

The light of the sun is the driving source of all life that exists on this earth and there is no living creature that is able to continue its existence in the long term without this amazing source of energy. In this same way, the Hidden Imam ('a) has been likened to the power of the sun over all that exists on this earth. This doesn't only apply to their physical existence, but also their spiritual existence as well.

Even when the sun is hidden behind the clouds, it still transmits a great deal of light to the earth and this light exerts a great influence over all living things. Similarly, the Imam (‘a) exerts a great physical and spiritual influence over the earth, even when he is hidden from the sight of the people. At the same time, it must be said that all things benefit only to the degree of their potential. In this way, the benefit of the people from the Imam (‘a) will only be to the degree that they have developed themselves and are able to benefit from him.

[1](#). Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 52, p. 92.

Lesson 80: Do Not Sit At Every Conversation

Tradition

مَنْ أَصْغَىٰ إِلَىٰ نَاطِقٍ فَقَدْ عَبَدَهُ فَإِنْ كَانَ النَّاطِقُ عَنِ اللَّهِ فَقَدْ عَبَدَ اللَّهَ وَإِنْ كَانَ النَّاطِقُ يُنْطِقُ عَنْ لِسَانِ إِبْلِيسَ فَقَدْ
عَبَدَ إِبْلِيسَ

Imam al-Jawad (‘a) is narrated to have said: “He who listens to a speaker has worshipped him. Therefore, if the speaker speaks of God, he has worshipped God and if he speaks of Satan, he has worshipped Satan.”[1](#)

Brief Commentary

Whenever someone speaks in regards to any topic, he exerts a certain influence over those who hear him. Similarly, when someone listens to another’s speech, he is influenced by those words as well. In this same way, words can be positive or negative, and in some cases, they can be a mixture of both truth and falsehood. When one sits complacently and listens to another’s speech, it is a type of worship in the sense that the words take root in their soul and exert their own influence and effect.

Therefore, those who listen to positive and truthful words will find positivity and truth taking root in their souls, while those who listen to negative and deviant words will find those attributes taking root in their souls. Therefore, we must always be careful not to sit in the company of negative speakers so that their words do not affect us in a detrimental way.

[1](#). Tuhaful-Uqul, p. 339, Al-Kafi, vol. 6, p. 434, Wasa'il Al-Shi'a, vol. 27, p. 127, Mustadrak Al-Wasa'il, vol. 17, p. 308.

Lesson 81: Those With The Attributes Of Satan

Tradition

إِذَا رَأَيْتُمُ الرَّجُلَ لَا يُبَالِي مَا قَالَتْ أَوْ مَا قِيلَ فِيهِ فَإِنَّهُ لَبَغِيَّةٌ أَوْ شَيْطَانٌ

The Prophet of Islam (S) is narrated to have said: “Whenever you see someone who doesn’t care about what he says or what people say about him, then you should know that he is either corrupt or Satanic (in nature).”¹

Brief Commentary

When someone submerses themselves very deeply in sin, they will eventually reach a point where they don’t care what others say about them or what they say about others. They will mention the worst types of slander while being utterly indifferent when similar things are directed towards them. When someone reaches such a state, then it is clear in regards to the evils which they are capable of committing. At the same time, reformation is also very difficult because such individuals are past caring about themselves.

¹. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 74, p. 147, Al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 323, Wasa'il Al-Shi'a, vol. 16, p. 34, Tuhafu Al-Uqul, p. 44.

Lesson 82: The Real 'Id, The Real Day Of Celebration

Tradition

إِنَّمَا هُوَ عِيدٌ لِمَنْ قَبِلَ اللَّهَ صِيَامَهُ وَ شَكَرَ قِيَامَهُ وَ كُلُّ يَوْمٍ لَا يُعْصَى اللَّهَ فِيهِ فَهُوَ عِيدٌ

Imam 'Ali ('a) is narrated to have said: “This day (the day of 'Id al-Fitr) is the 'Id¹ of those whose fasting and worship has been accepted by God; and indeed, every day that you do not sin is a day of 'Id.”²

Brief Commentary

The celebration that we hold after fasting for thirty days during the blessed month of Ramadan is in reality a celebration over our conquest of our lusts and desires. This is a celebration of our obedience to

God and his commands. Therefore, such a day is a day of celebration for those who have obeyed God in his commands and have understood the ultimate philosophy of their actions. Yet for those who have dishonored such a month and who have not attempted to educate and train themselves in the obedience of God, such a day is nothing but a day of grief and sorrow.

[1.](#) 'Īd can generally be understood as a day of celebration or a holy day.

[2.](#) Nahj al-Balaghah, Aphorism 428, Wasa'il Al-Shi'a, vol. 15, p. 308, Mustadrak Al-Wasa'il, vol. 6, p. 149, Rawdhat Al-Wa'idheen, vol. 2, p. 354. Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah, vol. 20, p. 73.

Lesson 83: Valuable Investments

Tradition

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَى صُورِكُمْ وَلَا إِلَى أَمْوَالِكُمْ وَإِنَّمَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ وَأَعْمَالِكُمْ

The Prophet (S) is narrated to have said: “God does not look at your faces and your wealth; rather, he looks at your hearts and your actions.”[1](#)

Brief Commentary

Even though most societies judge people based on how they look and how much money they have, Islam has explicitly mentioned that such judgements are actually incorrect and misguided. What God really judges are our hearts (meaning our intentions and beliefs) and our actions. Our hearts are the root of all of our actions and if we possess pure hearts, then likewise, our actions will be pure and wholesome as well. In front of God's judgement, the only successful people are those who possess these valuable things.

[1.](#) Muhajat al-Bayda', vol. 6, p. 312, Mustadrak Al-Wasa'il, vol. 11, p. 264, Alam Al-Deen, p. 201, Al-Amali, p. 535, Jami' Al-Akhbar, p. 100, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah, vol. 2, p. 181, Makarim Al-Akhlaq, p.469.

Lesson 84: Two Things Which Cause People's Destruction

Tradition

أَهْلَكَ النَّاسَ اِثْنَانِ خَوْفُ الْفَقْرِ وَ طَلَبُ الْفَخْرِ

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) is narrated to have said: “Two things have thrown people into destruction and these are the fear of poverty and the seeking of glory.”¹

Brief Commentary

There are two things which are the root cause of the increase that we see in thievery, bribery, and various other crimes in our society. Similarly, if we look at the root causes of greed and the accumulation of wealth in various individuals, we find that such behavior is caused by this same fear of poverty and the seeking of illusory glory.

When we look at some people, we find that in spite of their great amount of wealth, they are still engaged in the continuous accumulation of material wealth. In some cases, they even break laws for fear of somehow losing their wealth and becoming poverty stricken; this is in spite of possessing millions or even billions of dollars in their bank accounts. In other cases, people give up their sense of peace and calm in order to seek ever-increasing levels of glory and social recognition. They do this in order to compete with their rivals and to show themselves as being superior. This is while if they were to give up these two negative traits, their lives would be filled with ease and happiness.

¹. Tuhaf al-‘Uqul, Mustadrak Al-Wasa’il, vol. 12, p. 91, Al-Khisal, vol. 1, p. 68.

Lesson 85: Do Not Count Such Works As Being Little!

Tradition

لَا يَقِلُّ عَمَلٌ مَعَ تَقْوَى وَ كَيْفَ يَقِلُّ مَا يُتَقَبَّلُ

Imam al-Sajjad (‘a) is narrated to have said: “Actions which are based on sincerity and piety are never small, even if they outwardly appear to be so. How is it possible that an action that is accepted by God could be small (in nature)?”¹

Brief Commentary

The Quran has stated: “God only accepts the actions which are accompanied by piety and pure intentions.” Therefore, we should pay close attention to the purity of our intentions, our sincerity, and our piety when it comes to our actions and not just their quantity. This is because no matter how small our actions may be, if it comes with sincerity and piety, then it is of great value before God and considered an action that is accepted by him. Can an action accepted by God ever be considered as small? In conclusion, the actions which are based on insincerity and showing off are those that are without value, and those which are based on sincerity of intention and piety are valuable and weighty in front of God.

1. Tuhaf al-’Uqul, p. 201.

Lesson 86: Do Not Make Mistakes So That You Don’t Have To Apologize

Tradition

إِيَّاكَ وَ مَا تَعْتَذِرُ مِنْهُ فَإِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَ لَا يُسِيئُ وَلَا يَعْتَذِرُ وَالْمُنَافِقُ كُلُّ يَوْمٍ يُسِيئُ وَ يَعْتَذِرُ

Imam al-Husayn (‘a) is narrated to have said: “Do not perform bad actions, for then, apologizing will be an inevitable consequence. This is because a believing person performs neither bad actions, nor does he apologize (as a consequence of his bad action). Yet, the hypocrite performs bad actions and seeks pardon every day.”1

Brief Commentary

It is possible for every individual to make mistakes but the people of faith and the hypocrites have a critical difference in this regard. This difference is that the believers strive to make less mistakes so that they will not have to keep making amends because they realize that apologizing is only a second best after having committed a mistake. One of the marks of the believers is someone who quickly learns and does not keep making mistakes; this is also in line with the issue of faith where one’s inner reality is the same as their outer reality. Therefore, if they are pure internally, then this will reflect clearly on their behavior as well.

1. Taken from the book: Tuhaf al-’Uqul, p. 177.

Lesson 87: The Worst Way Of Living

Tradition

أَسْوَأُ النَّاسِ مَعَاشاً مَنْ لَمْ يَعْشُ غَيْرَهُ فِي مَعَاشِهِ

Imam al-Rida' ('a) is narrated to have said: "The worst of the people in respect to their economic lives are those who do not support others with their livelihood..."¹

Brief Commentary

One of the worst attributes in a human being is the attribute of greed and miserliness. Sometimes, people fall into the trap of thinking that if they hoard their wealth and keep it all for themselves, they will gain a stronger position in terms of power and wealth. They refuse to support others, even their close family members. This type of greed and miserliness comes from a lack of understanding that wealth has no intrinsic value in and of itself; its value comes from the benefit that it gives to oneself and others. Such people have failed to understand the purpose of this life and the reason behind why God has given them such wealth.

¹. Taken from the book: Tuhaf al-'Uqul, p. 334.

Lesson 88: Our Promise Is Our Debt

Tradition

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

Imam al-Rida' ('a) is narrated to have said: "We are a family who considers our promises to be just like our debts and this is how the Prophet of God was."¹

Brief Commentary

Debts do not happen only when we borrow something from others and then owe them money as a result. Those who give a promise to others are in reality in their debt and they are responsible to fulfill their moral and ethical obligations towards them. This is something which cannot simply be shrugged off.

Being loyal to one's word is a sign of character, faith, truthfulness, and it also helps to solidify the bonds of trust in the society. It is something which strengthens the spirit of social cooperation and it is for these reasons that Islam has placed a great importance on fulfilling such promises.

¹. Taken from the book: Tuhaf al-'Uqul, p. 333.

Lesson 89: The Property Of The People

Tradition

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

Imam al-Baqir ('a) is narrated to have said: "Whenever an individual takes in wealth through unlawful means, neither his Hajj and 'Umrah pilgrimage, nor his acts to strengthen his family relationships will be accepted (from him)."¹

Brief Commentary

Good intentions by themselves are not enough in Islam. What is further necessary is the purity of the means through which we perform these good actions as well. Those who perform good actions through illegitimate means will never reach their end goals. Until the means are as pure as the intentions behind them, neither of them will be accepted by God.

¹. Safinat al-Bihar, vol. 1, p. 213, Wasa'il Al-Shi'a, vol. 17, p. 91, Al-Amali, p. 680.

Lesson 90: Do Not Seek Things From The People As Much As Possible

Tradition

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

Imam al-Sajjad ('a) is narrated to have said: "Requesting things from the people is (a kind) of abjectness in life and it destroys one's humility and weakens one's character and standing. It is a (type of) poverty

that the people create for themselves.”¹

Brief Commentary

Some people throw themselves into poverty as a result of actions which they believe will actually save them from it. They request things from people which are not necessary and they make themselves dependent and needy upon them. Through such behavior, their character is weakened and ruined in front of others. Islam has ordered its followers to stand upon their own two feet as much as possible and to be wary of dependence in their lives. This is because taking care of one’s needs through others is the worst type of neediness and poverty.

¹. Taken from the book: Tuhaf al-’Uqul, p. 201.

Lesson 91: Woe Upon Such A Person

Tradition

يا سَوَاتَاهُ غَلَبَتْ إِحْدَاتُهُ عَلَى عَشْرَاتِهِ

Imam al-Sajjad (‘a) is narrated to have said: “Woe upon those whose ones exceed their tens!”¹

Brief Commentary

Holy Qur’an has mentioned that:

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 tradition mentions that the truly wretched are those whose tens (their good deeds which are rewarded ten times as much) are exceeded by their bad deeds (for which they are only punished for once). Imagine that God is rewarding you ten times for the good you have done and only punishing you to the degree of the sins but in spite of this, the good is still outweighed by the bad. This is truly the ultimate disgrace and wretchedness.

¹. Taken from the book: Tuhaf al-’Uqul, p. 203.

Lesson 92: Do Not Attempt To Resolve Your Problems Through The Commission Of Sins

Tradition

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

Imam al-Husayn (‘a) is narrated to have said: “He who seeks to do something through sinning against God will lose what he hopes for sooner and reach what he feared for more quickly.”¹

Brief Commentary

Some people imagine that they will reach their goals sooner if they resort to unlawful (Haram) means. For example, someone may be in a financial bind and they may think that by opening up a liquor store, they can save themselves from their financial problems and gain significant amounts of profit. This is while the aforementioned tradition has explicitly mentioned that this is not the case and in fact, they will become even further engulfed in various issues than before.

In other cases, some people may think that because they are constantly suffering from financial issues, once they make more money, they can finally gain a sense of inner peace and calm. They then imagine that the quickest way to make this money will be through various unlawful means. Once they have made this money, they realize that they have not gained any additional sense of peace and, in fact, they are more stressed out and anxious than ever before. This shows us that we should never seek what we need through unlawful means; such actions will only take us further away from our goals.

¹ Taken from the book: Tuhaf al-’Uqul, p. 977, Al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 373, Wasa’il Al-Shi’a, vol. 16, p. 153.

Lesson 93: Those Who Are Satisfied With Themselves

Tradition

مَنْ رَضِيَ عَنْ نَفْسِهِ كَثُرَ السَّخِطُ عَلَيْهِ

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) is narrated to have said: “He who is self-satisfied and egotistic will have many who are not happy with him.”¹

Brief Commentary

Although confidence and having love for oneself at a moderate level is necessary for the continuation of life, it is possible for people to exceed these normal boundaries and reach a point of selfishness and egotism. Those who are egotistical never see their own personal faults and they consider themselves to be pure, without fault, and loveable all at the same time. They believe they are the cream of the crop in their society and the best at everything that they do. For this same reason, they have great expectations from the people and this causes the people to resent and eventually hate them.

¹ Nahj al-Balaghah, Aphorism 6, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah, vol. 18, p. 100, Ghurar Al-Hikam, p. 308.

Lesson 94: Close And Far Relatives

Tradition

الْقَرِيبُ مَنْ قَرَبَتْهُ الْمَوَدَّةُ وَإِنْ بَعْدَ نَسَبِهِ وَالْبَعِيدُ مَنْ بَاعَدَتْهُ الْمَوَدَّةُ وَإِنْ قَرَبَ نَسَبَهُ

Imam al-Hasan al-Mujtaba (‘a) is narrated to have said: “One’s close relatives are those who have the most love for you, even if they are far in lineage. And the far relatives are those who have less love and affection for you, even if they are from your close relatives.”¹

Brief Commentary

The relationship between relatives is one of the most important social institutions in Islam. Such relationships are comprised of tighter knit groups in the society where cooperation can extend to a higher and greater degree than in the society overall. This relationship is instrumental in the resolution of problems that come up from time to time. This tradition has emphasized that these relationships must in reality be based on love and affection and not only on simple lineage and family blood.

¹ Taken from the book: hTuhaf al-’Uqul, p. 165, Al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 643, Wasa’i’l Al-Shi’a, vol. 12, p. 52.

Lesson 95: Breaking Bad Habits

Tradition

رَدُّ الْمَعْتَادِ عَنْ عَادَتِهِ كَالْمُعْجِزِ

Imam Hasan al-'Askari ('a) is narrated to have said: "Breaking people's incorrect habits is something like a miracle."¹

Brief Commentary

Habits are actually one of the great divine blessings because it makes difficult things easy to do for people. Many of the complex and difficult tasks which we must do in our day to day lives (such as speaking, walking, etc...) are made automatic through their habitual nature. At the same time, habits can also establish incorrect actions and make them automatic in nature as well. When negative behavior becomes enshrined in habit, it becomes very dangerous and eliminating it from our lives is transformed into a very difficult task. Imam 'Askari ('a) has considered the breaking of such habits to be similar in nature to a miracle. Therefore, we should strive not to cultivate negative habits to begin with and this will make it unnecessary for us to spend great amounts of time breaking them later on in our lives.

¹. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 17, p. 217.

Lesson 96: The Tragedy Of Karbala

Tradition

لَا وَاللَّهِ لَا أُعْطِيهِمْ بِيَدِي إِعْطَاءَ الدَّلِيلِ وَلَا أَفِرُّ فِرَارَ الْعَبِيدِ... إِنِّي لَا أَرَى الْمَوْتَ إِلَّا سَعَادَةً وَالْحَيَاةَ مَعَ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا
بَرَمًا

Imam al-Husayn ('a) is narrated to have said: "I swear by God that I will never put my hand in theirs¹ like an abject person nor will I run away like a slave... I see death as nothing but felicity and life with the oppressors as nothing but the cause of misery and affliction."²

Brief Commentary

The day of ‘Ashura’ is a day that will never be forgotten and it can be considered as a great university for all of mankind. It is a great university for all people who wish to live and die with honor and greatness. The lessons taught to us on that day can fill volumes with its wisdom. The aforementioned lines from Imam al-Husayn (‘a) are but a small indication of who he was and how he lived his life. If we study his life and the lessons of that momentous day, surely we too will be able to live and die with full honor and greatness as well.

1. In order to pledge allegiance to Yazid.

2. Maqatal al-Husayn, pgs. 246 and 256, Al-Irshad, vol. 2, p. 97, Alam Al-Wara, p. 242, Al-Manaqib, vol, 4, p, 86.

Lesson 97: Who Is The Intelligent One?

Tradition

الْعَاقِلُ هُوَ الَّذِي يَضَعُ الشَّيْءَ مَوَاضِعَهُ

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) was asked to describe the signs of someone who is intelligent. He replied by saying: “The intelligent one is he who places everything in its proper place.”¹

Brief Commentary

There is much that has been said in regards to what intelligence actually is; out of all of what has been said, the short tradition above is the best description of what intelligence truly is. Intelligence is nothing but the placement of all things in their proper place. An intelligent individual will place happiness and sorrow, friendship and enmity, mildness and harshness, affection, worship, work, leisure, and all other things in their proper place. When all of these things are thus positioned, then that individual is truly one who is the epitome of intelligence.

1. Nahj al-Balaghah, Words of Wisdom.

Lesson 98: The Cause Of Enmity

Tradition

النَّاسُ أَعْدَاءُ مَا جَهِلُوا

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) is narrated to have said: “The people are enemies of what they do not know.”¹

Brief Commentary

We see that some people reject certain things and they stand up against them in opposition. The only reason for their opposition is they do not understand them or it is something new to them. This wise saying is particularly true in regards to religious matters. Some people easily reject religious matters when they don’t understand them and this applies even to those who are learned in other fields. You would think that someone who has taken the time to learn another field would understand that it takes much work in order to master a given subject and therefore they should not be so quick to judge something which they don’t understand. Therefore, we should be careful never to reject something simply because it may seem strange to us or because we do not understand it.

¹. Nahj al-Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 172.

Lesson 99: The Ones Who Possesses Ghayrah

The Ones Who Possesses Ghayrah¹

Tradition

إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى يُحِبُّ مَنْ عِبَادِهِ الْغَيُورَ

The Prophet (S) is narrated to have said: “God the Almighty loves those of his servants who are Ghayur.”²

Brief Commentary

Ghayrah is in reality a sense of loyalty and protectiveness over one’s religion and family. It can even extend to wanting to protect one’s country as well. A Ghayur individual feels responsible towards protecting these things and becomes extremely upset when a stranger encroaches upon them. Ghayrah is one of the prominent characteristics of the prophets and the men of God. Ghayrah is a powerful characteristic that is critical against attacks by outsiders against one’s religion, family, and people.

1. This term refers to those who have a protective sense towards their religion, their people, and their family. An individual who possesses this feeling of protectiveness is called Ghayur.
2. Nahj al-Fasahah, p. 15.

Lesson 100: A Blessed Existence

Tradition

مَثَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِ مَثَلُ النَّخْلَةِ مَا أَخَذْتَ مِنْهَا مِنْ شَيْءٍ نَفَعَكَ

The Prophet (S) is narrated to have said: “The believing individual is much like a date tree. Everything that comes from it is beneficial and advantageous.”¹

Brief Commentary

The date palm is a tree that is full of advantageous uses and blessings. We are able to eat from its fruit, which is considered as one of the healthiest and most nutritious fruits on this planet. Its seeds can be used as fuel for fire and its palm fronds can be woven into mats, hats, and table covers. Its wood can be used in buildings, as well as in the construction of bridges. Even its blossoms can be used in fragrant perfumes and so every single part of the palm tree has a use and the tree in its entirety is of great blessings for the people.

People who have faith are similar to this tree when it comes to their benefits. Their thoughts, their words, their gatherings, their friendship, their decision-making, and in reality everything which comes from them is blessed and helps the people. Everything they do or say is full of advantage and blessing for their society.

1. Nahj al-Fasahah, p. 564.

Lesson 101: The Best Of Hands

Tradition

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

The Prophet (S) is narrated to have said: “There are three kinds of hands– the hand which takes, the hand which remains, and the hand which gives. And the best of hands are the hands that give.”¹

Brief Commentary

Islam has always encouraged its followers to do their best and work hard in life. This has extended not only to the physical and material, but the spiritual and emotional as well. In addition, it has taught them to be independent as much as possible and not seek things from other people when they can work and earn it themselves. Not only has the religion asked that they not seek things from others but it has recommended that they put themselves in a position where they are the ones who are giving back. This tradition establishes this concept that the best of hands are those that give to others, and not those that are always taking.

¹. Tuhaf al-’Uqul, p. 32.

Lesson 102: Worse Than Death

Tradition

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

Imam Hasan al-’Askari (‘a) is narrated to have said: “What is more valuable than life itself is that, which if you were to lose, you would become fed up with life as a result. And what is worse than death is that, which if you were to gain, you would welcome death with open arms.”¹

Brief Commentary

Some people imagine that the most valuable things in life are found in those things which relate to the material and this is while there are a multitude of things much greater in value. There are non-material things, which, if lost, will cause unbelievable anguish to a person. These are things which no amount of money can replace or make up for. We should always be careful to keep things in perspective and be thankful for the multitude of blessings which God has given to us.

¹. Taken from the book: Tuhaf al-’Uqul, p. 368.

Lesson 103: The Difference Between A Believer And A Hypocrite

Tradition

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

The Prophet (S) is narrated to have said: “Whenever you see a believing individual engrossed in silence, then gather close to him for you will hear words full of wisdom. Faithful individuals are of few words and much action, while the hypocrites are of many words and few actions.”¹

Brief Commentary

Human beings have a finite amount of energy and it is for this reason that when they expend much of their energy towards a specific task, they will find themselves limited in what they can do in regards to other things in their lives. Therefore, it is not surprising that people who speak too much will fall short when it comes to their actions.

The Prophet of Islam (S) has described the people of faith as those who are filled with the spirit of hard work, rather than the spirit of talkativeness. The hypocrites, who are devoid of the spirit of faith, are the opposite of this and they spend their time talking instead of working. We should always strive to be like those the Prophet (S) has described as believers and not those who are hypocrites.

¹. Taken from the book: Tuhaf al-’Uqul, p. 296, Irshad Al-Qulub, vol. 1, p. 104, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah, vol. 7, p. 93.

Lesson 104: The Best Inheritance

Tradition

خَيْرُ مَا وَرَثَ الْآبَاءُ لِأَبْنَاءِ الْأَدَبِ

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) is narrated to have said: “The best thing which parents leave behind for their children is good behavior.”¹

Brief Commentary

Good behavior is defined by the positive way that we interact with others and the respect and generosity of spirit that we show to them. In some cases, good behavior is exhibited in front of God's creation, while in other cases, it is exhibited in front of God himself. In both cases, it is one of the greatest resources which human beings possess and it is the key to their success in all aspects of life.

For this same reason, Imam 'Ali ('a) has considered the greatest inheritance which parents can leave for their children to be good behavior. Many times, parents think that the best inheritance they can leave is found in homes and large bank accounts, and they end up neglecting everything else. This is while good behavior is the root of love, ease in living, friendship, and even unity amongst people. It is an important factor in how effective our speech is and how well we are able to progress in our social lives. There is no doubt that it is the best inheritance which parents can leave for their children.

[1.](#) Ghurar al-Hikam, p. 393.

Lesson 105: Respecting Freedom Of Thought

Tradition

بِسِّسِ الْقَوْمِ قَوْمٌ يَمْشِي الْمُؤْمِنُ فِيهِمْ بِالتَّقِيَّةِ وَ الْكِنْمَانِ

The Prophet (S) is narrated to have said: "When a believing individual is forced to hide his beliefs and live in a hidden manner amongst a group of people, they are truly a bad people."[1](#)

Brief Commentary

When one is forced to hide their true beliefs and is not able to speak or practice freely, then this is a sign that a selfish majority has forced their views on others and they are preventing the minority from expressing their thoughts and beliefs. There is no doubt that such a society will be unable to reach felicity. Righteous people who live in a healthy society must always be given the right to practice their beliefs and to express their thoughts as they wish. If they comprise a minority in that society, the majority should never prevent them from living in this manner. Their rights should be respected and they should be left free to propagate the truth.

[1.](#) Nahj al-Fasahah.

Lesson 106: Six Characteristics Which Are Not Present In The Believers

Tradition

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

Imam al-Sadiq ('a) is narrated to have said: “There are six things which do not exist in the believing individual- severity, ill-manners, jealousy, stubbornness, lying, and oppression.”¹

Brief Commentary

Those who see themselves as being believers are potentially fooling themselves if they possess certain attributes and characteristics. At the very least, the true believers should be free of the six negative attributes mentioned in this tradition. What is interesting is that these six characteristics are all connected to how people relate to one another socially. The true believers are those who are easy going, good-natured, benevolent, and who submit to the truth. They are furthermore truthful, just, and justice seeking for others. The title of a believer is an extremely high-ranking title that is unsuitable for those who possess any of the aforementioned six attributes. We should judge ourselves first and foremost and see if we possess any of these six attributes.

¹. Taken from the book: Tuhaful al-'Uqul, p. 282, Wasa'il Al-Shi'a, vol. 15, p. 349, Alam Al-Deen, p.129, Al-Khisal, vol. 1, p. 325, Al-Mahasin, vol. 1, p. 158.

Lesson 107: Be Careful Of Your Duty Towards God

Tradition

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

Imam al-Sadiq ('a) is narrated to have said: “Be careful of (your duty to) God and sanctify him even if only a little. Place a curtain between him and yourself even if it is very thin.”¹

Brief Commentary

When some people begin to walk on the path of sin, they quickly cut off all of their previous connections with God. They burn all of their bridges and they shut all of the doors which would make their return possible. In this tradition, Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) is saying that such people should at least leave one door open. One day, such individuals will naturally feel regret for their actions and if they have left this one door open, then they can have a means of return.

1. Taken from the book: Tuhaf al-’Uqul, p. 268.

Lesson 108: The True Worship

Tradition

يا كُمَيْلُ! لَيْسَ الشَّأْنُ أَنْ تُصَلِّيَ وَ تَصُومَ وَ تَتَصَدَّقَ، الشَّأْنُ أَنْ تَكُونَ الصَّلَاةُ بِقَلْبٍ نَقِيٍّ وَ عَمَلٌ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ مَرْضِيًّا وَ خُشُوعٌ سَوِيًّا

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) is narrated to have said to Kumayl: “Oh Kumayl, it is not important that you simply pray, fast, and give in the way of God. What is important is that you pray (and perform the rest of your actions) with a heart that is pure and in a way that is worthy of God and that (your acts) are infused with humility.”1

Brief Commentary

The real value of our actions is not based on how many times we do them, but the quality that they are done with. It is the inner reality of worship that is important and not just its outer manifestations. In this tradition, Imam ‘Ali (‘a) emphasizes to Kumayl that simply sufficing with the outer aspects of worship and their quantity is not enough. It is necessary for one to go to the heart of the matter. It is this inner reality which helps us to grow and reach human completion. We should always keep this point in mind and attempt to perform our acts of worship with the purest of intentions and with the utmost levels of care.

1. Taken from the book: Tuhaf al-’Uqul, p. 117, Mustadrak Al-Wasa’il, vol. 4, p. 94, Bisharat Al-Mustafa, p. 28.

Lesson 109: Do Not Forget Your Defects!

Tradition

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

Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) is narrated to have said: “Know that when someone is seeking out the sins of the people and criticizing them, but has at the same time forgotten his own sins, that he has been entangled in divine punishment.”¹

Brief Commentary

There are many people who are quite brazen in criticizing others and pointing out their faults, but at the same time, they are completely unaware of their own negative characteristics and issues. They may criticize others for their small faults while ignoring their own major problems. Such people have been afflicted with selfishness and egoism due to the veils of arrogance and unawareness, which have covered their eyes from seeing their own reality. The superior individual is the one who first removes his own defects before even looking at the defects of others.

¹. Taken from the book: Tuhaf al-’Uqul, p. 271.

Lesson 110: The Great Torture

Tradition

مَنْ سَاءَ خُلُقُهُ عَذَّبَ نَفْسَهُ

Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) is narrated to have said: “He who is ill mannered torments himself.”¹

Brief Commentary

It is commonly understood that people who have a bad attitude and are always ill mannered towards others are a cause of their friends and close relatives’ torment. By associating with such a person, they undergo various hardships and difficulties due to their negative behavior. While this is undoubtedly correct, such people are actually a source of the greatest torment for themselves and their entire lives

are made bitter and unlivable as a result. Such negative and pessimistic people usually live shorter lives, and they spend their days upset at everything and everyone. Contrary to this is someone who has good behavior and who sees life in a positive light. This type of demeanor and viewpoint is actually considered a type of great worship by the religion of Islam and it has been greatly emphasized and encouraged. It is counted as one of the important factors which allows us to gain entry into paradise.

¹. Taken from the book: Tuhaf al-'Uqul, p. 270.

Lesson 111: The Vitality And Freshness Of The Quran

Tradition

إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى لَمْ يَجْعَلِ الْقُرْآنَ لِزَمَانٍ دُونَ زَمَانٍ وَ لَا لِنَاسٍ دُونَ نَاسٍ فَهُوَ فِي كُلِّ زَمَانٍ جَدِيدٌ وَ عِنْدَ كُلِّ قَوْمٍ غَضٌّ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ

Imam al-Rida' ('a) is narrated to have said: "God has not made the Quran for a specific time period, nor for a specific group of people. Therefore, during every time period, it is new and fresh for every group."¹

Brief Commentary

The Imam ('a) mentioned these words when someone asked him why the Quran never gets old, even after countless recitations. The Imam ('a) pointed out the reality that the Quran was not created of this world, which is oft-changing and in constant flux. This is a book which is rooted in God's lofty knowledge and so it is of an eternal nature. When something is of an eternal nature, then whatever comes from it will always be fresh and captivating. Indeed, this is one of the signs of the greatness and high rank of the Quran.

¹. Safinat al-Bihar, vol. 2, p. 413.

Lesson 112: Be Fearful Of Worshipping Your Desires

Tradition

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

Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) is narrated to have said: “Fear your passions and desires just as you fear your diehard enemies, for the people have no worse enemy than following their desires and the outcomes of their tongues [speech]”¹

Brief Commentary

There is no doubt that internal enemies are more dangerous than external enemies. It is for this reason that our rebellious passions and desires, which influence us from the darkest recesses of our hearts, are more dangerous than any other enemy we can possibly face. The worship of these dark desires blind the eyes and seal the ears of the people; they shut down the proper functioning of the intellect and make us unable to see the true realities. As a result, such a person is thrown into the depths of deviation and corruption.

¹. Safinat al-Bihar, vol. 2, root word Hawa.

Lesson 113: The Only Way To Be A Follower Of The Ahl Al-Bayt

Tradition

بَلِّغْ شِبَعَتِي عَنِّي السَّلَامَ وَ أَعْلِمُهُمْ أَنَّهُ لَا قَرَابَةَ بَيْنَنَا وَ بَيْنَ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ وَ لَا يُتَقَرَّبُ إِلَيْهِ إِلَّا بِالطَّاعَةِ لَهُ

Imam al-Baqir (‘a) is narrated to have said to Jabir ibn Ju’fi: “Send my greetings to my Shias and tell them that there is no discriminating relationship between us and God but rather the only way to gain nearness to him is through obeying his commands.”^{1 2}

Brief Commentary

There are many people who think that by just calling themselves Shias or by having love towards the family of the prophet, that this will somehow save them from any level of accountability for their actions. They believe that by simply saying that they love the Ahl al-Bayt, they will be counted as amongst their

followers. They furthermore think that since the Imams and the Ahl al-Bayt are close to God, they will use their influence to save them. This is while the only relationship between God and his creation is that based on following and obeying his commands. Whoever obeys God's commands the most will be the closest to him and whoever commits the most sins will be the furthest from him, whoever they may be.

1. This tradition is referring to the fact that the Imams ('a) do not have a special link with God whereby they are given a position near to him; their closeness to God is based on their actions in obedience to him. Similarly, our relationship with God is based on obeying his commands and not because of anything else.

2. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 15, p. 164, Al-Amali, p. 296, Bisharat Al-Mustafa, p. 188.

Lesson 114: The Relationship Between Wealth And Its Consumption

Tradition

مَنْ يَكْسِبُ مِنْ غَيْرِ حَقِّهِ يَصْرِفُهُ فِي غَيْرِ أَجْرِهِ

Imam 'Ali ('a) is narrated to have said: "He who gains wealth through unlawful means will spend that wealth in a way which will entail no divine reward."1

Brief Commentary

People oftentimes say that not just any money is worthy of being spent in positive ways and if someone wants to spend money towards good, that money must first be obtained through pure and lawful ways. This tradition shows the veracity of this common saying. How can people think that they can spend their unlawfully gained wealth and somehow attain positive results for themselves? How can any reward be expected when the source of that money was unlawful to begin with?

Such money may even end up having consequences that are completely opposite to what was originally intended. On the other hand, even a small amount of money gained in lawful ways, may end up having tremendously positive effects. Therefore, we should always keep in mind that the root of money and the way through which it is earned have an effect both on the end result, as well as the reward which is given for such actions.

1. Taken from the book: Tuhaful-Uqul, p. 63

Lesson 115: The Most Truthful And The Most Learned

Tradition

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

The Prophet (S) is narrated to have said: “Every nation has its Siddiq and Faruq,¹ and the Siddiq and Faruq of this nation is ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib.”²

Brief Commentary

In order to implement and organize a proper and cohesive religious society, it was necessary for there to be someone capable who could lead after the passing of the Prophet of Islam (S). The Prophet (S) had spent many of his years engaged in building the very basic foundations of the Islamic society. Much time had also been spent fighting against the polytheists and other enemies of the new faith.

Someone was necessary to continue this building process and to separate and distinguish between the truth and the falsehood (in essence, someone who was a Faruq). Someone was also necessary in order to explain the realities of Islam openly and clearly (one who was a Siddiq) in order that all the questions of the people be properly answered. Such a person could only be ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib and no one else in the society was capable of fulfilling such a position.

¹. The term Siddiq can be understood to mean a truthful individual and the term Faruq can be understood as one who discerns and distinguishes between truth and falsehood.

². Safinat al-Bihar, vol. 2, p. 221, Uyoon Akhbar Ar-Ridha', vol. 2, p. 13, Al-Qisas, p. 173.

Lesson 116: Simple Living And Cooperation In Home Life

Tradition

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

Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) is narrated to have said: “Ali (‘a) would bring firewood from the desert, he would bring water, and he would clean, while Fatimah (‘a) would make flour, turn it into dough, and bake bread.”¹

Brief Commentary

This tradition is a small window into the lives of Imam ‘Ali (‘a) and the Lady Fatimah (‘a) and how they would conduct their day to day affairs. They lived their lives with the utmost simplicity and without any excess or waste. Their lives were filled with happiness, affection, cooperation, and vitality. Work was not seen as something to be shied away from, while cooperation and understanding were seen as a foundation of life. Unfortunately, these are things which have been lost in modern day life and along with them, we have also lost much of our day to day peace and tranquility.

¹. Safinat al-Bihar, vol. 2, p. 195, Al-Kafi, vol. 5, p. 86, Man La Yahdhuruhi Al-Faqih, vol. 3, p. 169, Wasa'il Al-Shi'a, vol. 17, p. 40.

Lesson 117: One Hour Of Justice

Tradition

عَدْلُ سَاعَةٍ خَيْرٌ مِنْ عِبَادَةِ سَنَةٍ

The Prophet (S) is narrated to have said: “One hour of (the implementation of) justice is better than a year of worship.”¹

Brief Commentary

Worship is the connection between the Creator and the created and understanding this relationship holds many inner lessons for us and it brings about the growth and progression of the human intellect and spirit. In spite of such importance that worship holds, the tradition above surprisingly says that one hour where justice is implemented is superior to one year of extra worship.

The question comes up as to how such a thing is possible? In other traditions, we also see mentioned how one hour of contemplation and thought are superior to one whole night (or according to other traditions, one whole year’s worship). What such traditions are showing us is how important justice (as well as thinking and contemplation) are in God’s eyes. What is interesting to note is that both contemplation and justice have common roots, since where there is no justice, there can also be no thought or contemplation.

Lesson 118: The True Doctor

Tradition

الطَّبِيبُ اللَّهُ وَ لَعَلَّكَ تَرْفِقُ بِأَشْيَاءٍ تُحْرِقُ بِهَا غَيْرَكَ

The Prophet (S) is narrated to have said: “The true physician is God and it is possible that there are some things which are beneficial for you that others see as being harmful.”¹

Brief Commentary

In some cases, many of the difficulties that people face in their lives are caused by a lack of proper thinking or a lack of proper choice. In some other cases, people are faced with certain undesirable events which are not caused by their own choices and they become needful of a ‘physician’ who can cure them. This master physician is none other than Allah, who possesses powerful types of medicine which can completely cure his ill patients. In some cases, these medicines can be quite bitter and difficult to take but they have powerful and beneficial effects on the diseases which people are suffering from. In all cases, God is the master physician, and even though his medicine may initially seem difficult to take, he is the most aware of how best to cure his patients.

Lesson 119: The Successors Of The Prophet

Tradition

لَا يَزَالُ هَذَا الدِّينُ عَزِيزاً مَّيْبَعاً إِلَيَّ إِثْنَى عَشَرَ كُلُّهُمْ مِنْ قُرَيْشٍ

The Prophet (S) is narrated to have said: “This religion will always be eminent and safe from the hands of the enemies until twelve individuals have ruled and all of them will be from the Quraysh.”¹

Brief Commentary

Many of the most accepted books of the Ahl al-Sunnah have mentioned similar traditions in regards to the twelve leaders. These books include: Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Sahih Tirmidhi, Sahih Abu Dawud, Masnad Ahmad, as well as many others. These narrations number around 271 when we count all of the Shia and Sunni sources through which they have been narrated. What is even more interesting is that these twelve rulers cannot correspond to anything other than the twelve Shia Imams when we look at the entirety of Islamic history.

When we look at the first three caliphs or the caliphs of the Ummayyads and Abbasids, none of them can be found to be amongst these twelve who have been mentioned. Due to this reason, the scholars of the Ahl al-Sunnah have faced great difficulty in trying to decipher and categorize who these twelve actually are. Yet, at the same time, the Shias have easily understood who these traditions are referring to and have clearly identified these twelve rulers.

1. Taken from the book: Taysir al-Wusul, written by Zubaydi Shafi'i.

Lesson 120: A Gathering Of Sin

Tradition

لا يَنْبَغِي لِلْمُؤْمِنِ أَنْ يَجْلِسَ مَجْلِسًا يُعْصَى اللَّهُ فِيهِ وَلَا يَقْدِرُ عَلَى تَغْيِيرِهِ

Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) is narrated to have said: “It is not worthy of the believers to sit in a gathering where there is sin while they are unable to stop it.”1

Brief Commentary

Participating in a gathering of sin is a sin itself even if the individual does not commit any sins and he doesn't become like the people of that gathering. This is because being part of such a gathering is the same as approving of that sin unless the individual has the intention of stopping them or transforming the gathering into one which is positive and where good is performed. This is actually a major responsibility in Islam and it is known as ‘commanding the good and forbidding the evil.’ When someone looks at something that is sinful while he is indifferent towards what is happening, it creates a spirit within them where the ugliness of that sin is lessened and the individual is slowly made accustomed to the performance of that sin.

1. Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 374, Wasa'il Al-Shi'a, vol. 16, p. 260.

Lesson 121: Engage In Works Of Agriculture

Tradition

إِزْرَعُوا وَاغْرَسُوا وَاللَّهِ مَا عَمِلَ النَّاسُ عَمَلًا أَحَلَّ وَلَا أَطْيَبَ مِنْهُ

Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) is narrated to have said: “Engage in agriculture and the planting of trees for I swear by God that the people have not performed purer or more lawful (Halal) work than this.”¹

Brief Commentary

Farming is one of the foundational aspects which human life is based upon and much of what people in society do would be impossible without it. Industrial factories and businesses would be unsustainable without established agriculture and farming, and this is because without the raw products provided by agriculture, factories and businessmen would not have the base products necessary for their work.

Another interesting aspect of farming is that while it is possible to cheat and adulterate when it comes to other lines of work, such a thing is not possible when it comes to farming. At the end of the day, fruit is fruit and only so much can be done to it. Farmers must also work hard and their work is honest work; it is for this reason that this tradition has considered agriculture as being one of the most wholesome and pure lines of work that can be performed.

¹. Safinat al-Bihar, vol. 1, p. 549, Mustadrak Al-Wasa’il, vol. 13, p. 26.

Lesson 122: The Duration Of Life

Tradition

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

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) is narrated to have said: “Death which arrives earlier for human beings as a result of sin is more common than death which comes as a result of one’s natural lifespan; and the extended lifespan of people as a result of their good deeds is more common than their actual natural life spans.”¹

Brief Commentary

It is clear that various sins are known to directly affect the length of our lives in a negative fashion. Such things as drinking alcohol, gambling, miserliness, and envy are known to have such an effect. In addition to these sins, there are other things which exert an indirect effect on one's lifespan. These indirect actors work through destabilizing the society, destroying public safety and security, and bringing about conflict and war. These indirect factors include things like usury and oppression.

At the same time, positive actions have their own deep effects on the calm and tranquility that people feel within their souls and their conscience, and this affects the length of their life spans in a positive manner. Therefore, we should realize that sins not only have spiritual effects, but they certainly have physical effects as well. These physical effects can go as far as affecting the quality of our physical lives, as well as how long we get to live.

1. Safinat al-Bihar, p. 489.

Lesson 123: Cooperation With Satan

Tradition

لَا تَسُبَّنْ إِبْلِيسَ فِي الْعَلَانِيَةِ وَأَنْتَ صَدِيقُهُ فِي السِّرِّ

Imam 'Ali ('a) is narrated to have said: "Do not curse Satan openly while you are his friend in secret."1

Brief Commentary

Many people express hatred for things like poverty or hypocrisy, while others will express hatred for figures such as Satan, who is an avowed enemy of mankind. While they express such hatred outwardly, they are practically engulfed in the very same things they profess to hate. For example, there are some extremely wealthy individuals who fear poverty to such a degree that they live their lives just like the poverty stricken; they are terrified of spending any money and so they deprive themselves of everything in life. Similarly, there are some hypocrites who are busy constantly speaking against hypocrisy; yet they themselves are engulfed in hypocrisy from head to toe.

There are yet others who are greatly influenced by Satan and yet they constantly express negative views in regards to him. This is while they openly do what God has made unlawful and they easily allow themselves to be influenced and controlled by Satan himself. Therefore, the people should be aware that it is not enough to simply express an idea or concept outwardly; rather, they must internally manifest that

concept as well.

[1](#). Turath al-A'imma, p. 209, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah, vol 20, page 329.

Lesson 124: Consult With Others So That You May Be Guided

Tradition

ما تَشَاوَرَ قَوْمٌ إِلَّا هُدُوا إِلَىٰ رُشْدِهِمْ

Imam al-Hasan ('a) is narrated to have said: "No group consulted with one another in their works but that they were guided to their best interests."[1](#)

Brief Commentary

When people cooperate and work together, this becomes a source of goodness and great blessings for them. They progress and are able to do things which would have been impossible for them individually. This is particularly true when it comes to intellectual and organizational issues, where the combined ideas of many have an especially powerful effect. Some people are unfortunately affected by a sense of stubbornness when it comes to the issue of consultation and so they refuse to seek the advice of others.

Such people find themselves constantly making mistakes and being entangled in various problems. The reason behind this is that each individual is able to see only one facet of an issue (or, at the very most, several facets). It is very rare to find someone who is able to look at an issue from all the possible angles.

Therefore, when people consult others, they are able to more fully understand a given issue and this aids them in making a more comprehensive decision. Such decisions will almost always be stronger and more correct than a decision made by someone who can only see one side of the issue. Let us make a firm decision to always consult others during appropriate circumstances for this is the way to success and proper decision making in life.

[1](#). Tuhaf al-'Uqul, p. 164.

Lesson 125: Greet One Another With The Salam

Tradition

لِلسَّلَامِ سَبْعُونَ حَسَنَةً تِسْعٌ وَ سِتُّونَ لِلْمُبْتَدِي وَ وَاحِدَةٌ لِلرَّادِ

Imam al-Husayn (‘a) is narrated to have said: “The Salam has 70 rewards of which 69 of them are for the initiator of the greeting, while 1 of them is for the one who responds.”¹

Brief Commentary

Amongst all the greetings that people around the world give to one another, the Islamic greeting has a particularly special context and meaning. This is because it is both a welcoming greeting, as well as a sign of peace, happiness, and friendship. At the same time, it also conveys a positive desire for the person’s health and soundness (physical, mental, and spiritual). It is for this same reason that the greetings of the dwellers of paradise will be the Salam. In addition, the angels will also greet the people who have lived pure lives with this greeting.

Unfortunately, some amongst the Muslims believe that initiating the greeting or replying is actually a sign of weakness. They therefore abstain from greeting others or from replying to their greeting. What they do not understand is that by not greeting others, they are missing out on a great blessing, and the aforementioned tradition has explained how great the rewards are for such an action.

¹. Tuhaf al-’Uqul, p. 177, Mustadrak Al-Wasa’il, vol. 8, p. 357.

Lesson 126: The Separation Of Belief And Action

Tradition

أَلَا وَ إِنَّ أْبْغَضُ النَّاسِ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَنْ يَفْتَدِي بِسُنَّةِ إِمَامٍ وَ لَا يَفْتَدِي بِأَعْمَالِهِ

Imam Zayn al-’Abidin (‘a) is narrated to have said: “The most detested of the people in front of God is he who has accepted an Imam and a leader, but does not follow him in regards to his actions.”¹

Brief Commentary

One of the biggest deficiencies that people commonly face is the separation between what they believe and what they actually do in their lives. Some people may speak about how much they like or believe in something, but when you look at their actions, you see that they are effectively not living based on those professed beliefs.

Such people may believe in God for example, but their actions practically show them as being disbelievers. Another individual may believe in God's justice on the Day of Judgement, but when you look at their morals and ethics, you see that they are practically disbelievers when it comes to the Day of Judgement.

Such an individual may consider the Prophet of Islam (S) as the greatest of the prophets, and Imam 'Ali ('a) as the greatest of leaders, and yet his actions will not at all be in concordance with theirs. In light of this tradition, we should always be careful that our beliefs and actions are in line with one another, for this is the mark of the real believer.

[1.](#) Tuhaf al-'Uqul, p. 202.

Lesson One Hundred And Twenty Seven 127: God's Punishment

Tradition

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

Imam al-Baqir ('a) is narrated to have said: "God has punishments which affect the body and the soul and these include reduced sustenance and feebleness in worship. Yet God has not punished any of his servants with a more severe punishment than that of hard heartedness."[1](#)

Brief Commentary

Divine punishments are in reality the natural reaction that people earn in place of their negative actions. In some cases, these punishments come in the form of an unbalanced income flow, while in other cases, they come in the form of a lack of vitality in worship and one's connection to God. Yet, the most important and dangerous form of punishment comes in the form of hard heartedness. This is when one's

heart becomes empty of human emotion and feeling, and where it becomes devoid of all feelings of friendship and social connection. Such a condition is the root of a great many sins and evil actions.

[1.](#) Tuhaf al-'Uqul, p. 217.

Lesson 128: That Which Has Been Forgotten

Tradition

لَمْ يَخْلُقِ اللَّهُ يَقِينًا لَأَشْكُ فِيهِ أَشْبَهُ بِشَكِّ لَا يَقِينَ فِيهِ مِنَ الْمَوْتِ

Imam al-Sadiq ('a) is narrated to have said: "God has not created any certainty like death while (the people treat it) as if it were a doubt in which there was never any certainty."[1](#)

Brief Commentary

This is a beautiful statement which mentions how unaware people are of the issue of death in spite of its certainty. If people have doubts in anything in their lives, the one thing which is one hundred percent certain is that our lives will end and everyone will leave this world. This is a certainty even for those who do not believe in any afterlife or religion. In spite of this, people live their lives as if death does not exist and they will live forever.

Since people live their lives in this way, they do not prepare themselves for what is to come and they fail to perform good deeds and acts of worship. They do not attempt to purify their souls and strengthen their faith. We should always keep death in clear view, and strive to purify our souls in order that when the end does arrive, we do not leave this world ashamed and embarrassed of what we have failed to accomplish and become.

[1.](#) Tuhaf al-'Uqul, p. 271, Man La Yahdhuruh Al-Faqih, vol. 1, p. 194, Al-Khisal, vol. 1, p.14.

Lesson 129: The Position Of Knowledge And Wisdom

Tradition

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

Imam al-Kazim (‘a) is narrated to have said: “Plants grow on soft soil and not on stones. Similarly, knowledge and wisdom sprout only in a humble heart and not in a heart that is filled with arrogance.”¹

Brief Commentary

The first step in gaining knowledge is the possession of humility. One must have humility before the truth, before one’s teacher, and before anyone who is more knowledgeable. Due to this reason, ignorance and arrogance are usually two attributes that come together.

The arrogant are never ready to acknowledge their lack of knowledge. In certain cases, they may even deny something that is true when it doesn’t correspond with their beliefs or actions. In some cases, this denial will even extend into open resistance. In addition, the arrogant are never willing to hear the truth from anyone they consider to be of a lower rank than themselves and so they remain submerged in a state of compound ignorance throughout their lives.

¹. Tuhaf al-’Uqul, p. 296, Mustadrak Al-Wasa’il, vol. 11, p. 299.

Lesson 130: The Heavy Duties Of The Imam

Tradition

الإمامُ أمينُ اللَّهِ فِي أَرْضِهِ وَ خَلْفِهِ وَ حُجَّتُهُ عَلَى عِبَادِهِ وَ خَلِيفَتُهُ فِي بِلَادِهِ وَ الدَّاعِي إِلَى اللَّهِ وَ الذَّابُّ عَنْ حَرِيمِ اللَّهِ.

Imam al-Rida’ (‘a) is narrated to have said: “The Imam is the trustworthy of God on this earth and amongst God’s creation. He is his proof amongst his servants and his deputy in the cities. He is the one who invites (the people) towards God and he is the defender of God’s sanctum.”¹

Brief Commentary

This narration is just a section of the entire tradition which introduces the position of the Imamate. It describes five of the important and heavy responsibilities which the Imam (‘a) holds:

- 1- The Imam is the protector of the divine revelation; he protects all of the knowledge of the religion.
- 2- The Imam is the living proof of God's religion.
- 3- The Imam is the guardian of the divine and he is his representative amongst the people.
- 4- The Imam is the propagator of the religion and he is the one who commands towards the good and forbids against evil.
- 5- The Imam is the defender of the divine sanctuary against the encroachment of the enemy. Such a person must possess divine knowledge and the rank of infallibility; no one except God can select an individual for such a position.

¹. Tuhaf al-'Uqul, p. 328, Al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 198, Al-Ihtijaj, vol. 2, p. 434, Al-Amali, p. 677, Ayoon Akhbar Al-Ridha', vol. 1, p. 219, Kamal Al-Deen, vol. 2, p. 677.

Lesson 131: The Closed Doors Will Be Opened

Tradition

لَوْ كَانَتْ السَّمَاوَاتُ وَ الْأَرْضُ رُنْقًا عَلَى عَبْدٍ ثُمَّ اتَّقَى اللَّهَ تَعَالَى جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لَهُ مِنْهَا مَخْرَجًا

Imam al-Jawad ('a) is narrated to have said: "Even if the doors of the heavens and the earth have all closed for someone but they then begin to implement and practice piety and God consciousness, then God will open a way out for them."¹

Brief Commentary

Sometimes in life, it appears that all the doors have closed to us and everywhere we look, we are faced with difficulties and problems. Such circumstances are an opportunity for us to wake up and return back to God. Such a return will be one that is constructive and transformative; when we connect to God through such means and ask him for help, he will aid us and send us his mercy. Doors will begin to open which we could have never even imagined. In reality, these situations are a great opportunity, even though they may initially seem like a calamity instead.

¹. Nur al-Absar, p. 150.

Lesson 132: Be Careful Of People With No Character

Tradition

مَنْ هَانَتْ عَلَيْهِ نَفْسُهُ فَلَا تَأْمَنْ شَرَّهُ

Imam al-Hadi (‘a) is narrated to have said: “Be careful of the evil of those who have no character.”¹

Brief Commentary

One of the most important things which prevents evil and corruption is a sense of character and self-respect. Those individuals who have character, even if they are looked down upon by others, will always maintain a standard of good behavior because of the self-respect which they have for themselves. Yet, if these same people felt that they had no character or self-respect, then they might perform all kinds of evil actions. This is why the Imam (‘a) is saying that we should be careful of such people.

It is for this same reason that one of the important facets of training and educating one’s children is through the creation of self-respect and character for them. When a child senses that he is worthy and the people respect him, this will result in him being careful of what he does both in public and in private, and this will prevent him from a great many sins and evil actions.

¹. Tuhaf al-’Uqul, p. 362.

Lesson 133: The Greater Jihad

Tradition

مَنْ هَانَتْ عَلَيْهِ نَفْسُهُ فَلَا تَأْمَنْ شَرَّهُ

Imam Hasan al-’Askari (‘a) is narrated to have said: “The strongest warrior is he who stops sinning.”¹

Brief Commentary

In Islam, the battle against our negative desires and lusts (which are the main root of various sins) is called the Greater Jihad. Such a fight is considered to be more important than the fight against one's enemies. This is because such a fight is the means to self-purification, and until self-purification has taken place, victory over one's enemies is also not possible. This is because defeat against one's enemies is usually the result of personal weaknesses due to this lack of character and self-purification.

The value of this battle is much greater in a society that is filled with corruption and it will yield much clearer results. The victory of the Prophet (S) in the city of Medina was a direct result of the internal battles and character building that took place for the companions while they were in the city of Mecca.

¹. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 78, p. 383.

Lesson 134: During The Occultation Of The Mahdi

Tradition

أَمَّا الْحَوَادِثُ الْوَاقِعَةُ فَارْجِعُوا فِيهَا إِلَى رُؤَاةِ أَحَادِيثِنَا

Imam Mahdi (‘a) is narrated to have said: “Refer to the narrators of our traditions during the various events that will take place in the Greater Occultation.”¹

Brief Commentary

Society cannot be properly organized, nor can its full potential be realized without proper leadership. For this reason, God has never left his servants to themselves without a form of divine leadership and guidance. There have always been divine leaders amongst us who have helped guide us towards the way that is best.

Even during the time of the occultation of Imam Mahdi (‘a), there were select deputies, as well as general deputies who would guide the people through him. These were men of faith and knowledge who were and are well acquainted with the Quran and the Sunnah of the Ahl al-Bayt. These are the necessary qualifications for such a position and anyone else who claims this position is not qualified in the least.

[1.](#) A section of the famous letter from the Imam ('a) as taken from various sources.

Lesson 135: The Root Of All Evil

Tradition

اجْتَنِبِ الْخَمْرَ فَإِنَّهَا مِفْتَاحُ كُلِّ شَرٍّ

The Prophet (S) is narrated to have said: “Stay away from wine (alcohol) for it is the key to all evils.”[1](#)

Brief Commentary

Many books and articles have been written on the ill effects of alcohol, and its negative effects have been proven on the nervous system, heart, blood vessels, digestive system, liver, kidneys, and practically all of the organs of the body. Besides these physically based negative effects, alcohol is related to a great many social ills as well. The statistics on the social dangers of alcohol are truly astounding. In addition to these physical and social ills, there are also spiritual illnesses which arise from alcohol and distance us from our Creator. These words of the Prophet (S) are enough for us to understand that alcohol is the key to many of the evils of this world.

[1.](#) Nahj al-Fasahah, p. 1.

Lesson 136: Performing One's Duty Is The Greatest Worship

Tradition

مَنْ عَمِلَ بِمَا افْتَرَضَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ فَهُوَ مِنْ أَعْبِدِ النَّاسِ

Imam al-Sajjad ('a) is narrated to have said: “Whoever performs his necessary duties is the most worshipful of the people.”[1](#)

Brief Commentary

Worship is neither limited to serving God's creation, nor is it limited to only prayers and fasting. Rather, the greatest worship of God is that in which each person performs their own necessary duties in life. What kind of worship can be higher and greater than the one through which a society is transformed into a virtual utopia filled with all sorts of blessings and goodness.

What is important to note is that performing one's duties is a term of wide ranging meaning and it also includes doing one's duty in terms of the obligatory worship as well. In reality, doing one's duty includes all of the necessary social, cultural, and economic actions which exist. This is in direct contradiction to those who believe that religiosity is achieved by putting aside all worldly duties and simply engaging in acts of ritual worship.

[1](#). Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, vol. 11, p. 206, Al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 81.

Lesson 137: The Inhabitants Of The Stars

Tradition

هَذِهِ النُّجُومُ الَّتِي فِي السَّمَاءِ مَدَائِنٌ مِثْلُ الْمَدَائِنِ الَّتِي فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرْبُوطَةٌ كُلُّ مَدِينَةٍ إِلَى عَمُودٍ مِنْ نُورٍ

Imam 'Ali ('a) is narrated to have said: "These stars which are in the skies have cities much like the cities of the earth; each of their cities is connected with a column of light with other cities."[1](#)

Brief Commentary

It is extremely selfish of us to imagine that all of the planets and all of the stars in the universe are completely void and empty of inhabitants. The scientists of today have done certain calculations where they have calculated that there should be at least millions, if not hundreds of millions of planets which contain inhabitants in the universe. There is a strong possibility that many of these planets have their own advanced civilizations, some of which may be even more advanced than what is found on earth. The reason behind this advanced state is due to the fact that life on those planets began many thousands or even millions of years before the earth. The tradition above is one of the scientific miracles of Imam 'Ali ('a), which was mentioned over fourteen centuries ago.

[1](#). Safinat al-Bihar, vol. 3, p. 574, Tafseer Al-Qummi, vol. 2, p. 218.

Lesson 138: The Quran And The Law Of Gravity

Tradition

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

Imam al-Rida' ('a) is narrated to have said to one of his companions: “Does not God say that the skies are established without any pillar (support structure) that can be seen?” His companion replied: “Indeed.” The Imam ('a) then said: “Therefore, there exists a pillar which is invisible, which you are not able to see.”¹

Brief Commentary

Today, it is firmly established that the earth and all of the planets travel in their set orbits through the regulation given to them by the phenomenon of gravity. The laws of attraction act much like a great chain which pulls things together, while the law of repulsion pushes things away from each other. This perfect balance has allowed all of these immense planets to travel along their own orbits without the least bit of deviation. This is the same invisible pillar which the Quran has mentioned. What is amazing is that these words were spoken over 1400 years ago at a time when the people were completely unaware of such matters--- this is a great proof of the truthfulness of this religion and its message.

¹. Tafsir Burhan, vol. 3, p. 278.

Lesson 139: The Secret Of The Mountains

Tradition

وَ وَتَدَّ بِالصُّخُورِ مِيدَانَ أَرْضِهِ

Imam 'Ali ('a) is narrated to have said: “Through means of the mountains, the earth is prevented from shaking and moving.”¹

Brief Commentary

Today, it has been proven that the moon exerts an influence on the tides and causes their rise and fall each day and night. Due to the effects of the pull of the moon, water levels in the ocean can rise one meter, and in some cases, even up to fifteen meters in height. In the same way that the moon's pull affects the tides, it also affects the earth's crust as well. The crust is pulled up at least thirty centimeters, after which it contracts back to its normal position.

What keeps the earth's surface stable and firm is the existence of the mountains whose roots are connected to one another and which form a network all around the earth. The presence of these mountains prevents the earth's crust from shaking and causes it be stable and firm. If the mountains did not exist and the earth continuously was expanding and contracting, then the people would not have been able to live for very long on this earth. This is a reality which the Imams ('a) mentioned many centuries ago.

1. Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon 1, Al-Ihtijaj, vol. 1, p. 198, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah, vol. 1, p.57.

Lesson 140: Microscopic Creatures

Tradition

إِنَّمَا قُلْنَا «الطَّيْفُ» لِلْخَلْقِ اللَّطِيفِ... وَ مَا لَا يَكَادُ عِيُونُنَا تَسْتَبِينُهُ لِإِمَامَةِ خَلْقِهَا، لَا تَرَاهُ عِيُونُنَا وَ لَا تَلْمُسُهُ أَيْدِينَا

Imam al-Rida' ('a) is narrated to have said: "The reason God is called the Subtle (Al-Latif) is because of his creation of very small and delicate creatures... These are creatures that we can't see and our hands can't feel due to their extremely small size."1

Brief Commentary

This is just a small section of a larger tradition which Fath ibn Yazdad Jurjani has narrated from Imam al-Rida' ('a). In this tradition, it has been explained that these creatures are so small that our senses cannot perceive them at all. They live amongst the waves of the ocean, the layers of the bark of trees, as well as scattered throughout the deserts and plains. This tradition has been narrated in books that are more than a thousand years old. They were compiled hundreds of years before the birth of Pasteur (1822–1895 AD). This is a clear-cut scientific miracle which has been narrated from Imam al-Rida' ('a).

1. Al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 106, Al-Tawhid, p. 185, Uyoon Akhbar Al-Ridha', vol. 1, p. 127.

Lesson 141: They Just Carry The Names Of Muslims

Tradition

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

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) is narrated to have said: “A time will come for the people when only lines will remain of the Quran, and only a name will remain of Islam, and the mosques of the Muslims will be beautiful in construction but empty of guidance and salvation.”¹

Brief Commentary

It cannot be said if this prediction has been fulfilled or if it relates to a future era but what is certain is that some aspects of it are apparent today within our societies. What is stranger yet is that such Muslims are always complaining of a lack of progress and it is as if they think that only the name of Islam and the written lines of the Quran are enough as a religion. They do not see the Quran as a book of education and human progress, nor do they see Islam as a complete way of life that includes intellectual and scientific development.

¹. Nahj Al-Balaghah, Words of Wisdom, Number 369.

Lesson 142: The Measure Of The Intellect And Ignorance

Tradition

اللِّسَانُ مِغْيَارُ إِطَاشَةِ الْجَهْلِ وَ أَرْجِحَةِ الْعَقْلِ

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) is narrated to have said: “The tongue is the measure of both the overflowing of ignorance and the measure of the intellect and wisdom.”¹

Brief Commentary

The most important gateway into the character and soul of human beings is found in their tongues. It is the tongue that is the best means of measuring someone's intellect. With just a small movement, the tongue is capable of revealing the deepest motivations and intentions which someone holds inside. It is for this same reason that many of the commandments of Islam revolve around the reformation of the tongue. Indeed, the Infallibles (‘a) have repeatedly warned of the dangers that can be found in the tongue. It is also obvious that the tongue cannot be reformed unless the spirit and the thoughts of an individual are first reformed. At the same time, it is possible through much silence and care to prevent many of the dangers that can arise from the tongue.

1. Tuhaf al-'Uqul, p. 143, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah, vol. 7, p. 88. Ghurar Al-Hikam, p. 211.

Lesson 143: Something Greater Than A Blessing!

Tradition

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

Imam al-Hadi (‘a) is narrated to have said: “The felicity of expressing thanks for a blessing is greater than one's felicity for having received that blessing. This is because blessings are a means for the life of this world and thankfulness is an investment both for this world and the next.”1

Brief Commentary

Thankfulness is not limited to simply expressing words through one's tongue; it also includes one's actions as well. Being truly thankful includes utilizing the blessings that one has received in the proper way. Being thankful in such a way brings about even further blessings which may make the initial blessing seem small and insignificant in comparison. When blessings are utilized in the way of God and the happiness of his creation, they become a further investment for felicity in both this world and the next. This is while if we look at a blessing itself, it may simply be a material blessing, while thankfulness for it extends much higher and is of greater value.

1. Tuhaf al-'Uqul, p. 362, Wasa'il Al-Shi'a, vol. 14, p. 502, Al-Amali, p. 73, Mishkat Al-Anwar, p. 257.

Lesson 144: Invigorating The School Of Thought Of The Ahl Al-Bayt

Tradition

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

Imam al-Rida' (‘a) is narrated to have said: “The heart of anyone who sits in a gathering which invigorates our school of thought will not die on the day when hearts die.”¹

Brief Commentary

It is apparent from this tradition that one of the duties of the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt is to constantly revitalize their ideology. This includes helping people to understand this school of thought, gain access to its teachings, and taste the essence of the words of the Imams (‘a). These should be gatherings of preparation, self-building, and spirituality, and not gatherings of amusement or those in which people simply seek out their material wants and desires, while forgetting their social and spiritual problems. These are gatherings through which the hearts are awakened and brought back to life.

¹. Mirath Imaman, p. 443.

Lesson 145: Safeguarding The Secrets

Tradition

إِذَا حَدَّثَ الرَّجُلُ بِحَدِيثٍ، ثُمَّ التَّفَتَ فَهِيَ أَمَانَةٌ

The Prophet (S) is narrated to have said: “When someone says something and then looks around, their words are a secret and trust (and one must strive to preserve them).”¹

Brief Commentary

Upholding trust has various forms in Islam – one of these forms is through preserving the secrets of the people. This is considered to be so important in Islam that revealing the secrets of people is counted as one of the greater sins. It isn't even necessary for an individual to mention that what he is telling you should be kept a secret; it is enough for him to simply look around in a certain manner and be careful of those who are within range. This is enough for such words to be considered a secret and to make their safeguarding obligatory.

[1.](#) Nahj al-Fasahah, p. 38.

Lesson 146: The Signs Of Faith

Tradition

إِذَا سَرُّكَ حَسَنَتُكَ وَ سَاءَتُكَ سَيِّئَتُكَ فَأَنْتَ مُؤْمِنٌ

The Prophet (S) is narrated to have said: “At the time that your good actions make you happy and your bad actions make you sad, then you are a believing individual.”[1](#)

Brief Commentary

Islam has mentioned that everyone is born with a pure inner nature; this includes an intrinsic faith in God and a love of all that is good. As time passes, it is possible for sins to gradually affect the soul and influence it in such a way where it is completely transformed from this original state. In spite of this, as long as someone loves what is good and hates what is bad, it is clear that the spirit of faith and their pure inner nature is still present and healthy within them. It is truly the wretched who do not become sad at their evil actions and a step beyond this is when they actually become happy.

[1.](#) Nahj al-Fasahah, p. 41.

Lesson 147: The First Condition Of Every Action

Tradition

مَا مِنْ حَرَكَةٍ إِلَّا وَ أَنْتَ مُحْتَاجٌ فِيهَا إِلَى مَعْرِفَةٍ

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) is narrated to have said: “There is no action or work except that you need awareness, comprehension, and understanding in its performance.”¹

Brief Commentary

If we reflect on the words ‘There is no action or work...’ we will become familiar with the extent of the Islamic program for life. The religion of Islam isn’t only a program for worship and supplication, or only a belief system without any practical applications. Islam is in reality a program for the entirety of our lives and this includes both personal issues, as well as social. This program extends to every action that we perform. The first step towards enacting this program is awareness and understanding of reality; without understanding ourselves and the reality around us properly, all of our actions and efforts will be without effect or at least they will be lessened in their effectiveness.

¹. Safinat al-Bihar, vol. 1, p. 15, Mustadrak Al-Wasa’il, vol. 17, p. 267, Bisharat Al-Mustafa, p. 24.

Lesson 148: The Importance Of Guests

Tradition

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

The Prophet (S) is narrated to have said: “Whenever God wishes goodness and felicity for someone, he gives them a gift.” He was asked: “What gift does he give?” He replied: “Guests!”¹

Brief Commentary

Without any doubt, guests are a great gift from the divine who possess value and honor. Unfortunately, in today’s materialistically oriented world, the custom of serving guests has seemingly lost its value. When we look at many countries, we find that the idea of having guests come over is not like what it used to be in time’s past. In some cases, they are even seen as an annoyance and bother, and it is becoming rare for people to invite others to their home or to accept invitations unless there is a type of

economic or political (materialistically oriented) motivation involved.

Yet, if we look at much of the Muslim world or within specific religious families, we will see that guests are greatly honored even if they are not well-known to the host family. We should always keep in mind that guests are a gift from God and we should treat and honor them accordingly.

[1](#). Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 15, p. 241, Jami' Al-Akhbar, p. 136.

Lesson 149: Respect And Love

Tradition

لَيْسَ مِنَّا مَنْ لَمْ يُؤْفَرْ كَبِيرَنَا وَ لَمْ يَرْحَمْ صَغِيرَنَا

Imam al-Sadiq ('a) is narrated to have said: "He who does not respect the elders and is not affectionate towards the young is not from us."[1](#)

Brief Commentary

Human society is much like a caravan that is always in motion; children are born and soon grow up while the adults age and become older, eventually passing away. No one amongst these travelers can bypass this process. In this caravan, the elders usually have more experience and wisdom due to the lives that they have lived. If they have lived their lives properly, they are also the source of much good in this world. Due to this reason, they are to be respected and honored by those who are younger than them. At the same time, the youth are newer to this world and they are just starting their lives; due to this reason, they must be loved and treated with complete care and consideration. This is the proper way that the youth and the elders are to be treated in a balanced and caring society.

[1](#). Usul al-Kafi, vol. 3, p. 253.

Lesson 150: Invest In Yourself

Tradition

مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ خَيْرٍ يَبْقَى لَكَ دُخْرُهُ وَ مَا تَوَخَّرَهُ يَكُنْ لِغَيْرِكَ خَيْرُهُ

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) is narrated to have said: “What you send ahead of yourselves will be saved for you and what you delay will end up benefitting others (while its responsibility remains yours).”¹

Brief Commentary

It appears that the desire of people to accumulate wealth has increased during modern times to much higher levels than before. Unfortunately, such people accumulate wealth without considering what their main goals in life are, and at some point, it really does seem like an illogical and even insane thing to do.

Such people get so involved in the accumulation of wealth that they sometimes lose sight of whether they are making that money through lawful or unlawful means. In addition, do such people think about the fact that they will not be able to take their wealth with them when they leave this world, nor will they be able to spend all of it during the span of their lives. At some point, they will have to leave all of their wealth and the only thing that will remain with them will be the responsibility of the wealth that they have left behind.

¹. Nahj al-Balaghah, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah, vol. 18, p. 41, Ghurar Al-Hikam, p. 104.

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