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Lecture 7: Anger is Both Merciful and Satanic

In the last lecture we discussed anger. Anger can bring man to such a state that his angelic face will be turned into the face of a predatory animal. The Qur^{ān} says:

“Indeed the worst of beasts in the sight of Allah are the deaf and the dumb- those who understand not.”¹

The end of one who continues to walk the path of anger will be worse than a predatory animal. Today we must make clear which part of anger is animalistic and which part is humane. If a person uses anger in the animalistic way he will lose his angelic shape and turn into a predatory animal, but if he uses anger in the humane way he will become a perfect man, an example of good and full of blessings.

Anger is when one's blood boils when confronted with a difficulty or with something unwanted. If one does not control himself in these situations he will seek revenge.

The Existence of Anger In Man Is Necessary

Of course, man would not be able to live without anger. Anger must be used in the correct way. Man cannot live without anger or lust (*shahawat*). Man must have lust in him so he will go after food and marriage. Considering all the obstacles in life, how would man be able to live without anger? But, if man uses his anger in the animalistic way it will cause him to fall down from the state of humanity.

What is humane anger and what is animalistic anger?

Animalistic Anger

Animalistic anger is anger which is unlawful, rationally and religiously. Anger and revenge, whenever it is against the intellect or against a religious law, is animalistic. Anger must be used in the correct way. Anger should occur when there is a barrier between him and improvement or perfection. One must become angry when another person wants to oppress him. What is meant by this is that he must not

allow the other person to oppress him. I will give an example to make it clear.

Suppose a person unintentionally hurt you, suppose he fell on you. If you get angry at him, curse him out and try to get revenge, you have used anger in the animalistic way. The person unintentionally hurt you, not intentionally. An animal does not understand intentional and unintentional, whenever something occurs that he does not like, he gets angry. But a human can understand if the other person hit him intentionally or unintentionally.

Imam Sajjad (A) And The Servant That Killed His Son

It is related in the eleventh volume of *Bihar al-Anwar* that Imam Sajjad (a) had guests over at his house. The Imam's servant was bringing a hot kabob on a sharp metal utensil. Suddenly, he accidentally hit the Imam's small child with the utensil and the child died. The servant immediately recited the verse: ***“..and those who control their anger.” (3: 134)***

Imam said: “I have controlled my anger.” Then he (a) read the next section of the verse: ***“..and those who forgive the people.”*** He continued: “I have also forgiven you.” Then he read the rest of the verse: ***“..and Allah loves the virtuous.”*** He continued: “I also free you.”

Act in opposition to your *nafs*. This was a place for forgiving, not anger, because he did not kill the child intentionally.

Do Not Get Angry From False Reports

Sometimes a child accidentally breaks a dish and his mother and father get angry. Sometimes they even hit the child. This is a mistake. The child was playing; he did not want to break the dish.

These are examples of the principle: do not get angry when the other person did something unintentional. If one gets angry, it is anger without reason. Most of the time when people get angry it is without reason. There are some people who get angry with someone after hearing something about him from another person. But most of the time these stories are false.

Acting In Opposition To Expectations Causes Unwarranted Anger

Another reason that people become angry in the wrong way is when others act in opposition to their expectations. For example; suppose a person expects his friend to loan him 100 dollars. When he asks his friend, his friend refuses and does not give him the money. Here, the person gets angry at his friend and his anger remains in his heart. This is dangerous.

It has been related that Imam Sadiq (a) told his followers not to ask people for things unless it is

necessary. The reason for this is clear, when one asks for something and does not get it, he becomes upset. His being upset turns into anger. But, we must think positively of the person who did not give whatever was asked for. Maybe he did not have what was asked for. Maybe he needed what was asked for. Did he owe it to me? Was it obligatory for him to give it to me?

Piety Strengthens One's Faith And Coveteousness Weakens One's Faith

Someone asked Imām Sajjīd (a): “What strengthens faith and what weakens it?”

The Imām (a) answered: “Piety (*wara'*) strengthens one's faith and coveteousness weakens one's faith.”²

Man expects someone else to come and help him. He must loan me money. He must fix my problems.

The person who believes in the oneness of Allah (*tawhīd*) should know that Allah is the only One who solves his problems. The means that Allah allows to exist will only work to the extent that Allah allows. One's problem would not be able to be solved if Allah does not want it to be solved. A person who believes in the oneness of Allah is one who knows that all good is from Allah and one who knows that the creations of Allah are just means for obtaining that good. Suppose one went to a creature of Allah and expected that creature to solve his problem. This is a form of polytheism. If I am a Muslim and one who believes in the oneness of Allah, I must be like this: “O' Allah I am going to this person, but my hope is with you. Solve my problem by means of this person.”

Lower Your Expectations

The sign of a person who really believes in the oneness of Allah is not getting angry when his problem remains unsolved. He says that Allah did not want it. It was not in my best interest. But, if the problem gets solved he thanks Allah and says: “My Lord! You have blessed me. You solved my problem at the hands of so and so.” Of course there is no problem in thanking that person as well because the person who does not thank the creature will not thank the Creator.³

Similar to what was mentioned before, this is an example of Allah's favor. So, it is necessary to thank the means that Allah made for fixing one's problem, not thanking the means independently; for that would be a form of polytheism.

Man becomes angry when he has an expectation from someone, but that person does not live up to his expectations. From the beginning, one must know that it is not in the other person's hands. If Allah wanted the problem to be solved he would have solved it through him or another person. One will never have this unwarranted anger if he thinks like this, because he will not have any kind of expectation.

Anger At Oppressors And Open Sin

One must become angry at oppressors. For example, one must be angry at the cursed Saddam Hussein who crossed the boundaries. It would be enough for the entire Muslim world to be angry at him if his only crime was killing the late al-Sadr and his sister, but now his hands are dirty with respect to thousands of Iranian and Iraqi Muslims.

One must also be angry at those who create corruption, those who commit sins openly.

The amount of anger that one has at oppression and sin should be in relation to that form of oppression and sin. Some sins are bigger than others and the level of anger for those sins should be more as well.

For example, these three sins are different, a woman having a little bit of her hair outside of her hijāb, a man drinking alcohol openly and a man killing an innocent person. The first sin is the smallest sin and the last one is the biggest.

This holds true for seeking revenge as well. For example, you cannot do more than slap one who slaps you or you cannot swear twice at someone who swore at you once. Of course, in any case it is better to forgive. There is a pleasure found in forgiving that is not found in revenge.

If One Over-Retaliates The Other Person has the Right to Counter-Retaliates

It is against religious doctrine to over-retaliate or to cross the line in getting revenge. If one slanders another he must receive the religious punishment (*hadd*) and if one wrongfully hits another he must pay blood-money (*dīyah*). For example, suppose someone slapped you and your skin became red, but when you retaliated you slapped him and his skin became black. Here, you must pay the amount of gold specified in the books of jurisprudence under the section of blood-money.

An animal is one who is unorganized in his actions. Animalistic anger is anger that when one seeks revenge he gets whatever kind revenge that he can, even if it is like a predatory wolf that kills his prey.

As a principle, anger is good, but it must be used in the correct way and to the correct extent. One should be angry at oppression and sin and even should seek the correct amount of revenge. The glorious Qurʾān says the following about this issue:

“..Should anyone aggress against you, assail him in the manner he assailed you.”⁴⁴⁹

You cannot afflict more aggression. First one must know to what level he has been oppressed, then he must be careful not to step over the line in retaliation.

For this reason there is no characteristic of a believer in the Qurʾān that says he must not ever show

anger.

The Hereafter Is For One Who Does Not Seek Superiority

Ibn Fahd Hill¹ said: “Suppose there are two people who are angry and you want to know if they are believers or not. Tell one of them: 'Because of Allah, forget about it.' If he is an unbeliever he will not pay attention to you. But, if you put some money in his hand and say calm down, he will calm down.”

Most people are examples of the verse: “They are stuck to the material life and belongings and are not interested in the hereafter.”

Shaykh Bah² said: “Scholars must not forget this verse; “This is the abode of the Hereafter which We shall grant to those who do not desire to domineer in the earth..”⁵

The world is not important for him. How do they obtain this level of spirituality? An important point about this verse is that it said 'those who do not desire' not 'those who do not go after.' In their hearts they do not want superiority; they do not want to become famous, because the one who wants fame or superiority is ignorant. They have yet to understand the reality of this world. They have not gone after the hereafter. It is self-evident that an ignorant person will not benefit from the next world's positions because: “**..Are those who know equal to those who do not know?**”⁶ The scholars are the ones who know, they are the one's who always remember Allah.⁷ This world will remain more important than the hereafter to an ignorant person. What expectations do you have from him? A person exists to the extent of his knowledge. How will one who has not stepped out of the realm of animals step into the neighborhood of the Lord of the universe?

One's Love Of The Hereafter Becomes Clear When One Is Angry Or Lustful

The importance or unimportance that one gives to the hereafter becomes clear when one is angry or lustful. One only thinks of his honor in this life or his worldly position when the hereafter is unimportant for him.

It should not be left unsaid that Islamic punishment can only be carried out in a courtroom from the ruling of an Islamic judge. If this was not the case there would be mayhem and anarchy. For this reason it is unlawful for one to take revenge from someone who oppressed him without a judge's consent. He must go to an Islamic court or an Islamic jurist to get his right.

1. 8:22.

2. Shaykh 'Alī Namāzī, Mustadrak Safīnat al-Bihār, volume 2, page 93

3. Shaykh 'Alī Namāzī, Mustadrak Safīnat al-Bihār, volume 1, page 709

4. 2:194.

5. 28:83.

6. 39:9.

7. Refer to 3:191.

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