

# MESSAGE OF THAQALAYN

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

IN THE NAME OF GOD,  
THE MOST GRACIOUS, THE MOST MERCIFUL

MESSAGE OF THAQALAYN  
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# MESSAGE OF THAQALAYN (UK ED.)

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The *Message of Thaqaalayn* feels responsible to present the teachings of Islam in general and the School of the Ahlul Bayt (a) in particular with complete honesty and accuracy and at the same time to emphasise the common ground that binds all Muslims together. Strengthening ties of brotherhood amongst all Muslims, whatever school of Islam they may adhere to, and establishing genuine, enduring and intimate friendship between all those who believe in God are two of the main aims and tasks of the *Message of Thaqaalayn* and indeed, any responsible media.

**Editor-in-Chief**

# INDICATORS OF PIETY, PART I<sup>1</sup>

MOHAMMAD ALI SHOMALI

**ABSTRACT:** What are the indicators of piety? And how can we guarantee that we are heading in the right direction in our spiritual journey? This series elucidates the merits and consequences of piety as seen in the Qur'an, hadith, and the lives of the Ahlul Bayt, and introduces indicators by which one can examine one's own piety or, if needed, others' piety. Piety, or taqwa, is one of the highest qualities a person can achieve; the pious believe in the hidden as well the revelations of Prophet Muhammad and the prophets before him, establish prayer, and give alms. Those who have it are to be grateful, and those who do not must endeavour to attain it as it pleases God, earns His support, and results in the acceptance of one's deeds.

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One quality we need is to be able to evaluate ourselves and others bearing in mind to avoid being judgemental. Many times in our social lives we need to assess people, for example, when we want to choose a friend, spouse, teacher, or we want to employ someone or work for someone. People are very complicated and sophisticated. You could know someone for many years but still be unsure about him or her; or you might have a

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is the first part of a series of seven lessons by the author in London, at the Islamic Centre of England in July 2011. This course was an attempt to explore the essence of faith, religiosity, and moral values on which they are based.

false opinion about someone, such as deciding in your mind that he or she is not a good person, and then suddenly after many years witness his or her beautiful qualities. This may happen with respect to one's self as well. We tend to develop good or bad ideas about ourselves although in both cases we may be wrong.

It is very difficult to be able to have a sound and accurate understanding of others, including your family members or friends. It takes a lot of effort and it actually needs some kind of insight. Just listening to someone or being related to him or her is not sufficient to have a sound understanding because of the many different levels of personality. Moreover, sometimes people manage to hide some aspects of their personality, and insight and patience is needed to understand their true character. Sometimes you need to wait for some situation to emerge so that those hidden things may emerge. When one is tested we may see his or her true colours since people are like a pool of water. Some pools are clean from the surface to the bottom and some are clean only on the surface: if you manage to stir the water the dirt will surface and it would be only then that you realise what was hidden at the bottom. A person's true colours appear when faced with a serious challenge such as a tragic event, a difficult task, a fight, or a disagreement. As Imam Ali said:

فِي تَغَلُّبِ الْأَحْوَالِ عِلْمُ جَوَاهِرِ الرِّجَالِ

Through change of circumstances the [true] essence of people is known.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Nahj al-Balaghah*, Wise Saying 217.

One way to know a people is to travel with them since unexpected events occur that not everyone is prepared for, and thus they behave more naturally instead of artificially. For example, during the hajj pilgrimage, often situations arise where things get out of control, even if you have the best hajj leaders. The entire experience is a good opportunity to better see people's real qualities, such as their patience, fairness, selfishness, or greediness.

In one anecdote, there was a man who always prayed in the first row for the congregational prayer in the mosque. One day, he entered the mosque late, when the prayer had already begun. He felt ashamed, thinking of what the people would think about him. Then he was suddenly awakened, and told himself, "My God! Maybe all these years I went early to be in the first row to show off." So sometimes after many years we may realize that there was a subtle impure intention we had thought was pure. Regarding intentions, both Sunni and Shi'a sources quote Prophet Muhammad as saying:

ديب الشرك في أمتي كديب الخملة السوداء على الصخرة الصماء في الليلة الظلماء

The creeping of *al-shirk* [associating someone or something to God which here refers to having no pure intention; *al-shirk al-khafiyy*] in my nation is more inconspicuous than the creeping of black ant on black rock in the pitch-darkness of the night.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, you might sometimes doubt your intention although after many years you realize that your intention was good. For example, in

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<sup>3</sup> *Muntakhab al-Anwar al-Mudi'ah*, p. 16.

one anecdote, there was a person who always provided a family with financial help. One day, he went to visit them and for a specific reason they got angry with him, shouting at him, telling him that he never did any good to them. He left the house humiliated and disrespected in the presence of others. However, his friend saw him happy when he returned from the house, and asked him why. He told his friend what had happened, and after the humiliation, he said, "I did not feel any regret and this means that I had not supported them to receive praise. I did it all for the sake of God.

In any case, it is up to God to judge people, but in our social lives we need to be able to evaluate people while simultaneously examining ourselves. How can we decide whether someone is virtuous? What are the indicators of piety? How can we ensure that we are on the right track in our spiritual journey?

The faithful are always concerned about themselves; those who feel content with their position need to worry even more. According to Imam Baqir, one night the Prophet was told by Aishah why he put too much pressure on himself while God has forgiven all his sins.<sup>4</sup> The Prophet replied, "O Aishah! Shouldn't I be thankful?" The Prophet believed that no matter how much he worshipped and served God and tried to guide people, he still did more to show his appreciation of divine blessings upon him. Imam Baqir said that the Prophet used to stand on his toes [praying

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<sup>4</sup> This refers to the verse 48:1. Of course, 'sin' here does not mean legal or fiqhi sin. For further discussion, please refer to Qur'anic exegesis, such as *Al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*, vol. 18, pp. 255 & 256.

and reciting the Qur'an] and then God revealed, “*Ta Ha! We did not send down to you the Qur'an that you should be miserable (20:1&2).*”<sup>5</sup>

It is only when you feel that you are in great need of God's favour and forgiveness that you can improve. In *Dua Abu Hamzah*, Imam Sajjad says to God:

إذا رايت مولاي ذنوبي فرغت و اذا رايت عفوكم طمعت

My master! When I look at my sins I become terrified  
but when I look at Your forgiveness I become hopeful.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, looking at one's own misconduct and shortcomings may cause hopelessness; however, thinking about God's mercy and generosity generates hope. Elsewhere in the same dua, Imam Sajjad says:

يا رب ان لنا بك رجاء عظيما

Oh God! We have great hope in you.<sup>7</sup>

If there is one thing in this world that is guaranteed, it is that we have a very kind, merciful, and generous Lord, and this should give us much hope. We should not deceive ourselves by developing an exaggerated view

<sup>5</sup> *Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 95. The original text in Arabic is as follows:

عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ قَالَ كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص عِنْدَ عَائِشَةَ لَيْلَتَهَا فَقَالَتْ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ لِمَ تَشْعُبُ نَفْسَكَ وَ قَدْ  
عَفَرَ اللَّهُ لَكَ مَا تَقْدَمُ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَ مَا تَأَخَّرَ فَقَالَ يَا عَائِشَةُ أَلَا أَكُونُ عَبْدًا شَكُورًا قَالَ وَ كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ  
ص يَقُومُ عَلَى أَطْرَافِ أَصَابِعِ رِجْلَيْهِ فَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ سُبْحَانَهُ وَ تَعَالَى طَهُ مَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لِتَشْقَى.

<sup>6</sup> *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 95, p. 83.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* p. 85.

of ourselves. Imam Sadiq says, “When self-admiration (*‘ujb*) enters a person, he is destroyed.”<sup>8</sup>

We have to examine ourselves carefully. If we really find signs of piety or at least some of them in ourselves we should thank God and endeavour to protect them; if we don’t find them, we should try to change ourselves and attain them before it is too late.

**Taqwa:** Sometimes *taqwa* is translated as Godwary or God-fearing which is fine, but here we will translate it as piety. It can be argued that according to the Qur’an, piety is the highest or at least one of the highest qualities a person can achieve. At the same time, it can be argued that no quality below *taqwa* is sufficient. If a person’s faith does not reach the level of *taqwa* struggle is needed. *Taqwa* is the bottom line; it is the only quality that shelters a person against the pains and sufferings faced in the hereafter.

The significance of *taqwa* and the merits of the pious (*muttaqin*) are described in many verses, for example:

*Alif, Lam, Mim. This is the Book, there is no doubt in it, a guidance to the Godwary [pious], who believe in the Unseen, and maintain the prayer, and spend out of what We have provided them with; and who believe in what has been sent down to you and what was sent down before you, and are certain of the Hereafter. Those follow their Lord’s guidance, and it is they who are the felicitous. (2:1-5)*

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<sup>8</sup> *Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 313.

Those who benefit from the Qur'an are the pious. Although the Qur'an offers its guidance to all mankind, there are people who ignore or oppose it, and there are people who theoretically accept it without putting its guidelines into practice. To believe in the Qur'an and act upon it is not a matter of mere recitation, memorisation, or distribution of it as Prophet Muhammad said, "There are many reciters of the Qur'an who are cursed by the Qur'an."<sup>9</sup>

Who are the pious that can actually benefit from the Qur'an? The above verses enumerate some of their characteristics. The pious are those who believe in a) what was revealed to Prophet Muhammad and the previous messengers of God, b) the hidden, that is, God, the angels, and in the hereafter, and c) they establish prayer and give alms.

Thus, taqwa is a virtue that is attained when you have certain qualities and actions. It also becomes clear that taqwa is higher than faith (*iman*), prayer (*salat*) and alms (*zakat*). These three result in taqwa.

According to the Qur'an, taqwa is the only thing that can save us in the hereafter:

*Relate to them truly the account of Adam's two sons. When the two of them offered an offering, it was accepted from one of them and not accepted from the other. [One of them] said, 'Surely I will kill you.' [The other one] said, 'God accepts only from the Godwary [pious]. (5:27)*

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<sup>9</sup> *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 89, p. 184.

Thus, God only accepts the deeds from the pious, and if the deeds are not accepted, it results in not having provision for his eternal journey:

*... And whatever good you do, God knows it. And take provision, for indeed the best provision is Godwariness. So be wary of Me, O you who possess intellects! (2:197)*

The Qur'an also indicates that God loves the pious, and certainly God's love for them is the greatest capital they can have:

*... God indeed loves the Godwary (3:76; 9:4; 9:7)*

Who does not want to be loved by God? Some trouble themselves to gain people's love. What about yearning for God's love? Interestingly God's love for the pious earns the people's love for them:

*Indeed those who have faith and do righteous deeds — the All-beneficent will endear them [to His creation]. (19:96)*

God only accepts deeds from the pious: actions are not accepted without piety. It depends on the intention, as God knows what is in the heart and how much efforts a person made. A person may give one pound in charity and it is accepted, while someone else's charity of a million pounds can be rejected due to the wrong intention.

In the time of Imam Sadiq, there was a man who was respected for his spirituality and piety. One day, the Imam witnessed a man stealing two fruits from a shop and two breads from a bakery, and then gave them to an ill person he visited. After a while, when the Imam asked him why he did that, the respected man, thinking he was clever, replied "Have not you

read in the Qur'an that if you bring one good action God rewards you ten times, and if you bring one bad action God will punish you for one? So I have 36 actions without spending a penny” The Imam replied, “Have not you read in the Quran that God only accepts from pious people? How can you steal money and spend it in charity? You must have pure money and pure intentions, and then you may give it for the sake of God.”<sup>10</sup>

The Qur'an also tells us that God is with the pious:

... *God is with the Godwary.* (2:194; 9:36; 9:123)

To be with the pious means that God supports them: “*God is the guardian of the Godwary* (45:19).” Describing the position of the pious in the hereafter, the Qur'an says:

*But to those who were Godwary it will be said, 'What is it that your Lord has sent down?' They will say, 'Good.' For those who do good in this world there will be a good [reward], and the abode of the Hereafter is better, and the abode of the Godwary is surely excellent: the Gardens of Eden, which they will enter, with streams running in them. There they will have whatever they wish, and thus does God reward the Godwary — those whom the angels take away while they are pure. They say [to them], 'Peace be to you! Enter paradise because of what you used to do.'* (16:30-32)<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 47, p. 238.

<sup>11</sup> See also the verses: 19:85; 44:51; 51:15; 52:17; 54:54; 77:41.

The Qur'an also informs us of the success of the pious:

*Moses said to his people, 'Turn to God for help and be patient. The earth indeed belongs to God, and He gives its inheritance to whomever He wishes of His servants, and the outcome will be in favour of the Godway.'*  
(7:128)<sup>12</sup>

To please God, to have one's deeds accepted, to gain His support and guardianship, and to attain a good end, we need taqwa. Without it, any blessings such as knowledge, reputation, money, position, family, and children will add to our responsibility, and one or more of these might even work against us. For example, Imam Sadiq is quoted as saying:

يغفر للجاهل سبعون ذنبا قبل ان يغفر للعالم ذنب واحد

Seventy sins of the person who has no knowledge will be forgiven before one sin of a scholar ( *'alim* ) is forgiven.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> See also 11:49; 28:83.

<sup>13</sup> *Al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 47.

# THE NURTURING ROLE OF LADY FATIMAH

NAHLA GHARAVI NAEENI<sup>1</sup>

TRANSLATED BY FATEMEH SOLTANMOHAMMADI

ABSTRACT: A look at historical narrations and biographies show that Lady Fatimah is the representation of a perfect individual in the Islamic school of thought. An exemplar mother who with her actions and words raised the best of children acknowledged by both friends and enemies, Lady Fatimah was a role model for her children and all Muslim women and men during her short lifespan. However, because narrations regarding the Lady and her family's virtues and character have been subject to change due to events throughout history, with the use of reports and narrations from the Infallibles about Lady Fatimah, this article brings to light the role she played in the upbringing of her family.

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## Introduction

Every faith consists of two essential components: 1) Its belief system, which comprises the fundamental aspects that create the worldview of that faith in which the views, perceptions, and values of a faith are consistent upon, and 2) Practice, which shows how the theoretical views of that faith can be accomplished. This article, which addresses Lady Fatimah's conduct

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and method of upbringing, seeks to present the life of Lady Fatimah as the applied form of Islam. She was an illustration of a perfect woman, or rather, a perfect human being within the Islamic faith. A woman who throughout her short life –between 18 to 35 years,<sup>2</sup> – witnessed the stages of the Prophet’s mission and was raised in the house of revelation. Indeed, the Prophet once said to her, “Are you not pleased to be the best of all ladies of the worlds?”<sup>3</sup> and “It is to be known that you are the chief of all women in paradise.”<sup>4</sup> He has also said, “My daughter, Fatimah, is the master of all ladies of the worlds.”<sup>5</sup>

Lady Fatimah was a wise, faithful, and patient. She was also a freedom fighter who was under the grace of God and His messenger. The Prophet said, “Surely God is angered when Lady Fatimah is angered and is satisfied when she is satisfied.”<sup>6</sup>

Due to the fact that recording and narrating hadiths were banned by the Caliphs up to the time of ‘Umar ibn ‘Abdulaziz, we are left with incomplete reports of Lady Fatimah’s conduct with her father, husband, and children. Her morality, honour, and virtues have not been completely reported. For instance, in several volumes in *Bihar al-Anwar*,<sup>7</sup> the chapter relating to Lady Fatimah titled *Biographies and Good Character and Virtues and Circumstances*<sup>8</sup> contains no report on the Lady’s conduct with

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<sup>2</sup> Majlisi, volume 43, p. 213 and 214; Gharavi Naeeni, 12

<sup>3</sup> Bukhari, vol. 4, p. 247-248; Kutub al-Managhib, Usul al-Ghabah, vol. 7, p. 218

<sup>4</sup> Ibn Athir Juzi, vol. 7, p. 219

<sup>5</sup> Majlisi, vol. 43, p. 22

<sup>6</sup> Ibn Athir, vol. 7, p. 219; Majlisi, vol. 43, p. 22; Tabrani, 22, narration 402

<sup>7</sup> A compilation of the majority of narrations amongst all Shi’a collections

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 19-80

her children and her method of upbringing.<sup>9</sup> And only a few narrations are found on her housework.

Thus, there is little found in regards to her housework and child-rearing; Islamic traditions and historical reports mostly consist of the Prophet's sayings, and that which have been reported about the family of the Prophet thus far does not allow us to fully describe how they lived and what their characteristics were, much less about Lady Fatimah and her role in the house and in society. From the brief texts about Lady Fatimah's virtues and character, some conclusions can be made about her character and actions.

### **Childcare and Education**

A child is a complete mirror of his or her parents, especially of the mother. The most accessible role model for any child or individual is the closest person to him, the person with whom the child spends his days and nights with. The father and mother, whom with their children form the smallest family unit in society, have the strongest influence on one another, especially on the children who are just beginning to be shaped. The father and mother's sentiment, conduct, and behavior are influential in their temperament.

Lady Fatimah's conduct was the best example for her children. She grew and developed in the house of the Prophet of Islam, the best narrator and interpreter of God's words. The best teacher of mankind raised and familiarized her with divine education. She then became the most

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<sup>9</sup> Refer to Majlis, 43, p. 81-91

prominent woman of her time under the shade of this training and guidance.

Lady Fatimah, in her wisdom, considered upbringing to be constructive and liberating for people; she knew that the secret to an individual and society's rise and decline lies in proper upbringing.

With the spiritual and practical changes in her social circle due to her father's leadership, she knew that a society advances when it is trained properly and a group is considered corrupt when its upbringing is corrupt. Moreover, being a mother is the foundation for a child's prosperity and misfortune, for she was the child of a woman who was the first to believe in the Holy Prophet.

The Lady foresaw the idea that negligence in upbringing would greatly damage an individual and society, especially during early childhood where a seed, like a plant shoot, is flexible; any action, word, or movement will have an effect on it. Thus, she devoted her life to nurturing her children, and continuously accepted her father's valuable words with all her heart: "Respect your children (value them) and train them well."<sup>10</sup> He also said, "Train your kids, for you are responsible."<sup>11</sup>

Hence, during the beginning of her marriage, the Prophet divided work between her and her husband, and said Lady Fatimah was to do the housework; she undertook it as her main responsibility, because she considered the importance of her marriage and caring for her children.

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<sup>10</sup> أكرموا اولادكم و أحسنوا آدابهم

<sup>11</sup> أَدَّبُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ فَاتِكُمْ مَسْئُولُونَ Kulayni, 6, reference 50

Lady Fatimah learned from her father's words of wisdom. Prophet Muhammad said:

الاكلّم راع و كلّمك مسؤل عن رعيتّه... فالمرأة راعية على اهل  
بيت بعلها و ولده و هي مسئولة عنهم<sup>12</sup>

Beware that you must all be obedient and you are all responsible towards those under your protection...and the woman is the protector of the family, her husband, and children and is responsible towards them.

Lady Fatimah nurtured and educated her children side by side with her husband, Imam Ali, who was also educated by the Prophet. Imam Ali said, "A bad child will ruin the reputation and dignity of the family and will bring disgrace and dishonor to his ancestors."<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, he said, "A bad child will contaminate those in the past and ruin those in the future."<sup>14</sup>

Lady Fatimah focused on developing her children's spirit and personality. In her very short life, God blessed her with four children. Indeed, child-rearing is no easy task. It is not limited to feeding, cleaning, and doing laundry. The basis of caring for a child is the nurturing of the child, raising and training an individual highly emphasized in Islam and considers the personality of the child partly dependent upon the teachings, upbringing, and care of the parents.

<sup>12</sup> *Majmu'ah Waram*, vol. 1, p. 6

<sup>13</sup> ولد السوء يهدم القرف و يشين السلف

<sup>14</sup> Amudi, p. 853. Arabic text is as follows:

ولد السوء يعز السلف و يفسد الخلف

A parents' words, attitude, and actions largely affect a child's sensitive and gentle soul which is why parents are to take into consideration their child's emotional and spiritual development for their future success. Prophet Muhammad said, "A fortunate person is fortunate in the mother's belly, and an unfortunate person is unfortunate in the mother's belly."<sup>15</sup> This hadith portrays the effects of the mother's moods, etiquettes, actions, and diet during pregnancy. When the smoking of a mother has a negative effect on the fetus, how can her attitude, mood, and worship not affect it? The mother's spiritual mood and her peacefulness also affects the fetus. This is a matter that medical science has touched upon today.

Since Lady Fatimah was raised by the Prophet and the great Lady of Islam, Khadija, she knew how her milk and her affectionate care would affect a child's sensitive spirit.<sup>16</sup> Lady Fatimah knew that parents are responsible for delivering children who are faithful, brave, and defenders of the truth. Since she had heard the reports of the future from the Prophet, she knew she was to raise a child like Hasan, who in a critical situation, in order to protect the interests of Islam and to prevent the destruction of the Prophet and Imam Ali's efforts, would remain patient and silent to reveal Muawiyah's plots, and to train Husayn who would defend Islam and fight against oppression and corruption, save Muslims from deviation and misguidance, and sacrifice his own life and the lives of his loved ones. She knew she was to nurture daughters like Zaynab and Umm Kulthum, who with patience, steadfastness, and deliverance of

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<sup>15</sup> See e.g. *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 5, pp. 9 & 157. Arabic text is as follows:

السعيد سعيد في بطن امه و الشقى شقى في بطن امه

<sup>16</sup> Refer to Majlisi, 43/282

speech, would expose the oppressive system and awaken the people from negligence.

Lady Fatimah learned from her great father who used to let Hasan and Husayn ride on his back even during his prayer<sup>17</sup> that you must love children. Strengthening a philanthropic soul, that is, establishing love in a child's heart to help him or her develop noble qualities arises from the gentle touches, kindness, true love, and respect parents give. Lady Fatimah not only was involved in her children's playtime, but she was also fully engaged in her children's education, and this included teaching them to worship One God and courageously protect the truth. She once told Hasan:

Hasan, my dear, be like your father and free the truth by removing the rope from truth's throat and worship God who has graced us all – who is beneficent - and do not follow God's vengeful enemy.<sup>18</sup>

Lady Fatimah is aware that before anyone or anything, a child needs his mother to meet his needs. Hence, for this reason, the day when Bilal, the *mua'dhin*<sup>19</sup> of the Prophet, went to see Lady Fatimah to repay his debt, and saw her making flour while Hasan was crying beside the mill. Bilal said, "What can I do for you? Should I take the child or grind the flour?"

<sup>17</sup> *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 43, p. 283. Arabic text is as follows:

كَانَ النَّبِيُّ ص يَضَلِّي فَإِذَا سَجَدَ وَقَبَّ الْحَسَنُ وَالْحُسَيْنَ عَلَى ظَهْرِهِ فَإِذَا أَرَادُوا أَنْ يَمْتَنُوهُمَا أَشَارَ إِلَيْهِمْ أَنْ  
دَعَوْهُمَا فَلَمَّا قَضَى الصَّلَاةَ وَضَعَهُمَا فِي حَجْرِهِ وَقَالَ مَنْ أَحَبَّنِي فَلْيَجِبْ هَدَيْنَ وَ فِي رَوَايَةِ الْجَلْبَةَ دَرُوهُمَا  
بِأَيِّ وَ أُمِّي مَنْ أَحَبَّنِي فَلْيَجِبْ هَدَيْنَ

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p. 286. Arabic text is as follows:

اشبهه اباك يا حسن و اقلع عن الحق الردن و اعبد الها ذا منن و لا توال ذا الاحن

<sup>19</sup> One who calls to prayer

Lady Fatimah replied, “I will take the child.” Bilal took the mill, and in doing so, arrived late at the mosque. When the Prophet came to know of Bilal’s assistance, he said, “You showed mercy to her, may God show mercy to you.”<sup>20</sup>

### *Nutrition for the Child*

Knowing too well that the mother’s milk is the only necessary and highly beneficial source of nutrition for an infant, and since she was not able to fully feed her child, she gave Hasan to Umm Ayman<sup>21</sup> and Husayn to Umm al-Fadl<sup>22</sup> for their feeding. These two women excelled in faith, God-consciousness, righteousness, and virtuousness, both of whom the Prophet praised and labeled them as those of the people of heaven.<sup>23</sup>

The use of permissible (*halaal*) and pure foods has an immense effect on an individual’s body and soul. Lady Fatimah and her husband, Ali bin Abi Talib, never ate unlawful food. Ali fed his children through his hard labor in farming along with other efforts.

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<sup>20</sup> Majlisi, 43/76

<sup>21</sup> Umm Ayman, the freed slave and nurturer of the Messenger of God who accompanied the Prophet in wars and the Holy Prophet named her as one of the people of paradise. She was at the service of the Prophet of God and Lady Zahra. Ibn Sa’d, 8/224-226; Majlisi, 43/204. Gharavi Naeeni, 47

<sup>22</sup> The sister of Maymunah, wife of the Holy Prophet, Asma bint Umayy and Salma, wife of Hamza and wife of Abd al-Muttalib and the first woman to accept Islam in Mecca after Lady Khadijah. The Prophet would visit her and praise her. Ibn Athir wrote Husayn as Hasan and wrote this content in regards to Imam Hasan. Ibn Sa’d, vol. 8, p. 278; Saduq, vol. 2, p. 363; Ibn Athir, vol. 2, p. 14; Gharavi Naeeni, p. 90

<sup>23</sup> Refer to: al-Tabaqat al-Kubra: 8/224-226 and 278

### *Talking with Children*

Speaking kindly and politely plays an affective role in the personality and spiritual strength of a child. It is an Islamic etiquette to warmly greet (*salaam*) others and fully respond to it. The parents' polite manners and observing respect with one another provides the children with an excellent model to follow. Hadith al-Kisa portrays a) the method Hasan and Husayn spoke with their mother, b) Lady Fatimah's response, c) the manner in which her holiness spoke with her husband, and d) respecting elders and seeking their permission:

...و اذا بولدى الحسن قد اقبل و قال السلام عليك يا امّاه  
 فقلت و عليك السلام يا قرّة عيني و ثمرة فؤادى...فاقبل الحسن  
 نحو الكساء و قال السلام عليك يا جدّاه يا رسول الله اتاذن لى  
 ان ادخل معك تحت الكساء فقال و عليك السلام يا ولدى و  
 يا صاحب حوضى قد اذنت لك...فاقبل عند ذلك ابو الحسن  
 على بن ابيطالب و قال السلام عليك يا بنت رسول الله فقلت  
 و عليك السلام يا ابا الحسن و يا امير المؤمنين...

...My son Hasan came in and said, "Peace be upon you, mother." I replied, "And upon you peace, O light of my eyes, and delight of my heart."...Hasan went near the cloak and said, "Peace be upon you, O grandfather, O messenger of God. May I enter the cloak with you?" He replied, "And upon you peace, my son and master of my fountain (*Kawthar*), you are given permission to enter."...After a while, Abul Hasan, Ali bin Abi Talib came in and said, "Peace be upon you, O daughter of the

Prophet of God.” I replied “And upon you peace, O father of Hasan, and the commander of the faithful...”<sup>24</sup>

The etiquette and respect visible in Lady Fatimah’s speech led to more love and affection in the family. The respectful way in which Hasan and Husayn asked for permission from their grandfather to enter was learned from the speech and actions of their parents. Even when speaking to each other, they observed etiquette and respect, where Imam Baqir says, “Imam Husayn out of respect would not speak when in the presence of Imam Hasan.”<sup>25</sup>

### ***Honesty and Integrity***

Sincerity and truthfulness encompass all virtues of knowledge and action. It is not possible to have honesty and not have modesty, courage, wisdom, and justice – the four bases of ethics – because an individual is an embodiment of his belief, faith, and actions; and when he decides to say nothing but the truth, he is required to make these three factors in correspondence with one another.

Therefore, if he acknowledges the truth, he says nothing but the truth, and will only say what he believes in and will only do that which corresponds with his words. This is when pure faith, exceeding morals, and good deeds will be provided for him. A child learns these traits from his teacher, specifically his parents, and eventually makes a habit of it; thus, having honesty and integrity is not only the main source of peace and comfort, it is one of the most important traits for a parent or teacher. Lady Fatimah

<sup>24</sup> Qummi, p. 1129

<sup>25</sup> *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 43, p. 319. Arabic text is as follows:

ما تكلم الحسين بين يدي الحسن اعظاما له

was the best of people in her honesty and integrity. Ayesha says about her, “I have never seen a person more honest than Lady Fatimah, unless if it were her children.”<sup>26</sup> Such a mother raised such children.

### ***Respecting Others’ Rights and Being Organized***

Part of good upbringing is teaching children to respect other people’s rights; as a result, this should train them to adhere to respecting others and prevent them from bullying or oppressing others.

This was strongly practiced in Lady Fatimah’s household; her husband said, “One day the Holy Prophet was at our house when Hasan wanted water. The Messenger of God milked some milk and gave it to Hasan. Husayn got up to take the bowl of milk from Hasan, but the Prophet prevented him. Lady Fatimah said, ‘Oh Messenger of God, it seems you like Hasan more.’ The Prophet said, “I don’t like him better; he asked for water first.”<sup>27</sup>

Salman al-Farsi says, “Lady Fatimah was busy grinding the grains to flour and Husayn was crying from hunger. I said, ‘Oh daughter of the Messenger of God, why don’t you get help from Fiddah’<sup>28</sup>?’ She replied, ‘The Prophet has said that one day the work is for Fiddah and one day for me. And her turn was yesterday.’<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. vol. 43, pp. 25 and 68

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. vol. 43, p. 283. Arabic text is as follows:

ما هو بأحبها الي و لکنه استسقى اول

<sup>28</sup> Lady Fatimah’s helper

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. p. 28

### ***Happiness and Care***

Naturally, Lady Fatimah wanted her children to be happy. Since she would think of her children's future and the days they will spend motherless after her death, during her last moments in this world she recommended Imam Ali to marry her niece, Umamah<sup>30</sup> and for the children to be well cared for, she asked Imam Ali to spend one night with the children and one night with his wife.

### ***Simple Living, Patience, and Contentment***

Lady Fatimah, the daughter of the Holy Prophet, the daughter of the leader of Muslims, and the ruler of the land could have anything she wanted. Instead, she chose to live simply, carefully sustaining and not wasting God's blessings; and this was a model lifestyle for her children. Lady Fatimah's generosity was learned from her father: she was still young when she gave a needy person her wedding dress on the night of her wedding, when every bride dreams of wearing a wedding dress. Imam Hasan said about the Prophet's generosity: "He was very generous and forgiving and would give his wealth for the sake of God over and over again"<sup>31</sup> and "He gave his wealth for the sake of God so many times, that at the time of his death he was in debt."<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid. p. 217

<sup>31</sup> 'Awalim al-Ulum, vol. 16, Chapter *Asceticism and Collection of Good Manners*

<sup>32</sup> Reminder: At the time of her death, Lady Fatimah made a will for her property, benefits, and income to be for Amir al-Mo'minin and after him for Hasan and after him for Husayn . (Bihar al-Anwar: 43/235). The report that they were in debt during their time of martyrdom, shows their extent of generosity that they were so generous, at the time of their martyrdom they were in debt. Majlisi, vol. 43, p. 321

Sunni scholar Ibn Athir writes the following about Imam Hasan: “Hasan was gentle and benevolent. He was also a God-conscious ascetic. He let go of the world for the love of that which is with God.”<sup>33</sup>

About Imam Husayn the following has been said:

-He would give lots of charity (*sadaqah*).<sup>34</sup>

-He would spend for the sake of God in such a way that at the time of his death he was in debt.<sup>35</sup>

-He would honor guests and grant the requester and would handle the state of the poor.<sup>36</sup>

Lady Zaynab was also said to be the best of women in being charitable and generous.<sup>37</sup>

If Lady Fatimah had not given for the sake of God, such as offering her only loaf of bread to the poor after fasting for three days, Hasanayn and Fiddah would not have learned to do the same. It was the mother’s actions that taught Hasan and Husayn to be generous, merciful, and honorable.

If Lady Fatimah did not endure difficulties, struggles, and distress, like carrying the jug of water, grinding grains into flour to bake bread, and the household chores and child-caring, how would Lady Zaynab face the exhausting hardship of gathering the orphans in Karbala, and would she have been able endure caring for the sick in the desert with no helper?

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<sup>33</sup> Ibn Athir, vol. 2, p. 18

<sup>34</sup> Ibn Athir: vol. 2, p. 27

<sup>35</sup> Majlisi: vol. 43, p. 321

<sup>36</sup> Qummi, *Nafs al-Mahmum*: p. 21

<sup>37</sup> Gharavi Naeeni, p. 194

When they had no food in the house, Lady Fatimah did not ask for anything from her husband. Imam Ali asked, “Why didn’t you say anything?” Lady Fatimah replied, “The Prophet forbade me to ask you for anything. He told me: Do not ask your cousin for anything. If he brings [home] something [appreciate it] and if he does not [have anything to] bring do not ask him.”<sup>38</sup> This sort of patience and contentment from Lady Fatimah was a lesson in the life and patience of her daughters’ family life. She lived such a life that her daughter Zaynab managed to turn away from her husband’s wealthy living and go through difficulties of traveling into the deserts.<sup>39</sup>

Ali said, “Other than the piece of sheepskin that Lady Fatimah and I would sleep on at night and the camel would eat grass on, we had nothing else.”<sup>40</sup>

### *Worship and Intimacy with the Qur’an*

Lady Fatimah was raised by the great man who familiarized her with Islamic knowledge, morals, and Qur’anic recitation and teachings from early childhood. As a result, she continuously found intimacy with God’s words. Such a mother taught this intimacy and understanding to her children, and this familiarity developed within those great figures as well. From childhood they witnessed their mother’s sincere affection with the Holy Book. She taught them until she passed on this intimacy to her children which soon became apparent in their personality. Imam Husayn

<sup>38</sup> *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 43, p. 31. Arabic text is as follows:

كان رسول الله (ص) نهاني أن أسألك شيئاً فقال: لا تسألين ابن عمك شيئاً إن جارك بشئى و الأ فلا تسأليه

<sup>39</sup> Gharavi Naeeni, p. 194

<sup>40</sup> *Manaqib Aal Abi Talib*, vol. 2, p. 96, *Fasl fi al-Musabiqah bil-Zuhd wa al-Qina’ah*

spent the entire night of Ashurah reciting the Qur'an, praying, supplicating, and asking for forgiveness.<sup>41</sup>

Praying for and thinking about others was another lesson Lady Fatima passed on to her children. Imam Hasan said, "There was no one more devout than Lady Fatimah in the world; she would stand for so long until her feet would swell."<sup>42</sup> He also said, "My mother, Lady Fatimah, would worship a great deal in her place of worship and I would hear her continuously pray for all the believing men and women, everyone other than herself."<sup>43</sup> Imam Hasan said, "I saw my mother, Lady Fatimah, who was standing at the altar the night of Friday bowing and prostrating in prayer until dawn."<sup>44</sup>

It was the result of Lady Fatimah's worshipping that Imam Ali ibn Husayn said about his father, "Imam Husayn would pray a thousand rak'ahs throughout the day and night."<sup>45</sup> Imam Husayn's plenteous fasts and prayers, which have been cited by Ibn Athir,<sup>46</sup> were cultured through his parents. Their mother's worship and her three-day consecutive fast was a matter well ingrained in Hasanain's mind and they mirrored that quality throughout their lives.

One day, Imam Ali, due to Fatima's exhaustion and pain from household work, encouraged her to go to the Prophet to request a maid. Instead of

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<sup>41</sup> Mufid, 215 and 216

<sup>42</sup> ما كان في الدنيا أعبد من فاطمة، كانت تقوم حتى تتورم قدمها

<sup>43</sup> *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 43, p. 76 and 82; Mahallati, vol. 1, p. 179

<sup>44</sup> *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 2, p. 96. Arabic text is as follows:

رأيت امي فاطمة قامت في محرابها ليلة جمعة فلم تزل راکعة و ساجدة حتى انفجر عمود الصبح

<sup>45</sup> Qummi, *Nafs al-Mahmum*: p. 212; Ibn Abd Rubah: vol. 3, p. 169

<sup>46</sup> Ibn Athir: vol. 2, p. 27

giving a maid, the Prophet taught her the supplication of prayer beads (*dhikr tasbih*) and they were pleased. Ali said, “We went to request something worldly, and God gave us the reward of the hereafter.”<sup>47</sup>

The idea of praying to reduce the weight of heavy loads of work and troublesome matters helped Lady Zaynab on the day of Ashura, when Imam Sajjad<sup>48</sup> witnessed her observing the night prayers (*salat ul-layl*) and supplicating and praying for God’s assistance to tolerate the suffering, disasters, and troubles to come. In humility, reverence, and worship, Zaynab was her parents’ successor. She would spend most of the night in prayer and was constantly reciting Qur’an.<sup>49</sup>

### *The Degree of Modesty and Islamic Clothing*

It has been narrated from Imam Ali who said, “One day we were in the presence of the Prophet when he asked, “What is best action for a woman?” We were all unable to answer until we parted. I went to Lady Fatimah, narrated the Prophet’s saying, and said none of us knew the answer. Lady Fatimah then responded, “The best thing for a woman is for her to not see a man (stranger/unlawful man) and for a man (stranger/unlawful) to not see a woman.’ I returned to the Prophet and said, “Oh Messenger of God, you asked us what is best for a woman...” and I told him the answer. The Prophet then asked, ‘Who told you this?’ I said, ‘Lady Fatimah.’ The Prophet was pleased and said, “Fatimah is part of me.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Majlisi, vol. 43, p. 85

<sup>48</sup> Mahallati, vol. 3, p. 62 - Imam Sajjad said about her, “I saw my aunt praying while sitting and busy in worship that night.”

<sup>49</sup> Mahallati, vol. 3, p. 62

<sup>50</sup> Arbali: vol. 2, p. 94

Lady Fatimah taught this principle to her children, especially her daughters and to Muslim women and girls. It has been reported regarding Umm Kulthum, “During the time Lady Fatimah was saying farewell to this world, Umm Kulthum, who was only five years old, put a burqa on her face and a cloak which dragged on the floor on her head and said with anguish, “Oh father, Oh Prophet of God! Truly this moment is like the time we lost you. There will no longer be any meeting (between us and our mother until the hereafter).”<sup>51</sup>

Chastity, purity, virtuous morality, and the status of Lady Fatimah was so eminent that when friends and foe wanted to introduce Imam Hasan or Imam Husayn to one another, they would say, “This is the son of Fatimah.”<sup>52</sup>

### ***Protecting rightful leadership and defending the truth***

It was Lady Fatimah’s pleading to, defending the truth and the rightful leadership that taught her daughter Zaynab how to defend the family of the Prophet in the court of Yazid.<sup>53</sup> Protecting the leadership (*wilayah*), which led to the martyrdom of Lady Fatimah, was an example for Zaynab to overlook the wealth and the comfort of her husband’s home, and to support Imam Husayn, she executed her duty; she set out into the desert, along with her sons, beside her leader and master, to perform her mission.

It was Lady Fatimah’s speeches in the mosque of Medina and in her encounters with the elders of that city as well as the wives of the

<sup>51</sup> *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 43, p. 191. Arabic text is as follows:

يا ابتاه يا رسول الله الآن حقاً فقد ناك فقدا لا لقاء بعده ابدا

<sup>52</sup> Ibn Shahr Ashub, vol. 3, p. 186; Majlisi, vol. 43, p. 345

<sup>53</sup> Ibn Tafur, p. 20; Amin, vol. 7; Majlisi, vol. 45

companions that created a strong Zaynab who with her firm words and sermons shook the market and court of Kufa,<sup>54</sup> brought a tremor and fear to the court of Damascus,<sup>55</sup> and awoke the Muslim people from negligence.

Lady Fatimah's courage in front of a large gathering that included the mosque's worshippers, the caliph and his followers, and the well-known companions of the Prophet was exhibited again and again. This occurred when Imam Hasan spoke to Mu'awiya in the mosque, when Imam Husayn renounced allegiance to Yazid's governor in Medina, and when Lady Zaynab talked in the palaces of Ibn Ziyad and Yazid.<sup>56</sup>

Every day Lady Fatimah would take Hasan and Husayn with her to *Bayt al-Ahzan* (the House of Sorrow) to grieve over her great father. Her deep sorrow and tears were due to separation from him and the discontinuity of revelation and the right of leadership that was denied. She shared this grief with her two children, and took them to observe the actions of the companions after the passing of the Prophet and learn how selfishness and carelessness can quickly cause serious problems in the society and in the Ummah.

In the mosque of the Prophet while delivering a sermon to the companions of the Prophet, Lady Fatimah said:

فاتقوا الله حق تقاته و أطيعوه فيما أمركم به...

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<sup>54</sup> Majmu'ah al-Khatib al-Dawiyah fi Wajh Yazid bin Muawiyah, p. 12

<sup>55</sup> ibid, p. 20

<sup>56</sup> Usd al-Ghaba: 2/19; A'yan al-Shi'ah: vol. 7; Bihar al-Anwar: vol. 45; Balaghah al-Nisa: p. 20; Maqtal al-Husayn: 2/40

Exercise God-consciousness (*taqwa*), as He deserves and obey Him in what He has commanded you to do, (i.e. accepting the leadership and guardianship of our family and obeying us).

In another section of this sermon, Lady Fatimah said, “He made obeying us [the Ahlul Bayt] the cause of order for nations and our leadership a safe haven from segregation and separation.”<sup>57</sup>

She had protected the Imam of her time and through her struggle she showed her children and all people that the most valuable and precious being in every era is the Imam of the time. It was with this teaching that Lady Zaynab, followed Imam Husayn and cared for him until the end. She also cared for and protected the successor to Imam Husayn – Imam Sajjad – who was ill in Karbala, and prevented an aggression towards him in the court of Ibn Ziyad and Yazid.

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<sup>57</sup> طاعتنا نظاما للملة و امامتنا امانا من الفرقة Arbali, vol. 2, p. 110

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# A GLIMPSE OF TAFSIR-E NUR: VERSES 162-165 OF SURAH AL-AN'AM

MUHSIN QARA'ATI

TRANSLATED BY SABIKA MITHANI

ABSTRACT: The Commentary of Light (*Tafsir Nur*) by Shaykh Muhsin Qara'ati is a written compilation of lectures over three decades of teaching. This commentary offers concise lessons from each verse of the Qur'an, featuring explanatory points and lessons; the explanatory points are brief itemized notes to help the readers attain a glossary understanding of the aforementioned verses, while the lessons delve deeper into the verse to illustrate a more thorough hermeneutic analysis of the concept. The verses chosen for this article are from the Chapter *al-An'am* - its theme about protesting against polytheism and inviting people towards monotheism. The following is an exegesis of verses 162 to 165 of this chapter.

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## Structure of Chapter *al-An'am*

The chapter *al-An'am* includes one hundred and sixty five verses, all of which were conveyed during a single revelation in Mecca. Alluding to the prominence of this chapter, according to historical traditions, Angel Gabriel, along with seventy thousand angels, revealed it to Prophet Muhammad.

The primary theme of this chapter is to protest against polytheism and invite people towards monotheism. During the Era of Ignorance (Jahiliyya)<sup>1</sup> and in the earlier days of the Prophetic mission of Muhammad, many polytheists had permitted the consumption of some four-legged animals, while prohibiting others. In response to the superstitious beliefs, God in the chapter *An'am* (namely verse 136 and onwards) clearly defines the rulings regarding the consumption of four-legged animals, hence the title *An'am* (*The Cattle*).

Many traditions have been narrated regarding the virtue of this chapter. It is said that anyone who recites a four-rak'at prayer<sup>2</sup> followed by this chapter and then supplicates, will be granted one's wishes."<sup>3</sup>

Another important point to note is that this chapter mentions the word «قُلْ» "Say" more than any other chapter. It may be that this term has been addressed 44 times to the Prophet because it was necessary that he demonstrate his certainty against invalid beliefs, superstitions, and unwarranted expectations of the polytheists mentioned in this chapter, and that the Prophet was responsible to relay the revealed text without any deviations or personal biases – and an unadulterated Divine Word of Allah.

In what follows, we refer to the exegesis of the verses 162 to 165 of this chapter.

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<sup>1</sup> Literally meaning ignorance, commonly referring to pre-Islamic Arabia

<sup>2</sup> In two sets of two rak'ats

<sup>3</sup> Tayyib, Sayed 'Abd Al-Husayn, *Atyab al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*, vol. 5, p. 2

**Verses 162 & 163**

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَ  
بِذَلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

*Say, 'Indeed my prayer and my worship, my life and my death are for the sake of Allah, the Lord of all the worlds.*

*He has no partner, and this [creed] I have been commanded [to follow], and I am the first of those who submit [to Allah].'*

**Explanatory Points:**

- It has been narrated that the Prophet would recite these verses at the beginning of his prayer before reciting Surat al-Hamd.<sup>4</sup>
- Death encompasses life, life encompasses rites of worship, and rites of worship encompass prayer. Therefore, prayer is the center within worship.
- Islam means to surrender before the command of Allah and all the Prophets have been included in this command.
  1. Prophet Nuh considered himself a Muslim – one who submits “*I have been commanded to be of those who submit] to Allah.*”<sup>5</sup> Someone who submits to Allah’s will is called a Muslim, hence Prophet Nuh’s self-attribution as a Muslim.

<sup>4</sup>Qurṭṭabi, Muhammad ibn Ahmad, Al-Jami’ li-Ahkam al-Qur’an, vol. 7, p. 153.

<sup>5</sup> 10/72: أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

2. Prophet Ibrahim asked Allah to make himself and his children submissive to Him: “*Make us submissive to You, and] raise [from our progeny a nation submissive to You.*”<sup>6</sup>
3. Prophet Yusuf asked Allah to let him die a Muslim.  
*Let my death be in submission] to You.*<sup>7</sup>
4. The Prophet of Islam is considered the first Muslim: “...and I am the first of those who submit [to Allah].” To be the “first” signifies that he either was the first to submit for his time or had the highest level of surrender over all others.

### Lessons:

1. Clearly and with pride announce your path, method, and goal in opposition to deviant paths. قُلْ “Say” The initial “Say,” in its command form, enhances the sense of conviction underlying the subsequent statement.
2. Prayer is a part of worship but it is mentioned separately to show its importance: “...my prayer and my worship...”
3. Sincere believers take their providential path (the road of life and death) and their legislative path (prayer and worship) only for Allah, Lord of the worlds.

إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ

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<sup>6</sup> 2/128

<sup>7</sup> 12/101

*'Indeed my prayer and my worship, my life and my death are for the sake of Allah, the Lord of all the worlds.*

4. In the same way a person seeks nearness to Allah through prayer, an intention can also be made for every breath one takes. Living and dying may also be for the intention of nearness to Allah. مَحْيَايَ ... وَ مَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ “My life and my death are for the sake of Allah.”
5. Life and death are not inherently important; what is important is that each should be used in the way of Allah.

مَحْيَايَ وَ مَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ

*My life and my death are for the sake of Allah.*

6. That which is for Allah will be nurtured. لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ *For the sake of Allah, the Lord of all the worlds.* The title ‘Lord’ (one who nurtures physically and spiritually) has been chosen for this verse; thus, one who prays, worships, lives, and dies for Allah’s sake will be responded to by Allah’s Lordship.
7. Life and death are not within our hands but one may determine the direction one takes.

*For the sake of Allah.*

8. Sincerity in our actions is Allah’s command. بِذَلِكَ أُؤْمِرْتُ “I have been commanded [to follow].” It is Allah’s wish that we be sincere in our actions, such as the Prophet has been commanded to be.
9. A leader must pioneer obedience of Allah’s commands. أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ “And I am the first of those who submit [to Allah].” Since the Prophet is a spiritual leader, he must lead by example.

**Verse 164:**

قُلْ أَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ أَعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمْ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ وَ لَا تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ إِلَّا عَلَيْهَا وَ لَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَى ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ

*Say, 'Shall I seek a Lord other than Allah, while He is the Lord of all things?' No soul does evil except against itself, and no bearer shall bear another's burden; then to your Lord will be your return, whereat He will inform you concerning that about which you used to differ.*

**Explanatory Points:**

- The fact that no one shall carry the sins of another conveys Allah's justice in retribution, a point also mentioned in the scriptures revealed to Prophet Ibrahim and Prophet Musa.

أَمْ لَمْ يُنَبِّأْ بِمَا فِي صُحُفِ مُوسَىٰ. وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ الَّذِي وَفَّى. أَلَّا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَى

*Has he not been informed of what is in the scriptures of Moses, and of Abraham, who fulfilled his summons that no bearer shall bear another's burden?<sup>8</sup>*

- Question: If no one is responsible for the other's sins, then why does the Qur'an mention that corrupt leaders will be responsible for the sins of their followers?

لِيَحْمِلُوا أَوْزَارَهُمْ كَامِلَةً يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَ مِنْ أَوْزَارِ الَّذِينَ يُضِلُّوهُمْ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ

<sup>8</sup> 53/36-38

<sup>9</sup> 16/25

*That they may bear their entire burdens on the Day of Resurrection, along with some of the burdens of those whom they lead astray without any knowledge (that they will be carrying this weight).*

Answer: Corrupt leaders are the cause of others becoming deviant and as a result, they are responsible for the sin of leading others astray.

- It has been narrated that a pregnant woman was brought to court before Umar and ordered to be stoned to death for committing adultery. Imam 'Ali said, "What is the sin of the baby in the mother's womb?" Then he recited the following verse: لَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَى<sup>10</sup> "No bearer shall bear another's burden."

### Lessons:

1. One must firmly stand by the truth when dealing with infidels and those who deny the truth:

قُلْ أَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ

*Say, Shall I seek a Lord other than Allah?*

2. An active conscience is the best reply to internal questions: "Shall I seek a Lord other than Allah?"<sup>11</sup>
3. Allah is the Lord of all existence and thus He is also my Lord:

وَهُوَ رَبُّ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ

*He is the Lord of all things.*

<sup>10</sup> 17/15

<sup>11</sup> If pure enough ones innate nature, fitrat, can answer many internal questions. *Trans.*

4. Infidelity, polytheism, or corruption do not cause any harm to Allah. In fact these are the cause of man's own downfall:

لَا تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ إِلَّا عَلَيْهَا

*No soul does evil except against itself*

5. In the presence of Allah, every man is responsible for his own deeds:

لَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَى

*No soul does evil except against itself, and no bearer shall bear another's burden.*

6. To judge about people and their actions is the job of God:

ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ مَرْجِعُكُمْ

*Then to your Lord will be your return.*

7. The world, too, has an end: "Then to your Lord will be your return, and finally the stubborn ones will realize the truth of what they opposed."

**Verse 165:**

وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلَائِفَ الْأَرْضِ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِّيَبْلُوكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ سَرِيعُ الْعِقَابِ وَإِنَّهُ لَغَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

*It is He who has made you successors on the earth, and raised some of you in rank above others so that He may test you in respect to what He has given you. Indeed your Lord is swift in retribution, and indeed He is All-Forgiving, All-Merciful.*

**Explanatory Points:**

- The Chapter al-An'am began with the praise of Allah and ends with Allah's mercy.

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي خَلَقَ

*All praise is for Allah who created...*

إِنَّهُ لَعَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

*...and indeed He is All-Forgiving, All-Merciful.*

- "Successors on the earth" refers to either the representatives of Allah on the earth or the successors of the previous nations.

**Lessons:**

1. Man is the successor [representative] of Allah and the commander of the earth; he is not a prisoner to the universe:<sup>12</sup>

وَ هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلَائِفَ الْأَرْضِ

*It is He who has made you successors on the earth.*

2. Differences among human beings and Allah's tests are part of His wisdom to teach and train each man. He teaches us because He is our Lord:

وَ هُوَ رَبُّ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ ... رَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ ...

*And He is the Lord of all things... and He raised some of you in rank above others...*

<sup>12</sup> The universe was made for man to use and reach his perfection. *Trans.*

The differences and advantages among people are not a criterion for superiority, but a means of testing:

لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ

*So that He may test you in respect to what He has given you.*

3. All that we possess is from Allah:

فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ

*What He has given you.*

4. The criteria and scale of Allah's test are according to how much Allah has given and one's own capability:

لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ

*So that He may test you in respect to what He has given you.*

5. After testing, Allah is swift in retribution towards to those who doubt:

سَرِيعُ الْعِقَابِ... لَعَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

*And He is all-forgiving, all-merciful towards those He has accepted.*

6. Fear and hope must be alongside one another:

سَرِيعُ الْعِقَابِ ... لَعَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

*Allah is swift in retribution...He is All-Forgiving, All-Merciful.*

# GOOD-NATUREDNESS IN ISLAM: ITS SIGNS AND EFFECTS

ALIREZA MAKTABDAR

TRANSLATED BY MOHAMMAD JAVAD SHOMALI

**ABSTRACT:** For those who strive to perfect themselves, good nature, or *husne khulq*, tends to be at the top of their list during the spiritual journey. Indeed, good-naturedness has been emphasized in the Qur'an and hadiths, as God's prophets possessed the highest level of it as they touched everyone's hearts with their warm-heartedness, mercy, and kindness. The present article offers a glimpse into the concept of good-naturedness as defined and emphasized in the Qur'an, hadiths, and as practiced by believers. Furthermore, the methods of behaving towards wrongdoers and reinforcing good nature, as well as the signs of good nature on a personal and social level are also described.

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## Introduction

Wise people strive to achieve perfection and this in turn requires many attributes, the best of which is good-naturedness. Treating people kindly with a friendly and smiling face gives happiness. Good nature brings much more than the mere benefits one gains from society, for it also relieves and gladdens the heart, and it does not nest in anyone but those

having strong roots of true humanity, philanthropy, and forbearance. Because of this, good-naturedness signals the presence of all these great virtues. God embraces all virtues and therefore those who are virtuous are close to God as if God embraces them. Good nature is the connection of different virtues, a criterion for judging personalities, and a key milestone on the road towards honour, glory, and charisma. Our beloved Prophet and Imams admired good nature and effusively praised those embellished with it and inspired people by all appropriate means.

### Islamic terms

There are numerous concepts for moral virtues in Islam. The most comprehensive term is that of “good nature” or “*husn-e khulq*” used in many religious texts.

*Husn* refers to ‘goodness’ and is the opposite of *qubh* or ‘badness’.<sup>1</sup> *Khulq* and *khuloq* are singular words that refer to an “inner or spiritual quality” and have the same root as *khalq* or the ‘physical quality’.<sup>2</sup> Hence, *husn-e khulq* is an inner qualities. It includes qualities such as gentleness, forbearance, affability, and courtesy.<sup>3</sup> Good qualities are to become habitual to eventually shape good nature.

Most Islamic references deem *husn-e khulq* as that which includes affability and respectfulness. Imam Sadiq said, “*Husn-e khulq* means to soften your behaviour, to purify your words (that is, not to use rude words), and to treat your brothers amiably.”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lisan ul-Arab, 1414, vol. 13, p. 114

<sup>2</sup> Raqib Isfahani, 1412, p. 297

<sup>3</sup> Naraqī, 1431, vol. 1, p. 231

<sup>4</sup> *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 68, p. 389: ثَلَاثِينَ جَانِبًا وَ تَطْيِيبُ كَلَامِكَ وَ تَلَقُّى أَخَاكَ بِبِشْرٍ حَسَنٍ

The opposite of *husn-e khulq* is *su-e khulq*, which stems from anger, causing a person to become bad-tempered. God and people both dislike these qualities. People distance themselves from those who are bad-tempered. Imam Sadiq said, “A bad-tempered person tortures himself.”<sup>5</sup>

### Good Nature in the Qur’an and hadiths

A person with a good nature touches people’s hearts and magnetizes them towards themselves. For this reason, as God perfected the prophets’ knowledge and gave them impeccable traits, God also bestowed mercifulness and kindness on them for their guidance. Their good-naturedness allowed for them to treat people with kindness and mercy since they longed to guide people to fulfil God’s aims. Their noble way charmed everyone, melting the people’s hearts and guiding the truth-seekers. The Quran portrays Prophet Muhammad’s good nature:

*It is by God's mercy that you are gentle to them; and had you been harsh and hard-hearted, surely they would have scattered from around you. So excuse them, and plead for forgiveness for them, and consult them in the affairs.*  
(Qur’an, 3:159)

The Prophet’s good-naturedness was a key factor in his attractiveness. His good nature was a blessing for him and all people. God says to the Prophet:

*And indeed you possess a great character.* (Qur’an, 68:4)

<sup>5</sup> *Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 321: مَنْ سَاءَ خُلُقُهُ عَدَّتْ نَفْسُهُ

The Prophet's excellent character shone brightly enough to be entitled "great" by God Himself and certainly his good nature is a part of his great character.

Moreover, as stated in the verse, people naturally keep away from harsh and hard-hearted people; both qualities are direct causes of loneliness. Thus, the essence of human relationships and friendships is the closeness of hearts provided by good nature. Social unity comes along with good nature.

Some exegetes listed different qualities to explain good nature: Patience, generosity, running affairs and forbearance in order to guide people towards God, and refraining from greed and jealousy.<sup>6</sup> "Great character" is more than just "good nature" – it is a combination of all human virtues. Since the Qur'an contains all moral virtues, in some hadiths "great character" is defined as Qur'anic conduct.<sup>7</sup>

Most of Luqman's guidelines for his son revolves around treating people and reflects some important aspects of good nature, such as modesty, geniality, and gentleness whether in words or actions:

*Do not turn your cheek disdainfully from the people, and do not walk exultantly on the earth. Indeed God does not like any swaggering braggart. Be modest in your bearing, and lower your voice. Indeed the ungainliness of voices is the donkey's voice.* (Quran, 31:19)

God also instructs people to speak kindly:

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<sup>6</sup> Tabarsi, 1994, vol. 10, p. 500

<sup>7</sup> Makarem Shirazi, 2009, vol. 3, p. 139

*Speak kindly to people, and maintain the prayer, and give the zakat. (Qur'an, 2:83)*

Here, speaking kindly can also refer to treating others compassionately. The same style is found in the verse “*He says no word but that there is a ready observer beside him*”<sup>8</sup> in which “*saying a word*” refers to “performing any deed.” Similarly, in the verse “*eating the possessions of an orphan*” may also refer to “any kind of misuse.”<sup>9</sup>

The following verses reveal the significant influence of good nature over people, especially foes. It is only with high standards of decent behavior that one can respond to negative conduct with good ones. It is no doubt a difficult quality to have as it requires self-control and purity of heart, especially from desiring revenge. These qualities are achievable through a long process of self-purification:

*Let the two of you go to Pharaoh. Indeed he has rebelled. Speak to him in a soft manner; maybe he will take admonition or fear. (Qur'an, 20:44)*

*Repel [evil] with what is best. [If you do so,] behold, he between whom and you was enmity, will be as though he were a sympathetic friend. But none is granted it except those who are patient, and none is granted it except the greatly endowed. (Qur'an, 41:35)*

Thus, the Qur'an praises good nature, gentleness, benevolence and soft-heartedness. The Qur'an also presents the character of the Prophet as the

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<sup>8</sup> The Qur'an, 50:18

<sup>9</sup> Javadi Amuli, 2008, vol. 5, p. 364

best example of these virtues, and such an excellent personality that could be considered one of his miracles.

### Good-Naturedness in hadiths

Piety and good-naturedness go hand in hand; the Prophet said, “Most of my followers will enter heaven due to their piousness and good nature.”<sup>10</sup>

Imam Ali said, “A believer’s book of deeds begins with the good nature of its owner”<sup>11</sup> and “The most faithful one of you is the most good-natured one.”<sup>12</sup>

According to two narrations from the Prophet, good-naturedness is so significant that it is the first thing to be weighed on the Day of Judgment as it is the most valuable quality.<sup>13</sup>

Good-naturedness is important enough to be a criterion for comparison between believers. The Prophet was asked “Whose faith is the deepest?” and he answered “The faith of him who shows the best conduct.”<sup>14</sup>

Imam Sadiq said “Among the believers, the one with the best conduct has the strongest faith.”<sup>15</sup>

A true believer normally hides his personal problems and sadness and keeps them to himself; he or she manages not to reveal it through his or her facial expressions or conduct. Instead, a believer displays a cheerful

<sup>10</sup> *Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 100: أَكْثَرُ مَا تَلِيحُ بِهِ أُمَّيِّ الْجَنَّةِ تَقْوَى اللَّهِ وَ حُسْنُ الْخُلُقِ

<sup>11</sup> *Bihar ul-Anwar*, vol. 68, p. 392: عُتْوَانُ صِحِيْقَةِ الْمُؤْمِنِ حُسْنُ خُلُقِهِ

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p. 387: أَكْمَلَكُمْ إِيْمَانًا أَحْسَنَكُمْ خُلُقًا

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p. 385: أَوَّلُ مَا يُوَضَّعُ فِي مِيزَانِ الْعَبْدِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ حُسْنُ خُلُقِهِ

Ibid. p. 374: مَا يُوَضَّعُ فِي مِيزَانِ امْرِئٍ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ شَيْءٌ أَفْضَلُ مِنْ حُسْنِ الْخُلُقِ

<sup>14</sup> *Irshad ul-Qulub ilal-Savab*, vol. 1, p. 133: أَحْسَنُهُمْ إِيْمَانًا فَقَالَ أَحْسَنُهُمْ خُلُقًا

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.: أَكْمَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِيْمَانًا أَحْسَنُهُمْ خُلُقًا

face and amiable character. Imam Ali said “The happiness of a believer is in his face and his sadness is in his heart.”<sup>16</sup>

The Prophet said, “Conciliate him who broke ties with you; forgive him who has wronged you; give to him who has refused you, and treat well him who mistreats you.”<sup>17</sup>

Thus, not only should we kindly treat those who have treated us the same, but we should also compassionately and benevolently accept, help, and be generous with those who mistreat us. This is similar to how God treats wrongdoers. He wants and decides the best for them and does not seek revenge from His servants, no matter how much they insult Him through disobedience.

This hadith may also explain why good nature is introduced as one of the two main factors for entering heaven and why it is a sign of deep faith. Qualities such as forbearance, generosity, modesty, and beneficence should combine in a person who wants to follow the codes mentioned in the hadith above; therefore, good nature as explained in Islamic teachings includes an array of other qualities in itself.

### Employing *husne khulq* and its limits

The intrinsic value of having a good nature and its consequent actions towards all people is portrayed in the Qur’an, hadiths, and lifestyle (*sunnah*) of the Prophet and Imams.

<sup>16</sup> *Nahj al-Balaqah*, p. 533: الْمُؤْمِنُ بِشْرُهُ فِي وَجْهِهِ وَ حُزْنُهُ فِي قَلْبِهِ

<sup>17</sup> *Misbah al-Shariah*, p 159:

قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَنْ رَبِّهِ يَا مُؤْمِنُ بِهَذِهِ الْخُصَالِ قَالَ صَلُّ مَنْ قَطَعَكَ وَ اعْتَفَ عَمَّنْ ظَلَمَكَ وَ أَعْطَى مَنْ حَزَمَكَ وَ أَحْسِنُ إِلَى مَنْ أَسَاءَ إِلَيْكَ

**-Good nature among the believers**

As said earlier, treating each other in the best possible way is a highly valued quality for believers to uphold. The Qur'an praised the Prophet's companions for their exemplary behavior:

*Muhammad, the Apostle of God, and those who are with him are hard against the faithless [who fight against the truth] and merciful amongst themselves. (Qur'an, 48:29)*

Thus, Muslims ought to be cordial, thoughtful, helpful, empathetic, respectful, and polite towards one another.

**-Behavior towards wrongdoers**

Certainly corruption is in conflict with the spirit of religion and damages society. Good-naturedness is to be held with wisdom: both reason and religion deem it unwise and downright wrong to accept corruption. Though good-naturedness is a valuable quality, it is also important to discourage wrongdoers. Believers are commanded to enjoin what is right and forbid wrongdoing. If a wrongdoer carelessly continues to engage in crime, especially if made public, believers must responsibly advise the wrongdoer in a reasonable, logical, and friendly way, as the Qur'an says, "*Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good advice and dispute with them in a manner that is best.*"<sup>18</sup>

While gently and empathetically advising them – with good intentions for their success – to discontinue the misconduct, the counsel should include reason, hadiths, laws, and the Quran for the wrongdoer to carefully consider public and personal benefits, as well as the results of his action.

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<sup>18</sup> The Quran, 16:125

### -Flattery

It is unfortunate that some take flattery as good behaviour and when they want to be amiable, they use flattery especially when they are dealing with the rich. They degrade themselves calling it good nature. The best sign of this is their mean expressions dealing with the poor. This negative quality is a heinous sin that calls for God's wrath. The Prophet said, "Whenever a sinner is praised, God's Throne is shaken and He is angered."<sup>19</sup>

It is necessary to distinguish between flattery and good manners to avoid falling for flattery when one lavishly compliments by mixing true and false qualities.

### -Humour

One sign of having a good nature is joking with others in a light-hearted manner, consequently making others happy and allowing them to temporarily forget their problems; of course, bearing in mind that it does not intentionally or unintentionally insult others. The Prophet said, "I may tell jokes although I will never say anything other than the truth."<sup>20</sup>

Once Imam Sadiq asked Yunus Shaybani, "How do you joke with each other?" and he replied "We rarely do so." The Imam said "Don't be afraid to joke. It is a sign of good-naturedness to joke with your brothers to make them happy. The Prophet also joked with people to cheer them."<sup>21</sup>

### -Overlooking sins and offences

<sup>19</sup> *Tuhaf al-Uqul*, p. 46: إِذَا مُدِخَ الْفَاجِرُ اهْتَزَّ الْعَرْشُ وَ عَضِبَ الرَّبُّ

<sup>20</sup> *Makarem ul-Akhlaq*, p. 21: أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ص كَانَ يَقُولُ إِنِّي لَأُمزَحُ وَ لَا أَقُولُ إِلَّا حَقًّا

<sup>21</sup> Elhaminiya, 2012, p. 106-109

As explained earlier, good nature is not the same as being indifferent towards sins. To build a decent society suitable for having a pleasant life, it is necessary to properly deal with wrongdoers given their harmful actions as a hindrance to society's stability through supporting moral values and opposing their actions in a friendly manner, without anger and insult. Tolerance comes into play in dealing with sinners, and not sins, by focusing on their merits to bring the best out of them; when we want the bright beam of hope to shine in their hearts once again for them to accept religious teachings. The Prophet said to Ibn Jundab, "O Ibn Jundab! To the sinners whom you would like to preach, say just good things. Pray hard that God may guide them, and ask God for their repentance."<sup>22</sup>

### **-Muslim scholars and mystics on good-naturedness**

Ghazali counted good nature as one of qualities a good friend should have; to be good-natured, it is necessary to balance all four inner powers (or internal faculties), namely knowledge, anger, desire, and justice. He believed good nature is an essential quality in friendship, because it is possible for a wise man who understands realities clearly to follow his temptations and oppose his knowledge when he loses himself to his anger, lust, fear, or stinginess. Once this happens, he cannot be a good friend.<sup>23</sup>

Junayd of Baghdad said, "There are four things that help one reach the highest levels of perfection even when he lacks knowledge and good deeds:

<sup>22</sup> *Tuhaf al-Uqul*, p. 302: يَا ابْنَ جُنْدَبٍ لَا تَقُلْ فِي الْمُنِيِّينَ مِنْ أَهْلِ دَعْوَتِكُمْ إِلَّا خَيْرًا وَاسْتَكْبِرُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ فِي تَوْفِيقِهِمْ وَ سَأَلُوا

التَّوْبَةَ لَهُمْ

<sup>23</sup> Faydh-e Kashani, 1994, vol 3, p. 384

forbearance, modesty, generosity, and good nature. The last one is the sign of deep faith.<sup>24</sup>

### **-Anecdotes**

Once, the Prophet appointed Imam Ali to confront three people who intended to kill the Prophet. During the battle, one of the three was killed and the other two were arrested. They were presented to the Prophet and received their verdict. At this point, Gabriel appeared to the Prophet and told him to free one of them for he had a good nature. When he was freed and realized that he has been forgiven God because of his good nature, he embraced Islam. The Prophet said about him, "He was one of the people whose good nature took them to heaven."<sup>25</sup>

On one occasion, one of Imam Sajjad's relatives spoke to him in a rude manner and eventually swore at him in front of some bystanders. The Imam did not respond and the person left. Then, the Imam decided to go to his relative's house, and he asked the onlookers to accompany him to see how he would respond. Certain that the Imam was planning on taking revenge, they instead heard him reciting the following verse on their way to his house:

*The Pious [are those who] ... suppress their anger, and excuse [the faults of] the people, and God loves the virtuous. (The Quran, 3:134)*

When they arrived, the Imam called his name and asked him to come out. The relative came out prepared to fight, thinking that was the Imam's

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid. vol. 5, p. 133

<sup>25</sup> *Al-Khisal*, vol. 1, p. 96

intention. Instead, Imam Sajjad said, “My brother, moments ago you came to my house and said what you wished. If what you said about me was true, I ask God to forgive me and if it was not, I ask Him to forgive you.” Moved by the Imam’s kindness, he kissed the Imam’s forehead and said, “What I said about you was wrong; it suited me more.”<sup>26</sup>

### **Reinforcing good nature**

Some people are gifted with good manners by nature, a blessing not everyone has. However, with practice one can reinforce good nature and manners to the extent that it becomes a person’s second nature. With the firm decision to make positive changes, striving to practice good manners becomes a part of a person’s personality, and he or she will soon witness pleasant results. Just as exercising strengthens and builds muscle, practicing good manners fortifies and refines the soul.

In Ghazzali’s *Ihya Ulum ud-Din*, good nature is brought forth when a person’s mind is balanced by wisdom and when the two faculties of anger and lust are controlled by the intellect and religious rules. This can be achieved in two ways:

1. Through God’s blessing; to be born with a perfected mind and controlled anger and lust. This will naturally result in good nature. People who are given such blessing do not need a tutor. Prophets are examples of people who have such quality in their nature.

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<sup>26</sup> *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 46, p. 54

2. Through practice. This requires a person do what a good-natured person would naturally do, and gradually these actions will become easier to the extent that they become second nature.<sup>27</sup>

Also, in Ghazzali's *The Alchemy of Happiness (Kimiyyay-e Sa'adat)*, associating with well-mannered people is the third way to reinforce good nature:

3. To associate with those who have good manners and actions; once a person is influenced by them, his or her actions and behaviours improve even without being aware of its effect.<sup>28</sup>

Additionally, considering that bad-temperedness and bad manners are caused by arrogance, anger, grudge, miserliness, and jealousy, it becomes clear that if one is to have good nature in all aspects one has to get rid of all these negative qualities. Therefore, to gain this precious quality many other virtues are to be implemented and for without them good nature will not be manifested.

### **The causes of bad-temperedness**

The opposite of good nature is bad-temperedness. It includes rudeness and bitterness, and it is a result of anger, just as good nature results from patience. Without a doubt, bad manners isolate a person by creating a gap between him and both God and society. People naturally detest an ill-mannered person; he or she is never free of pain and despondency, as Imam Sadiq stated, "He who is bad-tempered will suffer."<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Extracted from: Ghazzali, *bi ta?*, vol. 3, p. 123

<sup>28</sup> Extracted from: Ghazzali, 1380, vol. 2, p. 13

<sup>29</sup> *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 70, p. 298: مَنْ سَاءَ خُلُقُهُ عَذَّبَ نَفْسَهُ

For anyone to eliminate his or her moral vices, the root cause should be discovered. The following discusses some of those causes:

**Physical conditions and emotional pressure:** Aggressiveness is one vice that may occur due to physical cases triggered by weakness, fatigue, tiresome work, and excessive activity. Furthermore, various physical illnesses also lead to changes behaviour. Aggressiveness can sometimes stem from living in unsuitable environments, causing mental and emotional complexes.

**Improper upbringing:** Another factor that leads to bad-temperedness is ill upbringing at home. Poor parenting or bullying at school can lead to mental disorders, eventually resulting in aggressiveness.<sup>30</sup> It is important to note that acquiring virtues is only possible through divine assistance. A person should make as much effort as possible while simultaneously asking for God's help.<sup>31</sup> The Prophet said, "Good morals is a divine blessing. When God loves someone [due to their acts and intentions] He gives them good nature, and when He detests someone He gives them bad manners."<sup>32</sup>

### The signs of good-naturedness

Imam Ali said, "Good-temperedness relies on three things: avoiding sins, pursuing permissible (*halal*) sustenance, and generosity towards the family."<sup>33</sup>

Below are some specific guidelines to achieve good-naturedness:

<sup>30</sup> Esmayily Yazdy, 1386, p. 640

<sup>31</sup> Makarem Shirazi, 1388, vol. 3, p. 150-151

<sup>32</sup> *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 68, p. 394: إِذَا أَبْغَضَ عَبْدًا مَنَعَهُ خُلُقًا حَسَنًا وَإِذَا أَبْغَضَ عَبْدًا مَنَعَهُ خُلُقًا سَيِّئًا

مَنَعَهُ خُلُقًا سَيِّئًا

<sup>33</sup> *Majmuat Wurram (Tanbih ul-Khawatir)*, vol. 1, p. 90: حُسْنُ الْخُلُقِ فِي ثَلَاثِ اجْتِنَابِ الْمَخَارِمِ وَ طَلَبِ الْحَلَالِ وَ التَّوَشُّعِ عَلَى الْعِيَالِ

-Being humble towards people

-Knowing how to talk, that is, how to choose kind and pleasant words and avoid being sarcastic or rude

-Smiling and cheerfulness. The expression on a person's face can positively or negatively affect people's energy. A beautiful yet unhappy face does not have the same effect that an average-looking cheerful face. A calm and happy demeanor has a soothing effect on others, eventually gaining people's love, because good nature is real beauty.

All in all, we do not need to be told that greed, jealousy, aggression, idleness, hatred, swearing and backbiting are vices to be avoided. Qualities such as talking less, thinking more, patience, cheerfulness, wanting good for others, and loving and disliking for the sake of God are admirable qualities. Those who try to equip themselves with these virtues will naturally have good manners and become attractive to others.

### **Social and personal effects of good nature**

There are many rewards for a person who is good-natured both in this world and the hereafter. Some of these rewards are listed in the following:

#### **Effects in this world**

**Stronger friendships:** People dislike aggression and bad manners, and they tend to distance themselves from people who hold those characteristics. On the other hand, good manners attract people and strengthen friendships as the Prophet said, "Good manners make friendships last longer."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *Irshad al-Qulub ilal-Thawab*, vol. 1, p. 133: ر.ك: ارشاد القلوب الى الصواب

Being pleasant and gentle is one of the most practical traits to have in socializing that attracts people's affection and makes one's words more effective. This is why the Prophet said, "O sons of Abdul Muttallib, you cannot make everyone's life easier by your wealth, so make it easier by your kindness."<sup>35</sup>

The Prophet also said, "The best among you are those whose behaviour is more pleasant, those whom people surround them and approach them; they associate with people and people associate with them."<sup>36</sup>

**A developed society:** A society can only develop and progress through forgiveness, collective work, sacrifice, and good manners.

**Increased longevity:** Vices such as greed, jealousy, and holding grudges can reduce a person's energy due to its mental pressures, resulting in exhausting the body, eventually having a direct impact on longevity. On the other hand, eliminating these vices results in a healthier and longer life. Imam Sadiq said, "Indeed, good manners develop lands and increase longevity."<sup>37</sup>

**Increased sustenance:** It is natural to want a larger share of blessings in this world and in the hereafter. Given the trustworthiness of good-natured people, in business people tend to commerce more with them. Even in daily shopping, people prefer to buy from an approachable and welcoming shopkeeper. In most big and small companies, employees are trained to treat clients well and to gain their trust and loyalty through gentleness. Imam Ali said, "The treasures of sustenance are kept within good manners."<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 71, p. 169: يَا بَنِي عَبْدِ الْمُطَّلِبِ إِنَّكُمْ لَنْ تَسْعَوْا النَّاسَ بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ - فَالْتَوَهُمْ بِبِلَاقَةِ الْوَجْهِ وَ حُسْنِ الْبَشْرِ:

<sup>36</sup> *Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 102: أَفْضَلُكُمْ أَحْسَنُكُمْ أَخْلَاقاً الْمُوَطَّلُونَ أَكْثَرُ الَّذِينَ يَأْتُونَ وَيُؤْتُونَ وَ تَوَطَّأَ رَحَالَهُمْ

<sup>37</sup> *Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 100: إِنَّ الْبِرَّ وَ حُسْنَ الْخُلُقِ يَغْمُرَانِ النَّبَارَ وَ يَزِيدَانِ فِي الْأَعْمَارِ:

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* vol. 8, p. 23: فِي سَبْعَةِ الْأَخْلَاقِ كَثُورُ الْأَرْزَاقِ:

**Better social status:** There have always been people who, without wealth, good looks, or status found their place in society through their good conduct and charm. Imam Ali said, “How many humble people there were whose kind behaviour elevated them.”<sup>39</sup>

**Eased problems:** Good nature means that you do not become angry easily and you do not accuse people in your mind. Naturally, this means that no grudge and enmity will be formed and therefore, fewer problems will arise. On the other hand, if anger, grudge, and jealousy become part of one’s mind-set, life will become miserable and intolerable for him. Imam Ali said, “He whose behaviour is pleasant will reach his goals easier.”<sup>40</sup>

### Effects in the hereafter

On the Day of Judgment, God will judge lightly those who have good nature. Imam Ali said, “Improve your manners and God will be lenient on you with regards to evaluating your actions.”<sup>41</sup>

Forgiveness is another reward for good nature. Imam Sadiq said, “Indeed, good-naturedness melts sins as the sun melts ice.”<sup>42</sup> Those who are good-natured not only will his sins be forgiven, but he will also be given, as Imam Sadiq said, “...the reward of a warrior who has fought for the sake of God.”<sup>43</sup> As a result of this good nature, he will eventually be sent to heaven. The Prophet said, “The qualities that make people go to heaven the most are God-wariness (*taqwa*) and good nature (*husne khulq*).”<sup>44</sup>

<sup>39</sup> *Tasnif Gurar ul-Hikam wa Durar ul-Kalim*, p. 255: رَفَعَهُ حُسْنُ خُلُقِهِ كَمْ مِنْ وَضِيعٍ رَفَعَهُ حُسْنُ خُلُقِهِ

<sup>40</sup> *Tasnif Gurar al-Hikam wa Durar al-Kalim*, p. 255: مَنْ حَسَّنَ خُلُقَهُ سَهَّلَتْ لَهُ طُرُقَهُ

<sup>41</sup> *Al-Kafi*, vol. 4, p. 286: حَسَّنْ خُلُقَكَ يُخَفِّفِ اللَّهُ حِسَابَكَ

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* vol. 2, p. 100: إِنَّ الْخُلُقَ الْحَسَنَ يُمِيتُ الْخَطِيئَةَ كَمَا تُمِيتُ الشَّمْسُ الْجَلِيدَ

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*: إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى لِيُعْطِيَ الْعَبْدَ مِنَ الثَّوَابِ عَلَى حُسْنِ الْخُلُقِ كَمَا يُعْطِي الْمُجَاهِدَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ

<sup>44</sup> *Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 100: أَكْثَرُ مَا تُلْجَأُ بِهِ أُمَّتِي الْجَنَّةَ تَقْوَى اللَّهِ وَحُسْنُ الْخُلُقِ

**Conclusion**

God loves virtues and the virtuous. A person who is good-natured is loved by God and has its place in heaven. His good nature also benefits him in this world as well. Having good nature is one of the virtues that apart from the role it has in building one's character, it has many practical outcomes in one's social and personal life. It will make life easier on an individual basis free from anxiety or enmity caused by jealousy, greed, or anger. On a social level, it brings people who otherwise may not have been friendly even closer consequently bringing people together easily and ultimately improving the society by establishing peace, safety, and security.

# THE HISTORY OF THE ISLAMIC SEMINARIES OF QUM, PART II

RASOUL IMANI KHOSHKU

TRANSLATED BY MOHAMMAD JAVAD SHOMALI

ABSTRACT: The former articles in this series explored the historical origins of the main religious seminaries in the Shi'a world, and its role in bring about a unique culture in the scientific, social, and political spheres. The seminaries created well-educated and pious Shi'a scholars who pursued *ijtihad* with the use of the Qur'an, Sunnah, and reason to respond to the needs of the Muslim community. The previous article delved into the history of the Islamic seminaries of Qum. Using Islamic traditions and historical records, the significance of Qum according to the Ahlul Bayt was explained, along with its link to Lady Ma'sumah's arrival to the city and its impact on the future of the seminaries' success. This article continues with the seminaries of Qum after the Islamic Revolution, including an explanation of the core courses offered in philosophy, exegesis, theology, and jurisprudence.

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## **The Islamic seminaries of Qum after the Islamic Revolution**

Before the Islamic revolution in 1979, the government was a constant obstacle in the seminaries' progress with the ongoing propaganda against

seminarians to discourage people from admissions.<sup>1</sup> Seeing that the Islamic revolution in Iran was the result of the seminaries' progress supported by the people, after the revolution the seminaries became popular among people. The leadership of Imam Khomeini further strengthened this.

Numerous clerics moved to different parts of the country on various occasions to spread seminary teachings to encourage the youth to study Islamic sciences. The impressive growth of the Qum seminaries both in terms of quantity and quality were due to the abovementioned activities. The seminary scholars were not preoccupied with fighting against the Pahlavi regime any longer, and so they continued to engage in academic accomplishments with focused minds. Moreover, several new majors were offered in various fields of study.

The Qum seminaries expanded across the country and throughout the world. Today, most cities in Iran have seminaries directed under the Qum seminaries.

Although studying religion is a right for all Muslims, before the revolution in Iran seminaries were only opened to men. However, after the revolution, seminaries for women were also founded not only in Qum, but in cities across the country.

Those interested in learning religious studies have also come to Qum from across the world, and this is considered one of the greatest blessings of the Islamic Revolution. Nowadays, many foreign students residing in Qum are seminarians and eventually return to their countries to convey the message of Islam, particularly Shi'ism. The seminaries of Qum invited both men

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to: Misbah Yazdi, Muhammad Taqi, *Mabahesi Darbare-ye Hoze*, p.s 44-47

and women from foreign countries, and both are provided with the same facilities.

Moreover, although at first glance university and seminary studies did not have much in common, shrewd measures were taken for seminary studies to find a way into the universities. After the Islamic Revolution, some modules on Islamic studies were integrated in the national curriculum for undergraduate programmes and, as a result, more seminarians started teaching in universities and this paved the way further for cooperation between the two institutions. Ayatullah Mutahhari and Ayatullah Mufatteh also played a major role in this. On the other hand, it was made possible for the students of the seminaries who were interested in studying in the university to do so.

Today, many great teachers from the seminaries are present in the universities and along with teaching certain religious studies are the messengers of the valuable Shi'a teachings in these academic centres.

For a more profound understanding of the educational dimensions of the seminaries of Qum, the following provides a brief review of some of the available educational fields.

### **3. Core Courses in the Qum seminaries**

#### *3.1. Philosophy*

Philosophy is one of the most fundamental sciences on which all sciences depend. Religious sciences are related to God and the universe, and these discussions depend on accepting certain realities in existence which are only studied and proven in philosophy. The philosophical method is an intellectual one, and, in the Shi'a understanding, the intellect ( *'aql* ) is one of the sources for understanding Islam.

Philosophy in the Islamic world has a very long history. During the era of the Abbasids, there was a great interest in Greek works among the intellectuals, all of which were translated. Despite this interest and huge translation works, it was with the efforts of philosophers such as Farabi, Avicenna, and Suhrewardi in the next centuries that Islamic philosophy really developed.<sup>2,3</sup>

During the history of Islamic philosophy, three main doctrines were present: Avicennism (*Mash-shaa'*), Illuminationism (*Ishraq*), and the transcendent theosophy (*al-Hikmah al-Muta'liyyah*). The Avicennism that was in debt to the ancient Greek school of thought was dominant for years. Farabi, Avicenna, and Ibn Rushd were the most famous scholars of this doctrine.

In the sixth century, Shahab al-Din Suhrewardi developed the philosophy of Illuminationism (*Ishraq*) which was followed later by many followers. This continued until the eleventh century when Mulla Sadra founded the transcendent theosophy (*al-Hikmah al-Muta'liyyah*) which is the philosophy which is currently studied.

Of course, due to the deep rational and philosophical content in the Shi'a Imams' sermons and narrations, the Shi'a Islamic seminaries tended towards philosophy earlier and more than the rest of Muslim world.

Philosophy in the Islamic seminaries of Iran goes back to the arrival of Mulla Sadra (979-1050 AH) in Kahak, a village 30 kilometers outside Qum. As mentioned, philosophy in Qum began in the fourth era as a result of Mulla Sadra's migration. Fayz Kashani and Fayyaz Lahiji were

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<sup>2</sup> Refer to: Tabatabai, Sayyed Muhammad Husayn, *al-Mizan*, volume 5, p.s 279 and 280

<sup>3</sup> Refer to: Tabatabai, Sayyed Muhammad Husayn, *Shi'a dar Islam*, p. 92

among his students. And philosophy continued to exist with the efforts of Qadhi Saeed Qummi. Establishing the philosophical method of transcendent theosophy and expressing innovative theories about existence and reality, Mulla Sadra painted a new perspective in discovering the realities of the universe, such as his theory of substantial motion (*al-Harakat al-Jawhariyyah*).

In the recent period, philosophy in the seminaries of Qum witnessed great scholars who had an important effect on the philosophical and political thinking of the Islamic world similar to previous periods when philosophers such Mulla Sadra and his students played a major role in the Safavid Era.

Ayatullah Sayyed Abulhasan Rafi'i Qazwini (1310-1395 AH) was among the pioneers of the philosophical movement in the seminaries. He had studied intellectual sciences such as logic and philosophy in the seminaries of Tehran from Ayatullahs Abdunnabi al-Nuri, Hakim Mirza Muhsen Kermanshahy, Fazel Tehrani, and Mirza Mahmoud Qummi. He came to Qum at the time of Ayatullah Haeri where he taught rational sciences. Amongst his most talented students was Ayatullah Khomeini.

Ayatullah Khomeini was known for his attention towards several dimensions of the Islamic sciences, especially that of philosophy. Various philosophical, jurisprudential, ethical, and mystical topics that played a role in his philosophical-political thinking were coherently taught in his lessons. Due to his efforts, the theory of 'The Governance of the Jurist' (*Wilayatul Faqih*) was established and found followers in the seminaries. After expanding from the seminaries of Qum to the Islamic revolution, it led to the establishment of the Islamic government.

Allamah Sayyed Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i was another philosophical figure who greatly promoted Mulla Sadra's theories. He taught *Asfaar*<sup>4</sup> and *Shifaa*<sup>5</sup> and wrote *Bidayat al-Hikmah* and *Nihayat al-Hikmah*. Tabataba'i wrote tens of books, treatises, and commentaries on divine philosophy. His important role was his innovative method of discussing theories on divine philosophy and his counter-arguments against the philosophy of dialectic materialism. He discussed and responded to issues brought up in the materialistic school of thought in his *Usul-e Falsafe va Raveshe Realism*. This book was then published in different parts of the Islamic world with an additional commentary of his student, Ayatullah Murtatha Mutahhari.

Ayatullah Mutahhari was a follower of the philosophical doctrine of his two great teachers, Ayatullah Khomeini and Allamah Tabataba'i. He wrote about and taught comparative philosophy, cautioned people about Marxism, and promoted Islamic thinking to seminary and university students, as well as the laymen. Mutahhari's specialty was his ability to explain and analyse philosophical problems and render it easy for all to understand.

Other renowned philosophy professors in the seminaries were Ayatullah Abdullah Jawadi Amuli, Ayatullah Hasan Hasanzadeh Amuli, and Ayatullah Muhammad Taqi Misbah Yazdi.

Among the various branches of philosophy, political philosophy was also developed during this period; previous eras did not include this field.

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<sup>4</sup> This refers to Sadr al-Din Shirazi's monumental 4-part, 9-volume *Al-Hikmat al-Muta'aliyah fi'l-Asfar al-'Aqliyyah al-Arba'ah* ("The Transcendent Wisdom in the Four Intellectual Journeys").

<sup>5</sup> This refers to Avicenna's *Kitab al-Shifa* (The Book of Healing). This book is on science, logic and philosophy and not medicine.

In this period, Islamic political thought was discussed and its initial principles were compiled. The theory of 'The Governance of the Jurist' was introduced in a thorough and comprehensive manner, and the critical study of western philosophical schools of thought became available.

In this period, the principles of Islamic beliefs and the Islamic political philosophy were drawn from the scriptures and made available to everyone.<sup>6</sup>

In the present period, philosophy has become one of the main fields of study in the seminaries; many books have been written on the subject, such as *Usul-e Falsafe wa Rawesh-e Realism (Principles of Philosophy and Method of Realism)*, *Bidayat al-Hikmah (The Beginning of Philosophy)*, and *Nihayat al-Hikmah (The End of Philosophy)* by Allamah Tabataba'i, *Harakat wa Zaman (Motion and Time)* by Ayatollah Mutahhari, *Rahighe Makhtum* by Ayatullah Javadi Amuli and *Amuzesh-e Falsafe* by Ayatullah Misbah Yazdi.

### 3.2. Islamic Theology (*Kalam*)

Theology, as was explained earlier, deals with verifying religious beliefs and is responsible for responding to questions raised against Islam. Islamic theologians primarily benefit from two sources: intellect and tradition.<sup>7</sup>

In the seminaries of Qum, the narrators of the hadiths reported and explained the theological teachings of the Imams. Theology in Qum had a distinctive nature and had adopted a special method in delivering those topics and issues. Hadith compilations such as *Al-Kafi*, '*Uyun Akhbar al-*

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<sup>6</sup> Sayyed Kabayeri, Sayyed Ali-Reza, *Howze Haye Elmiyye Shi'i Dar Gostare-ye Jahan*, pp. 408-412

<sup>7</sup> The Qur'an and the sayings of the 14 Infallibles

*Rida*, *Al-Ghaybah*, and *Kifayat ul-Asar* include theological discussions with the authors' views expressed using a tradition-based (*naqli*) method.

In later periods, especially in the fourth period, the rational approach was common in the field of theology as depicted by the works of Mulla Sadra and Abd al-Razzaq Lahiji, the most dominant scholar in the field of theology during this period (1072 AH). Moreover, he adopted a mystical approach in his writings and explained the various results it would bring versus the philosophical or the theological (*Kalami*) approach. Mirza Hasan Lahiji and Qadi Saeed Qummi were among the famous theology scholars of the Qum seminaries after Mirza Lahiji. In this period, valued books such as *Gowhar-e Murad*, *Shawareq al-Ilham*, and *Sarmaye-ye Iman* by Mulla Lahiji, *Sham' al-Yaqin fi Ma'rifat il-Haqq wal-Yaqin* by Mirza Hasan Lahiji and *Kelid-e Behesht* by Qadi Saeed Qummi were released.

Currently, discussions of theology have an impressive growth among students of religious studies. Sub-branches of Islamic theology such as Imamate<sup>8</sup> and Mahdawiyyat<sup>9</sup> have their own text books. Allamah Tabataba'i, Ayatullah Misbah Yazdi, and Ayatullah Subhani are the most prominent scholars of Islamic theology during this period, each having written numerous books on its branches.

### **3.3 Exegesis of the Qur'an (*Tafseer*)**

Muslims believe the Qur'an to be God's words revealed to the heart of Prophet Muhammad who then accurately recited the verses to the people. The study of Quranic exegesis (*tafseer*), which began during the Prophet's lifetime, deals with understanding the inner and apparent meaning of the

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<sup>8</sup> The study of issues related to the imamate of the infallible Imams

<sup>9</sup> The study of issues about the saviour, Imam Mahdi

Qur'an. In Shi'ism, although the real interpreters of the Qur'an are the infallible Imams, it is possible to acquire a deep understanding of the verses using their hadiths. For this reason, from the early centuries until now, Shi'a scholars, especially those from Qum, have written books specifically on Qur'anic exegesis:

Third century: *Tafsir-e Qummi* by Ali ibn Ibrahim Qummi;

Fourth century: Though there were many books on exegesis by Shaykh Saduq, his father Ibn Babuyeh Qummi, and his teacher Muhammad ibn Hasan ibn Waleed,<sup>10</sup> they are unavailable today;

Sixth century: *Rawz ul-Jinan* by Abul Fatih Razi;

Twelfth century: *Kanz ud-Daqaiq wa Bahr ul-Gharaib* by Muhammad Reza Qummi Mashhadi, where he expounds on the verses of the Qur'an using the Imams' narrations.

After the Islamic revolution, exegesis developed more with numerous books written on it, including a variety of topics as explained in the following:

a. *Sequential exegesis of the Qur'an*: From the early days of exegesis, most exegetists (*mufasssir*) began explaining the Qur'an from the first until the last chapter. Such examples include *Tafseer al-Mizan* by Allameh Sayyed Muhammad Husayn Tabatabai, one of the most renowned exegesis books using this method; *Tafseer Nemuneh*, the work of a group of scholars from the Qum seminaries under the supervision of Ayatullah Makarim Shirazi, also translated to many languages; and *Tasneem* by Ayatullah Javadi Amuli.

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<sup>10</sup> Refer to Najjashi, Ahmad ibn Ali, *Rijal al-Najjashi*, pp. 281, 383, and 391

b. *Thematic exegesis of the Qur'an*: A new technique in the seminaries, the exegetist, with a particular subject in mind, reads through the verses, collects the subject-related ones, and by analysing those verses, draws conclusions related to the subject. *Manshoor-e Javeed* by Ayatullah Subhani, *Ma'arif-e Qur'an* by Ayatullah Misbah Yazdi, and *Payam-e Qur'an* by Ayatullah Makarim Shirazi are some primary examples.

c. *Qur'anic sciences (Ulume Qur'ani)*: In recent centuries, researchers studied the Qur'an with an outward view of its verses, called Qur'anic Science (*Ulume Qur'ani*). Topics such as the Qur'an's history of the revelation, the names and titles, various types of revelation, definite and indefinite verses (*muhkam wa mutashabih*), abrogated and abrogating verses (*nasikh wa mansukh*), and Meccan and Medinan chapters are discussed in this field. *Al-Tamheed* by Ayatollah Ma'refat is one of the more renowned books on this subject.

### 3.4. Jurisprudence (*fiqh*)

The predominant subject taught in the seminaries of Qum was jurisprudence, or the practical laws of religion, also closely related to the field of Principles of Jurisprudence (*Usule Fiqh*). While *usule fiqh* establishes the necessary principles needed for deriving rulings of religion from the sources, *fiqh* delves into the sources and use the principles established in *usul* to derive the practical legislative laws.

The Ash'arids in Qum reported the hadiths of the Imams about jurisprudence. The teachers of the second era of the seminaries published numerous books in the field of jurisprudence. Several examples include *Al-Mahasi* by Muhammad ibn Khalid Barqi (275 AH), a man who lived during the lifetime of Imams; *al-Nawadir* by Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn

Isa Ash'ari Qummi; the five volume (out of eight) *al-Kafi* by the late Kulayni devoted narrations related to jurisprudence; Shaykh Saduq's *Man la Yahthuruhul Faqih* (or "he who does not have access to a jurist") and other books on jurisprudence, such as *al-Muqni*.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, even scholars who have not written on jurisprudence prioritized it in their discussions. In the third era, although the seminaries underwent an overall recession, there are available works written on jurisprudence, such as *Fiqh ul-Qur'an* by Saeed ibn Abdullah Qutb ud-Din Rawandi (573 AH) who left Kashan to reside in Qum.

In the recent periods, Mirza Qummi (1151–1231 AH) made enormous efforts to develop this field. The founder of the seminaries of Qum, Ayatullah Haeri, also a mujtahid,<sup>12</sup> invited many of the renowned Grand Ayatollahs to come to Iran from Iraq for jurisprudential discussions. Ayatullah Burujerdi, Ayatullah Khomeini, Ayatullah Mar'ashi Najafi, Ayatullah Golpaygani, and Ayatullah Araki are among the great jurists of the recent centuries.

Numerous books and pamphlets have been written since then. *Tahrir ul-Wasilah* by Ayatullah Khomeini is one of the most outstanding works in this field in the recent years. Jurisprudential discussions have become the most important topics in various seminaries across the Islamic world, especially that of the Qum seminaries, where hundreds of sessions on jurisprudence are held every day.

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<sup>11</sup> Refer to Najjashi, Ahmad ibn Ali, *Rijal al-Najjashi*, p. 391

<sup>12</sup> A mujtahid is a scholar who is qualified to derive laws of the religious from the sources.

### **Propagation and society**

The Qum seminaries have never known themselves as an institute separate from people. This institute knows itself as the inheritor of the prophets; like the prophets, they have been involved in propagating the religion of God by spreading divine knowledge through education, and rebelled against oppression from the heads of state.

Since its formation, the seminaries propagated the teachings of the prophets as their mission. Today, students of Islamic studies travel to different parts of Iran and the world on special occasions such as the month of Ramadan, the first ten days of Muharram, and the last ten days of Safar to disseminate the teachings of Islam. Their primary goal is to guide people through lectures, public sessions, and private consultations. However, guiding people is not limited to special occasions; the scholars of the seminaries also maintain their contact with the people through various means.

Today one of the important sections of the seminaries deals with propagation. Those qualified to propagate travel to many countries, cities (including within Iran), and remote villages throughout the year.

The seminaries are also responsive to the domestic and foreign changes that occur in the society and the world. Their most important activity in this regard is their role in the Islamic revolution of Iran in the year 1357 S.A.H.

In 1342 SH, under the direction of Ayatullah Khomeini – the leader of the seminaries of Qum – the people of Iran rose up against the oppression of the Pahlavi regime. In that time and after the exile of Reza Pahlavi who promoted anti-Islamic policies, such as banning women from wearing

hijab, his son Muhammad Reza Pahlavi took his place and pursued the same objectives.

Ayatollah Khomeini believed that being silent towards the anti-Islamic activities of the government was not permissible. With his famous speech in the Fayziyyah School of Qum, he opened a new chapter in the history of Iran. Other scholars in the country, along with the people of Qum, announced their support for him and endured much difficulty doing so. This epochal uprising was eventually spread from Qum to cities across the country, and all of these movements were under the leadership of the scholars of the seminaries, many of whom were imprisoned, exiled, or lost their lives as a result. This lasted for fifteen years until 1357 SH, when the uprising of the masses and scholars became victorious.

After the Islamic revolution, the seminaries of Qum remained active in various social fields; due to the invading attack of the Ba'ath regime of Iraq against Iran, many scholars hastened to the battlegrounds to participate in the battle imposed on Iran to defend their country. Their presence was heart-warming for other battalions, and among them many were martyred.

The awareness of the seminaries of Qum with respect to the national and foreign developments and changes, and the seminarians' firm stand against the oppression and injustice had always been a source of comfort and inspiration for the masses.



# REASONS FOR THE PROHIBITION OF SPECIFIC FOODS IN THE QUR'AN

KANIKI JAMA NAQUL AWA

TRANSLATED BY MAHBOOBEH MORSHEDIAN

ABSTRACT: God has created man in the way that what he eats and drinks influences his mind, body, and soul. Hence, God declared certain edible materials prohibited (*haram*) and others permissible (*halal*). This paper lists the foods that are impermissible as mentioned in the Qur'anic Chapters *al-Baqarah* and *al-Ma'idah*. In these chapters, twelve impermissible foods are listed, some of which are carrion, blood, pork, and wine, in addition to the meat of animals that have been strangled, gored to death, and not slaughtered based on Islamic rules. Moreover, brief reasons as to why they are forbidden are also presented.

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## Introduction

Once man was created, God created his sustenance as well. As food contributes to the growth and strength of man's body, it also considerably influences his mind and soul. Hence, God, the Wise, has forbidden people from eating certain foods so as not to negatively affect our souls.

Although modern scientists have not discovered the negative effects of impermissible foods on people's minds and souls, there are scientific findings that confirm the harmfulness of impermissible foods to physical health, this is some evidence for the scientific miracle of the Quran. In this paper, impermissible foods in the Quranic chapters *al-Baqarah* and *al-Ma'idah* are discussed.

### **Impermissible Foods**

The foods in which God has forbidden us from eating in the chapters *al-Baqarah* and *al-Ma'idah* consist of the following:

#### **1. Carrion**

Carrion refers to any dead body of any animal – either four-footed animals or bird, wild, or tame – whose meat is considered permissible by God. In other words, eating carrion or making any use of it is forbidden. God says in the Quran, “*Forbidden to you [for food] are carrion,...*”<sup>1</sup>

#### **The reason behind prohibiting carrion**

No doubt, God, the Wise, does not make something prohibited without a reason as eating carrion has harmful effects. In addition to hadiths on the detrimental effects of carrion, scientific advances have also revealed its damaging effects.

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<sup>1</sup> Ma'idah, 3, also see Baqarah 173 and Nahl, 115.

Imam Sadiq said, “Nobody eats carrion, but he becomes feeble and has no offspring; the one who eats pork may die unexpectedly.”<sup>2</sup>

The reason behind this may be that the stomach cannot make fresh blood out of carrion. In addition, carrion is the center of various microbes. Besides prohibiting the consumption of carrion, it forbidden to eat it as it is also impure (*najis*); thus, Muslims are to avoid it altogether.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Blood

Allah says in the Quran, “*Forbidden to you [for food] are...blood...*”<sup>4</sup>

During the Age of Ignorance, people used to cook and consume the large intestine of an animal with its blood poured over it. After the revelation of the Quran, the oozed blood was forbidden. However, a little blood remaining in the animal’s meat after it is slaughtered or the blood that has turned into meat in the liver are considered permissible.

### **The reason for forbidding the consumption of blood**

When restricted to the areas where blood should be, such as the heart and vessels, blood is necessary for life. However, eating blood is detrimental to both the body and spirit. On the one hand, blood is a haven for microbe growth. All microbes entering the body concentrate in the blood, and white blood cells fight body toxicities by destroying bacteria and help remove unwanted material.. When blood stops

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<sup>2</sup> Shaikh Saduq, al-Amali, p. 666; Ilal-u-Saharayyi’, vol.2, p. 484.

<sup>3</sup> Nasir Makarim Shirazi, Nemuneh Qur’anic Commentary, vol.1, p.585.

<sup>4</sup> *Ma’idah*, 3, also see *al-Baqarah* 173 and *al-Nahl*, 115.

circulating in the body, white blood cells are destroyed. Thus, the microbes that face no opposition to multiply rapidly. And when blood stops circulating in the body, it becomes the filthiest part of a human or animal's body.

On the other hand, through influencing glands and producing hormones, foods affect man's temperament and conduct, and eating blood leads to cruelty and hard-heartedness.<sup>5</sup>

In this regard, Imam Sadiq said,

God has made [drinking] blood prohibited because it ruins body...and causes one's mouth and body to give an unpleasant odor cause bad-temperedness, hard-heartedness, and being less affectionate to others. Due to drinking blood, one may even kill his father, friend, and spouse.<sup>6</sup>

### 3. Pork

In this regard, Allah said in the Glorious Quran, "*Forbidden to you [for food] are .....and the flesh of swine,...*"<sup>7</sup>

According to the above Quranic verse, pork is considered prohibited as a whole so it becomes evident that pork is basically *haram* whether it is carrion or not. This is also the case with the meat of animals such as

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<sup>5</sup> Nasir Makarim Shirazi, *Nemuneh Quranic Commentary*, vol.1, pp. 585-586.

<sup>6</sup> Shaikh Saduq, *Ilal-u-sharayi'*, vol.2, p.484; Shaikh Hurr Amili, *Wasa'il-u-Shi'ah*, vol.24, p.100.

<sup>7</sup> Ma'idah, 3, also see Bagharah 173 and Nahl, 115.

dogs, cats, and monkeys. However, pork is specified because people tend to eat it more than animal meat.

### **Why pork is forbidden**

Even some of those who eat pork consider pigs as dirty animals. They're also known for being extremely indifferent and irresponsible in sexual matters, and since food affects a person's conduct and mindset, it leads to this carelessness in those who eat pork.

Pork is also forbidden in Judaism. As written in the Old Testament, "*...do not chew their cud; they are unclean for you. Do not eat their meat (i.e., pork) and do not touch their corpse.*"<sup>8</sup> Moreover, in the Gospels, sinners are likened to pigs, and in their stories, pigs are introduced as the symbol of Satans.<sup>9</sup>

It is surprising that some insist on eating pork while on the one hand they see pigs eating dirt and their excrement, and on the other hand, it has been scientifically proven that its meat contains two dangerous parasites, namely trichina and measles.

Trichina spawns 15,000 eggs every month, causing anemia, dizziness, diarrhea fever, rheumatic pains, nerve injury, itching, excess fat, bruise and fatigue, and difficulty in chewing, swallowing, and breathing. There are 400 million larvae of Trichina in one kilo of pork. This is perhaps why eating pork was banned in some part of Russia some years ago.

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<sup>8</sup> Leviticus, 11:7-8.

<sup>9</sup> Nasir Makarim Shirazi, *Nemuneh Quranic Commentary*, vol.1, p. 585.

Some may say that all these parasites can be killed and pork can be cleansed of them with modern technologies. However, there might remain germs that cannot be killed by using conventional methods and even if we assume that the parasites can be killed through cooking pork at high temperatures using hygienic devices, the harmfulness of pork cannot be denied because based on the aforementioned principle, the meat of every animal carries the features of that animal, and it influences the conduct of the one who eats it through the animal's glands secreting hormones. Consuming pork can lead to sexual laxity and indifference to reputation and chastity of one's wife and daughters, all of which are the prominent qualities of pigs and are transmitted to the one who consumes pork.<sup>10</sup>

#### **4. Animals not slaughtered based on Islamic rules**

Allah said in the Quran, *"Forbidden to you [for food] are carrion...and that which has been slaughtered to [the name of] any other than Allah."*<sup>11</sup>

This verse implies that if a halal animal is killed a) to [the name of] any other than Allah, b) while Islamic rules have not been observed during the process, or c) by disbelievers, it becomes prohibited to eat.

#### **The philosophy of animals not slaughtered based on Islamic rules**

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<sup>10</sup> Nasir Makarim Shirazi, *Nemuneh Quranic Commentary*, vol.1, pp. 586-587; also see Fakhr Razi, *Mafatih-ul-Ghayb*, vol.11, p.283.

<sup>11</sup> *Ma'idah*, 3, also see *Baqarah* 173 and *Nahl*, 115.

Does saying the name of God or any other name when slaughtering animals hygienically influence its meat?

Not necessarily so, because in Islam edible materials become forbidden for different reasons: sometimes for good physical health, sometimes for self-purification, and sometimes for preserving social order. Animals slaughtered to the name of idols, for example, are prohibited due to spiritual, moral, and pedagogical reasons. They separate man from God and have negative psychological and pedagogical effects due to its polytheistic tradition of idol-worship, reinstating idolatry.<sup>12</sup>

The above items, namely carrion, blood, pork, and animal not slaughtered based on Islamic legal rules are prohibited in four Quranic chapters; two in Mecca (*An'am*, 145; *Nahl*, 115), and two in Medina (*al-Baqarah*, 173; *al-Ma'idah*, 3).

It seems that the first time the prohibition of these kinds of meats was proclaimed in early Islam; the second time through the end of the Prophet's residence in Mecca; the third time in his early migration to Medina; and the fourth time in his late life in the chapter *al-Ma'idah*, which is among the last chapters revealed.<sup>13</sup>

## 5. Strangled Animals

In this regard, Allah said in the Glorious Quran, "*Forbidden to you [for food] are carrion....., and the strangled.*"<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Nasir Makarim Shirazi, *Nemuneh Quranic Commentary*, vol.1, p.588.

<sup>13</sup> Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabatab'î, *Tafsir al-Mizan*, vol. 12, p.365.

<sup>14</sup> *Al-Ma'idah*, 3.

The term *strangled* can sometimes refer to an animal whose head is put under pressure between two parts of a tree until it dies. Others maintain that it refers to an animal strangled to death with a rope or trap.

According to Ibn Abbas, “In the Age of Ignorance, people used to strangle the animal and eat its meat.”<sup>15</sup> And according to some narrations, the Zoroastrians in particular strangled animals to death to use their meat.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the above verse may apply to them as well.

## 6. Animals’ death through beating

Allah says in the Quran, “*Forbidden to you [for food] are carrion...and the dead through beating,*”<sup>17</sup>

“*The dead through beating*” refers to any animal killed through many hits or a powerful blow with any device, or if an animal dies due to a disease.

## 7. Dead animals through falling from a height

God says in the Quran, “*Forbidden to you [for food] are carrion..., and the dead animal through falling from a height.*”<sup>18</sup>

According to some, including Ibn Abbas, if an animal dies by falling, it is forbidden to eat its meat. However, if it falls into a well and still remains alive and it is not possible to slaughter it properly, one can

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<sup>15</sup> Fadi ibn Hasan Tabarsi, *Majma’-ul-Bayan*, vol.3, p.243.

<sup>16</sup> Shaikh Saduq, *al-Khisal*, vol.2, p.451.

<sup>17</sup> *Al-Ma’idah*, 3.

<sup>18</sup> *Al-Ma’idah*, 3.

target a large knife at it, leading to its death; in this way its meat becomes permissible.<sup>19</sup>

### **8. Animals that have been gored to death**

Allah says in the Quran, “*Forbidden to you [for food] are carrion..., and that which has been gored to death.*”<sup>20</sup>

The meat of an animal which is gored or stabbed to death is also forbidden to eat.

### **9. Animals hunted and killed by wild animals**

In this regard, Allah said, “*Forbidden to you [for food] are carrion..., and the devoured of wild beasts save that which you make lawful [by finding it alive and beheading it].*”<sup>21</sup>

Another forbidden edible material is the meat of an animal that is hunted and killed by another wild animal.

The possible philosophy of prohibition of these five kinds of animals’ meat, namely a) the meat of the animal strangled to death, b) the dead animal through beating, c) the dead animal through falling from a height, d) animals that are gored to death, and e) animals that are hunted and killed by another wild animals is that they do not bleed enough after being killed; as long as the main blood vessels of the throat are not cut, insufficient blood pours out. On the other hand, since blood

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<sup>19</sup> Shaikh Tusi, al-Tibyan, vol.3, p.430; Fadl ibn Hassan Tabarsi,

<sup>20</sup> Al-Ma’idah, 3.

<sup>21</sup> Al-Ma’idah, 3.

is a haven for microbes, after the death of an animal, blood is the first thing that is infected in its body; thus these meats are poisonous. In particular, if the animal is killed due to being tortured, contracting a disease, and being chased by a wild animal, it is more poisonous. What is more, the spiritual aspects of slaughtering the animal, reciting the name of God, and facing the *qiblah*<sup>22</sup> are not observed in the above-mentioned types of death.

Of course, if animals can be Islamically slaughtered before they die, and enough blood pours out of them, they will be permissible. Thus, following the prohibition of the above meats, God said, “*Save that which you make lawful [by finding it alive and beheading it].*”<sup>23</sup>

### 10. Animals slaughtered unto idols

*“Forbidden to you [for food]... and that which has been slaughtered unto Nusub [shapeless idols] and [forbidden is it] that which you divide by gambling arrow.”*<sup>24</sup>

During the Age of Ignorance, idol-worshippers used to construct shapeless stones called “Nusub” around the Ka’bah. They would slaughter an animal on a Nusub and daub its blood on it. What distinguished them from idols were their unique shapes. In this verse,

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<sup>22</sup> The direction in which a Muslim faces when praying (*salat*), towards the Ka’bah in Mecca.

<sup>23</sup> Nasir Makarim Shirazi, *Nemuneh Quranic Commentary*, vol.4, p. 295.

<sup>24</sup> Al-Ma’idah, 3.

God prohibited this meat, saying, “*That which has been slaughtered unto Nusub [shapeless idols].*”

This prohibition is spiritually and morally motivated; there seems to be no worldly and physical philosophy behind it. It is a kind of “*That which has been slaughtered to [the name of] any other than Allah.*”<sup>25</sup>

This was a common practice among the Arabs of Age of the Ignorance or pre-Islamic era.<sup>26</sup>

### 11. Animals killed through lottery

*“(Forbidden) also is that which you divide by gambling arrow.”*<sup>27</sup>

Another kind of animal whose meat is prohibited in Islam is slaughtered one whose meat is distributed on the basis of lottery. In the Ignorance Era, ten people would bet to buy an animal and slaughter it. Then they would put ten arrows in a bag, and draw lots for each of the ten members. On seven arrows, it was written “winner” and on three others “loser.” The winners received a share of meat while the other three received nothing; instead, they had to pay the price for one-third of the animal without receiving a share of meat. These arrows were called “*azlaam*” plural of “*zalam*.” Islam forbade the meat of these bets not because the very meat was forbidden but because they are a result of gambling and lottery.

<sup>25</sup> Al-Ma'idah, 3, also see *al-Baqarah* 173 and *al-Nahl*, 115.

<sup>26</sup> See Fakhri Razi, *Ma'atih-ul-Ghayb*, vol. 11, p. 285; Nasir Makarim Shirazi, *Nemuneh Quranic Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 260.

<sup>27</sup> Al-Ma'idah, 3.

Prohibition of gambling and the like is not limited to animals' meat; rather, it is also prohibited in other cases, and gambling lies at the root of all harm resulting from baseless social activities and superstitious pursuits.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, Islam takes a moderate position on eating different kinds of meat. That is, it neither resembles the ideas of people during the Age of Ignorance whose diet consisted of lizards, carrion, and blood, nor those of some who eat crabs, worms, and cats, nor those of Hindus who prohibit eating any kind of meat. Instead, Islam considers the meat of animals that have received pure nutrition. It rejects extreme measures and includes regulations on eating different kinds of meat, as listed in the following:

1. The animals whose meat is to be eaten should be herbivorous since herbivores eat healthy, while the meat of carnivorous animals is unhealthy due to their eating carrion and other unclean meat.

As mentioned above, the features of every animal are transmitted to the one who consumes its meat. Thus, consuming the meat of wild carnivorous animals strengthens brutality and savagery in man. For this very reason, in Islam the meat of '*jalal*' animals, that is, those that eat excrement and dirt is forbidden.

2. Islamic rules require that animals whose meat is consumed are not unpleasant or disgusting.

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<sup>28</sup> Nasir Makarim Shirazi, *Nemuneh Quranic Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 260; also see Sayyid Muhammad Hussain Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan*, vol. 2, p. 192, Mahmood Alusi, *Ruh-ul-Ma'ani*, vol.3, p.233.

3. The meat should not harm man physically or spiritually.
4. The meat of animals which are sacrificed on the basis of polytheism, idol-worship, and the like is prohibited to eat because they are spiritually impure.
5. Heeding to Islamic guidelines regarding the legal slaughter of animals that have hygienic or moral effects on consumers of meat.<sup>29</sup>

## 12. Wine

According to Raghīb Isfahānī, “khamr” (خمر), meaning “wine” literally means “covering something;” thus, “khimar” (خمار) refers to “cover” [as a noun], the cloth with which a woman covers her head is also called “khimar.”<sup>30</sup>

However, it should be noted that on the basis of Islamic rulings, “khamr” is not limited to wine [from grapes]; rather, it refers to any intoxicating liquid made out of either grapes, raisins, dates, or any other substance that can be made into an intoxicating drink is literally referred to by a specific term.<sup>31</sup>

In the Quran, it is seriously prohibited to drink intoxicating drinks, and Muslims are forbidden to do so. However, God declared wine as haram in stages; He said first in the chapter *al-Nahl*:

<sup>29</sup> Nasir Makarim Shirazi, *Nemuneh Quranic Commentary*, vol.4, pp.261-262.

<sup>30</sup> Raghīb Isfahānī, *Al-Mufradat*, the entry of “khamr” (خمر); also Turayhī, *Majma’ul-Bahrayn* & ibn Manzūr, *Lisan-ul-Arab*, the entry of “khamr.”

<sup>31</sup> Nasir Makarim Shirazi, *Nemuneh Quranic Commentary*, vol.2, p. 118.

*And of the fruits of the date-palm, and grapes, whence you derive strong drink and [also] good nourishment. Lo! Therein is indeed a lesson for people who have wisdom.*<sup>32</sup>

In this verse, “strong drink” refers to intoxicating drinks. Apparently, in this verse God does not permit Muslims to make wine out of dates and grapes. Rather, as “strong drinks” are placed opposed to “good nourishment,” it implicitly indicates the prohibition of intoxicating drinks and their undesirability. Thus, it is not necessary to say that this was revealed before the prohibition of intoxicating drinks and referred to their being halal. In contrast, it indicates their being haram and is the first warning on prohibiting wine.<sup>33</sup>

God also said the chapter *al-Nisa*, “*O you who believe! Do not approach prayer when you are drunken, until you know that which you utter.*”<sup>34</sup>

In this verse, God refers to the fact that prayer becomes null and void when one is intoxicated.

In the gradual course of prohibition of wine, God, the Wise, said, “*They ask you concerning wine and gambling. Say: "In them is great sin, and some profit, for people; but the sin is greater than the profit.*”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Nahl, 67.

<sup>33</sup> Nasir Makarim Shirazi, *Nemuneh Quranic Commentary*, vol.1, p.274.

<sup>34</sup> Nisa, 43.

<sup>35</sup> Baqarh, 219.

In this verse, God introduced wine as having some benefit for people. Its benefits perhaps include the money made through its sale, minor health benefits as offered by various scientific studies, and the pleasure one gains as a result of drinking it.<sup>36</sup> However, God specified that the consequential harms far outweigh the benefits. Then in the chapter *al-Ma'idah*, He said:

*“O you who believe! Intoxicants and gambling,...are an abomination, of Satan’s work: eschew such [abomination], that you may reach salvation”<sup>37</sup>...“Verily Satan wants to excite enmity and hatred between you, with intoxicants and gambling, and hinder you from the remembrance of Allah, and from prayer: will you then abstain?”<sup>38</sup>*

After referring to these verses and comparing them with each other, Allamah Tabataba'i pointed out ten features that highlight the prohibition of wine: 1) The word “verily” (إِنَّمَا) is used, 2) wine is called an abomination, 3) it is called a work of Satan, 4) God explicitly prohibits people from drinking it, 5) when it is avoided, one can hope for and expect salvation, 6) this verse includes the evils which result from drinking wine, 7) there is a question as to whether this warning causes those who commit this sin to abstain from it, 8) after much emphasis on this issue, people are invited to obey God and His

<sup>36</sup> Shaikh Tusi, *al-Tibyan*, vol.2, p. 213; Fadl ibn Hassan, *Majm-ul-Bayan*, vol.2, p.557.

<sup>37</sup> *Ma'idah*, 90.

<sup>38</sup> *Al-Ma'idah*, 91.

Messenger and are discouraged from opposing them, 9) God does not need our obedience, and 10) in the next verse, God says, “*On those who believe and do good there is no blame for what they eat...*”<sup>39</sup>

As mentioned above, the prohibition of wine was declared by God gradually and in stages, perhaps because the Arabs during that time were heavy drinkers, making it difficult for them to break the habit and hence convenient to deliver the verdict of its prohibition in stages.

### **Reasons for prohibiting wine**

Drinking intoxicants is naturally, morally, and intellectually harmful. Its negative physical effects include the disorder of the stomach, intestine, liver, lungs, nerves, blood vessels, heart, and the five senses. Both past and modern physicians have written and presented statistics that indicate the diseases resulting from drinking wine. These illnesses include throat cancer, breast cancer, stroke, heart disease, and high blood pressure. Overall, it harms organs such as the brain, heart, liver, and pancreas.

As for moral harms of drinking intoxicating beverages, besides its negative effects on man’s soul, it may lead to a person’s gracelessness, or committing unintentional actions such as insulting, harming others, committing crime or murder, divulging one’s and others’ secrets, and trampling on human rules and sanctity which form the basis of man’s happiness.

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<sup>39</sup> Sayyid Muhammad Hussain Tabataba’i, *Tafseer al-Mizan*, vol. 6, p.122-125.

As for the intellectual harms of drinking intoxicating beverages, it dissipates one's wisdom, disrupts rational decision-making, and mars perception and discretion. Drinking intoxicating beverages is the worst sin and evil because all evils are rooted in it.<sup>40</sup>

Some Quranic commentators have provided some mind-boggling statistics on the consequences of drinking wine:

1. According to some statistics released in England on insanity due to drinking intoxicating beverages, comparing it with other kinds of insanity, there have been only 53 insane people because of other reasons and 2249 insane people due to intoxication.
2. According to the report of the American College of Surgeons Committee on Trauma and Injury, "Forty percent of motor vehicle crash deaths involve alcohol drinking, and 40 percent of pedestrians killed had been drinking. The contributory role of alcohol in intentional trauma deaths is just as bad. The presence of alcohol in combination with easy access to a deadly weapon (most commonly a handgun) and often only a minor grievance is known as the deadly triad. These three factors together all too often result in tragedy for the victim as well as the assailant. Alcohol is responsible for approximately half of all trauma deaths and nonfatal injuries in the United States—a very tragic and very expensive public health problem that continues every day and every night on our nation's highways, in our cities, and on our farms."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Sayyid Muhammad Hussayn Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan*, vol. 2, p. 290.

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.facs.org/trauma/alcoholinjury.pdf>

3. An English scholar by the name of Bentham writes: "In northern countries, alcoholic beverages make a person fatuous and imbecile, while in the southern countries, it makes them insane." He adds: "The religion of Islam has prohibited all kinds of alcoholic drinks and this is one of the distinctive features of Islam."<sup>42</sup>
4. According to statistics in the United States, mental illness annually leads to twice as many deaths as the American death toll in the Second World War. Scientists believe that drinking intoxicating beverages and smoking play a crucial role in mental illness in the United States.
5. From the economic point of view, in England itself, the losses incurred every year as a result of absenteeism on the part of employees due to alcoholism has been estimated to be around 50 million dollars, which, by itself, is sufficient for the building of thousands of kindergartens, primary, and secondary schools.
6. As per statistics published in connection with the losses arising as a result of alcoholic beverages in France, alcohol burdens the French budget by 137 billion francs per year (not including the personal losses incurred by the individuals), details of which are as follows:
  - - 60 billion Francs spent towards courts and prisons.
  - 40 billion Francs expended for social benefits and charities.
  - 10 billion Francs utilized for covering the expenses of the hospitals for alcoholics.
  - 70 billion francs for maintaining social security.

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<sup>42</sup> *Tafsit Tantawi*, vol. 1, p. 165

Evidently, the number of mental patients, mental hospitals, murders, thefts, rapes, and accidents is proportional to the number of bars.<sup>43</sup>

### Conclusion

The chapters *al-Baqarah* and *al-Ma'idah* mention twelve edible and drinkable materials that are both physically and spiritually harmful and are thus prohibited. Islam holds that purpose of creating human beings is for them to reach perfection, and food influences people's physical and spiritual health. Islam offers guidelines with respect to what can and cannot be eaten so as not to hinder people's growth and perfection.

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<sup>43</sup> Nasir Makraim Shirazi, *Nemuneh Quranic Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 75.

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# THE ISLAMIC UNDERSTANDING OF HARDSHIP, PART I<sup>1</sup>

MOHAMMAD ALI SHOMALI

ABSTRACT: What is the Islamic view of hardship? Do we suffer because it is a sign of being good or immoral, or does it depend on other factors? This article explores the answers to these questions by describing Satan's role in the origin of mankind's hardship, and clarifies the concept of suffering, tragic events, and calamities people tend to face as viewed in the Qur'an and hadith from the Ahlul Bayt. It is sometimes wrongly assumed that a person experiences hardship due to his or her own immorality or irresponsibility. Indeed, suffering is a tool for the forgiveness of our sins, and might be a sign of God's love for a person.

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Experiencing hardship is a reality of everyone's lives. Sometimes, because we are in tune to what is happening to other people and we judge their lives based on outside appearances, we think that other people do not suffer as much as we do. However, when we come to realise the actual conditions of their lives, we realise that indeed everyone faces hardship,

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is based on the first part of two lectures delivered by the author in Dar al-Zahra in Qum in Fatimiyyah 2011.

though in different ways. In what follows, Islamic view of hardship will be explored.

### **Satan's role in the origin of mankind's suffering**

Adam and Eve were given the opportunity to be in a garden which God had made somewhat similar to the eternal heaven, although it was not the eternal heaven. They could live a life without any worries about food, drink, and clothing to the extent that God told them that in this garden they would never become hungry or thirsty, would never feel too hot, would not need to concern themselves about clothing and indeed that everything would be available for them. God also gave them a warning by saying, "*Satan is your enemy and enemy of your wife.*"<sup>2</sup>

We sometimes mistakenly take Satan to be the enemy of God; however, in the first place Satan is our enemy and not the enemy of God because Satan cannot harm Him. If God has some kind of problem with Satan, it is because of us. Satan vowed to deceive human beings and to make them suffer, and has therefore declared war against God. The main problem is between human beings and Satan; otherwise Satan had no problem in worshipping God as he did so for 6000 years. This is why God says:

أَلَمْ أَعْهَدُ إِلَيْكُمْ يَا بَنِي آدَمَ أَنْ لَا تَعْبُدُوا الشَّيْطَانَ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ

*Did I not exhort you, O children of Adam, saying, 'Do not worship Satan. He is indeed your manifest enemy.'*"<sup>3</sup>

Allah made a covenant with human beings that we must not worship Satan because Satan for us is a clear enemy.<sup>4</sup> How ignorant we are that we

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<sup>2</sup> The Qur'an 20:117

obey or even worship our enemy and sometimes we might even wonder if we truly know that God is our Lord when He has done everything possible which is good for us and Satan has done everything possible which is bad and against us and yet we still sometimes follow Satan. This is against the covenant.

وَأَنْ اعْبُدُونِي هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ

*And worship me and this is the right path.*<sup>5</sup>

So God told them that if they follow Him, He will show them the path toward happiness and perfection, but if they follow Satan who is their avowed enemy, Satan would not show them anything except loss and a miserable life in this world and the hereafter.

So Allah told Adam:

إِنَّ هَذَا عَدُوٌّ لَكَ وَ لِرِزْوَانِكَ فَلَا يُخْرِجُكَ مِنْ الْجَنَّةِ فَتَشْتَقِي

*This is indeed an enemy of yours and your wife's. So do not let him (Satan, who is their enemy) expel you from this garden or you will be miserable.*<sup>6</sup>

Thus, the garden was free of problems and Adam and Eve could enjoy it for as long as they wish, as the Qur'an says:

وَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَ زَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَ كُلَا مِنْهَا رَغَدًا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا

*We said: O Adam, dwell with your mate in paradise and eat thereof freely whencesoever you wish...*<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The Qur'an 36:60

<sup>5</sup> The Qur'an 83:61

<sup>6</sup> The Qur'an 20:117

The garden contains no problems, restrictions, and limitations, but they are warned to be careful because if they go outside this heaven, they would start suffering. Why? Because life in this world cannot be free from suffering. The Qur'an says: "...*certainly We created man in travail.*"<sup>8</sup>

Thus, the existence of mankind on this earth is mixed with pain and suffering. This is the reality of human life and therefore different schools of thought and religions have tried to develop an understanding of suffering. For some religions like Buddhism, their account of suffering is a central part of their understanding of this world.

### **The Islamic view of hardship**

So what is the Islamic view of hardship? Do we suffer because it is a sign of being a good or an immoral person? Or does it depend on other factors?

Sometimes people assume that if someone is suffering, it is because they are immoral or at least did not act wisely and carefully. In this way, when people see someone suffering, they assume that person to be responsible, a view commonly seen throughout history. Even in the Bible we find that when some people saw that Prophet Ayyub (Job) was suffering greatly due to losing his children and his health, they accused him of wrongdoing which led to his suffering. They wondered how it could be possible for a friend and obedient servant of God suffers. It ought to be impossible.

These people accused the Prophet due to their short-sightedness. They thought that a friend of God, who is expected to have received God's

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<sup>7</sup> The Qur'an 2:35

<sup>8</sup> The Qur'an 90:4

mercy, should not suffer physically, nor should he suffer in this world. However, they did not know that it is more complicated than this. We must not have a simplistic understanding of what happens in this world. Indeed, although we cannot generalize, as read in the Qur'an and hadith, the reality can be the opposite: if someone is suffering there is a great chance that the person may be a good person. Of course, as we will see below, we cannot say that whoever is suffering is definitely a good person. I am simply trying to correct the opposite view – that people tend to think that whoever is suffering is immoral, or has acted unwisely or irresponsibly.

### **Hardship in the view of the Qur'an and hadiths**

The following will include references to the verses of the Qur'an and hadith from the Ahlul Bayt about the suffering, tragic events, and calamities people tend to face.

In the Qur'an, God tells us that He has no reservations in giving worldly gifts, the possessions of this “*dunya*,”<sup>9</sup> to people who are not good or even those who disbelieve in Him. Indeed, God says that if it was not for the believers becoming perplexed and somehow in danger of losing their faith, He would have even given them more:

وَلَوْلَا أَنْ يَكُونَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً لَجَعَلْنَا لِمَنْ يَكْفُرُ بِالرَّحْمَنِ لِيُوتِحَهُمْ سُفُوحًا مِنْ  
فِضَّةٍ وَمَعَارِجَ عَلَيْهَا يَظْهَرُونَ

*Were it not (for the danger) that mankind would be one community (a monolithic community of people without faith), We would have surely made for those who defy the*

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<sup>9</sup> The world

*All-Beneficent, silver roofs for their houses and (silver) stairways by which they ascend.*<sup>10</sup>

Imagine if the world were in such a condition that those who did not believe in God were so rich that they all built their houses with silver whereas the people who believe in God were all poor. How many people would still remain faithful? However, only in order to prevent that from happening, God has not given them much, otherwise He would have no hesitations about doing so, because for Him “*dunya*” is insignificant and He would give it very easily. God also says:

وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّمَا نُثَمِّلِي لَهُمْ خَيْرٌ لِّأَنفُسِهِمْ إِنَّمَا نُثَمِّلِي لَهُمْ لِيَزِدَادُوا إِثْمًا

*Let the faithless not suppose that the respite We grant them is good for their souls: We give them respite only that they may increase in sin...*<sup>11</sup>

In this verse, in addition to some others in the Qur’an, Allah explains that when God gives those disbelievers opportunity, time, and chance to make more out of this worldly life, people should not think that God loves them and is supporting them. On the contrary, God is in fact giving them more opportunities to continue their criminal life and increase their sinful actions. Thus, if they are given longer lives, we must not be surprised.

This fact is also clearly mentioned in hadiths. For example, once person talked to Imam Sadiq about the suffering of faithful people, and the Imam quoted a hadith from the Prophet. According to this hadith, the Prophet was asked as to whom would receive the greatest calamities and to whom

<sup>10</sup> The Qur’an 43:33

<sup>11</sup> The Qur’an 3:178

the greatest tragedies happen in this world. The Prophet replied that the Prophets (*al-Nabiyyun*) suffer the most in this world, and then those who most resemble the Prophets suffer the most.<sup>12</sup> Thus, anyone who is closer to the Prophet in rank suffers more. And when someone suffers it is not due to his immorality or because God does not want him or does not love him. Furthermore, when we consider the faithful, everyone would suffer according to the level of their faith (*iman*) and the amount of good deeds they perform. So if their *Iman* is stronger and they have more good deeds, they would suffer more. Imam Sadiq also said:

إِنَّ لِلَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ عِبَادًا فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ خَالِصِ عِبَادِهِ مَا يُنَزِّلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ - نُحْفَةً  
إِلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا صَرَفَهَا عَنْهُمْ إِلَى غَيْرِهِمْ وَلَا يَلِيَّتُهُ إِلَّا صَرَفَهَا إِلَيْهِمْ<sup>13</sup>

Truly God has some servants on the earth who are very pure and dedicated to Him. Nothing good comes from heaven to the earth except that God sends it away from them and no calamity comes except that God sends it to them.

Thus, sometimes God chooses his best servants and tries them with all kinds of difficulties. Sometimes we see that there are people for whom not a day or a week passes without facing some sort of tribulation. It is as if at least every week something bad should happen to them. This is certainly

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* Full text of this hadith in Arabic is as follows:

ذَكَرَ عِنْدَ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عِ الْبَلَاءُ وَ مَا يُخْصُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ بِهِ الْمُؤْمِنَ فَقَالَ سُئِلَ رَسُولُ  
اللَّهِ ص مَنْ أَشَدُّ النَّاسِ بَلَاءً فِي الدُّنْيَا فَقَالَ التَّيْبُونَ ثُمَّ الْأَمْتَلُ قَالِ الْأَمْتَلُ وَ يُتَبَلَى الْمُؤْمِنُ بَعْدَ  
عَلَى قَدْرِ إِيمَانِهِ وَ حُسْنِ أَعْمَالِهِ فَمَنْ صَحَّ إِيمَانُهُ وَ حَسَنَ عَمَلُهُ اشْتَدَّ بَلَاؤُهُ وَ مَنْ سَخُفَ إِيمَانُهُ  
وَ ضَعُفَ عَمَلُهُ قَلَّ بَلَاؤُهُ

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

not a sign of being abandoned or forgotten by God. Indeed, sometimes it is the sign of being treated in a very special and favourable way by Him.

### **Suffering is a sign of God's love**

Imam Baqir says:

عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ ع قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى إِذَا أَحَبَّ عَبْدًا عَنَتُهُ بِالْبَلَاءِ عَنَاءً وَتَجَّهَهُ  
بِالْبَلَاءِ تَجًّا فَإِذَا دَعَاهُ قَالَ لَبَيْكَ عَبْدِي لَئِنْ تَجَّهْتُ لَكَ مَا سَأَلْتَ إِنِّي عَلَى ذَلِكَ لَقَادِرٌ  
وَ لَئِنْ ادَّخَرْتُ لَكَ فَمَا ادَّخَرْتُ لَكَ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكَ<sup>14</sup>

When God loves one of His servants, He shows calamities upon him and covers him with them. Then when the servant calls God [to remove them], God replies, ‘Here I am, My servant. I can give you what you ask for quickly, but if I save it for you it would be better for you.’

This may be one of the most difficult times for God – if indeed it is possible to say that there is something difficult for God. Although, for example, in some hadiths it does state that it is very difficult for God when He wants to take the life of His good servant who does not want to die. Of course, nothing is either difficult or easy for God; this is the way in which we can explain a deeper matter. Thus, it is a very difficult situation for God when He observes that His good servant is suffering and praying earnestly to Him to remove these sufferings and calamities. God is so Kind and Merciful that He loves us more than our mothers do. So what does He do? God tells His servant that He is at their service and has not forgotten them. Then God explains that if He quickly grants His servants

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* p. 253.

their desires, then it would be saved for them in hereafter (*akhirah*) which is indeed the time they will be in a greater need. So God wants to keep the situation as it is and save the reward for His servant's *akhirah*.

For example, parents may buy a bicycle for their child as an incentive to work hard for upcoming exams. Before completing the exams, the child asks to be given the bicycle. Though the child is told to first finish the exam he or she objects and cries; however, a wise parent would not give the bicycle until the exams have been completed. Although they may feel sad, they are certain their child will eventually understand and thank them later for it. Therefore, God tells us that He is indeed able to remove all our suffering and has no problem doing so, but He has instead reserved something much better for us, depriving us of which would actually harm us. So He asks us to trust His understanding and decision about what is best for us.

### Outcome of worldly suffering on the Day of Judgment

Ibn Abi Yafour, one of Imam Sadiq's well-known companions, approached Imam Sadiq with a complaint that he was suffering a lot while constantly facing illness and pain. So Imam Sadiq told him:

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ أَبِي يَعْقُورٍ قَالَ شَكَوْتُ إِلَى أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع مَا أَلْتَمَسْتُ مِنَ  
 الْأَوْجَاعِ وَكَانَ مَسْأَلًا فَقَالَ لِي يَا عَبْدَ اللَّهِ لَوْ يَعْلَمُ الْمُؤْمِنُ مَا لَهُ مِنَ الْمَصَائِبِ  
 لَتَمَتَّى أَنْ يُفْرَضَ بِالْمَقَارِيطِ طُولَ عُمُرِهِ<sup>15</sup>

If a believer knew what he will gain because of all the calamities experienced and what God would give them as a result of this suffering, they would wish that their body

<sup>15</sup> *Musakkin al-Fu'ad 'Inda Faqad al-Ahibbah wa al-Awlad*, p. 125.

was cut into pieces using scissors for as long as he or she was alive.

At the moment we do not understand this, though on the Day of Judgment everyone would wish they suffered more as a result of seeing what has been saved for them in their savings account with God.

### Why do some people not suffer?

On the other hand, we have hadiths about people who did not suffer, who had everything they wanted though they were wrongdoers. In a famous hadith, Imam Sadiq talks about a person who was visited by the Prophet. While the Prophet was in his house, he witnessed a hen having laid an egg when it was sitting on top of a wall when that egg fell onto a nail in the wall and remained there. Imagine an egg dropping onto a nail without cracking. This surprised the Prophet. This person saw the Prophet's astonishment and proudly said, "By God, Who has truthfully raised you as a Prophet, I have never faced any calamity." The Prophet quickly stood up without having eaten the food, and said, "For the one who does not face any calamity in his life, God has nothing to do with him." The Prophet then left the house.<sup>16</sup>

If you never become ill, if you never suffer, if you never have any problem or loss, it is not a sign that you are a good person – it only means that

<sup>16</sup> *Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 256. The original text is as follows:

قَالَ أَبُو عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع دُعِيَ النَّبِيُّ ص إِلَى طَعَامٍ فَلَمَّا دَخَلَ مَنَزِلَ الرَّجُلِ نَظَرَ إِلَى دَجَاجَةٍ فَوَقَّ حَائِطًا قَدْ بَاصَتْ فَتَمَعَّ الْبَيْضَةَ عَلَى وَتَدٍ فِي حَائِطٍ فَتَبَتَّ عَلَيْهِ وَ لَمْ تُسْقَطْ وَ لَمْ تُنْكَسِرْ فَتَمَعَّجَبَ النَّبِيُّ ص مِنْهَا فَقَالَ لَهُ الرَّجُلُ أَعْجَبْتَ مِنْ هَذِهِ الْبَيْضَةِ فَوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَكَ بِالْحَقِّ مَا رَزَيْتُ شَيْئًا قَطُّ قَالَ فَتَهَضَّ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص وَ لَمْ يَأْكُلْ مِنْ طَعَامِهِ شَيْئًا وَ قَالَ مَنْ لَمْ يَزُرْ فَمَا لِلَّهِ فِيهِ مِنْ حَاجَةٍ.

God has left you to yourself. This is the concept of *Imlā'* as we saw above in the verse 3:178.

### **Different approaches to a person who suffers**

Some believe that people suffer due to their sins, foolishness, irresponsibility, or improper planning. Therefore it is mistakenly thought that the person deserves to suffer, that it was decided by God and consequently they deserve no sympathy. Others believe that God sometimes deliberately plans for His close servants to suffer as a means for their perfection and upliftment, a reason for giving them more in the hereafter. However, this does not mean that those who apparently do not suffer have a problem, because unfortunately sometimes some people may accuse believers who, according to their understanding, are not suffering. The truth is, everyone is suffering to one degree or another, but when some people do not observe apparent suffering, they tend to wrongly assume the person is wrongdoer, because hadiths say that the people who are good would suffer. Our role is to be as non-judgmental as possible and leave everything to God. It is not our responsibility to judge who is suffering because they are sinful or pious.

### **Suffering: A tool for the forgiveness of our sins**

There are hadiths that indicate that some people may suffer in themselves or in their children due to their sins. Sometimes we suffer because someone has not fulfilled his responsibilities; there are people who suffer their entire lives because at the time of delivery the nurse or doctor mishandled the baby due to carelessness and unintentionally disabled the infant's life. Sometimes people are injured for life as a result of careless

driving. Thus it's imperative to hold an accurate and comprehensive understanding of evil, suffering, and calamities.

### **Suffering and God's pleasure**

According to the Qur'an and hadith, all that befalls us is a test, although this does not necessarily mean that all occurrences please God or He has deliberately planned it. For example, if someone insults me in front of others without a good reason, it does not mean that God is pleased with this, although it certainly is a way God can test us. Every moment of our life is a test, which means every moment of life has the potential to be used as a step towards our progress. Thus, a criminal or a careless person may harm us, and these are all considered to be tests; however, we are not to say that the perpetrators were agents of God to test us. This is like a driving lesson. During training, we are to remain calm and act wisely if a driver carelessly runs through a red light and accidentally comes close to us. However, the careless driver cannot ask our instructor to pay them or thank them for creating a situation in which our instructor can test us. So these are two different issues.

A believer may suffer due to his carelessness, irresponsibility, or not bothering to consult before making decisions. If we get married without thinking and consulting and then suffer, or we do not take care of our children's health and they become ill, it is wrong to think that God has chosen us as His pure servants and this is why we suffer. On the contrary, we must act wisely, think, plan, and consult to benefit from the experiences of other people, especially the believers. Nevertheless, we will still face many problems we are not in control of. What is then important is to have patience (*sabr*) to enormously benefit from all tests and

suffering. And God chooses those who practice patience, not those who fail.

### **The Prophet's suffering**

As we saw above, the prophets suffered more than other people. Among all the prophets, Prophet Muhammad suffered the most, as he said:

ما أؤذي نبي مثل ما أؤذيت<sup>17</sup>

No Prophet was annoyed like me.

Prophet Muhammad lost his father before his birth, and shortly after his birth he lost his mother. He was then brought up by his grandfather who then also passed away. When he was under great difficulties and pressures, when the Muslims were kept under sanctions in “*Shi'b Abi Talib*”, he lost his greatest supporters, his wife, Lady *Khadija*, and his uncle, *Abu Talib*. It cannot be imagined how much he suffered whether for his own situation or because of that of his companions. He even suffered within the four walls of his own house. In several verses of the Qur'an, God mentions some of the Prophet's difficult experiences e.g. suffering in his own family and being ill-treated by some of his own followers who did not appreciate having a Prophet like him.

The Prophet was tolerant among his own followers as well as the unbelievers and enemies who killed many of his companions, including his uncle Hamzah. And many times they have attempted to kill him. For example, sometimes when the followers wanted to meet the Prophet or ask him for something, they would shout using his first name (and not the nickname) from outside his house, asking him to come out. He was still

<sup>17</sup> *Bihar Al-Anwar*, vol. 39, p. 55; *Kashf al-Ghummah fi Ma'rifat al-A'immah*, vol. 2, p. 537.

tolerant and patient with this treatment to the extent that God came to support his Prophet: *“Indeed those who call you from behind the apartments, most of them do not apply reason.”*<sup>18</sup>

Some also used to enter to the Prophet’s house without asking his permission. Nowadays when we want to visit our scholars, we are worried that we may disturb them, and sometimes hesitate before visiting to eliminate putting much pressure on them. However, those people used to go inside the Prophet’s house without permission, and the Prophet, due to his kindness, felt embarrassed to stop them, so then God said:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتَ النَّبِيِّ إِلَّا أَنْ يُؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ إِلَى طَعَامٍ غَيْرِ نَاطِرٍ  
 إِيَّاهُ وَ لَكِنْ إِذَا دُعِيتُمْ فَادْخُلُوا فَإِذَا طَعِمْتُمْ فَانْتَشِرُوا وَلَا مَسْتَأْذِينَ لِحَدِيثٍ إِنَّ  
 ذَلِكُمْ كَانَ يُؤْذِي النَّبِيَّ فَيَسْتَحْيِي مِنْكُمْ<sup>19</sup>

*O you who have faith! Do not enter the Prophet’s houses unless permission is granted you for a meal, without waiting for it to be readied. But enter when you are invited, and disperse when you have taken your meal, without settling down to chat. Indeed such conduct torments the Prophet, and he is ashamed of (asking) you (to leave).*

Thus, they were told not to enter the house of the Prophet unless given permission. For this reason, nowadays we seek permission when we want to enter the shrines because these are the houses of the Prophet. Furthermore, when those people went to the house of the Prophet, they used to sit there waiting for lunch or dinner because they regarded his

<sup>18</sup> 49:4.

<sup>19</sup> 33:53

food as blessed. Then after having their food they would want to listen to some hadith. Imagine what the Prophet would have suffered with if all the people of Medina did the same thing. For this reason, Allah instructed them to ask for permission before entering the Prophet's house; and if invited, to not wait for the food to be served, and if invited for a meal, to kindly leave afterwards instead of desiring to enjoy their time listening to the Prophet (33:53).

Thus, the Prophet suffered a great deal, though he was patient. He did not ask them to be considerate towards him or to do something for him. The only thing that he asked of them was to love for his family, the Ahlul Bayt: *"Say, I do not ask of you any reward for it except affection for (my) relatives."*<sup>20</sup> Indeed, it was God who told the Prophet to inform them that if they want to show their appreciation to him, they should show love towards his family. Note that the question was not to love him; it was to love his household. In other words, they had to prove their love for the Prophet by loving his household.

To show love towards the family of the Prophet, the most natural choice would be Lady Fatimah al-Zahra, because she was daughter of the Prophet and the closest one to him. It is true that Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn were his grandchildren or that Imam Ali was his cousin and son in law, but the closest one to him was Lady Fatimah. Everyone knew that she was the one about whom the Prophet said that she was not only his daughter, but she was indeed part of him and she was his own soul. For example, Jabir ibn Abdullah al-Ansari reports that just before the demise of the Prophet, Lady Fatima went to see the Prophet and bent over his body and

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<sup>20</sup> 42:23.

cried. The Prophet opened his eyes and talked to her. Among the things that the Prophet said was:

لَأَنَّكَ مِنِّي وَ أَنَا مِنْكَ وَ أَنْتِ بَصْعَةٌ مِنِّي وَ رُوحِي الَّتِي بَيْنَ جَنْبَيْ

...Truly you are from me and I am from you and you are part of me and my own spirit.<sup>21</sup>

However, although this was the only thing the Prophet wanted from the people, some did not even observe this much and therefore knowing what is going to happen to his family and progeny after he passed away, the Prophet during his lifetime suffered for this reason as well.<sup>22</sup> For example, the Prophet knew what was going to happen to Lady Fatimah, Imam Ali, Imam Hasan, and Imam Husayn. Lady Fatimah faced so many tragedies in a very short time after his death that she became very severely ill and frail. During the last day of her life, she had a dream of her father. The Prophet told the Lady in this dream:

هَلْتِي إِلَيَّ يَا بُنَيَّةَ فَإِنِّي إِلَيْكَ مُشْتَاقٌ<sup>23</sup>

My dear daughter, come to me quickly; I am eager to be with you.

Lady Fatimah knew that this was a true dream because the Prophet himself had said, "Whoever sees me in a dream he has seen me."<sup>24</sup> Then the Prophet said, "O Fatimah! Tonight you will be with me."

<sup>21</sup> *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 28, p. 77.

<sup>22</sup> In *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 28, there is a chapter with 43 hadiths on Allahs swt informing the Prophet and the Propeht informing his nation about the injustice and hostility towards Ahlul Bayt.

<sup>23</sup> *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 43, p. 179.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* vol. 58, p. 211.

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***Self-Development in the Words of Great Mystics***

Sayyidah Iram-Zahra Zaidi - Translated by Mahboobeh Morshedian

***Imam Husayn, the Heir of Prophet Ibrahim***

Mohammad Ali Shomali