

Dr. H. Fereidoun

LESSONS IN  
ISLAMIC  
ETHICS

# **LESSONS IN ISLAMIC ETHICS**

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# بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*In the name of God , the Merciful , The Compassionate*

## **Introduction**

Many things have been recorded in books throughout history about human beings and their nature. In all of the books, philosophies and ideologies which have developed various points of view about the human being, we find one point in common: Human beings have a special humility and strength which separates them from all other creatures. Even though the materialist schools of thought maintain that this humility and strength is related to the brain and its fissures, we believe that this advantage is not simply related to brain fissures because a dolphin has the same fissures but everyone knows it is not human.

Thus we must seek for this difference in something else. When we turn to the revealed books, in particular, the Holy Quran, we find the cause for this humility and strength of human beings. The Holy Quran says that the reason for the superiority of mankind over other creatures is because it contains a Divine substance which is called the soul (*nafs*).

We can then conclude that the fissures of the brain and the complicated structure of the nervous system are not the sole causes for the difference between the human being and other creatures, but the main advantage of the human being is its soul. This characteristic has enabled the human being to dictate his or her will over others.

The human soul is the most important factor in creating a person's personality. With this, the human being can move through the evolutionary stages with correct training and ascend to the highest heights. The opposite is also true. By disobeying the Divine and moral laws which have been sent by the Divine, the human being may fall to the lowest depths. As the Holy Quran says, *"In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. By the sun and his morning brightness and by the moon when she follows him, and by the day when it disi.nys him and by the night when it enshrouds him! By the heaven and That which built it and by the earth and That which extended it! By the soul, and That which shaped it and inspired it to lewdness and god fearing! Prosperous is he who purifies it, and failed has he who seduces it. "* (91 : 1-1 0)

We see in the above verses that God speaks about the human soul and swears by it. We can thus see the importance of the soul and its significance. It was part of the mission of the Prophets to teach human beings by completing and perfecting ethics.

This meaningful task does not mean that the Prophets did not pay any attention to the human body and its needs as we will refer to later when we discuss cleanliness of dress.

We can say that the Prophet Muhammad, peace and the mercy of God be upon him and his descendants, the last of the Prophets, came to take the hand of mankind and rescue it from the materialist world, to help humanity move towards the summit of revolution and spiritual perfection.

He and the Prophets before him came to say to mankind, 'Know yourself and know your value'.

The Prophets told them that human beings were not like animals who only attended to their physical needs. They emphasized that the human being can attain wellbeing and happiness by choosing the right way and avoiding all that is evil.

This is why ethical and moral principles form such an important part of religious teachings because ethics means 'the science of living'. This is a science which teaches human beings how to attain well-being and eternal happiness and opens the way for them to reach perfection and completion.

The Prophets of God established the principles of moral excellence and taught their followers these precepts for them to then teach mankind. They tried to strengthen and make firm this principle. They trained many noble and valuable people. The last Prophet, the Prophet of Islam, came and declared his program which he received in revelation from God saying, *"It is He Who raised up from among the common people a Prophet from among themselves, to recite His signs to Them and to purify them, and to teach them the Book and Wisdom although before that they were certainly in manifest error."* (62:2)

Our Holy Prophet mentions his task as being the perfecting of the ethics when he says, "I have been raised to complete the ethics of humanity."<sup>1</sup> Thus by nothing the verse of the Holy Quran and the Prophet's statement, we realize that ethics plays a very important role in Islamic precepts.

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<sup>1</sup> *Mustodrak o/Woso'iJ*, vol. 2, p. 282. This is a Shi'ite reference book written by Haji Nuri.

The Arabic word itself, *akhlaq*, or ethics, comes from the root word *khalq* which means nature and *khulq* which means mood or humour. It is this latter which is transformed through a worthy teacher who is "a follower of the teachings of the Holy Prophet of Islam.

We shall study ethics under two headings: The relationship between the human being and God and second, the relationships among human beings.

## **Foreword: The Guarantee for Practicing Islam.**

In most cases when a person discusses Islamic rules and regulations, the questions may arise, " What makes a person follow ethical laws? What prohibits a person from doing the unethical? "

For example, Islamic precepts tell us to undertake a good deed for God's satisfaction. What happens if we do not follow this Command? Is there any chastisement for not following the Divine Commands? If so, what forms do they take?

The answer to these questions can be found in many Islamic sources, the Quran and the Traditions. Here we are confronted with the greatest of principles, the belief in the resurrection and life after death. There are more than 1400 verses of the Holy Quran devoted to this, showing the importance which is attached to it.

The Holy Quran tells us about the recording of actions and deeds, the angels who are responsible for this work, the moment of death, purgatory, the arising on the Day of Resurrection. The reckoning of the actions will be looked into and' finally, heaven or hell awaits the decision.

Can anything better guarantee good deeds than this.

What other factor could prevent mankind from committing evil deeds? Let us look at some Quranic verses in regard to this: *"Ob humanity! Surely you must strive (to attain) to Your Lord, a hard striving until you meet Him. "*(84:6) This verse tells us that our living is not limited to this world alone. We have another life after death.

*"And the Book shall be set in place; and thou wilt see the sinners fearful at what is in it, saying, 'Alas for us! How is it with this Book, that it leaves nothing behind, small or great, but it has numbered it?' And they shall find all they wrought present, and Thy Lord shall not wrong anyone."* (18:49)

The Holy Quran speaks about the recording of actions in this interesting verse. Everybody who reads this verse tries to control his or her actions so that the final book will be full of good things on the Day of Resurrection. *"As for the atheists, for them garments of fire shall be cut, and there shall be poured over their heads boiling water whereby whatsoever is in their bellies and their skins shall be melted; for them await hooked iron rods; as often as they desire in their anguish to come forth from it, they shall be restored into it and Taste the chastisement of the burning!" God shall surely admit those who believe and do righteous deeds into gardens underneath which rivers flow; therein they shall be adorned with bracelets of gold*

*and with pearls and their apparel there shall be of silk ...* "(22: 19-23)

In order to present further evidence, we turn to the words of Imam Ali, peace be upon him, the Commander of the Faithful, whose sermons, sayings and letters have been compiled in the *Nahj al-Balagha*.<sup>2</sup> "Know, oh creatures of God, that you are a guard over your own self. Your limbs are watchmen and truthful vigil keepers who preserve (the record) of your actions and the numbers of your breaths. The gloom of the dark night cannot conceal you from them, nor can closed doors hide you from them. Surely tomorrow is too close to today."<sup>3</sup>

We see from these words that every human being is supervised and will be judged by their organs and members as to their actions and deeds. "As regards the obedient people, He would reward them with His Nearness and would keep them forever in His House from where those who settle therein do not move out. Their position would not undergo change, fear would not affect them and journey from place to place would not be forced on them. As for people of sins, He will settle them in the worst place, would bind their hands with their necks, bind their forelocks with their feet and would clothe them in shirts of tar and dresses cut out of palms. They would be in punishment whose heat would be severe, doors would be closed on the inmates, in a fire which is full of shouts and cries and rising flames and fearful voices."<sup>4</sup>

In the above phrases, the Commander of the Faithful has mentioned the final place of the obedient people and the people of sins. "Surely God, the Glorified, the Sublime, nothing is hidden from Him of whatever people do in their nights or days. He knows all the details and His Knowledge covers them. Your limbs are a witness, the organs of your body constitute an army (against yourself), your inner self serves Him as eyes (to watch your sins) and your loneliness is open to Him."<sup>5</sup>

The Commander of the Faithful speaks about the witnesses of God in this Sermon. He reminds us that our actions are controlled by the angels of God even in our loneliness. "You should therefore exercise fear of God because it has a rope whose twist is strong and its pinnacle is lofty and invulnerable. Hasten towards death in its pangs (by good deeds) and be prepared for it before it approaches because the ultimate end is the Day of Judgment. This is

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2.This book was compiled by Sharif Razi approximately 1000 years ago.

3An excerpt from the *Nilhjal-Bo/ogha*, Sermon 156.

4. *ibid.*, Sermon 1 08

5. *ibid* , Sermon 138.

Sufficient preaching for one who understands and enough of a lesson for one who does not know. What idea do you have before reaching that end, of the narrowness of the grave, the hardship of loneliness, fear of the passage towards the next world, the pangs of fear, the shifting of ribs here and there (due to the narrowing of the grave), the deafness of ears, the darkness of the grave, fear of the promised punishment, the closing of the receptacle of the grave and the laying of stones." <sup>6</sup>

As can be seen, the Commander of the Faithful states what will happen after death. He says that the human being should be aware and careful because they have a long way before them and they will be responsible for their actions. "God, the Sublime, will certainly question you, oh community of his creatures, about your actions, small or big, open or concealed. If He punishes you, it is because you have been oppressive and if He forgives, then it is because He is the most generous. " <sup>7</sup>

In this letter quoted above, we gain knowledge of God so we try to do what He wants in order to attain His satisfaction. "I wonder at the proud man who was just a drop of semen one day and will turn into a corpse tomorrow. I wonder at the man who doubts God although he sees His creations. I wonder at him who has forgotten death although he sees people dying." <sup>8</sup>

Thus every believer who has accepted that the Holy Quran is a Divine book and believes in the Prophet of God and his descendants, should submit to God's Commands. Therefore, a person has an obligation in obeying the moral precepts and it is the best guarantee for the ethical rules and regulations.

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<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, Sermon 232.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, Letter 27.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, Saying 126.

## **PART ONE:**

### **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE HUMAN BEING AND GOO**

#### **Purity of Intention**

Our Merciful Lord has invited His creatures to Himself, appointing worship for them. He knows that His creatures can only approach Him through worship and then they can become more and more complete. Thus worship is the only way to attain perfection. And here we can see the most important matter in the Prophet's rules.

It is necessary for us to know what goal has been specified for the human being in their worship. The goal for human beings in their worship is to purify their intention, undertake good deeds and prevent themselves from evil deeds in order to attain God's satisfaction. This important subject runs throughout the Holy Quran.

As the Holy Quran says, all the Prophets came to show the correct way to human beings. All of them say, 'Do your actions only to attain God's satisfaction. This is the only method for spiritual completion.' This is the way of the monotheists; for to do deeds for the satisfaction of others is to be among the idolaters, the signs of which, in Islamic culture, refers to people who undertake their religious duties but do so' when others can see their worship and thereby praise them or else it is persons who like to have others hear their worship.

Purity of intention means undertaking something for God's satisfaction alone. The Holy Quran tells us that just as God purifies milk from a cow and separates it out from the faeces and blood of the cow, so a human being must strive to purify their intention so that worship is undertaken for God alone and not because of one's selfishness or personal desires. It says, "*And surely in the cattle there is a lesson for you; we give you to drink of what is in their bellies, between the faeces and blood, pure milk, sweet to drinkers.*" (16:66) and, " ... *they were not enjoined anything except that they should serve God.*" (108:5)

God says that human beings are commanded to purify their tasks so that they undertake them only for Him.

*Whoever desires this world's life and its finery. We will pay them in full their needs therein and they shall not be made to suffer loss in respect of them. These are they for whom there is nothing but fire in the hereafter and what they wrought in it shall go for nothing and vain is what they do.* "(11: 15-16)

Here the Holy Quran enlightens the final position of people who do not perform their Divine tasks for the satisfaction of God. *'(There are) they whose labor is lost in this world's life and they think that they are well versed in skill of the work of hands.'* (18: 104-105)

Yes they who suppose that they had won and who had attained many profits in their life and think that they have performed their religious tasks for the satisfaction of God, lost out because they did not have such a purpose and they actually undertook their tasks for the satisfaction of other human beings. *" On you who believe! Do not make your charity worthless by reproach and injury like him who spends his property to be seen of men and does not believe in God and the Last Day so his parable is as the parable of a smooth rock with earth upon it; then a heavy rain falls upon it so it leaves it bare. They shall not be able to gain anything of what they have earned and God does not guide the unbelieving people. And the parable of those who spend their property to seek the pleasure of God and for the certainty of their souls is as the parable of a garden on an elevated ground upon which heavy rain falls so it brings forth its fruit two-fold but if heavy rain does not fall upon it, then light rain (is sufficient) and God sees what you do. "* (2: 264-265)

God says that there is a similarity between a person who spends his property to be seen of men and a smooth rock with earth upon it. When a heavy rain falls upon it, we no longer see the earth upon the smooth rock and it leaves it bare. A person who does not do his tasks for God's sake gains no benefit for his future life. But those who do their Divine duties to seek the pleasure and satisfaction of God can daily add to their benefits.

The following Traditions of the Holy Prophet and the pure Imams reaffirm this. "The foremost in religion is the acknowledgement of Him. The perfection of acknowledgement of him is to testify to Him. The perfection of testifying to Him is to believe in His oneness. The perfection of believing in His Oneness is to regard Him Pure." <sup>9</sup>

In a Tradition, the Commander of the Faithful says, "There are three traces for a man who seeks for the pleasure of men. First, he becomes glad when he sees people around himself. Second, he becomes depressed when he is alone (there is no one to praise him) and third, he likes to be praised in all his tasks." <sup>10</sup>

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9. *ibid.*, Sermon 1.

10. *Usul al-Kafi*, Chapter of faith and infidelity. This is one of the most famous and important books among Shi'ite sources. The Traditions have been collected by Shaykh Kulani

Our sixth Imam, Imam Ja'far Sadiq, peace be upon him, said to one of his followers, "Be very careful and aware about wanting people to see what you do. Surely a person who does his tasks to seek the pleasure of men, God will give over to men (and there is no profit for them)." He also said, "Every person who seeks the pleasure of men is a worshipper of idols. Anyone who works for the satisfaction of mankind, his benefit is given by them and a person who does his religious tasks to seek the pleasure of God is given benefit by Him."

Our eighth Imam, Imam Reza, peace be upon him said to one of his followers, "Do your work without wanting people to see what you have done or hear your good worship. Certainly a man who does not do his tasks for God, God will give over him to the man who has done his tasks to seek his own pleasure. Woe upon you! Nobody did a deed unless God turned its result to him. If it was a good deed, he received a good result and if it was a bad deed, he received a bad result. "<sup>11</sup>

Imam Sadiq, peace be upon him, said, "The angel who is with human beings cheerfully takes the good doer among human beings to Paradise. When he takes him up, God says, Put him in hell because this human being did not seek My pleasure when he was doing this task: "<sup>12</sup>

So the believers are always in danger of not accounting for our actions and we must always beseech the help of God. We ought to want him to help us to do our Divine religious tasks and worship only to seek His pleasure. We must always pray to our Lord to help us to step in the way of His satisfaction. We know that it is impossible to travel upon this way without His Help. Finally, we must want our Merciful God to help us to be amongst the purified ones who have been praised by God in the Holy Quran where Satan is speaking with God.

He said, *My Lord, then respite me to the day that they are raised.'* He said, *'Surely you are of the respited ones till the period of the time made known. "* He said, *'Then by Thy Might, I will surely make them live an evil life all except Thy servants from among them, the purified ones.'* " (38:79-83)

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11. *ibid.*, *Usul*.

12. *op. cit.* *Usul*.

## Reliance on God

Reliance on God is to make use of instruments and to try to reach the target by delivering the work to God. This is one of the duties of the believers in Islam. When a Muslim wants to attain a target, he must struggle for the intention or purpose according to his ability but he must take into consideration that in every stage he ought to rely on God.

This means that one must know that although one has been ordered to use the instruments to attain one's purpose, but one never forgets that one must always rely on God during one's struggle. For instance, suppose that you have a great difficulty to solve. Here a question arises. Which characteristics must be chosen? In answer we can explain the following:

1. The lawyer must be aware of the law.
2. He must be capable of doing your work.
3. He must be compassionate and really want to help you.

We call this action 'relying' on another person when he fulfills the three above conditions. We find that we have no lawyer better than God. Thus it is reasonable for a believer to rely on God.

Thus He is aware of all creatures, knows everything in His creation and He has the highest power in the world, and nobody is as strong as He is. As to the third condition, He is Merciful and Compassionate to His creatures.

There are many verses in the Holy Quran which speak about reliance upon God. *"They only are believers whose hearts become full of fear when God is mentioned, and when His communication is recited to them they increase them in faith and in their Lord do they trust"* (8: 2)

Or, *"Surely he (Satan) has no authority over those who believe and rely on their Lord."* (27: 99) This verse says that Satan has no effect upon the people who believe in God and rely on Him .

*"God, there is no god but He and upon God then let the believers rely."* (64: 13) Here we see that the believers should only rely on God.

*"And give him (who believes in God and the Last Day) substance from whence he thinks not and whoever trusts in God, He is sufficient for him. Surely God attains His purpose. God indeed has appointed a measure for everything."* (65:3)

So our Holy Quran says whoever trusts in God, He is sufficient for him. *"Thus it is due to mercy from God that you deal with them gently and had you been rough and hard hearted, they would certainly have dispersed from around you; pardon them therefore and ask pardon for them and take counsel with them in the affairs so when you have decided, then place your trust in God. Surely God loves those who trust."* (3:154)

Of course, when God says to His Prophet, *"So when you have decided, then place your trust in God,"* it means that every believer who has accepted this Book and His Prophet must obey this order and must rely on God in his affairs. *"The Lord of the East and the West - there is no god but he . Therefore take Him for a protector."* (73: 10) Here the Holy Quran orders us to rely only on God.

*"And rely on the Ever-living Who dies not and celebrate His praise and sufficient is He as being aware of the faults of His servants."* (25: 58)

God then tells us, *"Rely only on God."* *"And rely on God and God is sufficient for a Protector."* (33:3) In this . . . . . , God Commands His Prophet saying, *"Ob Muhammad, rely on God,"* and everybody knows that it is a general command and God orders the people who believe in him to rely on God.

There are many Traditions about this important issue: Imam Sadiq, peace be upon him, says, "Certainly richness and power travel. When they are in a place which is settled by relying on God, they fall down."<sup>13</sup>

This is a very good example about the importance of relying on God. The Imam wants to say that everybody who has this reliance will attain well-being and strength. The Holy Prophet says, "Whoever desires to be the strongest of people and whoever wants to be the most guarded against evil has to rely on God."<sup>14</sup>

### **Fear and Hope**

There is an important subject in Islamic Traditions which is fear of God and hope in Him. These worthy statements say that a believer and real Muslim is a person who is always between these two expressions, fear of God and hope in Him.

This means that when he looks to himself and his actions, he becomes full of fear because he finds himself sinful but when he thinks about the Compassion and Mercy of God, he becomes hopeful.

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<sup>13</sup> *ibid . ,*

<sup>14</sup> *op.cit., Wasa'il al-Shi'a, vol. 2, p. 288.* This is one of the most

important source books in Shi'ism collected by Shaykh Hur Amuli,

The result is the following: If a person does any unlawful and forbidden deed, he does not become hopeless and disappointed because one does not say to one's self, "I have committed a sin and I must go to hell so I might just as well continue sinning because my future place is in hell." Rather, one says, "Although I have committed a sin, God forgives me because He is Merciful." This shows hope in God.

At the same time, a person always tries to prevent the self from sin because one knows that one will be tortured and go to hell for even one sin. This is fear of God.

Some of the Traditions which relate to this are:

Imam Sadiq, peace be upon him, says, from his father Imam Baqir, peace be upon him, "Surely there is not a believer unless there are two lights in his heart: The light of fear and the light of hope which if they are weighted, none of them becomes more than the other."<sup>15</sup>

The Imam says that these two lights are in balance the light of fear and the light of hope. Imam Sadiq, peace be upon him, said, "Be hopeful towards God in such a way that your hope does not make you hold to sin and be afraid of God in such a way that your fear does not make you lose hope in His Mercy and Compassion."<sup>16</sup>

### **Disregarding Sins**

The supposing of sins to be small ones and therefore not important or disregarding sins is one of the greatest factors in keeping creatures at a distance from God. One of the effects of sin is to destroy the heart's luminosity. It is obvious that one may begin with small sins but then they reach larger ones. There is a veil between the human being and God which does not allow the human being to act shamefully but when one begins to commit small forbidden deeds, the veil is torn asunder and it becomes easier to commit larger sins.

On the contrary, by undertaking one's duty to worship God, one destroys the darkness from their hearts and brings light to it. A person is cheated who does not know the evil effects of sin and does not know the role of preventing forbidden deeds. One of the important things which Islamic sources have spoken about is this, "Do not think that your sins are small ones so that it does not matter if it is committed." The Commander of the Faithful said, "The most serious sin is that sin which is taken lightly by the sinner."<sup>17</sup>

The result of a lack of restraint and care in respect to committing small sins is that a person becomes careless and little by little" this habit produces a boldness to commit even greater sins.

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<sup>15</sup> .op. cit., Usul.

<sup>16</sup> .op. cit. Usul

<sup>17</sup> .op. cit .Balagha, Saying 358.

Therefore one should regard small sins as a harbinger of greater sins and avoid them so that the stage for committing sins does not arise. Imam Sadiq, peace be upon him, said, to one of his followers, Zaid Shahham , "Do not commit small sins because they may not be forgiven." Zaid asked him, "What are small sins?" The Imam answered, "A man who commits a sin and then he says to himself, 'How lucky I am if I have no sin other than this one.' "18

In another Tradition, Imam Saidq, peace be upon him, said, 'The Holy Prophet once stopped in the desert and told his followers, 'Gather together some firewood.' They answered that they were in a desert and there was no firewood there. The Holy Prophet said, 'Each one bring whatever you find.' Then they started to gather the firewood and after a short time, they gathered quite a bit. The Holy Prophet said, 'Be careful for sins are like this firewood. They gather little by little and then they become plentiful. "19

## **Patience**

One of the essential virtues which is actually the base for the acquisition of spiritual perfections is patience. If this important instrument is lost, the acquisition of every form of spiritual perfection becomes impossible because everybody has desires in his life and tries to attain them. One person is interested in gaining knowledge. Another is eager to gather money. A third is ambitious.

It is obvious that attaining any target needs perseverance against difficulties. A student who is interested in knowledge must struggle day and night. The merchant who is eager to gain more and more money must travel to other countries. A person who is ambitious has to spend more time planning and thinking. All of them are obliged to be patient.

A believer who has accepted God and His Commands must have patience with difficulties in order not to turn to sinning. This is why the Commander of the Faithful said, "And you should practice endurance because endurance is to belief what the head is to the body so that just as there is no good in a body without a head, there is no good in belief without endurance."<sup>20</sup> Thus we see that patience is very important and that endurance or belief is as important as the head is to the body.

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18.*op. cit. Usul.*

19.*op.cit., Usul.*

20. *op. cit., Balagha, Saying 82*

The Holy Quran tells us, *"Ob Prophet, urge the believers to war. If there are twenty patient ones of you, they shall overcome two hundred and if there are a hundred of you, they shall overcome a thousand of those who disbelieve because they are a people who do not understand. "* (8:65) Or, *"Ob you who believe! Be patient and excel in patience and be careful of your duty to God that you may be successful. "* (3:200)

Luqman gave advice to his son, some of which has been mentioned in the Holy Quran. *"On my son. Keep up prayer and enjoin the good and forbid the evil and bear patiently that which befalls you. Surely these acts require courage. "* (31: 17)

As we saw in the above three mentioned verses, the Holy Quran clearly states the importance, effectiveness and significance of patience. In the first verse, we find this to be even more so. God tells the believers that every one of them will overcome 10 of the enemy in war at the 'battlefront. So patience in Islamic culture means fighting with enemies, resisting against difficulties and becoming victorious.

As to patience in the next life, the Holy Quran says, *"And those who are constant, seeking the pleasure of their Lord and keep up prayer and spend (benevolently) out of what we have given them secretly and openly and repel evil with good as for those, they shall have the (happy) issue of the abode. The gardens of perpetual abode which they will enter along with those who do good from among their parents and their spouses and their offspring and the angels will enter in upon them from every gate. Peace be upon you because you were patient. How excellent is then the issue of the above. "* (13:22-24).

## **Courage**

Courage is strength of the heart, the commitment to fight against difficulties and not being frightened by death upon the Way of God. To defend one's ideology, country and fellow Muslims requires courage which is very important in Islam. We can understand the importance in the word *jihad*, religious and spiritual struggle in the way of God.

This word occurs more than 100 times in the Holy Quran and it is clear that jihad is not possible without courage. We can readily see in the Holy Quran that Muslims are told to fight against all kinds of fear except the fear of God. It is to combat with the fear of death because it is a natural event which occurs for everybody. It is to struggle against the fear of poverty, illness and old age and fear is not the way to treat these difficulties.

The Holy Quran does not accept these forms of fear.

It accepts only one fear and establishes that this is a sublime adjective for human beings. The Holy Quran believes that anybody who has this kind of fear is not frightened by anything. This kind of fear makes human beings heroes. This fear is the fear of God. This fear causes the human being to express his or her beliefs and thoughts because he knows that they are truths and he is not afraid of people's judgments and their opposition because he naturally leaves falsity aside.

The Holy Quran says that God is most deserving that you should fear Him. If you are believers, there are many verses about this important virtue. *"Those who deliver the message of God and fear Him and do not fear anyone but God and God is sufficient to take account. "* (33:39)

In the above verses, the Holy Quran praises the people who deliver the message of God for the well-being of humanity and fear no one but God. *"Surely God loves those who fight in His Way in ranks as if they were a firm and compact wall. "* (61 : 4)

God loves those who fight in His Way against the enemies with the best form of courage without fear of anyone. *"Oh you who believe! whoever from among you turns back from his religion, then God will bring a people. He shall love them and they shall love Him, lowly before the believers, mighty against the unbelievers. They shall strive hard in God's way and shall not fear the censure of any censurer. That is God's grace. He gives it to whom He pleases and God is ample-giving, knowing. "*(5: 54)

The most important thing in this verse is this part, *"They shall strive hard in God's Way and shall not fear the censure of any censurer."* These are the believers who God loves because they fight against enemies without any fear.

We can summarize what has preceded in the following way: Islamic sources do not accept fear for believers because fear is the enemy of struggle and combat. But there' is an exception here, that is, the fear of God, for this fear is useful for every struggle and fighting and it also accepts the supervision of God in our life which is necessary for the spiritual evolution.:

## **PART TWO:**

### **THE RELATIONSHIP AMONG HUMAN BEINGS**

#### **Respect for a Muslim's Personality**

To respect the personality of Muslims, one of the most significant principles which should be observed by Muslims in an Islamic society is respect for the Muslims' personality so all Muslims are respected in such a society for no one should make fun of a Muslim. There is a great deal of difference between the thoughts of a Muslim and a materialist as a human being's personality.

A materialist believes a personality lies in things like money, mode, modern house, beautiful face and high position. Naturally, people who have these things are respectable and honored by the materialist-oriented personality. He does not respect people who do not have these characteristics so he mocks them.

The attitude of a Muslim is just the opposite because, in the Islamic culture, the basis of a personality is not these materialistic measures like money, high position, etc. A Muslim knows the personality and value of other people to be in their spiritual perfection. He respects others as much as their belief in God. In his opinion, the people to be respected are those who have enlightened their hearts and spirits, a person who is full of humanity, generosity and dignity. These are people whom our Holy Quran does not allow us to mock. In a very interesting verse of the Holy Quran, the following is stated, *'Oh you who believe!*

*Let not people laugh at (other) people - perchance they may be better than they, nor let women (laugh) at (other) women, perchance they may be better than they."* (49: 11)

Why does the Holy Quran state this? We read two important parts in the above verse, *'Perchance they may be better than they (men) and perchance they may be better than they (women)*. These are the reasons for the Holy Quran prohibiting Muslims and believers from mocking each other. As human beings do not know the inner characteristics of another person, and real human beings are like others from the point of view of body and face, we can recognize which is a man and which is a woman and which has a better position before God. They are not allowed to mock each other because of this.

Thus the basis of the personality in Islam is something hidden, based on the fear of God. For this reason, Islam says that all believers are worthy of respect and honor and that they should not be mocked. The life of our Prophet and pure Imams are full of examples of this.

Not to find fault with Muslims is one of the bases of spiritual evolution. The point in Islam is that a person should look inward and find his or her own moral shortcomings.

Self-knowledge is so important that qualified people in this field say, "Whoever wants to tear apart the chains of impurity should not talk behind the backs of others and must look at his or her inner self every night after a day's activities. One must carefully note one's daily works on a sheet of paper and account for them.

But there are people in every society who are called fault-finders. They are people who have neglected themselves and have forgotten their own shortcomings. They look at others to find their own shortcomings and then state what they have found in other people. They enjoy stating other people's faults for others. They enjoy stating other people's faults because they find the complex of contempt so they feel satisfaction in themselves by telling the weak points of other people. They suppose that they become quiet by finding and telling the weak points of other people.

That which is important to note is that this part of the moral lesson in this matter is to know what the advantages of this dangerous habit are.

I. Fault finding and spiteful criticism destroys sincerity in society.

2. It modifies the truthfulness of enmity. Thus our Holy Quran forbids Muslims from this dangerous habit and says, "*And do not find fault with your own people.*" (49:11)

The Holy Quran, in stating this moral principle in the best way, wants to, stimulate affections among people so it says not to find fault with your own people. This means all Muslims in an Islamic society are the same and when I am finding fault with a Muslim, I am really finding fault with myself.

There is an important point which must be noted about fault-finders. In Islamic sources, we find this advice for fault-finders, "It is better for you to try to find your own faults and improve them than to find the faults of others. In this way, you will be nearer to happiness, prosperity and spiritual evolution."

The Commander of the Faithful says, "He who sees his own shortcomings abstains from looking into other's shortcomings." <sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>*op. cit.*, *Balagha*, Saying 359.

He says, "Oh people, blessed is the man whose own shortcomings keep him away from (looking into) the shortcomings of others." <sup>22</sup> "He who observes the shortcomings of others and disapproves of them and then accepts them for himself is definitely a fool." <sup>23</sup> Or, "The greatest defect is to regard the defect (in others) which is present in yourself ."<sup>24</sup>

What worse defect can there be than that a man should criticize those defects in others which exist in himself. The requirement of justice is that before casting one's eye on the defects of others, one should look at one's own defects and realize that a defect is a defect whether it be in others or in one's self.

Of course, this point should be mentioned. There is a great distance between these two actions: First, finding fault with a Muslim and second, guiding people in doing good works and telling them their shortcomings.

In Islamic sources, therefore, we read that one of the most important duties for every Muslim is leading other Muslims to doing good works and telling them their shortcomings. The Commander of the Faithful says, "The best man in your opinion must be a man who brings you your shortcomings like gifts." <sup>25</sup>

## **Undesirable Names**

A name is one of the signs of a human being. A good name is to speak of the valor and worthiness of mankind so that a bad name reduces one's place and rank. When our Prophet had arisen to prophecy, Arabs had chosen bad names in most of the cities, villages and for their children. Modifying unbecoming names of cities, villages and persons was one of the primary steps taken by the Prophet of Islam. He ordered fathers to choose better names.

Our Holy Quran says calling people with unbecoming titles is unlawful and it is against the rights of Muslims. "*Nor call one another by nicknames.*" (49: 11) The Holy Quran calls the people who commit this impolite action, oppressors. "*And whoever does not turn these it is that they are the oppressors.*"(49: 11)

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22. *op. cit.*, *Balagha*, Sermon 175.

23. *op. cit.*, *Balagha*, Saying 359.

24. *op. cit.*, *Balagha*, Saying 363.

25. *Ghurar al-Hikam*, vol. 2, p. 586. This book was compiled

by Amudi nearly 900 years ago. It contains 10,760 sayings from Hadrat Ali

One day a person went to see the Prophet and explained something that had happened to him. He said, "I saw a fox urinating on an idol's head. I thought to myself, 'How can this idol be a god when it cannot defend itself.' Then I wrote a poem about how an idol which cannot defend itself cannot be a god, in particular when a creature which can urinate on it. The Holy Prophet appreciated this story. Then he asked the man, 'What is your name and who is your father ? He replied, "I am Ghavi (mislead) and my father's name is Zalim (oppressor)." The Prophet told him to change his and his father's name. Your name is Rashid (a follower of the right way) and your father is Abdullah (a servant of God)." <sup>26</sup>

## Evil Suspicions

Our Holy Quran says, '*Oh you who believe! A void most of suspicion for surely suspicion in some cases is a sin.*' (49:12) we know that the life, money and credit of Muslims are respectable and any exceeding to their life, money and credit is forbidden.

But here we find another limitation for Muslims towards each other. Islam does not allow Muslims to have bad suspicions about the others so Muslims have a sense of security which is called the security in thoughts.

The Holy Quran says that nobody is allowed to harm the honor of Muslims. Even in the mind of Muslims, Islam wants Muslims to be respected in the limit of Muslim thoughts.

Our Prophet says, "God has forbidden the excess of blood, money and respect of Muslims and has not allowed that somebody suspect a Muslim and think bad thoughts about him. If the three securities (life, money and respect) be guaranteed by the military forces, it is obvious that the fourth security is guaranteed only by belief in God. <sup>27</sup>

The harmful effects of evil suspicions:

1. The first harm of having bad suspicions turns back to the person himself because as he always has bad suspicions about others, he always thinks that all people have bad suspicions about him too for the reason he feels that he is in a bad position and feels psychological pressure.

2. Pessimism tears the thread of friendship and as a pessimist has bad suspicions about others, so he has to cut off his relations with other people.

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26. *Siroh Halabi*, vol. 2, p. 377. This book is a biography of the

Holy Prophet written by Burhan Addin Halabi, an Islamic historian.

27. *Muhaqall al-Baizaa*, vol. 5, p. 268. This book was written

by Faiz Kashani, one of the Shi'ite scholars.

3. The pessimists are always recluses and cannot become friends with other people.
4. The pessimist destroys the power of judgment of mankind and a pessimist cannot correctly judge in a matter.
5. Pessimism affects not only the human soul but his body because there is a very near relationship between the spirit and the body.

### **Not to Investigate into a Muslim's Affairs**

The Holy Quran says, "*And do not spy.*" (49: 12) There are three undesirable moral adjectives in the above verse and they have been mentioned systematically. There is an important reason for this order. The first step is to have bad suspicions. After this period, a person begins to investigate the believers' affairs and finally he begins to talk about others behind their backs. Thus these three naturally fall one after another.

We have briefly mentioned the harm caused by having bad suspicions. As to investigating into the affairs of a Muslim, we can say that this vice has many harms, one of which we will mention here.

One of the most dangerous harms of investigating the affairs of a Muslim is that it destroys that person's credibility. The person who investigates another cannot avoid revealing that person's secrets as they always backbite one another. So it is obvious that by investigating the affairs of a Muslim, the respect of Muslims, which is honorable like their blood, life -and money, is harmed for others. Islamic brotherhood orders Muslims not to harm the respect of another Muslim.

Imam Sadiq says, "The farthest position of a servant towards God is a person who becomes a friend with a person to find his weak points and reveal them to others."<sup>28</sup>

### **Backbiting**

The Holy Quran says, "*Nor let some of you backbite others. Does one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? But you abhor it and be careful of (your duty to) God. Surely God is oft-turning (to mercy), Merciful.*" (49: 12)

In this verse, one of the most undesirable vices has been discussed. It is so evil that the Holy Quran says that anybody who backbites others is like a person who eats the flesh of his dead brother.

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28 . *Op. cit. Usul.*

*The Holy Quran has stated four lessons here:*

1. A Muslim is a brother of another Muslim.
2. A Muslim's respect is like his flesh.
3. Destroying his respect is like eating his flesh.
4. As he is absent and he cannot defend himself, it is as if he is dead.

For this reason, the Commander of the Faithful calls those people who backbite, poor and weak people because they attack mankind who cannot defend themselves and he says , "Backbiting is the tool of the helpless." <sup>29</sup>

What are the harms of backbiting? Backbiting has two harms: First, individual harm and second, social harm. Individual harm is oppression to a Muslim brother by annihilating his respect. Social harm has four aspects:

1. A society which practices backbiting shall never attain unity, sincerity and familiarity and it cannot be a real human society.
2. Helping one another in attaining social development is based on the feeling of reliance that one person has for another. But in a society where its people reveal their faults, it is obvious that the reliance one has will be destroyed.
3. Backbiting will ignite a fire of enmity and spite and a person whose name has become infamous determines to take revenge on those persons who have made his name infamous.
4. Backbiting causes others to commit crimes openly because when they see that their respect has been annihilated, they do evil deeds without any shame.

However, there are several areas where backbiting is allowed.

1. **Witness:** When an event takes place, a person who has witnessed the event has to say all that he saw even though his witnessing be backbiting someone.
2. **To forbid evil:** When somebody does a bad deed and we know that if we speak and reveal his bad deed in an assembly, he will hear and improve himself, backbiting is allowable.
3. **Against oppression:** If a person has been oppressed and he has started to backbite an oppressor, there is no objection in this.
4. **Advising another:** If somebody asked us about a matter and he wanted to investigate about a person, for example, he wanted to become a partner with another person, he asks us about the behavior and characteristics of that person. It is a duty for us to tell him what we know about that person and it does not mean backbiting.

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29. op .cit..Balagha, Saying 470.

**5. To give preference of one to another:** For example, if we say that this carpenter is better than that one, it is not backbiting.

**6. A person who openly commits sins:** If we speak about a person who does the vice openly it does not mean backbiting.

**7. A person who knows a right:** We can backbite a person who knows a right but when somebody asks him about it, he does not mention it.

**8. Two persons that both know a matter about a third person:** If everybody tells the issue to the other, it is not backbiting.

**9. Modifying religious issues:** If somebody mentions religious issues in an assembly but he changes some of them, it is a duty for a person who knows the religious issues to correct those religious issues.

**10. To introduce a person:** If we want to introduce one person to another and we cannot do so without stating one of his characteristics, that is, for instance, that person is blind, deaf or crippled, this kind of introduction is not backbiting. (Of course it must be done without any derision).

### **To Forge a Lie**

One of the things which is strictly forbidden in Islam is to forge a lie. This is worse than backbiting because in backbiting we are speaking about a believer who has committed a sin but in forging a lie, we insinuate a believer has committed a sin when he or she has not.

As we said before, in an Islamic society, all the things which belong to a Muslim like his money, life and respect is to be honored. As a believers' respect is exposed to danger in forging a lie, it has been strictly forbidden in Islamic rules.

Here the Holy Quran tells us, *'And whoever commits a fault or a sin then accuses of it one innocent, he indeed takes upon himself the burden of a calumny and a manifest sin.'* (4: 112)

The above verse shows that forging a lie is one of the greatest sins and God will punish a person who commits such a sin. We can mention another verse, *"Only they forge the lie who do not believe in God's communications and these are the liars."* (16: 1 05)

The above verse states that the forger is a person who does not believe in God and he is a liar. *"And those who speak evil things of the believing men and the believing women without their having earned it, they are guilty indeed of a false accusation and a manifest sin ... "* (33: 58).

As to the Traditions on this subject, our Prophet, peace and the mercy of God be upon him and his descendants, has a special Tradition in which he says that everybody who forges a lie against a believing man and believing woman, God will settle him in the fire on the Last Day until he proves all he has said about that man or woman."<sup>30</sup>

Our sixth Imam, peace be upon him, has an important matter about forging lies against believers, "Anybody who forges a lie against a believing man or believing woman shall be raised in a very bad substance on the Last Day." Somebody asked him what the bad substance was. He said, "This bad substance is a mixture of the blood and pus that is edited from the vagina of bad women until he proves what he has said about that believing man or woman."<sup>31</sup>

The sentence, 'till he proves what he has said about that believing man or woman' may refer to the fact that a person who has forged a lie against a believer will go to hell and be tortured forever because he can never prove what he has said about a believer or believers.

### **To Lie**

As we know, one of the most important needs in a healthy society is the reliance of persons in that society upon each other. For this reason Islam has forbidden Muslims from telling lies because this action disturbs the confidence of society. The Islamic community will finally lose out.

According to Islamic precepts, telling a lie is one of the greatest sins so in the Holy Quran and the Traditions we find many matters about this great sin. *"Surely God does not guide him aright who is a liar, ungrateful." (39:3)*

God says He does not guide a man who tells lies and everybody knows that this is the worst kind of punishment. *"So woe on that day to those who reject (the truth). Those who sport entering into vain discourses, the day on which they shall be driven away to the fire of hell with Violence, this is the fire which you used to give the lie to." (52: 11- 14)*

The fire is the reward of a people who tell lies. This is God's promise. *"And if he is one of the liars, the erring ones, he shall have an entertainment of boiling water and burning hell. Most surely this is a certain truth." (56:92- 96)*

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30. *Ithna Ashari* commentary, vol. 2, p. 458-9

31.op.Cit.Usul

In the previous verse we knew what would be awaiting those who lie. *"So do not... to the liars. They wish that you should be pliant so they (too) would be pliant."* (68:8-9)

Here we find an important subject about liars. The Holy Quran says that they are not reliable. *"Woe on that day to those who cry it lies! Did we not destroy the former generations and then follow the-n with the later fold? So we serve the sinners. Woe that day unto those who cry it lies! Did we not create you of a mean water, that we laid within a sure lodging till a known term decreed?"*

*We determined; excellent determiners are we. Woe that day unto those who cry it lies! Made we not the earth to be a housing for the living and for the dead? Set we not therein soaring mountains? Sated you with sweetest water? Woe that day unto those who cry it lies! Depart to that you cried was lies! Depart to a triple-massing shadow unshading against the blazing flame that shoots sparks like dry faggots, sparks like to golden herds. Woe unto those who cry it lies! This is the day they shall not speak. neither be given leave and excuse themselves.*

*"Woe that day unto those who cry it lies! This is the Day of Decision; We have joined you with the ancients; if you have a trick, try you not to trick Me! Woe that day unto those who cry it lies! Truly the godfearing shall dwell amid shades and fountains, and such fruits as their hearts desire: 'Eat and drink, with wholesome appetite, for that you were working.' Even so do we recompense the good doers. Woe that day unto those who cry it lies! 'Eat and take your joy a little; you are sinners!' Woe that day unto those who cry it lies! When it is said unto those who cry it lies! When it is said to them, 'Prostrate yourselves,' they prostrate not. Woe that day unto those who cry it lies!*

*In what discourse after this will they believe?"* (77: 15-50)

Everybody who reads this verse finds that the words, *'woe on those that cry it lies'* are repeated 10 times and this repetition shows that lying is a serious offense. Hadrat Ali, peace be upon him, says, "Be on your guard against falsehood because it is contrary to faith. A truthful person is on the height of salvation and dignity while a liar is on the edge of ignominy and degradation."<sup>32</sup>

## Cooperation

One of the most important characteristics of a living nation is the help :one person gives to another. As we know, life is full of dangers and nobody can travel it alone. Human beings need the help of others in order to travel upon this way. Our world has understood the importance of this need by establishing cooperative societies in the towns and villages.

As Islam is a living religion, we find many verses in the Holy Quran which have persuaded believers to help one another *"And hold fast by the covenant of God all together and be not divided and remember the favor of God on you when you were enemies, then He united your hearts so by His favor you became brethren and you were on the brink of a pit of fire, then*

*He saved you from it. Thus does God make clear to you His communications that you may follow the right way. "* (3: 1 02)

**We found that the Quran has mentioned this characteristic as a favor of God. And help one another in goodness and piety and do not help one another in sin and aggression : be careful of (your duty to) God. Surely God is severe in requiting (evil). "**(5:2)

The Quran persuades Muslims to help one another in goodness and piety. *"And (as for) the believing men and the believing women, they are guardians of each other; they enjoin good and forbid evil and keep up prayer and pay the poor rate and obey God and His Prophet; as for these God will show mercy to them. Surely God is Mighty, Wise."* (9:71)

The Holy Quran says in the above verse that believing men and believing women must create unity, guard it and that they have to help together. *"O humanity! Surely We have created you of a male and a female and made you tribes and families that you may know each other. Surely the most honorable (honor comes to you if you are careful of your duty to God) of you with God is the one among, you most careful (of his or her duty). Surely God is Knowing, A ware. "*(49: 13)

God says that we created you from only one principle, so you men must help each other. From these verses, we can conclude the following:

1. To help one another is impossible without a sacred goal. The Quran says that the sacred goal must be God as we read in the first verse.

2. To help one another must be in goodness and piety not in sin and aggression as we saw in the second verse.

3. Helping one another must be the result of brotherhood and equality, so it has no meaning in a society in which inequality and enmity exists.

4. If helping one another not be based on piety, it will not have any value because it will be based on sin and aggression.

### **Envy**

One of the worst vices in human beings is jealousy and it has been severely forbidden in Islamic regulations. What does it mean? Envy means the desire for destroying the affluence of another and taking it for one's self. This is a vice for a believer in Islamic precepts.

But there is another adjective which is not a vice and has not been forbidden in Islam. The name of this virtue is emulation. This means that I wish to have an affluence which another person has. For example, when I see a believer who is very serious in his or her prayers, if I wish to become like this person in my prayer, this wish is named emulation.

The opposite of jealousy is called benevolence which is praiseworthy in Islam. We can find many verses about this matter in our Holy Quran . *'Or do they envy the people for what God has given them of His grace? But indeed we have given to Abraham's children the Book and Wisdom and We have given them a grand kingdom.* '(4:54)

God says in the mentioned verse, *"Do not envy a person who has an affluence. And do not covet that by which God has made some of you excel others."* (4: 32)

The Quran does not accept this vice. There are a great many Traditions about this. For instance, Imam Ali, peace be upon him, says, "Do not be jealous because jealousy eats away faith just as fire eats away dried wood."<sup>33</sup>

There is another saying from our first Imam, "It is strange that the jealous do not feel jealous about bodily health."<sup>34</sup>

The sixth Imam said, "There are three plagues for the faith: jealousy, self-conceit and arrogance. " He adds, "O you who believe, be careful of God and do not envy some of you each other."<sup>35</sup>

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33. *ibid.*,

34 .*op. cit.*, Balagha, Saying 225.

35. *op. cit.*, 'Wasa'il, vol. 2, p. 470.

## **Forgiveness**

Forgiveness is one of the praiseworthy moral virtues and anybody who has this virtue is a person who has a great soul and can overcome his or her rage, can bear insult and aspersion. A person who insults another really is a sick creature who has been overcome by sickness. It has stolen his or her spiritual health and so much the better to be treated by forgiveness.

Everyone of us sometimes commits an error and finds out that one needs to forgive or one wants to be forgiven. As we feel that forgiveness is praiseworthy for us when we sin, we must think that other people need forgiveness too when they sin. There is a principle that forgiveness is better than revenge and in Islamic precepts we have such an order that answers evil with goodness. With this kind of behavior, enmity changes to friendship.

### **Of course, there are some exceptions to this general rule such as:**

1. The criminal is a guilty person who should be punished instead of forgiven.
2. He has disrespected one of the Divine regulations.
3. He has oppressed the nation's rights.

There are some verses in our Holy Book about this important moral regulation. *'Take to forgiveness and enjoin good and turn aside from the ignorant.'* (7: 199)

The Quran orders believers to choose forgiveness in their social life. *'And those who are constant, seeking the pleasure of their Lord, and keep up prayer, and spend (benevolently) out of what We have given secretly and openly and repel evil with good (do good for peace of mind) as for those, they shall have the (happy) issue of the above.'* (13:22)

The Holy Quran praises a humanity which has good characteristics, one of which is to repel evil with good. *"And not alike are the good and the evil. Repel (evil) with what is best, when lo, he between whom and you was enmity would be as if he were a warm friend."* (41 :34) Everybody who believes in the Quran must hear this Divine message and practice it in his social life. *"Repel evil with what is best. And if you take your turn, then retaliate with the like of that with which you were afflicted but if you are patient, it will certainly be best for those who are patient."* (16: 126)

We read in the above verse that the Holy Quran allows the oppressed to revenge the oppressors better emphasizes that forgiveness and patience is better. *"And recompense of evil is punishment like it but whoever forgives and amends, he shall have his reward from God. Surely He does not love the unjust."* (26 :40)

Although our religion allows us to take revenge upon anyone who has done evil, it says that forgiveness is better for believers even though they have the power to take revenge.

### **Enmity and Revenge**

Enmity and revenge are among the vices of human beings so they are forbidden in Islamic precepts because sometimes they other actions like telling lies, back biting , forging lies and other sins and evils which have been forbidden and finally destroys mankind's world and its Last Day .

There are some Traditions from our Prophet and the Imams whereby they have advised Muslims to have good relations with their relatives." Do not cut-off relations with your relative even though they cut-off relations with you ." <sup>36</sup>

The joining with relatives causes friendship and kindness . Hadrat Muhammad ,peace and the mercy of God be upon him and him and his descendants , says, " Enmity and revenge are destructive and destroy faith."<sup>37</sup> He also says.

"It is unlawful for a believer to separate himself from his brother in faith for more than three days. Whosoever takes the lead in reconciliation has taken precedence in heaven." <sup>38</sup>

Our fifth Imam said, "If two persons of a family quarrel and then they both remained aloof, the oppressed must turn back to his friend and say to him, "I am the oppressor" till remaining aloof ends. God is the Judge and Just and revenge, the oppressor." <sup>39</sup>

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36.op. cit., Wasa'il vol.2, p.273.

37.op. cit., Wasa'il vol.2.p.233.

38. op. cit., Wasa'il vol.2.p.235

39. op. cit., Balagha letter 69.

## **Anger and Rage**

Islam has prohibited inopportune rage or rage which is not in the Way of God because inopportune rage is very dangerous and creates enmity in an Islamic society. For this reason, the Quran and our Traditions have advised Muslims to overcome their inopportune anger. *"Those who spend (benevolently) in ease as well as in straits, and those who restrain (their) anger and pardon men and God loves the doers of good (to others)." (3:133)*

A Muslim who restrains his rage is a believer who will enter heaven. *"And what is with God is better and more lasting for those who believe and rely on their Lord. And those who shun the great sins and indecencies and whenever they are angry they forgive." (26:36-37)*

Heaven expects believers to have many characteristics, one of which is *"Whenever they are angry, they forgive."* Our first Imam says, "Keep off anger because it is one large army from Satan's armies." 37 and "Avoid anger because it is an augury of Satan."

Imam Ali, peace be upon him, prevents Abdullah Ibn Abbas from anger and rage. Our sixth Imam says, "Anger is the key of any evil." 40 And "God will fulfill everybody who restrains his anger while he is able to express it with belief and security on the Last Day." 41

As we read in the above sentence, when a believer restrains his anger, he will be sure and calm on the Last Day. "Every servant of God who restrains his anger, God certainly increases his respect in his primary and secondary life." 42

The Holy Prophet said. "The wisest person is one who is the most moderate with people and the best servant of God is one who best restrains anger." 43

## **Keeping Covenants**

Islam has emphasized this important matter and it does not matter whether or not the person whom a Muslim has an agreement with be a believer or not. The effect of keeping one's covenants is very important because it shows the character of a person. This means that when we promise a person something, we feel responsible towards him, try to fulfill our responsibility and we also know that that which can evaluate faith and belief is action. Thus action evaluates faith and if there is no action, faith has no value. Many verses of our Quran are evidence of this. *"O you who believe, fulfill obligations." (5:7)*

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40 .op.cit., Wasa'il , vol. 2, p.469.

41.op. cit., Mustadrak,vol. 2, p.88.

42.op. cit., Wasa'il, vol. 2, p.224.

43.op. cit., Mustadrak,vol, 2,p.88.

We find a Command from God to the believers to keep their covenants. *"Successful indeed are the believers who are humble in their prayers. And who keep aloof from what is vain, and who are givers of poor-rate and who guard their private parts, except before their mates or those whom their right hands own for they surely are not blameable. But whoever seeks to go beyond that, these are they that exceed the limits and those who are keepers of their trust and their covenants."*(23: 1-8)

Believers have some characteristics, one of which is keeping their trusts and their covenants. *"And fulfill the promise Surely (every) promise shall be questioned about."* (17:34) One of the things which is questioned about on the Last Day is keeping promises. *"This is a declaration of immunity by God and His Prophet towards those of the idolaters with whom you made an agreement. So go about in the land for four months and know that you cannot weaken God and that God will bring disgrace to the unbelievers."*

*And an announcement from God and His Prophet to the day of the greater pilgrimage that God and his Prophet are free from liability to the idolaters, therefore if you repent, it will be better for you and if you turn back, then know that you will not weaken God and announce painful punishment to those who disbelieve. Except those of the idolaters with whom you made an agreement then they have not failed you in anything and have not backed up anyone against you."*(9: 14)

As we know, this surah is the only surah in the Holy Quran which does not begin by saying, *"In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate,"* because it is an ultimatum to the unbelievers. For this reason, it is full of harshness but even in this surah we can find the importance of fulfilling covenants.

At the end of this discussion, we present a Tradition which has been mentioned by both the fifth and sixth Imams. "There are three things which God does not allow anyone not to do: fulfilling covenants, handing over a trust and doing good to one's parents, whether good or bad."<sup>44</sup>

### **Trustiness**

Trustiness is one of the religious duties in Islamic precepts. One of the worst sins is breach of trust. *"But if one of you trusts another then he who is trusted should deliver his trust and let him be careful (of his duty to) God."* (2:283)

God orders Muslims to give over trusts. This is an explicit Command from God. *"Surely God Commands you to deliver trusts back to their owners."* (4:58) This means that the believers are obliged to make over trusts to people who deliver their trusts. And as we read in the previous part, when the Holy Quran speaks about the characteristics of believers, it says that one of the believers characteristics is: *"And those who are keepers of their trusts and their covenants."* (23:8) *"Surely God does not love the treacherous."* (8: 58)

This subject has been mentioned many times in our Islamic Traditions. "There is no faith for a person who does not make over trusts." According to this, we find that faith corresponds to handing over trusts. "Everybody who betrays a trust and he dies, he has not died in My religion (he is not a Muslim) and will meet God angrily."<sup>45</sup>

Our first Imam says, "He who treats a trust lightly and indulges in treachery and does not keep himself and his faith untarnished by it has certainly secured humiliation in this world and his humiliation and disgrace in the next world will be greater."<sup>46</sup>

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44. op. cit. . Wasa'il, vol. 2. p. 641.

45.op .cit. , Wasa'il, vol. 2 , p.641

46.op. cit. , Mustadrak,vol.2,p.505

In a famous letter, the Commander of the Faithful writes to Malik Ashtar, one of his closest followers, when he chose him as the governor of Egypt and sends him there. It is the longest, document in the *Nahj al-Balagha* and contains the greatest number of beautiful sayings. "You should also check their activities (executive officers) and have people who report on them who should be truthful and faithful because your watching their actions secretly will urge them to preserve their trust and to be kind to people."<sup>47</sup>

He says, "You should rather test them (secretarial workers) by what they did under the virtuous people before you. Make a decision in favor of one who has a good name among the common people and is the most renowned in trustworthiness because this will be a proof of your regard of God, for Him on whose behalf you have been appointed to this position."<sup>48</sup>

There is another famous saying of Hadrat Ali about trusts, namely, "If you conclude an agreement between yourself and your enemy or enter into a pledge with him, then fulfill your agreement and discharge your pledge faithfully."<sup>49</sup>

We end our discussion with a fine and worthy saying of our fourth Imam, "Be careful about making over trusts. It is so important that if my father's killer (Shimr who martyred Imam Husain) deposits the sword which he martyred by father with, with me, I will certainly give it back to him."<sup>50</sup>

### **Kindness and Soft-Naturedness**

One of the praiseworthy moral virtues is kindness. Of course if it be taken to an extreme, it will become flattery which is one of the worst vices. Kindness means giving up one's rights regarding another human being, recognizing one's position in relation to others and taking spiritual tranquility into consideration. As we said before, when kindness moves beyond its limits, it is modified into a very dangerous vice which is called flattery.

These persons are the people who have grown up without any free will and are ready to annihilate their human personalities for some partial and instantaneous good. Selfishness and arrogance are its spiritual diseases. Their sources are a feeling of contempt.

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<sup>47</sup>.op cit., *Balagha*, Letter 53.

<sup>48</sup>. *ibid*.

<sup>49</sup>*ibid*.

<sup>50</sup>.op. cit., *Wasa'il*, vol. 2, p. 641.

A selfish man feels contempt in himself and tries to compensate this feeling with arrogance. One of the dangerous advantages of selfishness and arrogance is disturbance of spiritual life. A selfish man does not give up against a right. He does not regard others rights and can easily trample upon another's personality.

In Surah 31, of the Holy Quran, verses 18-19, we see:

1. And do not turn your face away from people in contempt.
2. Nor go about in the land exulting overmuch, God

does not love any self-conceited boaster.

3. Pursue the right course in your going about.
4. Lower your voice.

It is wonderful that the Holy Quran attends even to the smallest of human behavior like walking, because the spiritual characteristics of mankind appears in small deeds. Thus walking is like a mirror which can show moral virtues. So our Holy Quran says: "*Nor go about in the land exulting overmuch.*"

Our first Imam says, "To praise more than what is due is sycophancy. To do it less is either because of inability to speak or because of envy." <sup>51</sup> The Prophet's life, the life of our leaders and Imams are the best examples to show us how to achieve this praiseworthy adjective.

For example, Hadrat Ali, peace be upon him, moved

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<sup>51</sup>*op. cit.*, *Balagha*, Saying 357.

as the Commander of a great army to fight with Mu'awiyah, his enemy. He reached the city of Anbar which was in his territory. This city had been governed by Iranian Sultans for a long time. The custom at that time was to kneel and bow down before the Shah and Sultan. The people of that city used to do this for their leader. When Hadrat Ali and his army came and wanted to pass through this city, the people supposed that he was like the Iranian Shah, so they knelt and bowed down.

Hadrat Ali got off his horse and said to the people of Anbar, "You associate something with God in this action because I am a servant of God like you. You and I must kneel down and bow down only before God. "

### **Politeness**

Islam is a religion of real moral superiorities and civilization. For this reason, it has many precepts about politeness and its importance which are new and interesting. For instance,

1. It has commanded not only that one answer a salam (greeting) but orders believers to answer a greeting with a more complete and more polite way.

It is strange for us to realize that it has commanded believers to answer to it even though they are reciting their ritual prayer but Islam knows and states that the ugliest and most dangerous thing to create enmity is arrogance and selfishness, one of its traces which is being indifferent to others' politeness, so it requests a Muslim to reply to another's greeting.

2. Backbiting and forbidding from chattering and whispering to one another in an assembly unless where these conversations are useful and profitable for the people.

Everybody knows that chattering causes suspicion and it is a sign of not paying attention to other persons.

3. To ask permission before entering another's house. This means that it is necessary for us to become familiar with the owner of a house and then go to see him at his house. To do so, we should think about the time and ..... about whether or not that person whom we want to see will be pleased to see us, then go to see him. When we want to enter his house, we must ask permission and then go in. Certainly this meeting will be useful and profitable.

4. Politeness in tone of voice: The voice must be calm and low and we as Muslims must avoid fighting. It is obvious that when we are not allowed to fight and we speak with people with a high voice, we are not allowed to use bad language towards human beings. Islam is very sensitive about the use of bad language and using ugly words in speech. We have many regulations in our Holy Quran and other Islamic sources which have strictly been forbidden like the use of bad language and we will mention some of them further on.

5. To lodge persons who come in an assembly: The importance of this order appears for us when we ourselves want to go to an assembly. We ask ourselves if the people will give us a place or not. So lodging a person in a general meeting is very important and necessary.

Of course there is a note here which must be taken into consideration. Sometimes we see persons when they enter an assembly, they expect and seek for a place in the place of honor. This is not Islamic behavior because as Islamic regulations say, we must sit down in the first empty seat in the place.

6. Politeness even with the enemies of God : We as Muslims are duty bound to behave with politeness even with the people who have another religion and materialistic ideologies because if we use bad language against his ideology, he will use bad language against our belief and as we have been the cause for this behavior, this means that we ourselves insulted our beliefs.

With this study we see that Islam is a religion with a great capacity and it can readily tolerate other ideologies and religions.

The Holy Quran says, *"And when you are greeted with a greeting, greet with a better (greeting) than it or return it. Surely God takes account of all things." (4:86)* And, *"There is no good in most of their secret counsels except (in his) who enjoins charity or goodness or reconciliation between people and whoever does is seeking God's pleasure. We will give him a mighty reward." (4: 114)*

As to the third issue, the Holy Quran says, *"O you who believe. Do not enter houses until you have asked permission and saluted their inmates. This is better for you that you may be mindful. But if you do not find anyone therein, then do not enter them until permission is given to you and if it is said to you, Go back, then go back. This is purer for you and God is Aware of what you do." (24:27-28)*

In referring to the fourth issue, *"God does not love public utterance of hurtful speech unless (it be) by one to whom injustice has been done and God is Hearing, Knowing." (4: 148)* And *"Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation and have disputation with them in the best manner. Surely your Lord best knows those who go astray from His path and He knows best those who follow the right way." (27: 125)*

Here we find the form of the right propaganda and inviting believers and unbelievers to the right path.

5. "O you who believe, when it is said to you, 'Make room in (your) assemblies,' then make ample room. God will give you ample and when it is said, 'Rise up,' then rise up. God will exalt those of you who are given knowledge in high degrees and God is Aware of what you do." (58: 11)

At the end of this part, we refer to the Holy Quran in the sixth part. 'And do not abuse those whom they call upon besides God lest exceeding the limits they should abuse God out of ignorance.' (6: 109)

Hadrat Ali, peace be upon him, has said, "I dislike you starting to abuse them but if you describe their deeds and recount their situations that would be a better mode of speaking."<sup>52</sup>

### **Cleanliness in Dress**

Our Holy Quran has used the word *libas* with its derivations 23 times and we can see two subjects by studying this word and its derivatives.

I. The Holy Quran orders believers to cover themselves.

2. It mentions the reason for this action. "O children of Adam. We have indeed sent down to you clothing to cover your shame and (clothing) for beauty." (7:26)

Our Prophet says, "Cloth beautifully and regulate what is correspondant with your dress so that you be like a flower among the people."<sup>53</sup>

One of the most important things in Islamic rules is cleanliness in dress and we as Muslims are not allowed to dress with old and dirty clothes.

Our sixth Imam says, "Surely God likes beauty and luxury and He dislikes poverty and demonstration to poverty (in clothes)."<sup>54</sup>

A man whose name was Abi Ahras records from his father who says, "I came to see the Prophet, Hadrat Muhammad, peace and the mercy of God be upon him and his descendants, whereas my clothes were old. He said to me, Have you anything from the world's richness?"

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52. *op. cit.*, *Balagha*, Sermon 205.

53. *Furua Koft*, vol. 6, p. 438. This book was also written by Kulani.

54. *ibid.*

I answered, yes. I have many things. I have sheep, cattle, camels, horses and other kinds of animals. The Prophet said, Now that God has given you many things, He likes to see the effect of His affluences in your appearance whereas your clothes seem old and dirty. " <sup>55</sup>

Hadrat Ali, peace be upon him, said to a man who had dressed in a cloak without any other clothes, "This is not right. You must keep your respect even with your clothes." <sup>56</sup>

One of the recommended things in Islamic regulations is a husband's embellishment for his wife and the reverse and it is obvious that one of the interesting embellishments is good and clean clothes.

### **Cleanliness**

The body's health and beauty are subjects which Islam contains many regulations about so that a believer does not reach real Islamic valor without respecting them.

Islam wants Muslims to be careful about their food, clothes, dwelling and apparent position. Physical cleanliness is only useful for material prosperity but it has a deep effect on spiritual training and it even causes the success for raising one's duties in life.

There are duties which arise for keeping a healthy and strong body. Islam considers the body important, so it has ordered its ablution for every ritual prayer and has determined the ritual prayer five times in 24 hours. It says that everybody should correctly and completely wash the apparent part of his body like the face, hands, arms, feet and head because these parts are more in touch with dirt and dust. In Islamic regulations, bathing is recommended every other day.

Islam orders us to be clean especially when we want to take part in a general meeting. For example in a mosque, it says, "You must be clean and wear your best clothes when you want to enter the mosque."

There are many verses in the Holy Quran about this.

*"Then let them accomplish their needful acts of shaving and cleansing. "(22:29)*

This is an order for pilgrim's during their pilgrimage.

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55. *ibid.*

56. *ibid.*

*"And your garments do purify." (74:4) And "God loves those who turn much (to Him) and He loves those who purify themselves." (2:222) And, "O children of Adam. Attend to your embellishments at every time of ritual prayer (and in every mosque). "(7:31)*

### **Extravagance**

Extravagance means exceeding the determined limits and it is divided into two kinds: extravagance in quality and extravagance in quantity.

For example, to earn much money or use electrical appliances more than is necessary is extravagance in quantity but buying high priced clothes while the buyer can buy a cheaper one is extravagance in quality.

It is obvious that all kinds of extravagance is forbidden and unlawful in Islamic regulations and this forbidding is not for a special time and special persons.

For example, throwing away a date seed is an extravagance if it is useful and profitable for sowing. Throwing away water when it is unobtainable is extravagance. Tearing a dress which is useful is extravagance. Keeping food without eating it and not giving it to another person who is deserving is a kind of extravagance. Kindling a lamp which is not necessary is extravagance. All of these are extravagances and naturally they are forbidden and unlawful.

Here a question arises, "Why is extravagance unlawful?" there are many reasons for this:

1. Extravagance sends capital out from the current of generation and dispatches it to the used currency.

2. The outbreak of extravagance becomes inevitable because social diseases are contagious.

3. Extravagance is a very suitable background for other social crimes like robbery, gambling, bribery, dishonesty, hoarding, using of short weights and selling short.

We find many verses in the Holy Quran about this social disease. *"And do not squander wastefully. Surely the squanderers are the fellows of the Satans." (17:26-27)*

There are other verses in our Holy and Divine Book in this field. *"And eat and drink and be not extravagant. Surely He does not love the extravagant (extravagance is prohibited)." (7:31) "And that the extravagant are the inmates of the fire "(40:43)*

Our sixth Imam, upon seeing a partially eaten fruit which had been thrown out of his house, became very angry and says, 'Why have you done such a thing. If you were satisfied and full from this fruit, there are many people who are hungry and could use these pomegranate seeds. Why did you not give these seeds to them?'<sup>57</sup>

And, "Certainly God likes moderation and dislikes extravagance, even a date seed and the rest of drinking water."

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57. op. cit., Mustadrak.

## **Behavior Towards Parents**

The above is one of the most important matters in Islam. The emphasis given in Islam is not present in other religions and ideologies to such an extent. The Holy Quran says, "*And serve God and do not associate anything with Him and be good to parents.*" (4:36)

You can find that after serving God, good behavior with parents is mentioned. '*And your Lord has commanded that you shall not serve (any) but Him and goodness to your parents if either or both of them reach old age with you. Say not to them (so much as) 'ugh' nor chide them and speak to them a generous word.*' (17: 23)

It is very clear that a Muslim is not allowed to say disrespectful things to his parents. There are many Traditions from our religious leaders about respect of parents. Imam Sadiq, peace be upon him, says about the above verse, "But about this part of the verse, '*If either or both of them reach old age with you, do not chide them,*' this means if they offend you, do not be disagreeable with them and if they beat you, do not chide them. When the Quran says, '*And speak to them a generous word.*' it means that if they beat you, say 'May God forgive you,' to them."

After this, we continue our discussion with the next verse of this Surah. "*And make yourself submissively gentle to them with compassion and say, 'O my Lord. Have compassion on them as they brought me up (when I was) little.*" (17: 24)

Imam Sadiq says about this verse, "And the meaning of this holy sentence, '*and make yourself submissively gentle to them with compassion*' is thus, 'do not look at them impudently, but look at them kindly and compassionately and do not raise your voice higher than their voice and do not lift your hand over their hands and do not walk faster than them.'" <sup>58</sup>

We end this section with beneficial words from Imam Sadiq. Mansour ibn-Hazm says, "I asked Imam Sadiq, 'What are the best forms of worship?' He answered me.:

1. Ritual prayer on time.
2. Goodness towards parents.
3. Striving in the Way of God."<sup>59</sup>

## **Behavior with Neighbors**

A Muslim's neighbors are people who must be respected. It is necessary to say that one of the essential and basic instructions in Islam is the creation of kindness and familiarity

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<sup>58</sup>.op. cit. Usul.

<sup>59</sup>.ibid

between Muslims in an Islamic society and it is obvious that good behavior with one's neighbors is one of the best ways for reaching that target.

For this reason there is much advice and recommendations about goodness with one's neighbors in Islamic books. Our Prophet says, "Everybody whose neighbor not be safe from his harm has no belief" and he repeated it three times. Then he added, "Your neighbors are 40 houses from every side - right, left, in front and behind your house."<sup>60</sup>

Our sixth Imam says, "Goodness towards neighbors increases one's daily bread." He also says, "Goodness towards neighbors increases time and makes the house habitable."<sup>61</sup>

And, "He said (when his house was full of men), " he who does not behave well towards his neighbor has not accepted us as religious leaders (this means that he is not a Shi'ite)."<sup>62</sup>

The Holy Quran says, "*And serve God and do not associate anything with Him and be good to the parents and to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the neighbor of (your) kin and the alien neighbor and the companion in a journey and the wayfarer and those whom your right hands possess. Surely God does not love him who is proud, boastful.*" (4:36)

### **Goodness towards a Guest**

A guest is respected in our Divine religion. There are many regulations about guests in the Islamic sources. For this reason, we have selected some wonderful speeches about the above title from our sacred leaders and Imams.

Imam Sadiq, peace be upon him, says, " Hadrat Fatima (our Prophet's daughter) complained to her father about some difficulties. The Prophet gave her a pamphlet and told her, ' Learn what is in it.' It contained these words: " Everybody who believes in God and the Last Day will respect his guest and everybody who believes in God and the Last Day must tell good things or be silent."<sup>63</sup>

The above speech of our Prophet tells us an important thing. Respect for a guest is one of the conditions of believing in God and the Last Day. Our sixth Imam says, "Jacob (the Prophet of God) announced everyday and night for a distance of 6 km. he who wants dinner or breakfast should come to his house. "<sup>64</sup>

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60 *ibid.*

61. *ibid*

62. *ibid*

63. *ibid*

64. *ibid*

## **The Moral Life of the Prophet of Islam**

We begin with two verses of the Holy Quran. *"And most surely you conform (yourself) to sublime morality."* (68:4) We read in another verse, *"Thus it is due to mercy from God that you deal with them gently and had you been rough, hard-hearted, they would certainly have dispersed from around you."* (3: 158) And, *"Certainly you have in the Apostle of God an excellent exemplar (God has given the Muslims an excellent example in the Holy Prophet, to copy and follow) for him who hopes in God and the last Day and remembers God much."* (33:21)

And now we want to follow our Prophet in his moral life so it is necessary for us to know how the Prophet behaved.

1. He was the most patient person.
2. He was the bravest person.
3. He was the most just.
4. He was the chastest.
5. He was the most generous and did not sleep even one night while he had money in his house.
6. And if he could not find any deserving man to give him the rest of his money, he would go out at night to find someone and give him the money.
7. He repaired his shoes and patched his clothes himself.
8. He helped his wives in their work.
9. He was the most modest person.
10. He never stared at another's face.
11. He accepted the invitation of the freed and the slave.
12. He accepted gifts even if it was a glass of milk.
13. He became angry for his Lord and not for himself.
14. He visited patients every place of the city.
15. He escorted a funeral.
16. He walked between his enemies without any guard.
17. He was the most humble of people.
18. He was the most eloquent.
19. He ate every thing that had been brought for him and never refused food.
20. He had no self-restraint from lawful food.

21. He dressed in what he found.
22. He liked perfume and hated bad smells.
23. He sat with the poor.
24. He ate food with them.
25. He honored learned people.
26. He had the coming and going with his relatives without referring one of them over another.
27. He did not oppress anyone.
28. He accepted the pardon of a man at fault.
29. He jested but he did not say any thing except the truth.
30. He did not reply to a bad deed with a bad deed but he forgave the sinful .
31. He was the first to greet everybody whom he met.
32. He honored everybody who entered his house even though the guest had no relation with the Holy Prophet.
33. He seldom became angry.
34. He was the easiest person to satisfy.
35. He was the most compassionate person.
36. He was the best and the most useful man for people.
37. He was the most silent person.
38. He did not speak unless necessary.
39. The best food for him was the food which the most people shared in eating.
40. He did not eat hot food.
41. He never reproached a food, but if he did not like it, he did not eat it.
42. His anger and his satisfaction shown upon his face.
43. He was the most faithful person about his agreements.
44. He saw him for the time was afraid of him.
45. He who associated with him deeply liked him.
46. Nobody wanted any thing in Islam unless he give it.
47. He was the most humble person with his eminent place.
48. When he was passing amongst the children, he greeted them.

49. If 1f they sat among the people who were speaking about the world, he spoke about the world with them too and if they were speaking about the next day and the Resurrection, he spoke about that matter too with them. If they were discussing food or drink, he discussed them to associate with them and to be friendly towards them.

50. He was the most eager for forgiving people with his power .<sup>65</sup>

Peace and the mercy of God be upon him and his descendants. We ask God to help us to succeed in following our Holy Prophet.

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65. These few sentences were selected from a book called *alaklaq* (Ethics) by Abdullah Shubbar who was a famous Shi'ite scholar of the 19<sup>th</sup> centruy.