Imam Ali's Maxims of Warning, and Admonition

So now, surely slyness and cheating will be in Hell. Fear God and be cautious of His power. God does not accept to surprise the servants with destructions before He warns them. From this cause, a servant slackens the efforts until he forgets the pledge –God's warning- and thinks he is doing well. Thus, a servant sinks in guess, hope, and inattentiveness of what has come to him.

He ties himself in many knots, destroys himself through exerting all efforts while God grants him a respite for the pledge between them. He falls with the mindless, walks with the sinful, disputes the believers about their obedience to God, and prefers the falsification of the indifferent.

These are the people whose hearts are open for doubts. They dare forge lies against others and regard their deeds as a way of seeking God's favor, because they pursued their whims and changed and distorted the words of the wise people ignorantly and blindly, seeking reputation and showing off, without right paths, circulating indications, or familiar marks of their final hours or final point of their lives. When God discloses the reward of their policies and strips their cloaks of inadvertence, they welcomed that which will fade away and turned the backs to that which is to come. They could not get use of the wishes and demands when they attained them and did not benefit by the times that they have had. Moreover, this was changed into misfortunes for them. Now, they are escaping what they were seeking.

I warn you against this slippery ground and order you to fear God other than whom nothing is helpful. The honest should help themselves if they are truly honest. The true perceptive is that who listens, ponders, thinks, understands, learns lessons, takes clear course that saves him from falling behind, evades the path of misguidance, and does not give any opportunity for the seducers to control him by means of abusing the right, speaking incorrectly, or changing a truth. All power belongs to God.

Say only what is said to you, submit to what is narrated to you, and do not impose on others what is not imposed upon you, because the result will be against you due to your own deeds, words, and intentions. Beware of doubt, because it was arranged for testing you. Seek ease. Use good deeds and words for each other. Opt for submission –to God-. Feel fearful and subservient to God. Treat each other modestly, fairly, generously, and calmly. This is God's commandment. Beware of envying each other or bearing malice, because they are the traditions of the pre-Islamic era (Jahilism).

A soul must see what it has done for the future. Have fear of God for He is All-aware of what you do.

You, O people, should know certainly that God will not permit a servant to do more than what has been counted to him in the Wise Reminder, even if he exerts excessive efforts, finds more ways, and practices exaggerative endeavors. Likewise, God will never preclude what has been counted in the Wise Reminder for a servant despite his weakness and lack of practice.

O people, neither skill nor will idiocy add or reduce a single atom of one's (previously decided) lot. He who realizes this fact and acts upon it will surely be the calmest in profits, while he who disregards this fact will be the weariest in loss. It often happens that he whom is bestowed with graces is waylaid through that bestowment, while he whom people see as unlucky is in fact fortunate.

Sober up, O listener, from your inebriety, wake up from your inadvertence, slow down your haste, and ponder over God's words that are not reneged and that are inescapable and unavoidable. Then forsake your pride, leave your arrogance, take heed, and remember your grave and abode, because it will be your passage and destiny. You will be treated as you treat and you will harvest only what you sowed, and whatever you did will be done to you. Tomorrow, you will indisputably find only (the results of) what you did. Benefit by considering the admonition that has been provided to you. Understand what you have listened to and what you have been promised, because, through this, you will be undoubtedly engaged in one of two matters—either to obey God and follow what you have heard, or to have God's claim instituted against you and you should submit to it according to your knowledge.

Beware, and keep up seriousness.

Not one can tell you the truth in the way that an expert reporter can do.

One of the firm decisions of Allah in the Wise Reminder upon which He bestows reward or gives punishment, and through which He likes or dislikes is that it will not benefit a man, even though he exerts himself and acts sincerely if he leaves this world to meet Allah with one of these acts without repenting, namely that he believed in a partner with Allah during his obligatory worship, or appeased his own anger by killing an individual, or declared an act but he opted for another, or sought fulfillment of his needs from people by introducing an innovation in his religion, or met people with a double face, or moved among them with a double tongue, or using arrogance or pride. Understand this because an illustration is a guide for its like.

Beasts are concerned with their bellies. Carnivores are concerned with assaulting others. Women are concerned with the adornments of this ignoble life and the creation of mischief herein. On the other hand, believers are humble, admonishers and afraid of Allah.

Imam Ali's Admonition and Description of the Negligent

Do not be like him who hopes for (bliss in) the next life without action and delays repentance by lengthening desires, who utters words like ascetics in this world but acts like those who are eager for it. If he is allowed something from it he does not feel satisfied. If he is denied he is not content. He is not grateful for what begets and covets for increase in whatever remains with him. He refrains others but not himself. He commands others for what he himself does not do. He loves the virtuous but does not behave like them. He hates the vicious but he himself is one of them. He dislikes death because of the excess of his sins but adheres to that for which he is afraid of death. He says: why do I work and get tired? I should repose and wish. He wishes for forgiveness, but preserves in disobedience. He attained an age quite enough for remembrance. He says about what he missed:

had I worked painstakingly, it would have been better for me. But he wastes time bravely and inadvertently. If he falls ill he feels sorry for his past negligence. When he recovers from illness he feels vain about himself; when he is afflicted he loses hope. His whims overcome him in the suspected questions, but he does not overcome his whims in the certain questions. He is not satisfied with his provisions and does not trust what is guaranteed for him. He does not perform the imposed acts –of worship-.

He doubts himself. If he becomes wealthy he becomes self-conscious and falls into vice. If he becomes poor he despairs and becomes weak. He has many sins and graces. He seeks more but does not show gratitude. He regards the sins of others as big but considers the same things for himself as small. When passion overtakes him he is quick in committing sin but delays repentance, and he does not how that will fall. His desire does not satisfy him, and his caution does not stop him. He goes too far when he is begging and he is too negligent in actions. He is tall in speaking but short in action. He hopes for winning the prizes of deeds that he did not do and is disregards the punishment of the ill deeds that he did. He aspires for –worldly- things that will perish and ignores things that will last for good. He fears death but does nothing in its anticipation.

He deems excessive people's acts of obedience but he deems insignificant his acts of disobedience that are greater than people's.

If he does something in obedience to Allah he considers it much but if others do the same he considers it small. For others he is afraid of small sins, but for himself he expects more reward than his performance. He therefore rebukes others but flatters himself. He fulfills the obligations only when he is healthy and pleased, but he betrays when he is displeased and inflicted by misfortunes. If he is cured, he thinks that his repentance was accepted, but when a

misfortune befalls him, he thinks he is punished. He delays fasting and hurries to sleep. He does not spend the night with worship and does not spend the day with fast.

In morning, he cares only for the breakfast while he did not stay up last night. In evening, he cares only for the dinner while he was fasting. He seeks God's protection against them who are less powerful than him, but does not seek God's protection against the more powerful. He wants others to obey him but he himself disobeys God. Entertainment in the company of the wealthy is dearer to him than remembrance of God with the poor. He is angry when he is given little sustenance, but he commits many sins. He prefers himself to others but never prefers others to himself. He wants others to obey him and never disobey. He seeks fulfillment of obligations towards himself but does not fulfill his obligations towards others. He guides others and misguides himself.

He fears the people and acts for other than his Lord and does not fear his Lord in his dealings with the people. He deems his wrongdoing and good and deems his good deeds as wrong. He neither praises his Lord for His graces nor thanks Him for the increase. He neither enjoins good nor forbids evil. He lives in confusion. If he is ill, he acts sincerely and shows repentance. If he is cured, he behaves severely and returns to his acts of disobedience. He always against himself and is never with it. He does not know where will his ill deeds take him. How long and until when will he be in such manners? O Allah, make us rear You.

Imam Ali's Description of the God-Fearing

All praise and gratitude are due to God.

The God-fearing in this world are the people of distinction. Their speech is to the point, their dress is moderate and their gait is humble. They submit to God with obedience. They keep their eyes closed to what Allah has made unlawful for them, and they put their ears to knowledge. They remain in the time of trials as though they remain in comfort due to their satisfaction with the act of God. If there had not been fixed periods of life ordained for each, their spirits would not have remained in their bodies even for the twinkling of an eye because of their eagerness for the reward and fear of chastisement. The greatness of the Creator is seated in their heart, and so, everything else appears small in their eyes. Thus, to them, Paradise is as though they see it and are enjoying its favors. To them, Hell is also as if they see it and are suffering punishment in it.

Their hearts are grieved, they are protected against evils, their bodies are thin, their needs are scanty, their souls are chaste, and their supporting Islam is great. They endured hardship for a short while, and in consequence they secured comfort for a long time. It is a beneficial

transaction that the Generous Lord made easy for them. The world aimed at them, but they did not aim at it. It captured them, but they freed themselves from it by a ransom.

During a night they are upstanding on their feet reading portions of the Quran and reciting it in a well-measured way, creating through it grief for themselves and seeking by it the cure for their ailments. Their griefs are stirred as they weep for their sins and the pains of their wounds and injuries. If they come across a verse creating eagerness for Paradise they pursue it avidly, and their spirits turn towards it eagerly, and they feel as if it is in front of them. And when they come across a verse, which contains fear of Hell they bend the ears of their hearts towards it, and feel as though the sound of Hell and its cries are reaching their ears. They bend themselves from their backs, prostrate themselves on their foreheads, their palms, and their toes, and beseech Allah the Sublime for their deliverance. During the day they are wise, learned, virtuous and God-fearing.

Fear of Allah has made them thin like arrows. If any one looks at them he believes they are sick, although they are not sick, and he says that they have gone mad. In fact, great concern (i.e., fear) has made them mad. If they remember the sublimity of God the Exalted and the stability of His omnipotence, in addition to the mention of death and the horrors of the Day of Resurrection, their hearts are dreaded, their views are agitated, and their minds are bewildered. If they feel fearful, they hurry to God through good acts.

They are not satisfied with their meager good acts, and do not regard their major acts as great. They always blame themselves and are afraid of their deeds. When anyone of them is spoken of highly, he says: “I know myself better than others, and my Lord knows me better than I know. O Allah do not deal with me according to what they say, and make me better than they think of me and forgive me those shortcomings which they do not know. You are the All-Knowing of the unknown.”

The peculiarity of anyone of them is that you will see that he has strength in religion, determination along with leniency, faith with conviction, eagerness in seeking knowledge, courtesy in lenience, clemency in almsgiving, understanding in awareness, knowledge in forbearance, moderation in riches, devotion in worship, gracefulness in starvation, endurance in hardship, mercy for the exhausted, fulfillment of the right, leniency in earning, desire for the lawful, pleasure in guidance, hatred from greed, piety in straightforwardness, and abstinence in appetites. The approval of him who ignores him does not deceive him. He does not stop judging his deeds. He performs virtuous deeds but still feels afraid. In the evening he is anxious to offer thanks to Allah.

In the morning his anxiety is to remember Allah. He passes the night in fear and rises in the

morning in joy—fear lest night is passed in forgetfulness, and joy over the favor and mercy received by him. If his self refuses to endure a thing, which it does not like, he does not grant its request towards what it likes. The coolness of his eye lies in what is to last forever, while from the things of this world that will not last he keeps aloof. He transfuses knowledge with forbearance, and speech with action.

You will see his laziness aloof, his activity uninterrupted, his hopes simple, his shortcomings few, heart fearing, his spirit contented, his ignorance absent, his affairs simple, his religion safe, his desires dead, his anger suppressed, his mannerism pure. He does not brief about what is kept secret with him. He does not conceal the testimony against he enemies. He does not do any practice ostentatiously. He does not leave anything shyly. Good alone is expected from him. Evil from him is not to be feared. Even if he is found among those who forget Allah he is counted among those who remember Him. He forgives him who is unjust to him, and he gives to him who deprives him. He behaves well with him who behaves ill with him.

His forbearance is not absent. He does not neglect what adorns him. Indecent speech is far from him, his utterance is lenient, his evils are non-existent, his virtues are ever present, his good is ahead, and mischief has turned its face from him. He is dignified during calamities, patient in distresses, and thankful during ease. He does not commit excess over him whom he hates, and does not commit sin for the sake of him whom he loves. He does not claim the possession of things that are not his.

He does not deny others' rights that are obligatory upon him. He admits truth before evidence is brought against him. He does not misappropriate what is placed in his custody. He does not call others bad names. He does not oppress or threaten others. He does not cause harm to his neighbor, he does not feel happy at others misfortunes. He hurries to the right. He fulfills the trusts. He is slow in ill deeds. He enjoins good and forbids evil. He does not enter into the worldly pleasures wrongly and does not go out of right.

If he is silent his silence does not grieve him, if he laughs he does not raise his voice. He satisfies with what is his. Malice does not agitate him. Whims do not overcome him. Stinginess does not prevail him. He does not desire for what is not his. He associates with people so as to learn. He keeps silent so as to be safe. He asks so as to understand. He does not listen to the good wording so that others will not find themselves neglectful in comparison with him.

He does not speak of his good actions so as to avoid taking pride in it before others. If he is wronged he endures till Allah takes revenge on his behalf. His own self is in distress because of him, while the people are in ease from him. He puts himself in hardship for the sake of his

next life, and makes people feel safe from himself. His keeping away from others is by way of asceticism and purification, and his nearness to those to whom he is near is by way of leniency and mercifulness. His keeping away is not by way of vanity or feeling of greatness, nor his nearness by way of deceit and cheating. He follows the example of the past men of virtue and he is the example of the coming people of virtue.

Imam Ali's sermon of faith

In this sermon, Imam Ali (peace be upon him) refers to faith and its supports and aspects, and atheism and its supports and aspects.

When God began the matters, He chose for Himself what he willed and extracted what He liked. Within the matters that He liked was faith. He accepted it; therefore, he derived the name of faith from His Name and gifted it with whomever He loved among His creatures. He then showed it. Hence, He made its springs within reach for whoever wants to have it and made its supports difficult for the opposites to penetrate.

He also made faith the fort of him whoever is loyal to it, the security of him whoever wants to enter into it, the guidance of him whoever betakes himself to it, the adornment of him whoever wants to have its beauty, the religion of him whoever braces it, the refuge of him whoever seeks its refuge, the bond of him whoever clings to it, the evidence of him whoever speaks of it, the honor of him who knows it, the wisdom of him whoever utters it, the light of him whoever seeks light from it, the proof of him whoever discusses about it, the claim of him whoever advances it as plea, the knowledge of him who understands, the narration of him who relates, the rule of him who judges, the forbearance of him who recounts, the reason of him who ponder over things, the understanding of him who meditates, the conviction of him who recognizes, the insight of him who determines, the sign of him who scrutinizes, the lesson of him who learns lessons, the salvation of him who believes in it, the Lord's love for him who is virtuous, the nearness of him who seeks nearness, the confidence of him who depends (upon God), the rest of him who entrusts (with God), the color of him who does charitably, the welfare of him who takes haste steps (toward God), the shelter of him who endures, the dress of him who fears (God), the purification of him who seeks right guidance, the safety of him who submits (to God), and the spirit of the honest.

Faith is the principal of right. Right guidance is the way of the principal of right. Righteousness is its quality and glory is its feat. The course of faith is bright. Its signpost is brilliant. Its lights are luminous. Its extreme is high. Its racetrack is easy. Its milking is ready. Its prize is very precious. Its people are old. Its knights are noble. The virtuous deeds are its signboard.

Chastity is its lights. Death is its extreme. The world is its racetrack. The Resurrection is its milking. Paradise is its prize. Hell is its punishment. God-fearing is its equipage. The charitable are its knights. By way of faith, the virtuous deeds are shown. By way of the virtuous deeds, the understanding is gained. By way of understanding, death is feared. Death is the seal of the world. Through the world, the other life is approached. Through the Resurrection, Paradise is loomed.

Paradise is the regret of the people of Hell. Hell is the admonition of God-fearing. God-fearing is the origin of charity. God-fearing is a purpose the follower of which will never lose. Likewise, he who applied God-fearing to himself will never be regret because it is the course through which the winners achieved triumph. The losers were beaten because of disobedience. Will the intelligent learn and the God-fearing ones remember?

Faith stands on four supports: on endurance, conviction, justice, and jihad.

Endurance again has four aspects: eagerness, fear, abstention (from the world) and anticipation (of death). So, whoever is eager for Paradise will ignore the passions; whoever fears the Fire (of Hell) will refrain from prohibited acts; whoever abstains from the world takes hardships lightly; and whoever anticipates death will hasten towards good deeds.

Conviction also has four aspects: prudent perception, intelligence and understanding, drawing lessons from instructive things and following the precedents of past people. So, whoever perceives with prudence, wise knowledge will be manifest to him, and to whomsoever wise knowledge becomes manifest he appreciates instructive objects, and whoever appreciates instructive objects he is just like past people.

Justice also has four aspects: keen understanding, deep knowledge, good power of decision and firm forbearance. Therefore, whoever understands comes to acquire depth of knowledge; whoever acquires depth of knowledge drinks from the spring of judgment; and whoever exercises forbearance never commits evil actions in his affairs and leads a praiseworthy life among the people.

Jihad also has four aspects: to ask others to do good, to keep away others from doing evil, to fight (in the way of Allah) sincerely and firmly on all occasions, and to detest the vicious. So, whoever asks others to do good provides strength to the believers; whoever desists others from evil humiliates the unbelievers; whoever fights sincerely on all occasions discharges all his obligations; and whoever detests the vicious and becomes angry for the sake of Allah, then Allah will be angry in favor of him and will keep him pleased on the Day of Judgment.

Unbelief stands on four supports: on lechery, exaggeration, doubt, and sedition.

Lechery has four aspects — coarseness, blindness, inadvertence, and rebellion. The coarse will

disgrace the believers, hate the jurists, and insist on guilt. The blind will disregard the remembrance, have ill mannerism, challenge the Creator, and be stirred by the Shaitan. The inadvertent will aggrieve themselves, turn over their backs, regard their seductions as rightness, be deceived by expectations, be befallen by regret, be uncovered, and will suffer what he has not supposed. He who rebels against God will doubt. God will exalt on anyone who doubts. Then He will humiliate him by His power and disgrace him by His Majesty. This is because he neglected and disregarded the Generous Lord.

Exaggeration has also four aspects: hankering after whims, mutual quarrelling, deviation from the truth, and dissension. So, whoever hankers after whims does not incline towards right. Except sinking in the whims, he will not obtain anything more. Whenever a seditious matter leaves him, another will cover him. He is living in confusion. He whoever quarrels and disputes will be befallen by failure and his affairs will be ragged. He whoever deviates from truth, for him good becomes evil and evil becomes good and he remains intoxicated with misguidance. He whoever makes a breach (with Allah and His Messenger), his path becomes difficult, his affairs become complicated, and his way of escape becomes narrow. He who takes a course other than the believers will surely be apostatizing his religion.

Doubt has also four aspects: unreasonableness, fear, wavering, and undue submission to every thing. So, about which of the bounties of your Lord can the disputers persistently dispute? He who is afraid of what befalls him has to run on his heels. He who wavers in doubt the tardy will left him behind, the last will catch up with him, and the Shaitans will trample him under their feet. He who submits to the destruction of this and the next world will perish in them both. Only the bearers of conviction may be saved.

Sedition has four aspects: fondness of the adornment, self-enticement, crooked interpretation, and confusion of the right and the wrong. Adornment will preclude evidence. Self-enticement leads to passion. Crookedness takes its adopter to a twisted inclination. Confusion is complicated groups of darkness. This is atheism and its supports and aspects.

Hypocrisy stands on four supports: whims, carelessness, rancor, and greed.

Whim has four aspects: oppression, aggression, passion, and insubordination. For those whoever oppress, their problems will be increasing and they will be disappointed and defeated. For those who aggress against other, they will not be secured against misfortunes, and their hearts will not be sound. He who does not stop against his whims will plunge into griefs. He who disobeys (God) will be intentionally deviating lacking any excuse or evidence.

The aspects of carelessness are arrogance, pride, negligence, and excessive expectation. Arrogance takes away from the right. Taking pride in the present leads to negligence of the

coming. Negligence is an involvement in blindness. Because of expectation, man will have knowledge of the account of his present manners. If he knows the account of his present manners, he will die secretly due to the horror and fear that he concludes.

The aspects of rancor are conceit, boast, zeal, and tribalism. The conceited will fall behind. The boastful are dissolute. The zealous are stubborn. The tribalist is unfair. How bad is the matter that is lying among falling behind, dissolution, and stubbornness.

The aspects of greed are complacency, fun, disputation, and haughtiness. Complacency is abominated for God. Fun is vanity. Disputation is misfortune for it drives to sinning. Haughtiness is ill amusement, play, engagement, and substituting the bad for the good. That was hypocrisy with its supports and aspects.

God is prevailing over His servants. His mentioning is exalted, His authority is upright, His power is firm, His blessing is widespread, His wisdom is luminous, His claim is evident, His religion is pure, His word is accurate, His ranks are present, His attribution is wholesome, His scales is fair, His messages are conveyed, and His keeping angels are attendant. He then made the sin as guilt, the guilt as sedition, and the sedition as profanity. He also made kindness as profit, apology as repentance, and repentance as purity. He whoever repents to God will be guided. He whoever follows seditious matters will surely be deviant unless he repents to God, confesses of his guilt, and believes in the kindness. God will not ruin except the perishing.

What great is God! How extensive are his repentance, mercy, good tidings, and forbearance! How intense are the fetters, fire, power, omnipotence, and vengeance the He has! He whoever wins obedience to God will choose for His honor, and he whoever is keeping himself in disobedience to Him will taste the harsh torture of His punishment. There is lying the blissful end.

Source: Tuhaf al-Uqoul