

Part 8: Heavenly Stars Memoirs & Anecdotes of the God-Wary

...'How much time is left for midday?,' because he had no watch with him, and had no strength to look at the watch; after every 15 minutes he would ask us (the time), not because his prayer should not be prayed outside its time, but because of performing prayer at the beginning of its time ...

... Once again, he said with disappointment: 'Why do you deal with me in such a way. Take back the food, so that I perform my prayer.'

... I only have hope of God's Grace and have no (action) at my credit to be hopeful .

... so that his eyes does not even fall once at a *ghayr mahram* woman. I observed this from him as an established habit...

1) Spiritual Ablutions

Allah (swt) says in the Holy Qur'an:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ

Surely Allah Loves those who turn unto Him constantly and Loves those who continually purify themselves. 1

The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said:

ان استطعت ان تكون ابدآ على وضوء فافعل: فان ملك الموت اذا قبض روح

العبد وهو على وضوء كتب له شهادة

If you can always be in the state of *wudu'*, than do so; for verily if the Angel of death were to take the soul of a servant of God while the latter is in the state of *wudu'*, martyrdom is written for him.²

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a) is reported to have said:

الوضوء على الوضوء نور علي نور

Wudu upon *wudu* is light upon light. ³

A) Imam Khumayni Regularly Renews his Wudu'

(In one of her memoirs, Ms. Dabbagh says:) "...One of these points was the orderliness & discipline of the personal life of that great man (i.e. Imam Khumayni): discipline in reading the papers, discipline in (his) meetings, discipline in reading letters, and discipline (even) in renewing his *wudu'*. Definitely it was not such that you suddenly ask for him, and are told that he has gone to renew his *wudu'*.

He rather had a specific time for that. I remember one day in the building that was opposite the house of the Imam in Paris, I together with other brothers was busy listening to an audio cassette.

Suddenly I remembered that I must leave, for it was the time of the renewal of Imam's *wudu'*. I thought that I must inspect the basin so that it is clean and orderly. I did not like the house for which I was responsible, to look disorderly. The brothers said, 'Come on, does it mean that he has a specific time for that?' However, I went and cleaned, and incidentally, the Imam came at that very moment.⁴

Ms. Marziye Hadidechee

Famously known as Dabbagh: a member of the team sent to Moscow for conveying the late Imam Khumayni's message to Gorbachev.

B) Imam Khumayni closes the water tap between the acts of wudu'

"On several occasions I have seen Imam Khumayni performing *wudu'*, and noticed that he closes the water tap between the acts of *wudu'*, and re-opens it (only) when it is necessary, to avoid any extra water to flow from the tap. This is while most of us do not have the smallest degree of attention toward the matter of *israf* (wastage).

For example, from the time we intend to perform *wudu'*, the tap is open until when our ablution is completed. Whenever Imam (Khumayni) wanted to perform *wudu'*, he was very careful in using less

water. This vigilance was witnessed in the most minor of his movements. He always performed *ghusl* (the Friday major ablution) before the call of prayers at Friday noon, and his Friday *ghusl* was never left.

Whenever the Imam performed *wudu'*, he would perform all the parts of it facing the *qibla*. Even if the basin was not in the direction of the *qibla*, at every instance, after taking a handful of water, he closed the tap, and facing the *qibla*, washed his face or hand. Imam Khumayni, in accordance with his self-commitment and Islamic belief, tried to practice whatever he preached.

For example, if during *wudu'* he reminded one of his family members not to use water more than necessary, he too carefully followed the same..." 5

Dr. Mahmud Burujardi

Imam Khumayni's son-in-law

C) 'It is not the time for an interview now.'

"One day in Paris a person came and said: 'The Americans have come to take an interview with Imam Khumayni, and this program shall be broadcasted live. If such an action transpires than naturally other European countries would follow suit, and this can be effective in revealing the stances and movement of the revolution.'

Incidentally it was a Friday. I came to Imam Khumayni and informed him of the matter. He said: 'Now is the time of doing the recommended acts—the Friday *ghusl*, not the time for an interview.' When he had performed the recommended acts of Friday, he said: 'I am ready for the interview.'" 6

Ms. Marziyeh Hadidechi

2) On Prayer

Allah (SWT) says in the Holy Qur'an:

حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ وَالصَّلَاةِ الْوُسْطَى وَقُومُوا لِلَّهِ قَانِتِينَ

***Be you watchful over the prayers,
And the middle prayer;
And stand obedient to God. (2:238)***

The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said:

أفضل الاعمال عند الله الصلاة في أول وقتها

“The best of deeds to Allah is prayer in the beginning of its time”

What follows are thought provoking memoirs of people who got the advantage to observe great Muslim scholars at prayer time:

A) A youth extremely observant of prayer time

"Of the important distinguishing characteristics of Imam Khumayni was that he always performed the prayer at the beginning of its time, and would give importance to the recommended prayers (*nawafil*) . This characteristic was present in him since the beginning of his youth age, when he hadn't exceeded twenty years.

Some friends used to say: "We thought in the beginning that God forbid, he performs his prayers at the beginning of its time, out of show off. For this very reason, we tried to do something that if this action was out of showiness, we stop the same. For a long time we thought of it, and tried him several times in various ways.

For example, exactly at the beginning of the prayer time, we would spread the table cloth (for having our meals); or arrange to set out on a journey. However, he would say, 'You go on with your food, and I shall perform my prayers. I shall eat whatever remains.'

Or while leaving for a journey (at the beginning of the prayer time) he would say: 'You go ahead. I shall follow and reach you.' A long time had passed since this matter took place, and not only was his timely prayer not left, he (also) compelled us to perform our prayers at the beginning of its time."

Muhammad `Abai

B) What imam al-Sadiq (`a) actually meant

"The other issue was prayer at the beginning of its time, that he lay great importance to. He would narrate a tradition from Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq that said: 'If a person takes his prayer lightly, he shall be deprived of our intercession.'

Once I said to him: 'Taking prayers lightly may mean that a person sometimes performs his prayers, while sometimes he does not.' He said: 'No. This, rather, is against the religion. Imam al-Sadiq meant that when *zuhr* (noon) comes to transpire (for example), and the person does not perform his prayers at the beginning of the prayer time, he has in reality given preference to something else."

Mahmud Burujardi

C) Prayers in Times of Great Difficulty

(This refers to the time Imam Khumayni was captured by the forces of the Shah.): "Imam (Khumayni) narrated the following to me: I had said on the way that I haven't performed my prayers. 'Stop at a place, so that I perform *wudu*'. They said: 'We do not have the permission to do so.' I said, 'But you are armed, while I do not have any weapon. Besides, you are all together, while I am alone; I cannot do anything.'

They said, 'We don't have the permission to do so.' I understood that there is no use (to go on explaining), and they shall not stop. I said, 'All right, at least stop so that I may do *tayammum*.' They listened to this and stopped the car. However, they did not give me the permission to come out. Whilst in the car, I bent myself and hit my hand on the ground and performed *tayammum*.

The prayer I offered was in the state of facing opposite the *qiblah*. This was because we were heading to Tehran from Qum, and the *qiblah* was at the South. It was a prayer recited with a *tayammum*, opposite the *qiblah* and whilst the car was moving. This is how I prayed my *subh* (dawn) prayers. Maybe these two units of my prayers pleases God."

Farideh Mustafawi

D) Indeed Such Are Moments When the True Believers Are Clearly Deciphered

"In one of the gatherings where, Hadhrat Ayatullah Khamenei, as the President of the time was also present. Also among those present were Agha Rafsanjani (the president of the parliament), the Commanders of the Revolutionary guards, other forces, and I, who was there as the commander of the land forces.

The gathering took place in the small room of the Imam. He was seated on a chair and we sat on the ground in front of him in a circle. I do not remember whose turn it was to deliver a report, that suddenly the Imam left the room.

Imam's confrontation was extremely shocking to us. The reporter could not finish what he was saying, for he was astounded and astonished as to what should he say and to whom should he address.

(Thereafter) the first one to speak was Agha Rafsanjani, who said: 'Agha, are you feeling unwell?'

Imam Khumayni returned quickly and cleanly said, 'No; It is the time for prayer.' I looked at my watch unconsciously. I knew the prayer time of Tehran beforehand, and can (confidently) say that the time of Imams leave for the purpose of prayer had no difference of even a minute with it ...In reality, the Imam's state of worship was such that he could not pay attention to what the reporter said moments before the beginning of prayer time."

The Martyr 'Ali Sayyad Shirazi

E) In Front Of All the Reporters Love Of The Beloved Gives Him No Respite

"The Day when Shah escaped, we were in Neauphle-le-Chateau in Paris. The French police had closed the main highway of Neauphle-le-Chateau; all the news-reporters of different countries of the world were present. The foreign news-reporters from Africa, Asia, Europe and America, and probably 150 cameras just broadcasted the Imam's speech.

Believe it that the news-reporters numbered as such, because they were reporting about the greatest event of the year.

The Shah had gone, and they wanted to know Imam Khumayni's decision. Khumayni stood on a chair near the highway, and all the cameras were focused at him. He spoke for a few minutes and said what he wanted to say. I was standing beside the Imam. Suddenly, he faced me and said: 'Ahmad, has the midday come to transpire?'

I said: 'Yes, it is midday now.' Imam Khumayni, without any fear, bade them off as follows: 'Wassalamu...' Look at what moment did he leave his speech to perform his prayer at the beginning of its time.

That is, at such a sensitive moment when International Television Broadcasting Stations, which have millions of viewers, such as the C.N.N., the B.B.C. London, all the television channels of London and America, all the news-reporters such as the Associated Press, the United Press, Reuters, and all the reporters of (the different) news-papers, magazines and radio-television stations were present, Imam cut his conversation and went after his prayer."

Sayyid Ahmad Khumayni *Late son of Imam Khumayni*

F) Imam is Informed of Martyr Rajai's Decision

"That which Imam Khumayni highly emphasized, and showed great sensitivity towards was prayer at the beginning of its time. My father would say also, that ever since his adolescence and youth age he (Imam Khumayni) used to pray at the beginning of prayer time. If you remember, during the beginning of the victory of the revolution,

Martyr Raja'i, introduced a law that the ministries and governmental organizations should remain closed for half an hour for prayer. This issue was very interesting and lesson-giving. When it was asked from Imam Khumayni concerning his opinion on this matter, he said: 'If it does not cause harm to the time and work of anybody, do it (as suggested)."

Dr. Mahmud Burujardi *Son-in-law of Imam Khumayni*

G) What Kind Of Lover Was This Who Even In That State Never Forgot The Only Beloved

"The time was ten minutes to eight when they brought Agha to the C.C.U. I whispered near the Imam's ears: 'Agha, it is the time for prayer; should Mr. Ansari come, so that you (can) perform *wudu*?' Imam Khumayni made a sign with his eye-brows. Dr. Ilyasi said: 'Agha is listening to everything, but cannot reply.' That is when I saw the Imam pointing with the fore-finger of his right hand, and we thought that he is performing his prayers."

Mustafa Kaff-ashzadeh

H) 'It should not happen that the sun rises and I have to pray qada'.'

"One night before his demise, I was near him (Imam Khumayni) in the hospital from 10.00 p.m. to 5.00 a.m. in the morning. He woke up several times from his sleep and asked for water. When I brought juice for him, he said: 'Give me natural water.' He did not take fruit juice. He also asked about the time a number of times; and continually said: 'It should not happen that the sun rises and I have to pray *qada*.'"

Husayn Sulaymani

I) Who is this angelic figure who is so particular of the time of meeting his only beloved?

"The very same day he (Imam Khumayni) prayed his *zuhr* and *asr* prayers with *wudu*'. From an hour before noon, he asked whoever came to him: 'How much time is left for mid-day?' And his aim (behind this) was that he should not delay in praying at the beginning of its time. From 3.30 afternoon an overwhelming anxiety overcame all (of us).

The treatment had reached at a point when, following utmost efforts by the physicians and the Hospital personnel, everyone was in wait for a miracle to transpire. During Maghrib, the doctors, considering their awareness of his sensitivity toward prayers, called him and said: 'Agha, it is time for prayer.'

Imam Khumayni, who was unconscious from 1.30 afternoon, attended to this voice. All of us witnessed that he prayed his Maghrib prayer in that state of restlessness by moving his hands and eyebrows."

Firishte l'rabi

J) Regaining Consciousness by The Mention Of Prayer

"He (Imam Khumayni) loved performing his prayer at the beginning of its time. Even in his last day, he prayed the prayer of Maghrib and 'Isha' by means of signs at 10.00 p.m. He was in the state of unconsciousness when one of the doctors came besides him and, with the likelihood that probably by

means of (mentioning) prayer Agha could be brought into consciousness, he said: 'Agha, it is time for prayer.'

The moment he said this, Imam regained his consciousness and performed his prayer with signs of his hand. In the morning of that day too, he would always ask us: 'How much time is left for midday?', because he had no watch with him, and had no strength to look at the watch; after every 15 minutes he would ask us (the time), not because his prayer should not be prayed outside its time, but because of performing prayer at the beginning of its time."

Na'ime Ishraqi

K) How can you snatch the cup of divine love from the intoxicated?

"He (Imam Khumayni) always prayed at the beginning of the prayer time, and advised his children the same. I remember that in the beginning of the war (Iraq-Iran imposed war), a gathering was held with some presidents and officials, both local and foreign.

When there was a call for prayer, Imam Khumayni without paying attention to the others, stood up and performed his prayer at the beginning of its time, and those present (also) prayed behind him. And in that very period, not only did he recite the 8 units of *nafile* prayers of *zuhr*, but also prayed the 8 units of *nafile* prayers of *asr*.

During the days when he was in the hospital, prior to the call of midday prayer, he would ask: 'How much time is left for the call of *zuhr* prayer?' And in the middle of the night too he would ask: 'How much time is left for the call of *subh* prayer?' so that he may recite his *nafileh* prayers. The time he left this mortal world too, the last moments of his life was together with the word of prayer. Even when he regained consciousness, the first sentence he pronounced was *Allahu Akbar* (Allah is great than what is attributed to Him)."

Ayatullah Muhammad Rida Tawassuli

L) 'Take back the food, so that I perform prayer.'

"The day when he (Imam Khumayni) was transferred to the hospital, he requested that he should be informed about the time for midday and afternoon prayer; and he would pray at the beginning of the prayer time and then take his meal. One day he suddenly noticed that the plate of food was brought inside the room.

He asked: 'Do you mean that it is time for prayer?' Those present said: 'Yes, it is prayer time.' Imam, facing them said in an angry tone: 'Why then didn't you wake me up?' They said: 'Due to your particular unfavorable state, we did not want to wake you up.' Once again, he said with disappointment: 'Why do you deal with me in such a way? Take back the food, so that I perform my prayer! '"

M) Great Stations Attained By Praying at the Beginning of Prayer Time

(This narrative is from a contemporary scholar and a student of the contemporary master of philosophy– Ayatullah Muhammad Taqi Misbah Yazdi): "I asked him (my teacher– Ayatullah Misbah Yazdi) :

What is the correct and balanced program of worship for a seeker of knowledge in your opinion?' He said with his ever humble attitude: 'I feel ashamed to talk about this, for I myself am greatly deprived of the same.

However, I have heard things from great people, of which I shall narrate: ...The late `Allamah Tabatabai and Ayatullah Behjat (a contemporary Shi'ah Gnostic presently residing in Qum–Iran) quoted Ayatullah Qadi (the teacher of `Allamah Tabatabai in `irfan), as saying: If a person prays the obligatory prayers at the beginning of its time and does not attain lofty stations, he should curse me! (or, he said: he should spit at my face!)" 7

The beginning of prayer time is a great secret! Safeguard your prayers⁸

حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ

(*Hafizu 'ala salawatikum*) is itself a point other than⁹

واقموا الصلاة

Establish the prayer' fact that man gives importance and binds himself to perform prayer at the beginning of its time in itself has many effects, even if the prayer is not performed with the presence of heart (and concentration). 10

Shaykh Muhsin Gharawiyyan

3) The Hereafter

والله ما اخاف عليكم الا البرزخ

I swear by Allah, I do not fear for you except in *barzakh*

Imam al–Sadiq (a) 11

If great authorities of gnosis (`irfan), who had already purified their inner selves and entirely sacrificed their lives for the sake of human salvation, believed that migration to the next world– the intermediate realm (*barzakh*) is difficult, what should those like the author, who have drowned themselves in the mundane pleasures of the world, express?

Following are some narratives worthy of reflection.

a) I Have No Action to My Credit

(The night before he left for the hospital where he was to pass the last moments of his life, the late Imam Khumayni was in the company of Fatima Tabatabai – his daughter-in-law – among other relatives. The latter narrates the following conversation, which took place after Imam Khumayni had eaten very little of his dinner:)

"Imam said: 'Now I have one or two advices for you: I shall not return. However, I don't want you to express grief and anxiety on my demise. I am asking God to give you patience. Be careful not to weep and lament. This is what I had to say.' I and Khanum (the wife of Imam Khumayni) were present; I do not recollect exactly; I think Zahra Khanum Ishraqi was (also) present. I don't know whether someone else was present or not.

It was difficult for us to listen to this issue; all of us had turned sad. Khanum said: 'No, Agha, God Willing, you will recover...' He (Imam Khumayni) said: 'No, I will not return. However, let me tell you this: to go (to the next world) is very difficult; to go (to the next world) is very difficult.' I (Fatimah Tabatabai) said: 'Agha, If you say all this, then we shall greatly lose our hopes. This is because, as far as I know, although I am young, those who have been with you narrate that not only have you performed all the obligatory deeds, and abstained from the forbidden ones, you have also observed the recommended acts and even abstained from most of the unpleasant deeds (*makruhat*).

If it is really difficult for you also, then what should we say? We get greatly despondent'. He said: 'No, you must not despair from God's Mercy; 12 this itself is the greatest sin ... 13

However, bear this in mind that to go (to the next world) is very difficult; I do not have any (good) deed, so that I should want to be happy thereby.' I said: 'But Agha, these words that you utter are very difficult for us to bear, for if it is as such, we are extremely frightened, worried and upset.' He said: 'It is really as such. If Hadrat Sajjad (`a) wept and said: "O Lord it is likely that my good deeds are bad" 14, do I possess a deed to get happy and confident thereby?

I only have hope of God's Graces and have no (action) at my credit to be hopeful...; and to go (to the next world) is very difficult; to go (to the next world) is very difficult. 15' The doctors then came, and Imam (Khumayni) said: 'It is time to leave.' 16

Fatima Tabatabai, *The daughter-in-law of Imam Khumayni*

الصراط أدق من الشعرة وأحد من السيف

'The path (*sirat*) is finer than the hair and sharper than the sword.'

Imam al-Sadiq (a) 17

B) The Task is Very Difficult

(Not very long before his demise, the late son of Imam Khumayni, Hujjatu 'l Islam Haj Sayyid Ahmad Khumayni, dreamt of his father. He narrates: "I saw Imam Khumayni in my dream. He said to me: 'Tell your friends that I (have already) crossed the straight path (*sirat*). However, the task is very difficult.'" 18

The Late Hujjatu'l Islam Sayyid Ahmad Khumayni *The late son of Imam Khumayni*

4) Extreme Chastity

Allah (swt) says in the Holy Qur'an:

قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ذَلِكَ أَزْكَى لَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ

Say to the believers,

That they cast down their eyes

And guard their private parts;

That is purer for them.

Allah is aware of the things they work. 19

The Late Ayatollah Mar'ashi's Extreme Chastity

(This narration is from a student of the late Ayatollah Shahab al Din Mar'ashi, who at present ranks among the esteemed tutors of the Islamic Seminary in Qum.). "During his (Late Ayatollah Mar'ashi's) old age, I had observed several times that on entering the holy shrine of Hadrat Ma'suma (a) for teaching or praying, and noticing the apparition of a woman from far, he would raise his cloak above his face, so that his eyes do not even fall once at a *ghayr mahram* woman. I observed this from him as an established habit".20

Hujjatu'l Islam al-Sayyid `Adil al-`Alawi: *A contemporary scholar in Qum*

1. Holy Qur'an, 2:222

2. Muhammad al-Ray Shahri, Mizan al-Hikma, New ed., vol. 4, pg. 3563, tr. 21920

3. Ibid, tr. no. 21924

4. Imam Dar Sangar-e Namaz, pp. 12-13
5. Ibid, pp. 11-12
6. Ibid, pg. 14
7. This decision is mentioned in the book. It is not by the translator
8. Holy Qur'an, 2:238
9. Holy Qur'an, 2:43
10. Muhsin Gharawiyyan, Dar Mahzare Buzurgan, (A Persian treatise on the Memoirs of saints contemporary to the author), p. 99
11. Muhammad al-Ray Shahri, Mizan al-Hikma, new ed., vol. 1, pg. 252, tr. 1681
12. The Holy Qur'an (39:54) says: Say: O My servants who have been extravagant against yourselves, do not despair of Allah's Mercy; surely Allah forgives sins altogether. Surely, He is the All-forgiving, the All-compassionate. The Holy Quran (15:56) also says: He said, 'And who despairs of the Mercy of his Lord, excepting those that are astray?'
13. Iman 'Ali ('a) is reported to have once told a person, whom fear had made to despair, due to the amplexness of his sins: 'O you! Your despondency of Allah's Mercy is worse than your sins.' (Jami al Sa'adat, Mawla Muhammad Mahdi al-Naraq, vol. 1, pg. 247)
14. This also refers to what Imam al-Husayn ('a) says in his famous supplication of 'Arafah. He says: 'O God, one whose good deeds are bad, how can his bad deeds not be bad?' (Mafatih al Jinan, Du'a al-'Arafah, Imam al-Husayn (A), compiler- Marhum Shaykh Abbas Qummi).
15. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said: 'Know that no one of you will be saved by his action, including me; except if Allah's Mercy and Grace were to cover me.' (Mizan al-Hikmah, Muhammad al-Ray Shahri, new ed., vol.3, pg. 2131)
16. Fasl-e Sabr, Memoirs of the days of Imam's illness and demise by the team of physicians and those affiliated to Imam Khumayni, pp. 83-84.
17. Mizan al-Hikmah, Muhammad al-Ray Shahri, new ed., vol. 2, pg. 1610, tr. 10481
18. Dalil-e Aftab, Memoirs of the Reminder of Imam Khumayni, pg. 169.
19. Holy Qur'an, Surat an-Nur (24), verse 30
20. Sayyid `Adil `Alawi, Qabasat min Hayati Sayyidinal Ustadh, p. 95

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