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62. Deeds

Allah, the Wise, has said:

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلِنَفْسِهِ وَ مَنْ أَسَاءَ فَعَلَيْهَا

وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلْعَبِيدِ

“Whoever does good, it is for his own soul, and whoever does evil, it is against it; and your Lord is not in the least unjust to the servants.”¹

Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him):

كُونُوا دُعَاةَ النَّاسِ بِأَعْمَالِكُمْ وَ لَا تَكُونُوا دُعَاةَ بِالسِّنَتِكُمْ

Invite the people (towards guidance) by means of your deeds and not by means of your tongues²

Short Explanation

Since ancient times it has been said that the markets of deeds and actions are bearish; meaning that to a certain extent all the people possess awareness of the rulings of religion, however, when it comes to deeds and actions, they falter and usually fall short of what is expected of them.

All deeds of man are recorded in his Book of Deeds, and only his deeds shall accompany him after his death.

If a person's deeds have been solely for the sake of God and without having trampled the rights of others or offended any person, God shall suffice for him with respect to all his affairs in this world and the hereafter, will regard him with love and affection, and will exhibit pride over him and his actions before the angels.

1) The Lawful Work

Hasan Ibn Husain Anbari narrates:

Over a period of fourteen years I kept writing letters to Imam Ridha (peace be upon him), seeking permission from him to allow me to work within the administrative setup of the ruler (of the city).

Since the Imam (peace be upon him) never replied, I, in my final letter, wrote: *I fear oppression and persecution. Those working with the Sultan say: "You are of the Shiites and this is why you do not co-operate with us and are evasive."*

In reply, the Imam (peace be upon him) said: *From your letter I sense that you fear for your life. You are aware that if you are placed in a (high and) responsible position, you can adhere to and act upon the teachings and Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his holy progeny); this would cause your subordinates to also follow the dictates of your faith.*

If you happen to come across instances whereby you have to deal with poor and indigent Mu'minin, ensure that you exhibit consideration, toleration and forbearance towards them!

And since you would now be working with them, it would be deemed that you are one of them, (and thus) you would have to strive hard to perform God-pleasing deeds, since these deeds would then serve to compensate your co-operation with the illegal ruling apparatus.

However, if you are unable to act in this manner, then it is not permissible for you to take up this employment.³

2) The Practicing Ones and Paradise

Imam Baqir (peace be upon him) once related:

Once, when my father was seated in the company of his companions, addressing them, he (peace be upon him) said: *Which of you is willing to hold flaming fire in his hand till the flames die out?*

All those present, as if to express their inability, lowered their heads and remained silent!

I said: *Dear father! Do you permit me to do it?* He said: *No, dear son! You are from me and I am from you. It is these people whom I was addressing.*

After this he repeated his request three times but when no one spoke up, he (peace be upon him) said: *How numerous are those who talk and how few are those who act. I only wanted to have you tested.*

Imam Baqir (peace be upon him) said: *By God! At that moment I observed that they were overcome with such embarrassment that it appeared as if the earth was pulling them towards itself. Perspiration flowed from the foreheads of some, but they did not raise their lowered eyes.*

When my father observed their embarrassment, he said to them: *May God forgive you! I did not intend anything except goodness. Paradise has many ranks, one of which pertains to none but those who practice and act.*

Imam Baqir (peace be upon him) said: *After these words (from my father) when I looked at them, they seemed to have calmed down and appeared as if they have been relieved of a heavy and weighty burden.*⁴

3) The Working Youth

Once, when the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his holy progeny) was seated with a group of his companions, he observed a strong and robust youth hard at work since the early morning. Those around him (peace be upon him and his holy progeny) remarked: *Had this youth expended his strength and energy in the way of God, he would have been worthy of immense commendation and praise.*

Hearing this, the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his holy progeny) said: *Do not utter such words, for there are several probabilities that exist; he could be working to earn his sustenance in order that he does not have to depend upon others, in which case he is striving in the way of God. He could be working to look after the needs of his feeble parents and weak children, so that they are not dependent upon other people, in which case he is again striving in the way of God.*

*However, if by means of this work he seeks to increase his wealth and manifest his superiority over those who are underprivileged, then he has travelled on the path of Satan and deviated from the right path.*⁵

4) (Good) Deeds Cause a Jew to Become a Muslim

The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his holy progeny) once owed a few dinars to a Jew. One day, the Jew sought his money from him (peace be upon him and his holy progeny), whereupon he (peace be upon him and his holy progeny) said: *Presently I do not have any money.* The Jew said: *I shall not leave you till you repay my money.*

Hearing this, the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his holy progeny) said: *If that is the case then I too shall sit by you here.* He (peace be upon him and his holy progeny) sat down beside the Jew and continued to do so for such a long period that he recited his Dhuhr, Asr, Maghrib, Isha and the morning

prayers of the next day, right there.

Observing the state of affairs, the companions of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his holy progeny) began to threaten the Jew, but he (peace be upon him and his holy progeny) said to them: *What is this that you are doing?*

How can a Jew hold you a captive? They replied. Hearing this, the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his holy progeny) explained: *God has not sent me as a Prophet in order that I permit those, who have established a religious covenant with me, to be oppressed.*

Till sunrise of the next day he (peace be upon him and his holy progeny) continued to be seated there, whereupon the Jew, addressing the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his holy progeny), said: *O Prophet of God! By God! It was not impertinence and audaciousness that prompted me to behave in the manner I did with you; rather, I desired to know whether the traits mentioned in the Torah about the Final Prophet, conformed with you or not?*

This is because I have read in the Torah that Muhammad Ibn Abdullah would be born in Makkah, and subsequently emigrate to Medina; he would neither possess a bad temperament, nor would he be discourteous. He would not speak with a loud voice and would not be foul-mouthed and abusive.

I now bear witness to the Unity of God and to your Prophethood, and I place my entire wealth at your disposal for you to utilise in whatsoever manner God commands you to. 6

5) The Conduct of Mua'wiyah and Abu al-Aswad Du'ali

Mua'wiyah, in order to attract people towards himself, would usually send them money, honey or other similar gifts. Impoverished people who could not even afford curd to satiate their hunger, would suddenly receive leather sacs of honey from Mua'wiyah, which at times would even contain money which he would place in them. All this was done to ensure that they do not incline towards Amir al-Mu'minin (peace be upon him). Those who would be willing to reject the money and also refuse to abandon Ali (peace be upon him) were very miniscule in number.

One day Mua'wiyah sent some sacs of honey for Abu al-Aswad Du'ali,⁷ one of the companions of Amir al-Mu'minin (peace be upon him), in order to attract him towards himself. Abu al-Aswad Du'ali was in the mosque when he was handed Mua'wiyah's letter and told: *Sacs of honey have been delivered to your house.*

Just as he reached home, he observed that his five year old daughter was about to put a finger, coated with honey, into her mouth. Seeing this, he shouted: *O My Daughter! Do not eat it for it is poison.* The girl immediately wiped her finger in the mud, and (after he had explained the situation to her) recited a couplet: *O Son of Hind! Do you wish to destroy our faith and religion by means of pure honey? Never shall our support cease for Ali (peace be upon him).*

Abu al-Aswad, holding Mua'wiyah's letter in one hand and his daughter's hand in the other, approached the Imam (peace be upon him) and recited his daughter's verses for him (peace be upon him). Hearing them, the Imam (peace be upon him) smiled and prayed for both of them.⁸

1. Qur'an, 41:46.

2. Safinah al-Bihar, v. 2, p. 278.

3. Baa Mardum In Guneh Barkhord Kuneem, p. 65.

4. Daastan-ha Wa Pand-ha, v. 2, p. 140, Kashkool of Bahrani, v. 2, p. 93.

5. Dunyaa-e-Jawaanaan, p. 316; Mahajjah al-Baydha, v. 3, p. 140.

6. Daastan-ha-e-Zindagi-e-Payaambar, p. 82; Bihar al-Anwar, v. 16, p. 16.

7. He died due to plague, in the city of Basrah, at the age of eighty five and had witnessed the lives of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his holy progeny), Amir al-Mu'minin, Imam Hassan, Imam Husayn and Imam Sajjad (peace be upon them) in the course of his lifetime. He is credited with writing, upon the instructions and assistance of Amir al-Mu'minin (peace be upon him), a book on nahw (Arabic grammar) and placing dots on the Arabic letters that form the words of the Qur'an.

8. Khazinah al-Jawahir, p. 536.

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