

**Alhassanain (p) Network for Islamic Heritage and Thought**

# **The Greater Jihad**

**Written by Imam Khumayni**

**Translated by: Dr. Muhammad Legenhausen & 'Azim Sarvdalir**

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**In the Name of Allah, the Merciful,  
the Compassionate**

### **[Preface]**

Yet another year of our lives has passed. You young people are advancing toward old age, and we old people toward death. During this academic year you have become aware of the extent of your learning and study. You know how much you have acquired and how high the edifice of your education has been raised. However, with respect to moral refinement, the acquisition of religious manners, divine teachings and purification of the soul, what have you done? What positive steps have you taken? Have you had any thought of refinement or self-reformation? Have you had any programme in this field?

Unfortunately, I must submit that you have not done anything striking, and have not taken any great steps with regard to the reformation and refinement of the self.

## **Recommendations for the Seminaries Of Religious Learning**

Simultaneous with the study of scholarly matters, the centres of religious learning are in need of teaching and learning in morals and spirituality. It is necessary to have moral guides, trainers for the spiritual faculties, and sessions for advice and counseling. Programmes in ethics and moral reform classes in manners and refinement, instruction in divine teaching, which is the principle aim of the mission of the prophets, Peace be upon them, must be officially instituted in the seminaries.

Unfortunately, scant attention is paid in the centres of learning to these essential issues. Spiritual studies are declining, so that in the future, it is feared, the seminaries might not be able to train scholars of ethics, refined and polished counselors, or godly men. Occupation with discussion and inquiry into elementary problems does not allow the opportunity for the basic and fundamental topics attended to by the Noble Quran and of the great Prophet ('s) and the other prophets and saints (awliya'), Peace be with them. The eminent jurisconsults and high-ranking professors, who are noteworthy in the scholarly community, had better try, in the course of their lessons and discussions, to train and refine people and to be more concerned with spiritual and ethical topics. For the seminary students it is also necessary that in their efforts to acquire higher virtues and refinement of the soul that they give sufficient weight to their important duties and momentous responsibilities.

## Recommendations for the Seminary Students

You who today are studying in these seminaries, and who shall tomorrow take charge of the leadership and guidance of society, do not imagine that your only duty is to learn a handful of terms, for you have other duties as well. In these seminaries you must build and train yourselves so that when you go to a city or village you will be able to guide the people there and show them refinement. It is expected that when you depart from the centre for the study of religious law, you yourselves will be refined and cultivated, so that you will be able to cultivate the people and train them according to Islamic ethical manners and precepts. If, God forbid, you were not to reform yourselves in the centre of learning, and you were not to realize spiritual ideals, then-may Allah protect us-everywhere you went, people would be perverted, and you would have given them a low opinion of Islam and of the clergy.

You have a heavy responsibility. If you do not fulfill your duty in the seminaries, if you do not plan your refinement, and if you merely pursue the learning of a few terms and issues of law and jurisprudence, then God protect us from the damage that you might cause in the future to Islam and Islamic society. It is possible-may Allah protect us-for you to pervert and mislead the people. If due to your actions, deeds and unfair behaviour, one person loses his way and leaves Islam, you would be guilty of the greatest of the major sins, and it would be difficult for your repentance to be accepted. Likewise, if one person finds guidance, then according to a narration "it is better than all that the sun doth shine upon."<sup>[1]</sup> Your responsibility is very heavy. You have duties other than those of the laity. How many things are permissible for the laity, which are not allowed for you, and may possibly be forbidden! People do not expect you to perform many permissible deeds, to say nothing of low unlawful deeds, which if you were to perform them, God forbid, people would form a bad opinion of Islam and of the clerical community.

The trouble is here: if the people witness your actions as contrary to what is expected, they become deviated from religion. They turn away from the clergy, not from an individual. If only they would turn away from one person and form a low opinion of just that person!

But if they see an unbecoming action contrary to decorum on the part of a single cleric, they do not examine it and analyze it, that at the same time that among businessmen there are unrighteous and perverted people, and among office workers corruption and ugly deeds may be seen, it is possible that among the clergy there is also one or a few impious or deviant persons. Hence, if a grocer does something wrong, it is said that such and such a grocer is a wrongdoer. If a druggist is guilty of an ugly deed, it is said that such and such a druggist is an evildoer. However, if a preacher performs an unbecoming act, it is not said that such and such a preacher is deviant, it is said that preachers are bad! The responsibilities of the learned are very heavy; the 'ulama have more duties than other people.

If you review the chapters related to the responsibilities of the 'ulama in Usul al-Kafi and Wasail<sup>[2]</sup> you will see how they describe the heavy responsibilities and serious obligations of the learned. It is narrated that

when the soul reaches the throat, there is no longer any chance for repentance, and in that state one's repentance will not be accepted, although God accepts the repentance of the ignorant until the last minute of their lives. <sup>[3]</sup> In another narration it is reported that seventy sins will be forgiven of one who is ignorant before one sin is forgiven of an 'alim. <sup>[4]</sup> This is because the sin of an 'alim is very harmful to Islam and to Islamic society. If a lay and ignorant person commits a sin, he only wins misfortune for himself. However, if an 'alim becomes deviant, if he becomes involved in ugly deeds, he perverts an entire world ('alam). He has injured Islam and the 'ulama' of Islam. <sup>[5]</sup> There is also a narration according to which the people of hell suffer from the stench of an 'alim whose deeds do not accord with his knowledge. <sup>[6]</sup> For this very reason, in this world there is a great difference between an 'alim and an ignorant person with regard to benefit and injury to Islam and to the Islamic community. If an 'alim is deviant, it is possible that the community will become infected by deviation. And if an 'alim is refined, and he observes the morality and manners of Islam, he will refine and guide the community.

In some of the towns to which I went during the summer, I saw that the people of a town were well mannered with religious morals. The point is this, that they had an 'alim who was righteous and pious. If an 'alim who is pious and righteous lives in a community, town or state, his very existence will raise the refinement and guidance of the people of that realm, even if he does not verbally propagate and guide. <sup>[7]</sup> We have seen people whose existence causes lessons to be learned, merely seeing them and looking at them raises one's awareness.

At present in Tehran, about which I have some information, the neighbourhoods differ from one another. Neighbourhoods in which a pure and refined 'alim lives have righteous people with strong faith. In another neighbourhood where a corrupt deviant person wears the turban, and has become the prayer leader, and set up shop, you will see that the people there have been misled, and have been polluted and perverted. This is the same pollution from the stench of which the people of hell suffer. This is the same stench which the evil 'alim, the 'alim without action, the perverted 'alim has brought in this world, and the smell of it causes the people of hell to suffer. It is not because something is added to him there; that which occurs to this 'alim in the next world is something which has been prepared in this world. Nothing is given to us except that which we have done. If an 'alim is corrupt and evil, he corrupts the society, although in this world we are not able to smell the stench of it. However, in the next world the stench of it will be perceived. But a lay person is not able to bring such corruption and pollution into the Islamic society. A lay person would never allow himself to proclaim that he was an Imam or the Mahdi, to proclaim himself a prophet, or to have received revelation. It is a corrupt 'alim who corrupts the world: "If an 'alim is corrupt, a world ('alam) is corrupted." <sup>[8]</sup>

## **The Importance of the Refinement and Purification of the Soul**

Those who have constructed (their own) religions, causing the straying and deviation of masses of peoples, have for the most part been scholars. Some of them even studied and disciplined themselves in the centres of learning. <sup>[9]</sup> The head of one of the heretical sects studied in these very seminaries of ours. However, since his learning was not accompanied by refinement and purification, since he did not advance on the path toward God, and since he did not remove the pollution from himself, he bore the fruit of ignominy. If man does not cast pollution from the core of his soul, not only will whatever studying and learning he does be of no benefit by itself, rather it will actually be harmful. When knowledge enters in this evil centre, the product will be evil, root and branch, an evil tree. However much these concepts are accumulated in a black impure heart, there will be greater obscurity. In a soul which is unrefined, knowledge is a dark cover: Al-'ilm huwa al-hijab al- akbar (Knowledge is the greatest veil). Therefore, the vice of a corrupt 'alim is greater and more dangerous for Islam than all vices. Knowledge is light, but in a black, corrupt heart it spreads wide the skirts of darkness and blackness. A knowledge which would draw a man closer to God, in a worldly soul takes him far distant from the sanctum of the Almighty.

Even the science of tawhid (i.e. the higher gnostic teaching), if it is for anything other than God, becomes a veil of darkness, for it is a preoccupation with that which is other than God. If one memorizes and recites the Noble Quran with all the fourteen different readings, if it is for anything other than God, it will not bring him anything but obscurity and distance from Haqq ta'ala (God). If you study and work hard, you may become an 'alim, but you had better know that there is a big difference between being an 'alim and being refined. The late Shaykh, our teacher, <sup>[10]</sup> may Allah be pleased with him, said, "That which is said, 'How easy it is to become a mullah; how difficult it is to become a man,' is not correct. It should be said, 'How difficult it is to become a mullah, and it is impossible to become a man!' " The acquisition of the virtues and human nobilities and standards is a difficult and great duty which rests upon your shoulders. Do not suppose now that you are engaged in studying the religious sciences, and learning fiqh (the study of Islamic law), which is the most honourable of these sciences, that you can take it easy otherwise, and that you have carried out your responsibilities and duties. If you do not have a pure intention of approaching God, these sciences will be of no benefit at all. If your studies-may Allah protect us-are not for the sake of God, and are for the sake of personal desires-the acquisition of position and the seats of authority, titles and prestige-then you will accumulate nothing for yourself but harm and disaster. This terminology you are learning, if it is for anything but God, it is harm and disaster. This terminology, as much as it increases, if it is not accompanied by refinement and fear of God (taqwa), then it will end in harm in this world and the next for the Muslim community. Merely knowing terminology is not effective. Even the science



of tawhid, if it is not accompanied with purity of the soul, will bring disaster.

How many individuals have been learned in the science of tawhid, and have perverted entire groups of people! How many individuals have had the very same knowledge that you have, or even more knowledge, but were deviant and did not reform themselves, so that when they entered the community, they perverted many and led them astray!

This dry terminology, if it is not accompanied by piety (taqwa) and refinement of the soul, as much as it accumulates in one's mind it will only lead to the expansion of pride and conceit in the realm of the soul. The unfortunate 'alim who is defeated by his own conceit cannot reform himself or his community, and it will result in nothing but harm to Islam and the Muslims. And after years of studying and wasting religious funding, enjoying his Islamic salary and fringe benefits, he will become an obstacle in the way of Islam and the Muslims. Nations will be perverted by him. The result of these lessons and discussions and the time spent in the seminary will be the prevention of the introduction to the world of Islam and the truths of the Quran; rather, it is possible that his existence will be a barrier preventing the society from coming to know Islam and spirituality.

I am not saying that you should not study, that you should not acquire knowledge. But you have to pay attention that if you want to be a useful and effective member of society and Islam and lead a nation to awareness of Islam and to defend the fundamentals of Islam, it is necessary that the basis of jurisprudence be strengthened and that you gain mastery of the subject. If, God forbid, you fail to study, then it is forbidden for you to remain in the seminary. You may not use the religious salary of the students of the religious sciences. Of course, the acquisition of knowledge is necessary, although in the same way that you take pains with the problems of fiqh and usul (law and jurisprudence), you must make efforts in the path of self-reformation. Every step forward which you take in the acquisition of knowledge, should be matched by a step taken to beat down the desires of the soul, to strengthen one's spiritual powers, to acquire nobility of character, and to gain spirituality and piety.

The learning of these sciences in reality is an introduction to the refinement of the soul and the acquisition of virtue, manners and divine knowledge. Do not spend your entire life with the introduction, so that you leave aside the conclusion. You are acquiring these sciences for the sake of a high and holy aim: knowing God and refining the self. You should make plans to realize the results and effects of your work, and you should be serious about reaching your fundamental and basic goal.

When you enter the seminary, before anything else, you should plan to reform yourselves. While you are in the seminary, along with your studies, you should refine yourselves, so that when you leave the seminary and become the leader of a people in a city or district, they may profit from you, take advice from you, and reform themselves by means of your deeds and manners and your ethical virtues. Try to reform and refine yourselves before you enter among the people. If now, while you are unencumbered, you do

not reform yourselves, on the day when people come before you, you will not be able to reform yourselves.

Many things ruin people and keep them from studying and purifying themselves, and one of them, for some, is this very beard and turban! When the turban becomes a bit large, and the beard gets long, if one has not refined oneself, this can hinder one's studies, and restrict one. It is difficult to trample the carnal self under one's feet, and to sit at the feet of another for lessons. Shaykh Tusi, <sup>[11]</sup> may Allah have mercy on him, at the age of fifty-two would go to classes, while between the ages of twenty and thirty, he wrote some of his books! His Tahdhib was possibly written during this period. <sup>[12]</sup> Yet at the age of fifty-two he attended the classes of the late Sayyid Murtada <sup>[13]</sup> and thereby achieved such station as he did.

God forbid that prior to acquiring good habits and strengthening one's spiritual powers that one's beard should turn a bit white and that his turban should get big, so that he would lose the blessings of knowledge and spirituality. So work, before your beards become white; before you gain the attention of the people, think about your state! God forbid that before a person develops himself, that people should pay heed to him, that he should become a personality and have influence among the people, causing him to lose his soul. Before you lose hold of the reins of your self, develop and reform yourself! Adorn yourselves with good traits, and remove your vices! Become sincere in your lessons and discussions, so that you may approach God! If one does not have sincere intentions, one will be kept at a distance from the divine precincts. Beware that, after seventy years, when the book of your deeds is opened, Allah forbid, that you should have been far from God Almighty for seventy years.

Have you heard the story of the 'stone' which fell into hell? Only after seventy years was the sound of its hitting the bottom of hell heard. According to a narration, the Prophet, may the Peace and Blessings of Allah be with him and with his Progeny, said that it was an old man who died after seventy years, and during this seventy years he was falling into hell. <sup>[14]</sup>

Be careful that in the seminary that you do not reach hell by your own labour of fifty years, more or less, and the sweat of your brow! You had better think! Make plans in the field of refinement and purification of the soul, and reformation of character. Choose a teacher of morals for yourself; and arrange sessions for advice, counsel, and admonition. You cannot become refilled by yourself. If there is no place in the seminary for moral counselors and sessions of advice and exhortation, it will be doomed to annihilation.

How could it be that fiqh and usul should require teachers for lessons and discussions, and that for every science and skill a teacher is necessary, and no one becomes an expert or learned in any field spontaneously and by himself, yet with regard to the spiritual and ethical sciences, which are the goal of the mission of the prophets and are among the most subtle and exact sciences, they do not require teaching and learning, and one may obtain them oneself without a teacher?! I have heard on numerous occasions that the late Shaykh Ansari, <sup>[15]</sup> was a student of a great Sayyid <sup>[16]</sup> who was a teacher of ethics and spirituality.

The prophets of God were raised in order to train people, to develop humanity, and to deliver them from ugliness, filth, corruption, pollution and moral turpitude, and to-acquaint them with virtue and good manners: "I was raised in order to complete noble virtues" (makarim al-akhlaq).<sup>[17]</sup> This knowledge which was considered by God the Almighty to be so important that he raised the prophets for it, is now considered unfashionable in the seminaries for our clergy. No one gives it the importance of which it is worthy. Due to the lack of spiritual and gnostic works in the seminaries, material and worldly problems have come so far as to penetrate the clergy (ruhaniyat), and has kept many of them away from holiness and spirituality (ruhaniyat) so that they do not even know what ruhaniyat means, nor what the responsibilities of a cleric are and what kind of programmes they should have. Some of them merely plan to learn a few words, return to their own localities, or somewhere else, and to grab facilities and position, and to wrestle with others (for them)-like the one who said: "Let me study Sharh e Lum'ah and then I will know what to do with the village chief!" Do not be this way, that from the beginning you aim to win someone's position by studying, and that you intend to be the chief of some town or village. You may achieve your selfish desires and Satanic expectations, but for yourself and the Islamic community you will gain nothing except harm and misfortune. Mu'awiyah was also chief for a long time, but for himself he achieved no result or benefit except curses and loathing and the chastisement of the afterlife.

It is necessary for you to refine yourselves, so that when you become the chief of a community or a clan, you will be able to refine them as well In order to be able to take steps toward the reform and development of a community, your aim should be service to Islam and Muslims. If you take steps for the sake of God, God the Almighty is the turner of the heart He will turn hearts in favour of you:

Surely for those who believe and do good deeds, the Merciful (al-Rahman) will bring, about love. (19:96)

Take some trouble on the way to God, devote yourselves; God will not leave you unpaid; He will reward you, if not in this world, then in the next. If aside from Him, you have no reward in this world, what could be better? This world is nothing. This pomp and these personalities will come to an end after a few days, like a dream that passes before the eyes of man, but the otherworldly reward is infinite and never ending.

## Warnings to the Seminaries

It is possible that by spreading poison and evil propaganda impure hands have portrayed ethical and reformatory programmes as without importance and have presented going to the minbar (pulpit, pronounced as 'mimbar') for giving advice and making sermons as contrary to a scholarly station, and they inhibit the work of the great scholarly personalities who have the station of reforming and refining the seminaries by calling them 'mimbar' and (mere sermonizers). Today, in some seminaries, going to the mimbar and giving sermons may even be considered disgraceful! They forget that the Commander of the Faithful, Peace be with him, was mimbari (a sermonizer) and from the minbar he would admonish people, make them aware of things, raise their consciences, and guide them. Other Imams, Peace be with them, were also this way.

Perhaps secret agents have injected this evil in order to exterminate spirituality and ethics from the seminaries, so that as a result our seminaries should become corrupt and dissolute; that, God forbid, forming gangs, selfishness, hypocrisy, and disputes should penetrate the seminaries; that the members of the seminaries fight with each other, close ranks against one another, and that they insult and belie one another; that they become discredited in the Islamic community, so that the foreigners and enemies of Islam are able to get hold of the seminaries and destroy them. The ill-intentioned know that the people support the seminaries, and as long as the people support them it is not possible to crush them or tear them apart. But on the day when the members of the seminaries and the students of the seminaries come to lack ethical principles and Islamic manners, and fight each other, and form rival gangs, and are not refined and purified, dirty their hands with unsuitable deeds, then naturally the nation of Islam will get a bad impression of the seminaries and the clergy, and support for them will be lost, and consequently the way will be opened for the use of force and enemy's influence. If you see that governments are afraid of a cleric and of a marja' (authority in Shi'ite jurisprudence and source of emulation), and take account of them, it is because of this, that they benefit from the support of the people; in truth, they are afraid of the people. They consider it probable that the people will rebel and rise up against them if they show contempt and audacity and violate a cleric. However, if the clerics oppose one another and defame one another and do not behave with Islamic manners and morals, they will fall from their position in the community, and the people will abandon them. <sup>[18]</sup>

The people expect you to be ruhani (spiritual, a cleric), well-mannered with the manners of Islam, and to be of the party of Allah. Restrain yourselves from the glamour and glitter of life and artificiality, and do not refuse any kind of self-sacrifice in the way of the advancement of Islamic ideals and service to the nation of Islam. Step forward on the way of God the Almighty to please Him, and except for the unique Creator pay attention to no one. However, if, contrary to what is expected, it is seen that instead of paying attention to the transcendental, all you care about is this world, and just like the others you try to gain worldly and personal interests, and you fight with one another for the sake of the world and its base pleasures, and

you take Islam and the Quran, may Allah forbid it, as playthings, simply to reach sinister goals and your own dirty, disgraceful and worldly intentions, and you turn your religion into a marketplace, then the people will be turned away and become cynical. So, you will be responsible. If some of those who wear the turban and burden the seminaries, fight and brawl with each other and malign and slander one another because of personal grudges and the pursuit of worldly interests, and rivalry over some positions, they commit treason against Islam and the Quran and violate the divine trust. God the Almighty has placed the holy religion of Islam in our hands as a trust. The Noble Quran is a great divine trust. The 'ulama and ruhaniyun (clergy) are the bearers of the divine trust, and they bear the responsibility to protect that trust from betrayal. This stubbornness and personal and worldly antagonism are treachery against Islam and the great Prophet of Islam.

I do not know what purpose is served by these oppositions, formations of cliques, and rivalries. If it is for the sake of the world, you do not have much of that! Supposing that you did benefit from pleasures and worldly interests, there would be no place for disagreements, unless you were not ruhani, and the only thing you inherited of ruhaniyat (spirituality, being a cleric) was the robe and the turban. A ruhani (cleric) who is occupied with supra-natural, a ruhani who benefits from living teachings and formative Islamic attributes, a ruhani who considers himself a follower of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, Peace be with him, is not possibly tempted by the world, nor would he allow it to cause disagreements. You who have declared yourselves to be followers of the Commander of the Faithful, Peace be with him, you should at least make a bit of research into the life of that great man, and see if you are really one of his followers! Do you know and practise anything of his zuhd (asceticism), taqwa (piety, God-wariness) and simple, unadorned life? Do you know anything of that great man's combat against oppression and injustice, and class differences, and of his unhesitating defence and support of the oppressed and persecuted, of how he lent a hand to the dispossessed and suffering social classes? Have you put it into practice? Is the meaning "Shi'ite" nothing more than the ornamental appearances of Islam? <sup>[19]</sup> Therefore, what is the difference between you and other Muslims who are much ahead and more observant in these matters than the Shi'ah? What distinguishes you over them?

Those who today have set a part of the world on fire, who spill blood and who kill, do this because they are competing with each other in looting the nations of the world and swallowing their wealth and the products of their labour, and in bringing the weak and under-developed countries under their domination and control. Thus, in the name of freedom, development and prosperity, the defence of independence and protection of borders, and under other deceptive slogans, every day the flames of war are set in some corner of the world, and millions of tons of incendiary bombs are dropped upon defenceless nations. This fighting seems correct and accords with the logic of worldly people whose brains are polluted. However, your conflicts, even according to their logic, are incorrect. If asked why they are fighting, they will say that they want to take over such and such a country; the wealth and income of such and such a country must be made ours. However, if you

are asked why you have conflicts and why you are fighting, what will you answer? What benefit do you get from the world, for the sake of which you are fighting? Your monthly income, which the maraji' taqlid (supreme authorities of religious jurisprudence) give to you, called "shahriyah," is less than the money spent by others for cigarettes! I saw in a newspaper or magazine-I don't recall exactly--that the amount the Vatican sends to a single priest in Washington makes quite a large figure. I reckon it is more than the entire budget of all the Shi'ite seminaries! Is it right for you, with your lifestyle and conditions, to have conflicts and confrontations with one another?

The root of all these conflicts which have no specific sacred aim is love of this world. If conflicts of this sort exist among you, it is for the reason that you have not expelled the love of this world from your hearts. Because worldly interests are limited, each one rises up against his rival in order to obtain them. You desire a certain position which someone else also wants, and naturally this leads to jealousy and strife. However, the people of God-who have expelled the love of the world from their hearts and have no aim but God-never fight with one another and never cause such calamities and corruption. If all of the divine prophets were to gather in a city today, there would be no disagreement or conflict among them, for their aims and goals are one. The hearts of-all of them attend to God the Almighty, and they are clear of any love of the world.

If your deeds and actions, your way of life and your wayfaring, are of the sort evident today, then you had better fear-may God protect us from It-that you may leave this world without being one of the Shi'ah of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, Peace be upon him. You should fear that your repentance might not be accepted, and that you might not receive the intercession of Imam 'Ali. Before losing the opportunity, you should try to remedy this. Give up these banal and shameful conflicts. These confrontations and conflicts are wrong. Do you compose two nations? Does your religion constitute different sects? Why will you not beware? Why are you not pure and honest and brotherly with one another? Why? Why?

These conflicts are dangerous, for they lead to irreparable harms, the destruction of the seminaries, and they will bring you discredit and dishonour in the community. This banding into gangs is only to your loss. Not only does it bring you harm and .discredit, but it brings dishonour and harm to the community and the nation, and leads to the harm of Islam. If your confrontations lead to harm it will be an unforgivable offence, and before God the Almighty it will be one of the greatest of all sins, because it will corrupt the community and make it prone to the influence and domination of the enemy.

Perhaps some hidden hands are at work spreading enmity and discord in the seminaries, sowing by various means the seeds of discord and strife, poisoning the thoughts and confusing the minds under the guise of 'religious duties' By means of such 'religious duties' corruption is established in the seminaries, so that those who are useful for the future of Islam are destroyed and disabled from serving Islam and the Islamic community in the future.

It is necessary to be conscious and aware. Do not fool yourselves into thinking that your religious duties require such things, and that your religious obligations are such and so. Sometimes Satan determines responsibilities and duties for man. Sometimes selfish wants and desires force a man to do things in the name of religious duties. Offending a Muslim and saying something bad about a brother in faith are not religious duties. This is love of the world and love of self. These are the promptings of Satan which bring such wretchedness for man. This enmity is the enmity of the damned: "That most surely is the truth, the contending of one with another of the inmates of the fire" (38:64). Enmity and contention exist in hell. The people of hell have conflicts, fighting and clawing at one another. If you have quarrels for the sake of the world, beware that you are preparing hell for yourself, and you are on the way there. There is no fighting for things of the other world. The people of the other world are pure and at peace with one another. Their hearts are overflowing with the love of God and servitude to Him. The love of God requires the love of those who have faith in God. The love for the servants of God is the shadow of that very love for God.

Do not set your own hands on fire. Do not set ablaze the flames of hell. Hell is lit with the ugly works and deeds of man. These are the deeds of refractory man which set this fire. It is narrated: "I passed hell when it was extinguished." <sup>[20]</sup> If a man does not light the fire by his works and deeds, hell will remain extinguished. The interior of this nature is hell. To approach this nature is to approach hell. When man passes away from this world and the; curtains are drawn aside, he will realize, "This is for what your own hands have sent before," (3:182), and "and what they had done they shall find present," (18:49). All of the deeds which are done by man in this world will be seen in the other world, and will be embodied for him, "So he who has done an atom's weight of good shall see it and he who has done an atoms weight of evil shall see it"(99:7-8). All of the works and deeds and words of man will be reflected in the other world. It is as if everything in our lives were being filmed, and in that world the film will be shown, and one will be able to deny none of it. All of our actions and movements will be shown to us, in addition to the testimony given by our limbs and organs: "They shall say: Allah, Who makes everything speak, has made us speak" (41:21). You will not be able to deny your ugly deeds or hide them before God, Who Will make all things able to speak and bear witness. Think a little, look ahead, and weigh the consequences of your deeds. Keep in mind the perilous events which take place after death, the pressure of the grave, the world of barzakh (the period between death and resurrection), and do not neglect the hardships which will follow that. At least believe in hell. If a man believes in the perilous events which take place after death, he will change his way of life. If you had faith and certainty in these things, you would not live so freely and licentiously. You will try to guard your pen, your steps, and your tongue, in order to reform and purify yourselves.

## Divine Blessings

Because He favours His servants, God the Blessed and Supreme gave them Intellect. He gave them the power to refine and purify themselves. He sent the prophets and awliya' to guide people and to help them to reform themselves so that they do not fall into the severe chastisement of hell. If these restraints do not bring about awareness and refinement in man, God the Merciful, will make him aware through other means: by various hardships, afflictions, poverty, illness. Like an expert physician or a skilled and kind nurse He tries to cure sick men from dangerous spiritual illnesses. If a servant is blessed by God, he will be faced with afflictions until he turns his attention to God the Almighty, and is refined. This is the way, and other than this there is no way. But man must tread this path with his own feet in order to attain success. If he does not succeed in this way, and the misled man is not cured, and he does not deserve the blessings of heaven. There will be much pressure on him when his soul is drawn from him, so perchance he will return and be aware. Again, if he is not affected, then in the grave, in the world of barzakh, and in the terrible perilous events which take place after death he will suffer pressures and chastisement until he becomes purified and refined, and he will not go to hell. All of these are blessings from Almighty God to prevent man from going to hell. What then if with all these blessings and favours from Almighty God he is still not cured? Then there is no other alternative but the last cure, which is that he should be burned. How many a man has not refined and reformed himself and was not affected by these cures, so that he needed God, the Merciful, the Compassionate, to refine His servant by fire, just as gold must be purified in fire.

Regarding the ayah "Living therein for ages," (78:23), it has been reported that the 'ages' mentioned here are for those who have been guided and the basis of whose faith has been intact.<sup>[21]</sup> This is for me and you, if we are believers. Each age lasts for thousands of years, how many God only knows. God forbid that we reach such a state that these cures are not effective, so that this final cure is required for deserving and meriting the everlasting blessings [of heaven] God forbid that it should be necessary that a man should go to hell for a while and burn there until he is purified from his vices, spiritual pollution, and filthy Satanic attributes, so that he may become deserving and capable of benefitting from "gardens beneath which rivers flow." (58:22)

Beware that this is only for those whose sins have not reached such an extent that they are entirely deprived of the mercy and blessings of God the Almighty, those who yet have an essential merit for going to heaven. God forbid that a man, due to the multitude of his sins, should be expelled and blocked from the presence of God the Almighty, and that he should be bereft of the divine mercy, so that there is no other way for him but to remain forever in the fire of hell. God forbid that you should be bereft of divine mercy and blessings, and that you should be subject to His wrath, anger, and chastisements. May your deeds, behaviour and speech not be the means to the denial of grace, so that there is no way for you but eternal damnation.



Now, while you cannot bear to hold a hot stone in your hand for a minute, keep the fire of hell away! Keep these fires from the seminaries and from the clerical community. Keep disputes and strife far from your hearts. Behave well with people, and in company, and be compassionate and kind. Of course, you are not to be nice to sinners with regard to their sins and rebelliousness. Tell him to his face of his ugly deeds and wrongdoing, and prohibit him from it; and keep yourselves from promoting anarchy and disturbance. Behave well with the servants of God and the righteous. Show respect to the learned with regard to their knowledge, to those on the path of guidance with regard to their virtue, and to the ignorant and unlearned, for they are also the servants of God. Have good behaviour, be kind, honest and brotherly. Refine yourselves. You want to refine and guide the community, but how can one who is not able to reform and manage himself guide and manage others? Now there are only a few days left in the month of Sha'ban, so try in these few days to repent and reform yourselves, and enter the blessed month of Ramadan with a healthy soul.

## **Points regarding the Intimate Devotions (Munajat) of the Month of Sha'ban**

Have you said the Munajat of Sha'ban for God, the Blessed and Supreme, a devotion whose recital has been recommended during this month, from the first until the last of the month? Have you benefited from its lofty meanings which teach increased faith and knowledge (ma'rifah) with regard to the station of the Lord? It is reported with regard to this supplication that it is the munajat of Imam 'Ali-Peace be upon him-and his descendants and all of the immaculate Imams-Peace be upon them-called upon Allah by this devotion. <sup>[22]</sup> Very few supplications and devotions (du'a wa munajat) may be found which were recited by all of the Imams ('a) for God.

This devotion is truly a preparatory means to admonish and prepare man to receive the responsibilities of the blessed month of Ramadan, and it is possible that it is also to remind the aware person of the motive for fasting and its valuable fruits.

The immaculate Imams, Peace be with them, have explained many things by the tongue of supplication. The tongue of supplication is very different from the other tongues by which those greats explained precepts. They have explained most spiritual, metaphysical, and precise divine matters, and that which is related to knowledge of Allah by the tongue of supplication. But we recite supplications to the end and unfortunately pay no attention to their meanings and fail to understand what they really want to say.

In this munajat we read:

My God, grant that I may be perfectly cut off from all else but Thee, and enlighten the vision of our hearts by the radiance of vision toward Thee, until the visions of the heart tear through the curtains of light and reach the Source of Greatness and our spirits get anchored to the threshold of Thy sanctity. <sup>[23]</sup>

It is possible that the meaning of the sentence, "O my God! Grant that I may be perfectly cut off from all else but Thee," is that prior to the blessed month of Ramadan, divinely aware people should get ready and prepare themselves for cutting themselves off and avoiding worldly pleasures (and this avoidance is that very being cut off perfectly from all else but Allah). Being perfectly cut off from all else is not something easily obtained. It requires extra hard practice, going to some lengths, spiritual exercises, perseverance, and discipline, until one is able to fix one's attention completely on nothing but God and cut himself off from all else. If someone is able to do this, he has reached a great felicity. However, with the least attention to this world it is impossible to be cut off from all else but Allah. Someone who wants to perform the fast of the blessed month of Ramadan with such manners as he has been asked to, must cut himself off completely from all else so that he can observe the etiquette for the celebration and feast [of Allah], coming to know of the station of the Host, insofar as this is possible.

According to the order of the Noble Apostle (s) (which is related in one of his sermons) all of the servants of God, the Supreme, have been invited by Him to a feast in the blessed month of Ramadan and are to be the guests of the Provider at His feast. There he says:

O you people! The month of Allah is approaching you ... and you have been invited in it to the feast of Allah. <sup>[24]</sup>

In these few days until the blessed month of Ramadan, you should reflect, reform yourselves, and pay attention to God the Almighty, seek forgiveness for your unbecoming behaviour and deeds, and if, God forbid, you have committed a sin, repent for it prior to entering the blessed month of Ramadan. Habituate your tongue to munajat to God the Almighty. God forbid that in the blessed month of Ramadan you should backbite or slander, or in short, sin, and so become polluted by transgression in the presence of the Lord, the Exalted, at His feast. You have been invited during this honourable month to the banquet of God the Almighty, "and you have been invited in it to the feast of Allah," so, get yourself ready for the magnificent feast of the Almighty. At least respect the formal and exoteric manners of fasting. (The true manners of fasting are another matter entirely, and require constant care and effort.) The meaning of fasting is not merely refraining from eating and drinking; one must also keep oneself from sin. This is the primary etiquette of fasting for novices. (The etiquette of fasting for divine people who want to reach the Source of Greatness is other than this.) You should at least observe the elementary etiquette of fasting, and in the same way that you refrain from eating and drinking, you should keep your eyes, ears, and tongue from transgression. From now on, keep your tongue from backbiting, slander, speaking bad, and lies, and expel from your hearts all spite, envy, and other ugly Satanic attributes. If you are able, cut yourself off from all but Allah. Perform your deeds sincerely and without ostentation. Cut yourselves off from the Satans among humans and the jinn.

Though apparently we have lost hopes of reaching such a valuable state of felicity, at least try to see to it that your fast is not accompanied by sin. Otherwise, even if your fast is correct from the point of view of Islamic law, it will not ascend to be accepted by God. There is a big difference between the ascension of one's works and their acceptance on the one hand and their religious correctness on the other. If, by the end of the blessed month of Ramadan, there is no change in your works and deeds, and your ways and manners are no different from what they were before the month of fasting, it is evident that the fast which you were expected to perform was not realized; and that which you have done is no more than a vulgar physical fast. In this noble month, in which you have been invited to the divine banquet, if you do not gain insight (ma'rifah) about God the Almighty nor insight into yourself, it means that you have not properly participated in the feast of Allah and failed to observe the etiquette of the feast. You must not forget that if you are not able to reform and refine yourselves in this blessed month, which is the 'month of Allah,' in which the gates of divine mercy are opened to the servants of God and the satans and devils-according to some reports-are locked in chains, <sup>[25]</sup> and if you fail to manage and control your nafs e ammarah (the 'commanding self'), <sup>[26]</sup> to subdue your selfish lusts and to cut off your relations and interests with this world and material things, then after the end of the month of fasting it will be difficult for you to be able to accomplish this.

Therefore, take advantage of this opportunity before the magnificent grace of it vanishes, and purify and reform yourselves. Get ready and prepare to perform the duties of the month of fasting. Let it not be that prior to the arrival of the month of Ramadan you are like one who is wound up by the hand of Satan so that in this single month when the satans are enchained you automatically busy yourselves with sin and deeds opposed to the orders of Islam! Sometimes the rebellious and sinful man, due to his distance from God and the great number of his sins, sinks so low into darkness and ignorance that he does not need Satan to tempt him, but he himself takes on the colour of Satan.<sup>[27]</sup> Someone who pursues selfish desires and is obedient to Satan, gradually turns the colour of Satan. You should decide to control yourselves at least in this one month, and avoid speech and behaviour which displease God, the Supreme. Right now in this very session make a covenant with God that during the blessed month of Ramadan you will avoid backbiting, slander and speaking ill of others. Bring your tongue, eyes, hands, ears and other organs and limbs under your control. Be watchful of your deeds and your words. It is possible that this same worthy deed will result in God's paying attention to you and blessing you. After the month of fasting, when the satans are released from their chains, you will have been reformed, and you will no longer listen to the lies of Satan, and you will refine yourselves. I repeat, decide during these thirty days of the blessed month of Ramadan to control your tongue, eyes, ears and all your organs and limbs, and pay constant attention to the judgement of the Shari'ah about the works you intend to do, and the words you intend to speak and the matter you intend to listen to.

This is the elementary and outward manner of keeping a fast. At least keep to this outward manner of fasting! If you observe that someone is about to backbite, prevent him and say to him that we have made a covenant to keep ourselves from prohibited matters during these thirty days of Ramadan. And if you are not able to keep him from backbiting, leave that session. Do not just sit there and listen. The Muslims must be safe from you. Someone from whose hands, tongue and eyes other Muslims are not safe is not truly a Muslim,<sup>[28]</sup> although he may be outwardly and formally a Muslim who has formally proclaimed: "La illaha illa Allah" (There is no god but Allah). If, God forbid, you want to offend somebody, to slander him or backbite, you should know that you are in the presence of the Lord; you are the guest of God Almighty, and in the presence of God, the Supreme, you would behave rudely to one of His servants; and to insult one of the servants of God is to insult God. They are the servants of God; especially if they are scholars on the path of knowledge and piety (taqwa). Sometimes you see that because of such affairs man reaches such a state that he denies God at the moment of his death! He denies the divine signs:

Then evil was the end of those who did evil, because they rejected the signs of Allah and used to mock them. (30:10)

These things occur gradually. Today, an incorrect view; tomorrow, a word of backbiting; and the next day, slander against a Muslim, and . . . little by little these sins accumulate in the heart, and make the heart black

and prevent man from attaining knowledge (ma'rifah) of Allah, until it reaches the point that he denies everything and rejects the truth.

According to some ayat of the Quran as interpreted in some traditions, the deeds of men are presented to the Prophet (s) and the pure Imam's ('a) and are reviewed by them. <sup>[29]</sup> When the Prophet reviews your deeds and he sees how many errors and sins there are, how upset and distressed will he be? Do not make the Apostle of God become upset and distressed. You would not want to break his heart and make him sad? When he witnesses that the page of your deeds is replete with backbiting, slander, and speaking ill of other Muslims and that all your attention was devoted to this worldly and materialistic affairs and that your heart was overflowing with malice, hatred, spite and suspicion towards each other, it is possible that in the presence of God, the Supreme and Holy, and the angels of Allah, he will be embarrassed that his community and followers were ungrateful for their divine blessings, and they betrayed the trust of God, the Holy and Supreme, in such an unbridled and heedless manner.

When someone who is related to us, even if in a menial position, errs, we become embarrassed. You are related to the Apostle of Allah, may the Peace and Blessings of Allah be with him and with his Progeny; by entering the seminary, you have related yourself to the Law of Islam, the most Noble Apostle and the Noble Quran. If you perform ugly deeds, it upsets the Prophet and he cannot bear it, and God forbid, you may be damned. Do not let the Apostle of Allah (s) and the pure Imams become upset and saddened.

The heart of man is like a mirror, clear and bright, and it becomes dark because of too much attention to this world and too many sins. However, if a person at least performs the fast for God the Almighty sincerely and without duplicity (I am not saying that other acts of worship are not to be pure; it is necessary for all of the acts of worship to be performed sincerely and without duplicity), then this worship-which is a turning away from lust, a putting aside of pleasure and cutting oneself off from all but God-if it is performed well in this single month, perhaps the grace of God will be extended to him and the mirror of his heart will be cleaned of its blackness and tarnish, and there is hope that he will change his ways and become dissuaded from this wilderness and worldly pleasures. When the Night of Qadr <sup>[30]</sup> arrives, one will gain the illumination which is obtained on that night by the friends of God and the believers.

The reward of such a fast is God, as it has been reported:

"The fast is for Me and I grant its reward." <sup>[31]</sup> Nothing else could be the reward of such a fast. The Gardens of Blessings would not count as a worthy reward for such a fast.

If a man takes fasting to mean closing his mouth to food but opening it for backbiting, and he engages in backbiting until sahar <sup>[32]</sup> in the warm and friendly company in the nights when there is opportunity and time, such fasting will be of no benefit and have no effect. Rather, one who fasts in this way has not observed the etiquette of the banquet of God. He has violated the rights of his Benefactor, the Benefactor Who has provided him with all the means and conveniences of life before creating him, and has provided for the means of his development. He sent the prophets to guide him. He

sent down the heavenly books. Man has been given the power to approach the source of greatness and the light of felicity, has been favoured with intellect and perception, and has been the recipient of His generosity. Now, He has invited His servants to enter His guest house and to sit at the table of His blessings where they are to thank and praise Him to the extent that their tongues and hands are able. Is it right for the servants who partake at the table of His blessings and use the means and conveniences which He has freely provided for them that they should oppose their Master and Host and rebel against Him? Is it right that they should use these things in opposition to Him and against His wishes? Wouldn't this be biting the hand that feeds one, the height of ingratitude to sit at the table of one's Master and audaciously insult one's honoured Host, Who is his benefactor, with rude and impudent behaviour and performing ugly and evil deeds before the Host?

The guests must at least know who their Host is, and become aware of His dignity. They should be acquainted with the etiquette and manners of the sessions and try not to perform any deed contrary to virtue and decorum. The guests of the Supreme Lord must know the divine station of the Lord of Majesty, a station of which the Imams, Peace be upon them, and the great divine prophets were constantly seeking greater knowledge and more perfect awareness, aspiring to reach the Source of light and greatness. "And enlighten the eyes of our hearts with the light of Thy vision, until the vision of the hearts tears through the curtains of light and reaches the Source of Greatness." The banquet of Allah is that very "source of greatness." God, the Blessed and Exalted, has invited His servants to enter the source of light and greatness. However, if the servant is not worthy, he will not be able to enter into such a splendid and sumptuous position. God, the Exalted, has invited his servants to all sorts of favours and boons and to numerous spiritual delights, but if they are not prepared to be present at such lofty positions, they will not be able to enter. How can one enter the presence of the Lord and the guest house of the Lord of lords which is the source of greatness with spiritual pollution, vice, and sins of the body and soul? It requires merit. Preparation is necessary. In indignity and with polluted hearts covered by veils of darkness, one will not be able to understand these spiritual meanings and truths. One must tear these veils and push aside these dark and luminous curtains which cover the heart and are barriers to union with Allah so that one will be able to enter the brilliant and splendid divine company.

## The Veils Of Islam

Attention to other than God covers man with veils of darkness and light. If any worldly affair is a cause for man's attention to be directed toward the world and to neglect God, the Exalted, it raises dark veils. All of the corporeal worlds are dark veils. If the world is a means of directing attention to the Truth and for arriving at the abode of the Hereafter, which is the "abode of honour," then the dark veils are transformed into veils of light. "Being perfectly cut off from all else" means tearing and pushing aside all the dark and bright veils, until one is able to enter the divine guest house which is the "source of greatness." Hence, in this intimate devotion (munajat) there is a request to God, the Exalted, for vision and brightness of the heart so one may tear the veils of light and reach the source of greatness: "Until the vision of the heart tears through the veils of light and reaches the source of greatness."

However, one who has not yet torn the veils of darkness, one who directs all of his attention to the natural world and, God forbid, becomes deviated from Allah, and one who is basically unaware of the world beyond and the spiritual worlds, and has retrogressed to a state of nature, who has never decided to refine himself, to set into motion his spiritual powers, to push aside the curtains of darkness which are a cloud over his heart, he is lodged in 'the deepest of the depths' which is the ultimate veil:

[Indeed We created man in the fairest structure], then We consigned him to the lowest of the low, (95:4-5)

while the God of the worlds has created man in the most lofty state and station:

Indeed We created man in the fairest structure.

If one follows the desires of the self and from the day he becomes acquainted with himself pays no attention to anything other than the dark wilderness of nature <sup>[33]</sup> and who never thinks that it is possible that there exists another place and station aside from this polluted dark world, then he will have sunk into the veil of darkness and have become an instance of: "but he clung to the earth and followed his low desire" (7:176). With such a heart polluted by sin that has been covered by the curtain of darkness and with such a gloomy spirit that due to the effect of numerous sins has receded far from God, the Exalted, after that worship of desire and seeking after the world have blinded the intellect and the vision of truth, he cannot be released from the veils of darkness, let alone to tear the veils of light and detach himself from all but Allah. However convinced he might be that one should not deny the station of the saints (awliya') of God, and not consider as myths the worlds of the barzakh, the sirat, the resurrection, the accounting, the book, heaven and hell, yet due to the effects of sins and the attachment of the heart to the world, one comes to gradually deny these truths, to deny the stations of the awliya' of God, stations which are mentioned in not more than a few lines of prayers and intimate devotions.

## Knowledge and Faith

Sometimes you see that one has knowledge of these realities but has no faith. Undertakers are not afraid of the dead, for they have certainty that the corpse cannot harm one. Even when the dead person was alive and had a spirit in his body he could hardly do anything, so of what harm can he be now as an empty frame? However, those who are afraid of the dead are afraid because they do not have faith in this truth. They merely have knowledge.

They know about God and the Day of Retribution, but they lack certainty. The heart is unaware of that which the intellect has understood. They know the proofs for the existence of God and the reality of the Resurrection, but these very same intellectual proofs may be veils covering the heart which do not permit the light of faith to shine in, until God, the Exalted, frees them from the darkneses and obscurities and leads them to enter the worlds of light and radiances:

Allah is the Guardian (Wali) of those who believe; He brings them out of the darkneses into the light. (2:257)

He whose Guardian (Wali) is God, the Blessed and Exalted, and who is taken by Him out from the darkneses never commits another sin, never backbites, never slanders others, and he is never vengeful or envious of his brothers in faith. His own heart is filled with a feeling of luminosity and he no longer holds the world or what it contains in high esteem. As Imam 'Ali ('a) said: "If all the world and what it contains were offered to me to cruelly and unjustly take the skin of a grain of barley from the mouth of an ant, I would never accept it." <sup>[34]</sup> But some of you trample over everything, and you backbite the great [scholars] of Islam. If others speak ill of the grocers and perfume sellers on the street and backbite them, some of you relate unfair things, insult and are impudent toward the scholars of Islam, because you are not firmly grounded in faith and you do not believe in [divine] retribution for your own deeds.

Infallibility (ismah) is nothing but perfect faith. The meaning of the infallibility of the prophets and the Friends of God (awliya') is not that, for instance, Gabriel took them by the hand. (Of course, if Gabriel had taken the hand of Shimr <sup>[35]</sup> he would never have committed a sin.) Rather, infallibility is the offspring of faith. If a man had faith in God, the Exalted, and if he saw God Almighty with the eyes of his heart as one sees the sun, it would not be possible for him to commit a sin, just as if one were standing before an armed power, one would find some 'infallibility'. This fear comes from belief in the [divine] presence, which keeps man from committing sin. The Impeccables (ma'sumun), Peace be upon them, after their creation from pure nature (tinah) because of the effects of their spiritual discipline, and acquisition of radiance and virtuous character traits, always see themselves as being in the presence of God, Who knows all things and encompasses all affairs. They have faith in the meaning of the words, "La illaha illa Allah" (There is no god but Allah), and they believe that other than God, all persons and all things, are perishing and have no role in determining man's destiny:

All things are perishing but His Face. (28:88)



If man is certain and has faith that all the outward and inward worlds are in the presence of the Lord, and that God, the Exalted, is present everywhere and sees everything, in the presence of God and God's blessings there would be no possibility for committing sins. Man is not able to commit sins before a discerning child and does not expose his private parts, so how could he expose his nakedness before God, the Exalted, and not dread to commit a crime? This is because he has faith in the presence of the child; however, with regard to the divine presence, if he has knowledge, he still lacks faith. Due to the multiplicity of his sins which have darkened and blackened his heart, he is totally unable to accept such truths, and may not even consider them to be likely. Actually, man would not recklessly run wild if he considered it at all likely (he need not have certainty) that that which is reported in the Noble Quran is true, the promises and the threats, and that he should amend his ways and deeds.

If you consider it at all likely that ferocious beasts which might harm you are to be found along the path, or that there are armed bandits who might hold you up, you would refrain from taking that path, and you would try to ascertain the correctness or incorrectness of these reports. Is it possible for someone to consider it possible that hell exists and that one may remain for ever in its fire while at the same time doing wrong? Can it be said that one who considers God the Almighty to be present and watching and who sees himself to be in the presence of the Lord, and who considers it possible that there might be retribution for his words and deeds, a reckoning and chastisement, and that in this world every word he speaks, every step he takes, every deed he does, is recorded by angels of Allah called Raqib and 'Atid<sup>[36]</sup> and they carefully record all his words and deeds, and in such a state, could he be fearless of his own wrongdoing? It is painful [to realize] that they do not even consider these truths to be possible. From the manners of some and their way of living it is obvious that they do not even consider the existence of a supernatural world to be likely, since the mere consideration of this likelihood keeps man from committing many wrongs.

## **The First Step in Refinement**

How long do you wish to remain in the sleep of negligence, plunged in corruption? Fear God! Beware of the aftermath of your deeds! Wake up from the sleep of negligence! You have not yet awakened. You have not yet taken the first step. The first step of wayfaring is yaqzah (awakening), but you are still asleep. Your eyes may be open, but your hearts are asleep. If your hearts were not so sleepy and rusted and blackened with the effects of sin, you would not continue your wrongful deeds and words so carelessly and indifferently. If you thought a bit about the affairs of the other world and its terrible path you would give more importance to the heavy duties and responsibilities which rest upon your shoulders.

There is also another world for you, there is also the resurrection. (You are not like other existents for which there is no returning.) Why do you not take warning? Why are you not awake and conscious? Why do you so heedlessly engage in backbiting and speaking ill of your Muslim brothers, or listening to such things? Do you not know that the tongue which wags in backbiting will be trampled under the feet of others on the day of the resurrection? Have you heard that backbiting will be food for the dogs of hell? <sup>[37]</sup> Have you ever given a thought to how evil are the consequences of these differences, enmities, jealousies, cynicism and selfishness, and arrogance and conceit? Do you know that the repercussion of these wicked forbidden deeds is hell and that it is possible, God forbid, that they will lead to the everlasting fire?

God does not want man to be afflicted with maladies unaccompanied by I pain, for when an illness is accompanied by pain, it forces man to seek a cure, to consult a doctor or go to a hospital, but an unfelt illness without pain is more dangerous. By the time one becomes aware of it, it is too late. If mental illnesses were accompanied by pain, this would be something for which to be thankful. Ultimately, man would be forced to find a cure or a remedy. But what can be done about such dangerous diseases for which there is no pain? The maladies of arrogance and selfishness are without pain. Other sins corrupt the heart and the spirit without causing any pain. Not only are these maladies unaccompanied by pain, but they also bring apparent pleasure. Meetings and sessions of backbiting are very warm and sweet! Love of the self and love of the world, which are the roots of all sins, are pleasurable. <sup>[38]</sup> One who is afflicted with dropsy may die from water, but yet he enjoys drinking it until his last breath. <sup>[39]</sup> Naturally, if one gets pleasure from an illness, and it also has no pain, he will not seek any cure for it. However much he is warned that it is fatal, he will not believe it.

If someone is afflicted with the maladies of hedonism and worshipping the world, and his heart is filled with love of the world, he will grow weary of all else but the world and what is in it. Allah forbid, he will become an enemy of God, the servants of God, the divine prophets and awliya and the angels of Allah. He will have a sense of hatred and loathing for them, and when the angels come at the command of the Glorious God to take his soul, he will have a feeling of repulsion and abhorrence, for he will see that God and His angels want to separate him from his beloved (the world and worldly things). It is possible that he will leave the world with hostility and

enmity toward the Presence of the Exalted Truth (God). One of the great men of Qazwin, may Allah have mercy on him, reported that he was present at the bedside of someone at the moment of his death. During the last moments of his life, he opened his eyes and said: "No one has ever wronged me the way God has done.! Now, He wants to separate me from these children whom I have taken such pains to raise. Is there ally greater injustice than this?" If one has not refined oneself, turning away from the world, and has not expelled love of the world from his heart, there is the fear that he will die with a heart overflowing with anger and aversion toward God and His awliya'. He will have to contend with an ominous destiny. Is such an unbridled man to be considered as the crown of creation or as the vilest of creatures?

By Time! Surely man is in loss, except for those who believe and do good works and enjoin upon each other truth. and enjoin upon each other patience. (Sura 103, al Asr)

In this surah, the only exceptions are the believers who perform good works. And a good work is a work which is congruous with the spirit. However, you see that many of man's works are only congruent with the body. "Enjoining" is also not practised. If you are dominated by love of the world and love of the self, and if this prevents you from perceiving truths and realities, and prevents you from performing deeds purely for God, and if you are kept from enjoining the truth and enjoining patience, and you are thereby obstructed from the way to guidance, then you will be in loss. You will be in loss in this world and in the next, for you will have given up your youth and will be prohibited from the blessings of heaven and otherworldly advantages, and also lack this world. If others have no way to heaven, and if the doors to divine mercy are closed to them, if they are to abide eternally in the fire of hell, at least they will have had the world, they will have enjoyed worldly advantages, but you.

Beware, lest love of the world and love of the self gradually increase within you to the point that Satan is able to take away your faith. It is said that all of the efforts of Satan are for the sake of robbing faith. <sup>[40]</sup> All of his efforts and labours, night and day, are for the sake of taking away the faith of men. No one has given you a document to guarantee you a permanent faith. Perhaps one's faith is merely on loan (mustawda') <sup>[41]</sup> and in the end Satan will get it, and you will leave this world with enmity for the Blessed and Exalted God and His awliya'.

Perhaps one will have enjoyed an entire life of divine blessings, provided for by Imam Zaman ('a) <sup>[42]</sup> and, God forbid, in the end one may give up his life without faith and in enmity toward the Bestower of the Blessings. If you have any interest in, relation with, and affection for the world, try to cut it. This world, with all its superficial glamour and glitter is too insignificant to be worthy of love, especially for one who has divested himself of such superficialities of life. What do you have of this world that your heart should be attached to it? You have nought but the mosque, the prayer niche, the seminary, the corner of a room. Is it proper for you to compete for the mosque and the prayer niche? Should this be a cause of disagreement among you, to corrupt the society? Suppose that, like the worldly people, you had a

comfortable sumptuous life, and that, God forbid, you spent your life on feasting and drinking. After your life is over, you would see that your life had passed like a pleasant dream, but the requital and liability for it will be with you always. What value does this fleeting and apparently sweet life have (assuming that it is very sweet) in comparison to endless chastisement? The chastisement of worldly people is sometimes endless. The worldly people who imagine that they have acquired the world and benefit from its advantages and boons are remiss and mistaken. Everyone sees the world from the window of his own environment and situation, and imagines that the world is exactly that which he has. The physical world is broader than that which man imagines he has acquired, discovered and through which he roams. It has been narrated about this world with all its means and ways that: "He has never looked graciously upon it." <sup>[43]</sup> So, how must the other world be upon which God, the Blessed and Exalted, has looked graciously? What is the 'source of greatness' to which man is called and what is it like? Man is too low to comprehend the source of greatness.

If you purify your intentions, rectify your deeds, expel love of self and position from your hearts, a high station will be prepared for you. The whole world and what exists in it along with its superficial aspects is not worth even a cent in comparison to the station prepared for the righteous servants of God. Try to achieve this lofty station. If you are able, try to make something of yourselves and improve yourselves so that you may pay no heed even to this lofty station. Do not worship God in order to reach this station, but rather call upon Him and prostrate yourselves with your heads upon the earth before Him because He is worthy of worship and magnification. <sup>[44]</sup> In that case you will have torn through the curtains of light and reached the source of greatness. Can you obtain such a position with these deeds and actions which you perform? Can it be reached by the path you tread? Is there any likelihood of your being saved from divine chastisement and escaping the terrible torment and fire of hell?

Do you imagine that the lamentations of the Pure Imams and the cries of Imam Sajjad ('a) were merely for education's sake, and that they wanted to instruct others about how to cry? With all that spirituality and the lofty position they hold, they wept for fear of God! They understood how difficult and dangerous it is to advance along the way before them. They were aware of the difficulties, hardships and problems of crossing the Sirat, which has this world at one end and the next world at the other and which passes through hell. They were aware of the worlds of the grave, of the barzakh, and of the resurrection, and of their terrible torments, and hence they were never complacent and always took refuge in God from the intense chastisements of the other world.

What thought have you given to these terrible devastating torments, and what way have you found to deliverance from them? When are you going to decide to reform and refine yourselves? Now, while you are young and have the strength of youth and the power over your faculties, and physical weakness has not yet overtaken you, if you do not think of refinement and of making something of yourselves, then how will you be able to do it when you become old, when your bodies and souls are in the grip of weakness and

feebleness, and you have lost your will power, your decisiveness and your resistance, and when the burden of your sins has blackened your hearts? With every breath and every step you take, and with each passing moment of your life, reform becomes more difficult, and it is possible for darkness and corruption to increase. The more one's age advances, the more the things which conflict with human felicity multiply and the more one's powers are weakened. Thus, when old age arrives, it is difficult to be successful at refinement and the acquisition of the virtues and piety (taqwa'). One is unable to repent, for repentance is not merely the verbal expression, "I repent before Allah," rather, contrition and the resolve to abandon one's sin are also necessary.<sup>[45]</sup> Such contrition and resolve are not to be obtained by one who has engaged in backbiting and lying for fifty or seventy years, whose beard has become white with sin and transgression. Such a person is afflicted with sin to the end of his life.

Youths should not sit still until the dust of age turns them grey. (I have reached old age and am aware of its misfortunes and difficulties.) While you are young, you are able to accomplish something. While you enjoy the strength and determination of youth you can expel selfish desires, worldly attractions and animal desires from yourselves. However, if you do not think about reform and making something of yourselves while you are young, it will be too late when you become old. Think, while you are young, before you become old and exhausted. A young heart is subtle and celestial, and within it the motivation for corruption is weak. However, the older one gets the stronger and firmer is the source of sin implanted in the heart, until it can no longer be uprooted, as it is reported: "The heart of man is clear and shining like a mirror; with each sin a man commits, another black mark is added to the heart, until it becomes black, so that it is possible that a night and day cannot pass without the commission of a sin against the Lord."<sup>[46]</sup> When old age arrives, it is difficult to restore one's heart to its original form and state.

If, God forbid, you have not reformed yourself when you leave the world, in what manner do you expect to meet God, when your heart is black and your eyes, ears and tongue are polluted by sin? How can you restore that with which you have been entrusted by God when it has become polluted and wicked, while it was given to you in perfect purity and cleanliness? These eyes and ears which are under your control, this hand and tongue which are at your command, these organs and limbs with which you live, all have been entrusted to you by God, the Almighty, and were given to you in perfect purity and righteousness. If they are afflicted with sin, they become polluted. If, God forbid, they are polluted with that which is forbidden, wickedness results. When the time comes to return this trust, it is possible that you will be asked if this is the right way to protect the trust which was given you. When the trust was placed under your control, was it like this? Was the heart which you were given, like this? Were the eyes which were bestowed upon you, like this? Were the other organs and limbs which were placed at your will this polluted and dirty? What will be your answer to these questions? How will you meet God when you have

committed such treachery with regard to that with which you have been entrusted?

You are young. You have spent your youth in such a way that from a worldly perspective you have given up many benefits. If you use this valuable time and the spring of your youth in the way of God and with a specific sacred purpose, then it has not been wasted, but rather this world and the next have been secured for you. However, if your behaviour is of such a manner as is currently witnessed, then you have wasted your youth and the prime of your life has been passed in vain. In the other world, before God, you will be questioned and reproached, while the penalty for your perfidious deeds and acts will not only be limited to the other world. In this world also, various severe difficulties, calamities and troubles will grab you by the neck, and you will fall into the whirlpool of misfortune and disaster.

## Another Warning

Your future is dark: numerous enemies are surrounding you on every side and from all strata; dangerous fiendish plans are ready to be enacted which will destroy you and the seminaries. The colonialists dream about what they will do with you, they have deep dreams about what they will do with Islam and the Muslims. With the pretence of Islam, they have drawn up dangerous plans for you. Only in the shade of refinement, preparation, and the proper arrangement and order will you be able to push away these corruptions and difficulties, and frustrate the plans of the colonialists.

I am now living the last days of my life. Sooner or later I will leave you. But I see before me dark black days ahead for you. If you do not reform and prepare your-selves, and if you do not manage your studies and your lives with order and discipline, then, God forbid, you will be doomed to annihilation.

Before you lose the chance, before you fall into the hands of the enemy with regard to every religious and scholarly affair, think! Wake up! Arise! The first stage is to decide to refine and purify your souls and to reform yourselves. Prepare and organize yourselves. Establish some order and discipline in the seminaries. Do not let others come to arrange [the affairs of ] the seminaries. Do not let others take hold of the seminaries with the excuse that 'these people are not capable of it; it is not their sort of work; they are just a group of loafers who have gathered in the seminaries,' and then in the name of organization and reform, to spoil the seminaries and take you under their own control. Do not give them an excuse. If you are organized, purified, and well ordered and arranged in every respect, others will not be able to aspire to control you. There will then be no way to penetrate into the seminaries and the clerical society. Prepare and purify yourselves. Get ready to prevent the mischief with which you will be faced. Prepare your seminaries for resistance against the events which are to come.

God forbid, black days lie ahead of you. The conditions are ripe for bad days to come. The colonialists want to destroy all aspects of Islam, and you must stand up against them.

With love of self and position, with arrogance and pride, you cannot mount any resistance. An evil scholar, a scholar who inclines toward the world, a scholar who thinks of preserving his position and administrative post, will not be able to combat the enemies of Islam. He will be more harmful than others. Take a step for the sake of God. Dispel the love of the world from your hearts. Then you will be able to engage in combat. From this moment on, develop and raise this point in your hearts, that I must be an armed soldier of Islam, and sacrifice myself for Islam. I must work for Islam until I am destroyed. Do not make excuses for yourself that today is inappropriate. Try to be useful for the future of Islam. In short, become a human being!

The colonialists are afraid of human beings. They are afraid of man. The colonialists, who want to plunder all we have, will not allow the training of human beings in religious and scholarly universities. They are afraid of man. If a man is found in a country, it bothers them, and endangers their interests. It is your duty to make something of yourselves, to become perfect

men, and to stand up against the vicious plans of the enemies of Islam. If you are not organized and prepared, if you do not resist and combat the lashes which whip the body of Islam every day, not only will you yourselves be destroyed, but also the precepts and laws of Islam will be annihilated and you will be responsible! You 'ulama'! You scholars! You Muslims! You will be responsible First you 'ulama' and seminary students and then the rest of the Muslims will be responsible: "All of you are shepherds, and all of you are responsible for tending the flock." <sup>[47]</sup> You young people must strengthen your wills so that you can stand up against every oppression and injustice. Other than this there is no alternative: your dignity, the dignity of Islam, and the dignity of the Islamic countries depend upon your resistance and opposition.

God Almighty! Protect Islam, the Muslims and the Islamic countries from foreign evils. Cut the hands of the colonialists and traitors to Islam in the Islamic countries and in the seminaries. Grant success and help to the Islamic 'ulama' and to the great maraji<sup>[48]</sup> in their defence of the sacred laws of the Noble Quran and their advancement of the holy ideals of Islam. Make the clergy of Islam aware of their weighty duties and important responsibilities in the present epoch. Protect and keep safe the seminaries and clerical centres from the thievery and influence of the enemies of Islam and the hands of the colonialists. Grant the success of making something of themselves and purifying and refining the soul to the young generation of clerics and university students and to the entire Muslim community. Free the people of Islam from the sleep of negligence, from frailty, from apathy and inflexibility of thought, so that with the lustrous revolutionary teachings of the Qura'n they may come to themselves, rise up, and in the shade of unity and oneness they may cut the hands of the colonialists and the inveterate enemies of Islam from the Islamic countries, and so that they may regain the freedom, independence, nobility and greatness which they have lost.

Our Lord, pour down upon us patience and make our steps firm and assist us against the unbelieving people. (2:250)



## Notes:

[1]. The Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Ali, Peace be upon him, said: "When the Messenger of Allah, may Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him and his Household, sent me to Yemen, he said: 'O 'Ali! Do not war against anyone until you invite him to Islam. I swear by Allah, if by your hand the Great and Almighty Allah should guide a man, then it is better for you than all that the sun rises upon or sets upon, and you are his wali (guardian).' " Al-Kafi, vol. 5, p. 36, "kitab al-jihad," "bab al-du'a ila al-islam qabl al-qital," hadith 2.

[2]. Usul al Kafi, kitab fadhl al-'ilm," Chapters: "bab sifat al-'ulama'," "bab badhl al-'ilm," "bab al-nahy 'an al-qawl bi ghayr 'ilm," "bab isti'mal al-'ilm," "bab al-musta'kil bi 'ilmih wa al- mubahi bihi," "bab luzum al-hujjah 'ala al-'alim," "bab al-nawadir," and Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, vol. 18, pp 9-17, 98-129, "kitab al-qada'," "abwab sifat al-qadi," bab 4,11,12.

[3]. Jamil ibn Darraj says that he heard from Imam Sadiq, Peace be upon him, that he said, "When the soul reaches here (and with his hand he pointed to his neck) for the learned, there remains no further chance of repentance." Then he recited this ayah "The repentance of Allah is only for those who do evil in ignorance" (4:17). Usul al Kafi, vol. 1, p. 59, "kitab faqi al-'ilm," "bab luzum al-hujjah tala al-'alim," hadith 3.

[4]. Hafs ibn Ghiyath said that Imam Sadiq, Peace be upon him, said: "O Hafs! Seventy sins will be forgiven of an ignorant person before one sin is forgiven of an 'alim." Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 59, "kitab fadl alu ilm" bab luzum al-hujjah 'ala al-'alim."

[5]. The Prophet of Allah, may Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him and with his Household, said, "There are two groups from my community such that if they are righteous then the community will be righteous, and if they are corrupt, then the community will become corrupt." It was asked, "Who are they?" He replied, "The 'ulama' and the rulers." Al-Shaykh al-Saduq, al-Khisal, Chapter 2, p. 37; al-Harrani, Tuhaf al-uqul, p. 50.

[6]. Sulaym ibn Qays al-Hilali said that he heard from the Commander of the Faithful, Peace be with him, that he reported from the Prophet, that he said, "There are two kinds of 'ulama', one who acts in accordance with his knowledge, so he has been saved, and the 'alim who does not act in accordance with his knowledge, so he will perish. And truly the people of hell will suffer from the stench of the 'alim who does not act in accordance with his knowledge." Usul al Kafi, vol. 1, p. 55, "kitab fadl al-'ilm", "bab isti'mal al-'ilm," hadith 1.

[7]. Imam Sadiq, Peace be upon him, said, "Invite the people to excellence, but not by your tongue, rather let people see in you right struggle (ijtihad), truthfulness, and piety." Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 78.

[8]. None given.

[9]. This group includes Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (founder of the Wahhabi sect), Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'i and Sayyid Kazim Rashti (founders of the Shaykhi sect), Ahmad Kasravi and Ghulam Ahmad (founder of the Qadiyani sect).

[10]. Grand Ayatullah Hajj Shaykh 'Abd al-Karim Ha'iri Yazdi (d. 1355/1937) was one of the greatest of Islamic jurists and a juristic authority of the Shi'ah in the fourteenth Islamic century. He attended the classes of such masters as Mirza-ye Bozorg Shirazi, Mirza Muhammad Taqi Shirazi, Akhiund Khorasani, Sayyid Kazim Yazdi, Sayyid Muhammad Isfahani Fesharaki, in Najaf and Samarra'. In the year 1340/1921, at the insistence of the ulama of Qum and after finding a good omen in a passage from the Quran he took up residence in Qum and organized the centre of religious studies (hawzah 'ilmiyyah) at Qum. Among his works are: Durar al-Fawa'id in usul, al-Salat, al-Nikah, al-Rida', al-Mawarith, all the four in the field of Islamic law.

[11]. Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Tusi (385-460/995-1067). He is known as 'al- Shaykh al-Ta'ifah,' and he was one of the most distinguished scholars of the Imami Shi'ah. He was the leading jurist and theologian of his time, and was also strong in literature, rijal, exegesis, and hadith. His teachers were al-Shaykh al-Mufid, al-Sayyid al-Murtada, Ibn al-Ghadai'iri, and Ibn 'Abdun. The Shaykh is the author of two famous books of Shi'ite hadith, Istibsar and Tahdhib, counted among the four books" of the Imami Shi'i hadith corpus. Al-Shaykh al-Tusi established Najaf as the centre of Shi'ite learning.

[12]. Al-Shaykh al-Tusi began to write the Tahdhib, which is a commentary on the Muqni'ah of al-Shaykh al-Mufid, during the lifetime of his teacher (d. 413/1022). Al-Shaykh al-Tusi was about twenty-six years old at this time.,

[13]. 'Ali ibn al-Husayn ibn Musa, known as al-Sayyid al-Murtada, and 'Alam al-Huda, (355-436/965-1044), is one of the greatest scholars of Islam and Shi'ism. Most of the great scholars of the Imami Shi'ah, including al-Shaykh al-Tusi, have benefitted from his teaching. Among the works he wrote are: al-Amali, al-Dhari'ah ila usul al-Shari'ah, al-Nasiriyat, al- Intisar, al-Shafi'i.

[14]. Fayd Kashani, al-Kalamat al-maknunah, p. 123.

[15]. Shaykh Murtada Ansari (1214-1281/1799-1864), known as "Khatam al-Fuqaha' wa al-Mujtahidin," was a descendant of Jabir ibn 'Abd Allah al-Ansari, a Companion of the Prophet, may the Peace and Blessings of Allah be with him and with his Household. He was a genius in Jurisprudence ('ilm al-usul), and he brought great developments in this field. Some of his professors were: Shaykh Musa Kashif al-Ghita', Shaykh 'Ali Kashif ai-Ghita', Mulla Ahmad Naraqi and Sayyid Muhammad Mujahid. Shaykh Ansari trained some great jurists, including: Akhund Khorasani, Mirza Shirazi and Mirza Muhammad Hasan Ashtiyani. His works include: Fara'id al-usul (known as Rasa'il) and Makasib one of the most famous text books.

[16]. Sayyid 'Ali ibn Sayyid Muhammad (d. 1283/1866), was one of the great ascetics and mystics of his day. He received authorization (as a mujtahid) from Shaykh Ansari and Sayyid Husayn, the Friday Prayer leader of Shushtar. Sayyid 'Ali spent some time in Shushtar as a judge and legal authority (mufti), and then moved to Najaf al-Ashraf. There he attended the classes of Shaykh Ansari in fiqh, and Shaykh Ansari also attended his classes in ethics. When Shaykh Ansari passed away, Sayyid 'Ali was the executor of his will and he succeeded him in his professorial position. The late Shaykh Sayyid 'Ali was the teacher and counselor of Akhund Mulla Husaynquli Hamadani, who had many students who were led by him, some of the greatest of whom were: Mirza Jawad Maliki Tabrizi, Sayyid Ahmad Karbala'i, Shaykh Muhammad Bihari, Sayyid 'Ali Qadi Tabrizi and 'Allamah Tabataba'i.

[17]. Majma' al-bayan, under the exegesis of the fourth ayah of the Surah, The Pen (al-Qalam).

[18]. 'Ali, Peace be with him, said: "If the bearers of 'ilm (knowledge, science) bear it as it deserves to be borne, they will be loved by Allah, the angels, and those who are obedient to Him, and those who bear it for the sake of this world will be despised by Allah and held in contempt by the people."Tuhaf al-uqul, p. 201, Chapter on the words of the Commander of Ihe Faithful, Peace be upon him.

[19]. Sifat al-Shi'ah, by al-Shaykh al-Saduq, and also Bihar al-al-anwar, vol. 65, pp. 83-95 and 149-196, "kitab al-iman wa al-kufr" ("The Book of Faith and Infidelity"), the section on, "Verily the Shi'ah are the people of the Religion of Allah ...." the section on "the Attributes of the Shi'ah and their kinds ...." Sharh-e Chehel hadith, Imam Khumayni (may he rest in Peace), hadith 29, translated by A. Q. Qara'i as "Forty Hadith: An Exposition," in the journal al-Tawhid, vol. X. (Tr.)

[20]. This refers to a hadith according to which: "When some people asked our Imam about the inclusiveness of this ayah: "And there is not one of you but shall come to it [hell]" [19:71] he replied, "We passed through hell and it was extinguished." 'Ilm yaqin, vol. 2, p. 917.

[21]. Al-'Ayyashi narrates from Humran who asked Imam Baqir, Peace be with him, about the ayah mentioned, and he answered: "This is about those who will depart from the fire." Majma' al-bayan, vol. 10, p. 424.

[22]. Iqbal al-a'mal, "Works for the Month of Sha'ban," p. 685; and Misbah al-mutahajjid wa salah al-muta'abbid, p. 374; and Bihar al-anwar, vol. 91, p. 97-99, "kitab al-dhikr wa al- du'a' ", Chapler 32, hadith 12.

[23]. Bihar al-anwar, vol. 19, part 2, old edition, "bab al-ad'iyyah wa al-munajat," pp. 89-90.

[24]. From Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, vol. 7, p. 227, "The Book of Fasting," "Chapter on the Month of Ramadan," Ch. 18, hadith 20.

[25]. It is reported from Jabir that Abu Ja'far, Imam Baqir, Peace be with him, said: "The Prophet of Allah turned his face Inward the people and said: 'O company of people!

When the crescent of the month of Ramadan appears, the rebellious Satans are locked up, and the doors of heaven, the doors of paradise and the doors of mercy are opened, and the doors to the Fire are shut, and prayers are answered.' " From Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, vol. 7, p. 224, "The Book of Fasting," "The Section on the precepts of the Fast of the Month of Ramadan," section 18, hadith 14.

[26]. The 'commanding self' is an expression used in the Quran, associated with one's base desires, cf. 12:53. (Tr.)

[27]. "Sibghat Allah," The colour of Allah, cf. 2:138, is the opposite of the "colour of Satan." (Tr.)

[28]. Abu Jafar [Imam Baqir], Peace be With him, said that the Apostle of Allah, may the Peace and Blessings of Allah be with him and with his progeny, said: "Shall I tell you of the believer? I he believer is one whom the believers trust with their lives and their property. Shall I tell you of the Muslim? The Muslim is one from whose tongue and hands the Muslims are safe." From Usul al-Kafi, vol. 3, p. 331, "kitab al-iman wa al-kufr" ("The Book of Faith and Infidelity"), "Chapter of the Believer, His signs and attributes," hadith 19.

[29]. For example, "And say: 'Work, so Allah will see your work and (so will) His Apostle and the believers; and you shall be brought back to the Knower of the unseen and the seen, then He will inform you of what you did.' " (9:105) Also, Abu Basir reports that Imam Sadiq (a) said: "Each morning, the deeds of the servants, the good ones and the bad ones, will be reviewed by the Apostle of Allah, Peace be upon him and his household, so be careful. This is what Allah, the Supreme, said: 'Work, so Allah will see your work and (so will) His Apostle.' " Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 318, "The Book of Hujjah," "Chapter on the Presentation of the deeds to the Apostle and the Imams, Peace be with them," hadith 1, 2-6. Al-Tafsir al-burhan, vol. 2, p. 157.

[30]. "The Night of Power" is a night near the end of Ramadan in which the Quran was revealed to the Prophet (s) and which, according to the Quran, is "a night better than one thousand months." Cf. Quran, Surat al-Qadr (97). (Tr.)

[31]. Furu' al-Kafi, vol. 4, p. 63, "The Book of Fasting," "The Chapter of the Grace of the Fast and the one who Keeps the Fast," hadith 6.

[32]. Sahar is the period from the first light of the morning until sunrise. (Tr.)

[33]. Imam uses the expression " 'alam-e zulmani-ye tabi at," literally 'the dark world of nature,' but here, by 'nature' is not meant all things natural, as opposed to artificial, but unrefined and base. (Tr.)

[34]. "By Allah, if the seven climes and what is under their skies were offered to me to be sinful to Allah by taking the skin of a grain of barley from an ant, I would not do it." Nahj al-balaghah, Sermon 215.

[35]. Shimr was the assassin of Imam Husayn, Peace be with him, and symbolizes evil. (Tr.)

[36]. "He utters not a word but there is by him a watcher at hand (raqibun 'atid)." (50:18)

[37]. In the advice given by the Commander of the Faithful (Imam 'Ali [a]) to Nawf al-Bakali, it is stated: "Keep away from backbiting, for it will be food for the dogs of hell." Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, vol. 8, p. 600, "the Book of Hajj" "the Chapters on the Precepts of the Ten," Ch. 152, hadith 16.

[38]. It is reported that Aba 'Abd Allah (Imam Jafar), Peace he with him, said: "The head of all sins is love of the world." Usul al-al-Kafi, vol. 4, p. 2, "The Book of Faith and Infidelity," "The Chapter on Love of the World and Avarice Toward It," hadith 1. Usul al-al-Kafi, vol. 3, p. 197, "The Book of Faith and Infidelity," "The Chapter on Derogation of the World and Asceticism in respect of it," hadith 11. Bihar al-anwar, vol. 70, p. 1; and vol. 74, p. 178.

[39]. One of the symptoms of dropsy is inordinate thirst. In Arabic the disease is called istisqa and one who has the disease is mustasqa (Tr.)

[40]. "He (Iblis) said: "As You have caused me to remain disappointed, I will certainly lie in wait for them in Your straight path." (7:16) In the exegesis of 'Ali ibn Ibrahim pertaining to this ayah, it is written: "If people tread the path of guidance, Satan tries to make them leave the path of religion." Tafsir of 'Ali ibn Ibrahim, vol. 1, p. 224; al-Tafsir al-burhan, vol.2,p.5.

[41]. In a narration from the family of the Prophet (s) under ayah 98, Surat al-An'am, pertaining to the phrase, "a resting place and a depository", it is said that the faiths of individuals may be divided into two kinds, fixed and borrowed, as in the narration from Muhammad ibn al-Fudayl from Musa ibn al-Ja'far ('a) who said: "Faith which is in a resting place will be fixed until the day of the resurrection. Faith which is in a depository will be taken by God prior to death." Tafsir al-'Ayyashi, vol. 1, p. 401. In Nahj al-balaghah it is also to be found that: "A kind of faith is fixed in the heart, and another kind is loaned in the hearts and breasts until the time of death." Nahj al-balaghah, Sermon 231.

[42]. The phrase used is more literally, "sitting at the table of Imam Zaman ('a)," indicating that the religious students are provided for through religious donations. (Tr.)

[43]. The full text of the hadith is: "For God, the Glorious and Exalted, the world is without value; and among the creatures known to us which God has created, there is no existent more despicable to Him than the world, and since the time when He created the world, God has never looked kindly upon it." Bihar al-anwar, vol. 70, p. 110, "The Book of Faith and Infidelity," Ch. 122, hadith 109.

[44]. It is narrated from Imam S3diq ('a): "Worship is of three kinds: one group worships God from fear, this is the worship of the servants; another group worships God in order to obtain a reward, this is the worship of hirelings; and the third group worships God, the Great and Lofty, because of love, and this is the worship of the free. And this is the most excellent worship" Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, vol. 1, p. 45, "The Chapters of Introduction to Worship," Ch. 9, hadith 1. Usul al-Kafi, vol. 3, p. 131, "The Book of Faith and Infidelity," "Ch. on worship," hadith 5

[45]. It is narrated that Imam 'Ali ('a) said: "Verily, asking forgiveness is a degree of the 'Illyyin, and it is a word that means six things. The first of them is regret for what has occurred. The second is resolve not to return to that evil ever again...." Nahj al-balaghah, p. 1281, hikmat 409.

For more information refer to "Forty hadiths: An Exposition" by Imam Khumayni, hadith 17, translated by 'A. Q. Qarati in the journal, al-Tawhid, vol. VII, No. 2, pp. 39-52. Note that the 'Illyyin are the loftiest heights of heaven. Cf. Quran (83:17) (Tr.)

[46]. It is reported from Imam Baqir ('a): "There is no servant without a white spot on his heart. When a sin is performed a black spot appears on it. Then if he repents, this blackness is erased. But if he continues to sin, the blackness increases, until it covers the white. When the white is covered, one with such a heart never returns to excellence and goodness." Usul al- Kafi vol 3, p. 274, "The Book of Faith and Infidelity," "the Chapter of Sins," hadith 20.

[47]. Awali al li'ali vol. 1, p. 129, Ch. 8, hadith 3; al-Jami' al-saghir, vol. 2, p. 45, 95.

[48]. The maraji' taqlid are the sources of imitation for Islamic law. (Tr.)

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