

# THE GLOBE BEFORE AND AFTER THE ADVENT OF IMAM MAHDI, PART II<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT:** Islamic sources hold a rich account of the ‘End of Times’ – an era described in the eschatologies of the dominant world religions. It refers to the world’s state of affairs before and after the coming of Imam Mahdi to establish worldwide justice and peace. The previous part offered an overview of the concept of the ‘End of Times’ from the viewpoint of the dominant world religions, as well as the Islamic perspective using the Qur’an and hadith as sources to envision what lays ahead of us, and with the purpose of increasing our knowledge on the advent of Imam Mahdi, establishing a positive relationship with the Imam, and preparing for his return. This part expands on the quality of the people during this time, including their intellectual condition and scientific and technological advancements.

## **Intellectual situation**

In this part, the focus is on the intellectual situation of the people at the time of Imam Mahdi – the level of human understanding and thought. According to Islam, knowledge, understanding, thinking, contemplation and reflection are very important. Islamic sources use terms such as

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*tafakkur, tadabbur, shu'ur, 'ilm, ma'rifah* – all different terms that refer to the significance of understanding. Thus, we are to investigate the level of people's understanding before and after the advent of Imam Mahdi.

According to hadiths, many doubts during the “End of Time” will be prevalent among the people, almost like an epidemic illness – doubts with respect to many issues, although it will firstly manifest in the fundamental questions of life: our origin, what we will ultimately witness, what we should do to prepare for our end in this world, and so forth. It will be like a state of confusion that will be widespread; people will be, and perhaps currently are, faced with various ways of thinking about humanity, creation, and the proper course of action a person should take.

This will exist even among the believers and some Shi'a who will experience doubts in their hearts. They will say ‘If there is such a person as Imam Mahdi, then why has he not reappeared? How long do we wait for him?’ Such feelings of confusion will be widespread.

Shaykh Tusi narrates a hadith in *al-Ghaybah* referring to the end of time: “In that age, those after falsity (*mubtilun*) will be experiencing many doubts.”<sup>2</sup> However, these doubts will not be real or logical ones; they will be self-inflicted, as mentioned in the Qur'an:

وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَتْلُوا مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَلَا تَخُطُّهُ بِيَمِينِكُمْ إِذَا لَأْتَابَ الْمُبْطِلُونَ

<sup>2</sup> *al-Ghaybah*, p. 334 –

فَعِنْدَ ذَلِكَ يَرْتَابُ الْمُبْطِلُونَ

*You did not use to recite any scripture before it, nor did you write it with your right hand, for then the impugners would have been sceptical. (29:48)*

In other words, it did not matter what the Prophet did. Those who were committed to falsifying his message would constantly argue that the Qur'an was not from God. There is a difference between having genuine doubts and stubborn doubts.

There is a story of Avicenna and one of his students. On one occasion, they were together on a journey, and the student continuously praised Avicenna from time to time, saying that he was a genius and a great person,<sup>3</sup> and that if he claimed some high position of authority people would follow him. Avicenna did not reply. In the middle of one cold night as they were asleep, when Avicenna asked the student for some water, he began to make excuses and avoided the subject. Avicenna asked him again, and he continued to make excuses. At the time of the morning prayers, the *muadhdhin*, or caller to prayer, began to recite the *adhan* (call to prayer). Avicenna then said to the student that this was the difference between himself and someone with real authority. The Prophet, who lived centuries ago and whom the caller to prayer has never seen, has enough love and authority to cause that man to leave his bed, go out into the dark and cold to pronounce the *adhan* every night, whilst he had known Avicenna closely for so many years, and as a teacher no less, yet still he did not listen to him and could not give him water when he asked for it. Such doubts and scepticism are self-inflicted.

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<sup>3</sup> Indeed Ibn Sina was a great man and most of his knowledge was gained through self-inspiration and not from any teachers.

Imam Ali quotes from the Prophet, as narrated in *Kamal al-Din* by Shaykh Saduq: “Mahdi is from my progeny; he will have an occultation and there would be perplexity due to which nations will go astray.”<sup>4</sup>

Another report reached us from Imam Sadiq, which is a good tidings for us; if we are truly believers then this will make us rejoice:

The time in which God is closest to His servant and happiest with him is when they miss the Hujjah (proof) of God [i.e. when the Hujjah is not with them]. He is not visible for them and they do not know where he is. But nevertheless they remain certain that the Hujjah of God is present. At this time these people should expect the advent (*faraj*) in the mornings and evenings [i.e. all day, every day]. On the other hand, the time in which God is most angry with His enemies is the time of *ghaybah* because the Hujjah is not physically present. God knew that genuine believers would not have doubt. And had He known that genuine believers would start doubting then He would not have taken away His Hujjah even for a blink of an eye.<sup>5</sup>

We may sometimes feel that we are at a loss because the Hujjah of our time is not physically accessible to us. Imam Sadiq, however, tells us that this is the time that God is most happy with us, even more so than the people who were able to sit with and listen directly to the other

<sup>4</sup> Shaykh Saduq, *Kamal ud-Din wa Tamam um-Ni'mat*, p. 287

المهدي من ولدي ... تكون له غيبة وحيرة تضل فيها الأمم

<sup>5</sup> *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 52, p. 95

أقرب ما يكون العباد من الله جل ذكره وأرضى ما يكون عنهم إذا افتقدوا حجة الله جل وعز و لم يظهر لهم ولم يعلموا مكانه وهم في ذلك يعلمون أنه لم تبطل حجة الله جل ذكره ولا ميثاقه فعندها فتوقعوا الفرج صباحا ومساء ، فإن أشد ما يكون غضب الله على أعدائه إذا افتقدوا حجته ولم يظهر لهم وقد علم أن أوليائه لا يرتابون و لو علم أنهم يرتابون ما غيب حجته عنهم طرفة عين

great personalities such as the Prophet and the other Imams. And He is angrier with His enemies in this time because the Shi'as are without their leader and are facing oppression, hence making the anger of God more severe with the oppressors. Indeed, we are the orphans of the Ahlul Bayt because our spiritual fathers are not with us. God is very much supportive of us and angry with those who are hostile to us.

The last part of the hadith suggests that the doubts are not genuine; they are pseudo-doubts, and a true believer would not doubt. Indeed, there is little difference whether the *ghaybah* is ten years or 10,000 years, as logically there is no difference. God knows that real believers would never doubt. If He knew they would doubt then He would never take away his Hujjah into occultation.

At the end of time, despite all the confusions and scepticism, there will be some people who possess a very profound and deep understanding. When Imam Zayn al-Abidin was asked about *tawhid* (the oneness of God), he replied, "God knew there would be people at the end of time so profound and deep in their understanding, and because of them God revealed the chapter "Say, *He is Allah, the One*" and the beginning of Surat al-Hadid up to "He is aware of what is in the breasts (57:1-6)."<sup>6</sup>

From this we conclude that there will be a group of people at the end of time with the profundity and depth sufficient to understand the meanings of these verses. God's names in these verses, such as *Samad*,

<sup>6</sup> *Al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 91

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّوَجَلَّ عَلِمَ أَنَّهُ يَكُونُ فِي آخِرِ الزَّمَانِ أَقْوَامٌ مُتَعَمِّقُونَ فَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى {قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ} وَالْآيَاتِ مِنْ سُورَةِ الْحَدِيدِ إِلَى قَوْلِهِ {عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ} فَمَنْ رَأَى ذَلِكَ فَقَدْ هَلَكَ

*Awwal, Akhir, Zahir, and Batin* cannot be explained without philosophical knowledge and insightfulness.

Of course, there were people before the end of time who read and understood these verses, but not with the truer and deeper meaning. In our time, we know so much more about these verses, and certainly we understand them in a much better way than those who came before us. It would not be difficult to argue – based on these hadiths – that at the end of time there would be some people who have no doubts; rather, they possess certainty and a profound understanding even before the advent of Imam Mahdi.

### The best of people

In another hadith from Imam Zayn al-Abidin, we read:

The occultation of the twelfth successor of the Prophet will last a long time ... the people that live in that time of occultation who believe in his *imamah* and await his advent are better than the people of every other age. This is because God has given them so much intelligence and understanding that for them seeing or not seeing their Imam is the same.<sup>7</sup>

When the Imam says that the people of the end of time are ‘better than the people of every other age’, this is relatively speaking. It does not mean every single person of the end of time is better than every single person of other ages; rather, it is in a general sense.

<sup>7</sup> *Bihar ul-Anwar*, vol. 52, p. 122

تمتد الغيبة بولي الله الثاني عشر من أوصياء رسول الله صلى الله عليه واله وسلم والأئمة بعده ... إن أهل زمان غيبته القائلين بإمامته، المنتظرين لظهوره أفضل أهل كل زمان لأن الله تعالى ذكره أعطاهم من العقول والإفهام والمعرفة ما صارت به الغيبة عندهم بمنزلة المشاهدة

The enquiry we must now make is why are the people of the end of time better in a general sense than people of other times? Is it due to their extra worship, or that they work harder? According to this hadith, it is because they have a better understanding, stemming from the intellect.

Without a proper level of understanding, we risk being like the person described in a hadith: There was a person who was on an island and was satisfied with this way of life. He thanked God that everything around him was perfect: he had good health, food, and environment. But he had one complaint; he would say, “Where is the donkey of God so I can feed him properly.” In other words, despite much worship and being surrounded by many bounties, he had misunderstood God, thinking of Him as a being who rode a donkey. The value of such worship, when not coupled with proper understanding, is reduced.

Those who possess superficial knowledge must see realities in order to believe. While the people at the time of Prophet Musa requested him to ask God to show Himself to them, the people of the end of time appreciate their Imam whether they see him or not. Imam Zayn al-Abidin says, “These are the people who are true and sincere; they are the genuine Shi‘as, and they call to the religion of God secretly and openly [i.e. their very being is a call to Islam].”<sup>8</sup>

### **Intellects will be made complete**

*Al-Kafi* contains the following hadith from Imam al-Baqir:

<sup>8</sup> *Bihar ul-Anwar*, vol. 52, p. 122

اولئك المخلصون حقا ، وشيعتنا صدقا والدعاة إلى دين الله سرا وجهرا

When our Qa'im comes, God will put his hand [either the hand of God or the hand of Imam Mahdi] on the heads of the servants; and God will bring together their intellects and then their understanding will become complete.<sup>9</sup>

We can infer the following points from this:

1. The change in understanding referred to in this hadith is a comprehensive and general change intended for humankind, rather than limited to any one group.
2. The nature of this event does not have a simple explanation. There is no mention of God sending any new book or message, nor any messenger; rather, it refers to placing a hand. Whether it is His hand or the Imam's hand is irrelevant. In any case, it is a divine act, a special providence for the people of that time, and Imam Mahdi is God's instrument on the most important part of a human being, i.e. his mind. From this we can conclude that God directly attends to human understanding.
3. The intellects are put together. This could mean:
  - a. Placing a hand on them brings about reconciliation and agreement among people, and will end combat and discrepancies, and increase cooperation and mutual understanding. As said in other hadiths, the cleverest person is he who brings together the knowledge and understanding of others, whereas an ignorant person is one who says he knows everything and thinks that he does not need anyone else.

<sup>9</sup> *Al-Kafi*, vol. 1, Kitab ul-Aql wal-Jahl, No. 21

إذا قام قائمنا وضع الله يده على رؤوس العباد، فجمع بها عقولهم وكتبت به أحلامهم

Overall, this will enable people to set aside hostility, and will enter them into a harmonious way of thinking. Although the human population is more than six billion, our collective understanding and intellect is not multiplied six billion times. We somehow block and limit one another when our intellects clash.

- b. By placing a hand on them, God puts together the intellect of every individual and completes and perfects that person's own intellect. Perhaps the person's concentration is improved and he can avoid any distractions to focus on what is truly important. In modern life, we often feel that there are too many distractions with so many things happening around us, and it is difficult to concentrate properly. We end up losing an immense amount of understanding when we lose concentration. Hence, this placing of the hand could mean that people are directed to think about what is necessary and beneficial.
- c. The people's understanding becomes complete, which is a natural outcome of the act of placing the hand. Hence, we should not be surprised when we hear reports of many who believe in Imam Mahdi; their understanding has been raised and focused, thus making it easier to believe in him. Of course, there could be more interpretations than what we have presented.

So far we have discussed that when Imam Mahdi reappears, there will be a sudden change in the people's understanding in general, and particularly in a select group who are – relatively speaking – superior to

the believers in any previous age. The following introduces the condition with respect to science and technology.

### Science and technology

We have reports from the Infallibles that suggest certain progressions will occur in the fields of science and technology. In *Bihar al-Anwar*, Imam al-Sadiq is reported to have said:

Knowledge consists of twenty-seven letters,<sup>10</sup> and all the knowledge brought by the prophets only comprises two out of twenty-seven. Until now, people had not learned except two out of the twenty-seven. When our Qa'im comes, he will introduce twenty-five more parts of knowledge and will spread this knowledge amongst all people. And he will add this to the two parts from the previous prophets, so that the twenty-seven parts become complete.<sup>11</sup>

Knowledge will reach its peak during the time of Imam Mahdi. It is not difficult to comprehend how knowledge may undergo a rapid expansion. If we compare the progress of knowledge, science, and new discoveries in the last fifty years with the rest of the progress in the history of mankind, then the last fifty years achieved more than what came before it. Hence, this assertion is not surprising. Indeed, in the field of knowledge, the more one knows, the more one is encouraged and intrigued to ask questions, which ultimately leads to more knowledge.

<sup>10</sup> The word used is letters, but this may actually refer to types of knowledge, or parts of knowledge.

<sup>11</sup> *Bihar ul-Anwar*, vol. 52, p. 336

العلم سبعة وعشرون حرفاً لجميع ما جاءت به الرسل حرفان فلم يعرف الناس حتى اليوم غير الحرفين فإذا قام القائم أخرج الخمسة والعشرين حرفاً فبئها في الناس وضم إليها الحرفين حتى يبئها سبعة وعشرين حرفاً

Regarding this hadith, we are unsure of whether it refers to a particular kind of knowledge or whether it refers to knowledge needed to achieve human perfection. In Islamic sources, knowledge is sometimes used in a broader sense and at other times it is used in a specific sense. For example, Prophet Muhammad said, “Seek knowledge even if it requires you to travel to China.”<sup>12</sup> In this instance, the mention of knowledge could not have been Islamic knowledge since China did not have Islam. In this instance, therefore, the meaning of knowledge is broad.

On another occasion, Prophet Muhammad noticed that people had gathered around a person and were asking him questions, and he was answering them. The people were amazed and impressed. When the Prophet enquired as to who this person was, they replied that he is an expert in genealogy of Arabs; he can describe any person’s forefathers. In response to this, the Prophet said, “Knowledge is three: beliefs (*ayah muhkamah*), morals (*sunnah qa’imah*), or duties and responsibilities (*faridah ‘adilah*). Anything extra to these three is a grace (*fadh*).”<sup>13</sup>

In other words, priority should be given to that which helps in human perfection. If a person does not know the depth of their genealogy, then it will not limit them in their pursuit of perfection. And when Imam al-Sadiq mentions the twenty-seven types of knowledge, we cannot say for certain whether they are all general knowledge, or the specific knowledge that is required to achieve human perfection. In any case, we can conclude that there will be an extraordinary expansion in knowledge.

<sup>12</sup> *Wasail ul-Shia*, vol. 27, p. 27

اطلبوا العلم ولو بالصين

<sup>13</sup> *Al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 32

انما العلم ثلاثة آية محكمة أو فريضة عادلة أو سنة قائمة و ما خلاهن فهو فضل

## Communications technology

It seems that another area for expansion and advancement will be the technology related to communications. Imam Sadiq says, “When Imam Mahdi appears, God will strengthen the Shi‘as’ hearing and vision so much so that whilst the Imam is in his own place and they are in other parts of the world, they will be able to see and hear him without any intermediary.”<sup>14</sup>

Today, we can understand how this may happen. But fourteen centuries ago this would have been unimaginable. At that time, many were not able to read or write, and the most they could do was to send verbal messages. Again, we are unsure if this hadith is what we see in modern technologies or whether we will still witness further advancements.

A similar point is mentioned in another hadith from Imam Sadiq:

Surely a believer, during the time of Qa‘im, will be in the east and will be able to see his brother in the west, and a believer will be in the west and will be able to see his brother in the east.<sup>15</sup>

Once again, it cannot be concluded for certain whether this is technology or a special power granted to believers.

In sermon 150 of *Nahj ul-Balaghah*, Imam Ali speaks about the future, and many thinkers have considered this to be a reference to the time of

<sup>14</sup> *Rawzat ul-Kafi*, p. 241

ان قائمنا اذا قام مد الله عزوجل لشيعتنا في اسماهم و ابصارهم حتى لا يكون بينهم و بين القائم بريد، يكلمهم فيسمعون و ينظرون اليه و هو في مكانه

<sup>15</sup> *Bihar ul-Anwar*, vol. 52, p. 391

ان المؤمن في الزمان القائم و هو بالمشرق ليرى اخاه الذي في المغرب و كذا الذي في المغرب يرى اخاه الذي في المشرق

Imam Mahdi, because the description it gives is compatible with what we know already regarding the end of time. Imam Ali says:

The eyes of the people will be enlightened by the Qur'an, and the interpretation of the Qur'an will be thrown into their ears. And they will be given the cup of wisdom in the morning and in the evening.<sup>16</sup>

Perhaps this refers to the contemporary personal mobile devices, or even something more advanced. In any case, it was unimaginable for the people at that time. From this excerpt, it seems that the Imam is emphasising the universal distribution of wisdom, that every person in the end of time will have access to the interpretation of the Qur'an, and to wisdom.

This has been possible with the spread of knowledge through books, electronics, and social media. This is why this prediction is not difficult to accept now, albeit it was something difficult for people to fathom in the past. The reality today is that a person in a remote area may have the same access to information that we have in a major modern city.

Regarding the topic of communications during the time of Imam Mahdi, I wish to also highlight the following hadith from Imam Sadiq, "When Mahdi comes ... what you are supposed to do is in your hand. If something happens to you and you do not know what to do, look at your palm and there you will find your answer."<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *Nahj ul-Balaghah*, Sermon No. 150

<sup>17</sup> *Bihar ul-Anwar*, vol. 52, p. 365  
 جلى بالتنزيل ابصارهم و يرمى بالتفسير في مسامعهم و يغتقون كأس الحكمة بعد الصبح  
 اذا قام القائم بعث في اقاليم الارض في كل اقليم رجلا. .. يقول له الامام(ع) عهدك في كفك فاذا ورد  
 عليك امر لا تفهمه و لا تعرف القضاء فيه فانظر الى كفك و اعمل بما فيها

In *Kamal al-Din* of Shaykh Saduq, Prophet Muhammad refers to the ninth Imam after Imam Husayn, i.e. Imam Mahdi, as: “He with whom God will fill the earth with light after darkness, and with justice after oppression, and with knowledge after ignorance.”<sup>18</sup>

This clearly shows that the Imam will bring not only justice, but also knowledge, to which everyone will have access without restriction. In turn, this will help in curbing crime. Imam Baqir states:

One of the reasons why Mahdi is called Mahdi [lit. the guided] is because whatever is hidden and secret will become known to him to the extent that a murderer or criminal who is in his own house will be detected without anyone knowing about him, but Imam Mahdi will command people to go and bring him from his house. And people in their own houses will be afraid to speak lest they say or do something wrong, as if the wall may bear witness against them.<sup>19</sup> Such a situation may be due to a miracle that the Imam possesses, or through technology.

## Transport

Regarding the modes of transport in the end of time, Imam al-Baqir says, “There is something kept for your master [i.e. Imam Mahdi] and it is called *sa’b* (difficult/strong).<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *Kamal al-Din wa Tamam al-Ni’mat*, p. 260

تأسعهم القائم الذي يملا الله عزوجل به الارض نورا بعد ظلمتها ، وعدلا بعد جورها ، وعلا بعد جهلها

<sup>19</sup> *Bihar ul-Anwar*, vol. 52, p. 390

اما سمي المهدي لانه يهدي الى امر خفي حتى انه يبعث الى رجل لا يعلم الناس له ذنب فيقتله حتى ان احدكم يتكلم في بيته فيخاف ان يشهد عليه الجدار

<sup>20</sup> *Bihar ul-Anwar*, vol. 52, p. 321

ذخر لصاحبكم الصعب

He was asked: ‘What is *sa’b*?’ The Imam replied: “Something like a cloud, but with thunder and lightning [i.e. electricity] and your Imam will mount it and ride on the clouds.”<sup>21</sup> This seems to be a reference to a development in the technology of transportation.

### Information

Another interesting report, which some people say may refer to today’s satellite technologies, or it could be something that is yet to be developed, is that Imam al-Sadiq tells his people:

When Imam Mahdi comes he will have knowledge about whatever is hidden in the earth, whether it is inside a high mountain or in the depth of a valley [i.e. inside the earth]; nothing of the treasures of the earth will be hidden from him.

Somehow the Imam would have this knowledge, and would not need to dig or explore to find out what is hidden inside the earth. We can see that some of this is already happening today, with the technologies and techniques that currently exist.

Again, Imam al-Sadiq states: “When our Qa’im begins to rise up, the earth will be shining and people will not be in need of the light of the Sun.”<sup>22</sup> This may be referring to nuclear energy used for lighting, or to the current electrical methods used for generating light. Certainly in the past people would have been limited to the Sun for its light, but during the time of Imam Mahdi, the earth itself would be a source of lighting.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>22</sup> ما كان من سحاب فيه رعد وصاعقة او برق، فصاحبكم يركبه اما انه سيركب السحاب ويرقى في الاسباب  
*Kashf ul-Ghummah*, vol. 2, p. 464

إذا قام قائمنا اشرفت الارض بنور رها و استغنى العباد عن ضوء الشمس و ذهب الظلمة

# PATIENCE AND GRATITUDE

TAWUS RAJA

**ABSTRACT:** The ‘patient and grateful servants’ in the Qur’an are those who take lessons from how God has created the world of nature and how He has treated the previous nations in history (14:5, 31:31, 34:19, 42:33). The significance and connection of these two qualities is seen more vividly in a Prophetic narration: ‘*Īmān* (belief, faith) is split in two halves: one half of it is [in] patience, and the other half is [in] gratitude.’<sup>1</sup> A clear meaning of this is that at times of ease, success and bounty, a believer must be grateful, and at times of difficulty, loss and affliction, a believer must be patient. In several hadiths, the ‘one who is grateful when he is given [a blessing], and patient when he is afflicted [with hardship]’ is described as a believer, the best of people, the noblest and most honourable servant to God, and one who is given the good of this world and the Hereafter.<sup>2</sup> This article discusses the meanings of each quality and how they are integral elements of faith. It shows that the essence of both qualities is the realisation that God is the sole owner of everyone and everything in the universe. God’s absolute ownership is the spirit of patience and gratitude.

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<sup>1</sup> Tuḥaf, p. 48. Aḥsā’ī, *‘Awālī al-La’ālī*, vol. 2, p. 66, ḥ 171. Suyūṭī, *al-Jāmi’ al-Ṣaḡīr*, vol. 1, p. 479, ḥ 3106. Kanz, vol. 1, p. 36, ḥ 61. Mustadrak.W, vol. 11, p. 287, ḥ 13039.

<sup>2</sup> Iskāfī, *al-Tamḥīṣ*, p. 58, ḥ 163. Tuḥaf, p. 364. Ghurar, ḥ, 1539 and 6120. Ṭabrisī, Ali ibn al-Ḥasan, *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, p. 22. Warrām, vol. 2, p. 247.

## Gratitude

*Shukr* (gratitude, gratefulness, thankfulness) is defined with respect to *ni'mah* (blessing, bounty). It is a feeling in a beneficiary regarding a benefactor who has bestowed some good, fortune, or favour upon him. The essence of gratitude is the realisation and acknowledgement that 'I owe this bounty to so-and-so, and it was because of him that I received this benefit.' The Qur'an says, "*Whatever blessing you have is from Allah* (16:53)." For this reason, it instructs us to be grateful to Him for His bounties (2:152, 2:172, 16:114, 29:17, 31:14).

According to al-Rāghib, *shukr* is to recognise a blessing and display it. It has been said that it was originally *kashr*, meaning 'to unveil and expose,' then the first two letters were swapped. Its opposite is *kufr*, which is 'to cover, conceal, and forget a blessing.'<sup>3</sup>

Upon further reflection and analysis, one can reduce this to ownership: gratefulness means understanding that the real owner of this bounty is God. It is in my possession by His bestowment, so I am not its real owner to do whatever I want with it. I am rather an agent that has been given charge, possession, and authority over this bounty by the real Owner. That is why the essence of gratitude is not separable from obedience and worship. The Qur'an uses the two interchangeably: "*Give thanks for Allah's blessing, if it is Him that you worship*" (16:114; also see 2:172).

Moreover, the Qur'an has used gratefulness against extravagance (*isrāf*). Prophet Lot is described as a grateful servant (54:35) while his tribe is termed an extravagant lot (7:81). Likewise, God orders His servants to

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<sup>3</sup> Rāghib, *al-Mufradāt*, under *sh-k-r*.

eat, drink, and give thanks (2:172, 16:114, 34:15) but not waste (7:31). This contrast shows that *isrāf* (wastefulness, extravagance) – which is when one uses resources irresponsibly and not as outlined by God – is the opposite of gratitude. That is why according to a hadith, gratefulness for God’s bounties necessitate abstinence from what God has prohibited.<sup>4</sup> In one narration, Abū Baṣīr asks Imam al-Ṣādiq, “Is there any limit to gratitude such that if a servant lives up to it he would count as grateful?” The Imam replied, “Yes” and he explained:

He should praise God [verbally] for every bounty that He has bestowed upon him with regard to his family and possessions. He should also pay any applicable due in the wealth that God has given him.

Afterwards, the Imam quoted several verses from the Qur’an as examples of expressing gratitude and praise (43:13, 23:29, 17:80).<sup>5</sup> As Rumi beautifully puts it:

Being ungrateful is indeed like this: / To reject one who comes with blessing and bliss.

‘I don’t want your good, if you don’t mind! / ‘I don’t want an eye, so make me blind!’<sup>6</sup>

It is for the same reason that the Qur’an says, “*Whoever gives thanks, gives thanks only for his own sake*” (27:40, 31:12). Giving thanks for any bounty is using it in the way it was intended for, which is conducive to our own welfare and benefit. It also maintains, preserves, and increases the blessing for us: “*And when your Lord proclaimed, ‘If you are*

<sup>4</sup> *Kāfi*, vol. 2, p. 95, ḥ 10. *Khiṣāl*, vol. 1, p. 14, ḥ 50.

<sup>5</sup> *Kāfi*, vol. 2, pp. 95-96, ḥ 12.

<sup>6</sup> Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, vol. 3, lines 365 and 367.

*grateful, I will surely enhance you [in blessing]”* (14:7). The opposite of it would be wastefulness and extravagance, which will certainly cause the loss and destruction of our resources and blessings.<sup>7</sup> It is narrated from the Prophet, Imam Ali and Imam al-Sadiq: ‘If one is given gratitude, he will not be denied increase [of blessings].’<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, the opportunity, awareness, and ability to thank God are themselves further bounties by God. God revealed to Prophet Moses:

‘O Moses! Thank Me as I deserve.’ He replied, ‘My Lord! How can I thank You as You deserve, while any thank that I give you is a bounty by which You have blessed me!?’ He said, ‘O Moses! Now you have thanked me [as I deserve] for you have realised that this [thankfulness of yours] is from Me.’<sup>9</sup>

Similarly, Imam al-Sajjād prays to God:

How can I achieve thanksgiving? For my thanking Thee requires thanksgiving. Whenever I say, ‘All praise belongs to Thee!’ it becomes thereby incumbent upon me to say [again], ‘All praise belongs to Thee!’<sup>10</sup>

## Achieving Gratitude

The Qur’an describes Prophet Noah as a ‘very grateful servant’ (17:3). Imam Bāqir explained this by saying:

<sup>7</sup> Anṣārī, *Tafsīr-i Sūrah-yi Luqmān*, pp. 77-80.

<sup>8</sup> *Tuḥaf*, p. 41. *Nahj*, Saying 135. *Amālī*Ṭ, p. 693, ḥ 1473. *Warrām*, vol. 2, pp. 84-85.

<sup>9</sup> *Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 98, ḥ 27. *Mishkāt*, p. 32. A similar account is narrated from Prophet David (a). See Daylamī, vol. 1, p. 122.

<sup>10</sup> *Biḥār*, vol. 91, p. 146, Munājāt al-Shakīrīn.

Noah was called a grateful servant because he used to utter every morning and evening: ‘O God, verily I take Thee as witness that any blessing or well-being in religious or worldly affairs that comes upon me in the evening or the morning is from Thee alone. Thou hast no partner. To Thee I owe all praise and thank for it until Thou art satisfied and after Thy satisfaction.’<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, observing this verbal formula every morning and evening can pave the road and prepare the grounds for developing this quality. This, however, is only the start. Prophet Noah’s praise was only a verbal utterance, but his verbal utterance was an expression and manifestation of what he held in his heart.

To achieve due gratefulness to God, we need to know His bounties and blessings upon us. We are composed of soul and body. Our physical body, which is the lower and transient aspect of our being, consists of many parts, faculties, and functions that physiologists have ever been studying and discovering more about. Now, what we know of our body is negligible compared to what we do not know. Think of how much God has blessed us just in terms of our physical bodies. Then think of His blessings external to our body, such as food, shelter, clothing, security, sustenance, family, wealth, rain, sun, oceans, and everything found in nature. Then think of the soul and God’s immaterial blessings, such as intelligence, emotions, education, determination, guidance, faith, and connection with Him.

Add to these all possible evils and misfortunes that could have struck us if God had not protected us against them. Any illness, pain, disability,

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<sup>11</sup> ‘Ayyāshī, vol. 2, p. 280, ḥ 17. *Ilal*, vol. 1, p. 29.

loss, calamity, defect, deviation, and sin that others have been afflicted with could have equally happened if it were not for His mercy. Imam Husayn prays to God: “O God! What Thou hast deflected and turned away from me of troubles and distresses is more than what appears to me of wellness and joy.”<sup>12</sup> This is why God admonishes us in the Qur’an: “*Will you then be grateful?*” (21:80).

Taking a few minutes to continue this thread, we can better appreciate the meaning and depth of ‘All praise belongs to Allah.’ Then we will say this with all our being and from the depths of our hearts. The Qur’an says: “*If you enumerate Allah’s blessings, you will not be able to count them*” (14:34, 16:18). It is for this reason that we can never praise and thank God as He deserves. We cannot achieve His praise completely because we do not encompass His bounties.<sup>13</sup>

Not only are *we* indebted to God’s bounties, but all existents are. The first and foremost blessing of God is existence itself, which encompasses every being, whether animate or inanimate, material or immaterial. The goodness of existence manifests in the striving of living creatures for survival. Hence, God’s blessings and bounties embrace every being and creature: “*My mercy embraces all things*”(7:155). That is why “*All praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of all worlds.*”<sup>14</sup>

According to the Muslim mystic Shaqīq al-Balkhī,<sup>15</sup> there are three conditions to a proper and complete praise of God: 1) to know God as the Giver of bounties to you, 2) to be pleased and satisfied with what He

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<sup>12</sup> Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Iqbāl al-A’māl*, vol. 2, p. 76. Kaf’ amī, *al-Balad al-Amīn*, p. 252.

<sup>13</sup> Rāzī, vol. 1, pp. 23-24 and vol. 1, p. 193.

<sup>14</sup> Rāzī, vol. 1, p. 194.

<sup>15</sup> A leading early figures of Islamic mysticism. He was killed in 194 AH.

has given you, and 3) to no not use His bounty in the way of His disobedience.<sup>16</sup> The poet Sa'di eloquently states:

The winds, the clouds, the sun and the moon / Are  
running day and night to fill up your spoon,  
So that you may be heedful and in tune / When you sit  
down to eat your lunch at noon.<sup>17</sup>

Imam al-Kāzīm said, “God is generous whether He gives or withholds, because when He gives, He gives what does not belong to you; and when He withholds, He withholds what does not belong to you.” This is why we should praise God in all circumstances, whether we achieve or fail, in pleasure and pain, in health and illness. It is narrated that when a pleasing event happened to the Messenger of God, he would say, “Praise be to God for this blessing,” and when a distressing event happened to him, he would say, “Praise be to God at all times.”<sup>18</sup> Ibn ‘Abbās said, “The first group that will be called to Paradise on the Day of Resurrection are those who praise God in all conditions.”<sup>19</sup> There are also some hadith from the Infallibles to this effect.<sup>20</sup>

In many narrations we have been advised to be good neighbours to – or good protectors of – God’s bounties. According to these very hadiths, this means being grateful to their Benefactor, and to give the dues that is mandatory upon us toward them. Otherwise, God’s bounties will depart from us, and it seldom occurs that they return afterwards.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Qurṭubī, vol. 1, p. 134.

<sup>17</sup> Sa'di, *Gulistān, Dibāchah*.

<sup>18</sup> *Kāfi*, vol. 2, p. 97, ḥ 19. *Amālī*. Ṭ, pp. 49-50, ḥ 64. *Mishkāṭ*, p. 31.

<sup>19</sup> *Warrām*, vol. 1, p. 230.

<sup>20</sup> *Kāfi*, vol. 5, p. 15. Narāqī, *Jamī‘ al-Sa‘adāt*, vol. 3, p. 192.

<sup>21</sup> *Kāfi*, vol. 4, p. 38. *Tuḥaf*, vol. 4, p. 48. *Faqīh* vol. 2, p. 60, ḥ 1706. *Amālī*. Ṭ, p. 246, ḥ 431.

Therefore, to achieve gratitude, we are to constantly remind ourselves that we are only deputies and representatives of any blessing that we have, not the real owner of it; we do have not deserved what we have by our own merit and virtue. Rather, anything that we have is from God, Who has given it to us *to test us* and help us *grow* by spending it as He pleases. We should also remind ourselves that doing so is only to our own benefit, because it will preserve and increase God's blessings upon us, and will make us God-like, Whose hands of generosity are ever wide open even to those who least deserve it. As the Qur'an says:

*'The Jews say, "Allah's hand is tied up." Tied up be their hands, and cursed be they for what they say! Rather, His hands are wide open: He bestows as He wishes' (5:64).*

## Patience

It is narrated from the Prophet and several Imams, with slight variations: "Patience (*ṣabr*) to faith (*īmān*) is like the head to the body. When the head is gone, so is the body. Likewise, when patience is gone so is faith."<sup>22</sup> The Qur'an describes the patient as follows:

*And give good news to the patient – those who, when an affliction visits them, say, 'Indeed we belong to Allah, and to Him do we indeed return' (2:155-156).*

What makes them patient is their firm belief that "*Indeed we belong to Allah, and to Him do we indeed return.*" This can be linked again with the concept of ownership. The essence of patience is the realisation and acknowledgement that I – and everything I have – belong to God. I do

<sup>22</sup> Ḥimyarī, *Qurb al-Isnād*, pp. 155-156, ḥ 572. *Kāfi*, vol 2, p. 87ff. *Tuḥaf*, pp. 202, 211 and 282. *Khiṣāl*, vol. 1, p. 315. *Nahj*, Saying 82. Suyūṭī, *al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaghīr*, vol. 2, p. 113, ḥ 5136. *Kanz*, vol. 3, p. 744, ḥ 8631-8632, and 1vol. 6, p. 241, ḥ 44309.

not own even myself, let alone my possessions, properties, qualities, achievements, and actions. If this idea is truly established in one's heart, then he will not feel a loss when he apparently loses some property, misses some benefit, or fails to achieve a goal. The other half of the formula – “*and to Him do we indeed return*” – reinforces this by inspiring hope in one's heart for the rewards and blessings that God has prepared for and promised to the patient.

### Types of Patience

According to the narrations, there are three forms of patience:

1. Patience in afflictions, which is to bear the bitterness of troubles and misfortunes.
2. Patience in obedience, which is to bear the difficulty of performing what we are commanded.
3. Patience in sins, which is to stop and refrain from committing sins despite their attraction.<sup>23</sup>

### Patience and Faith

The close tie between faith and the above types of patience is evident. Faith entails that any trouble or affliction that befalls us is under God's watch and according to His decree. It is a test of patience by Him to make us grow and attain felicity and reward. Faith also entails a sense of obedience and servitude to God, which leads one to do what He has commanded and to abstain from what He has prohibited. Belief in God's presence and watch also necessitate one to avoid committing sins. Imam

<sup>23</sup> *Kāfi*, vol. 2, p. 91, ḥ 15. *Tuḥaf*, 206. *Warrām*, vol. 1, p. 40. Daylamī, vol. 1, p. 127. Suyūṭī, *al-Jāmi'* *al-Ṣaghīr*, vol. 2, p. 114, ḥ 5137. *Kanz*, vol. 3, p. 273, ḥ 6515.

al-Ṣādiq said, “We [Imams] are patient, but our Shi‘as are indeed more patient than us.” Then he explained this by adding: “We have patience while we know [the wisdom behind our difficulties], but you are patient while you do not know.”<sup>24</sup> Rumi articulately pens the beauty of trials as follows:

The trial of your Friend is so that you may grow / His  
knowledge is superior to all that you know.<sup>25</sup>

Another fundamental connection between patience and faith is that if one believes in the Hereafter and its immense rewards and punishments, then the affairs of this world will become less significant in his eyes, for any benefit or loss here is trivial compared to eternal bliss and everlasting torment. Imam Ali said, “Whoever is certain about the Hereafter forgets this world.”<sup>26</sup> In another similar hadith he said, “Whoever loves meeting God forgets this world.”<sup>27</sup>

The Qur’an tells us about certain individuals who were mesmerised by Korah’s glamour. When they expressed their wish and yearning to have similar wealth and luxury, the knowledgeable ones in their community advised them: “*Woe to you! Allah’s reward is better for someone who has faith and acts righteously, and no one will receive it except the patient*” (28:80). Patience in this sense is not a moral virtue or quality, but it is a matter of worldview. It is about how one weighs, assesses, and discounts present and future benefits and losses. It is in this light that the Prophet said, “Good for him who abandons a current pleasure for an unseen promise.” Such exchange is the essence of faith, and thus the idea that

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<sup>24</sup> *Mishkāt*, pp. 274-275.

<sup>25</sup> Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, vol. 4, line 107.

<sup>26</sup> *Ghurar*, ḥ 2772.

<sup>27</sup> *Ghurar*, ḥ 2491.

patience to faith is like the head to the body. Hafiz, the great Persian poet, movingly describes the reward of patience:

When I was given patience to forbear abuse, / It was a  
promise of success and a pleasing news.

With sweets and honey my words are replete / It's a  
reward of patience from indulging in sweets.<sup>28</sup>

### Patience in Practice

The Qur'an says:

*Piety is not to turn your faces to the east or the west; rather, piety is [personified by] those who have faith in Allah and the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets, and who give their wealth, for the love of Him, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveller and the beggar, and for [the freeing of] the slaves, and maintain the prayer and give the zakat, and those who fulfil their covenants, when they pledge themselves, and those who are patient in stress and distress, and in the heat of battle. They are the ones who are true [to their covenant], and it is they who are the Godwary (2:177).*

The true realisation of any moral virtue occurs when it becomes one's second nature, such that the person acts according to it without much difficulty or pretention.<sup>29</sup> One way to achieve this is to act 'as if' one possesses the virtue. Imam Ali says, "If you are not tolerant, put on the garb of tolerance, because it rarely happens that that one imitates a

<sup>28</sup> Hafiz, *Ghazal* 183.

<sup>29</sup> Narāqī, *Jāmi' al-Sa'adāt*, vol. 3, p. 227.

people and does not soon become one of them.”<sup>30</sup> Practice and consistency help one develop this quality in time.

Another instruction is found in the Imam’s answer when he was asked about *īmān* (faith, belief). He said:

Faith stands on four pillars: patience, conviction, justice, and jihad. Patience itself has four aspects: eagerness, fear, disinterestedness, and anticipation. Whoever is eager for Paradise will let go of lustful desires; whoever fears the Fire [of Hell] will keep away from sins; whoever is disinterested in this world will find hardships to be light; and whoever anticipates death will hasten toward good deeds...<sup>31</sup>

This hadith refers to the various types of patience and the root of each.

Imam Ali describes the importance and results of self-purification while striving to obey God:

You should know that there is no act of obedience to God except that **it is accompanied by some pain**, and there is no act of disobedience to God **except that it comes with some pleasure**. Thus, may God have mercy on the person who cuts free from his lusts and uproots the desires of his ego, for indeed the ego is the hardest thing to control, and it ever drags one to a sinful desire.<sup>32</sup>

Rumi eloquently instructs his readers to learn patience as it offers long-term rewards:

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<sup>30</sup> *Nahj*, Saying 207. *Ghurar*, ḥ 6435.

<sup>31</sup> *Nahj*, Saying 31.

<sup>32</sup> *Nahj*, Sermon 176

If you want your speech to be sweet and neat / Have  
patience and abstain from eating the sweet.

The bitterness of patience is the desire of the wise / But  
children ever crave for sweets and prize.<sup>33</sup>

Another means of developing moral virtues is to study and reflect on the inspirational accounts of brave men and women who showed patience at the most difficult times, in circumstances that most people would not be able to endure. It is said that once the wife of Faṭḥ al-Mawṣilī, who was an early Muslim mystic, fell down and hurt herself, but then she smiled instead of crying. She was asked, “Doesn’t it hurt?” She replied, “The pleasure of its reward took away the bitterness of its pain.”<sup>34</sup> A similar account to this is narrated about Āminah Bīgum, the learned daughter of Muhammad Taqī Majlisī and the wife of Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Māzandarānī, who are both among the leading figures of piety and scholarship in Shī’ism. It is said that once she fell from the stairs, broke her head and shin, and started bleeding. However, she was only heard saying contentedly, “All praise belongs to God, the Lord of all worlds.” She was asked, “Don’t your wounds hurt?” She said, “I was pacified when I remembered the reward that God gives me for bearing this pain.”<sup>35</sup>

These accounts are confirmed by a hadith by Imam Ali concerning the verse: “*Whatever affliction that may visit you is because of what your hands have earned, and He excuses many [an offense].*” (42:30) Imam Ali also said:

<sup>33</sup> Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, vol. 1, lines 1610-1611.

<sup>34</sup> Ghazzālī, *Iḥyā’ al-‘Ulūm*, vol. 12, p. 53.

<sup>35</sup> Dastghayb, *Īmān*, vol. 1, p. 55.

No vein is moved out of place, no one hits a stone, no foot slips, and no thorn scratches the skin – except for some sin, and yet what God pardons is more. If God penalises one for his sin in this world, then God is greater and nobler than penalising him again in the Hereafter.<sup>36</sup>

A challenging type of patience is in social interactions, when one faces abuse, misbehaviour, and oppression in family, at work, or in other places. The Qur'an addresses this issue in several places. Even though the Qur'an sanctions equitable retaliation, it immediately warns us of exceeding beyond that: "*So should anyone aggress against you, assail him in the manner he assailed you, and be wary of Allah, and know that Allah is with the Godway*" (2:194; also see 17:33). Even when it is permissible to retaliate, patience is yet a higher virtue:

*And if you retaliate, retaliate with the like of what you have been made to suffer, but if you are patient that is surely better for the patient. So be patient, and you cannot be patient except with Allah [’s help]. And do not grieve for them, nor be upset by their plot’* (16:126-127).

The advice 'to not be upset by their plot' is because: '*Indeed Allah is with those who are Godway and those who are virtuous*' (2:128). Hafiz says:

What more do we want when the Beloved is with us? / The bliss of His presence is sufficient for us.<sup>37</sup>

This is effectively a result of a monotheistic view of the universe. In any interaction, one should see himself dealing only with God. If one does

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<sup>36</sup> *Kāfi*, vol. 2, p. 445, ḥ 6.

<sup>37</sup> Hafiz, *ghazal* 268.

good to others for the sake of God, then their ungratefulness should not hurt or disappoint him by any means. Imam Ali says:

Let not the ungrateful discourage you from doing good, for sometimes you are thanked for a good deed by one who derives no benefit from it. Indeed, what you gain from the gratitude of the grateful is more than what the ungrateful wastes. ‘*And Allah loves the good-doers* [3:134, 3:148, 5:93].<sup>38</sup>

Sa’di says:

You do good and throw it in Tigris, my friend,  
For God will pay you back when you hit a dead end.<sup>39</sup>

Believing in a single Lord (*rabb*) that governs the universe and a single system that pervades all beings, directs a person’s actions toward that One Lord, and attunes the person with that single system. Regarding this, Rumi says:

The world is a mountain / And our actions are a shout;  
The shout will echo back, / So we should watch out!<sup>40</sup>

## Summary

Gratefulness is to acknowledge God as the absolute owner of everyone and everything. The result of this acknowledgement is that the person will dedicate himself and all of the resources he is endowed with in the cause of the One and Real Owner. Patience is also a result of seeing one’s

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<sup>38</sup> *Nahj*, Saying 204.

<sup>39</sup> Sa’di, *Mawā’iz*, *mathnawiyāt*.

<sup>40</sup> Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, vol. 1, line 216.

self and properties as possessions of God, as opposed to one's own belongings. Both qualities share the foundation of belief in God as the absolute Lord and the only Owner of everything in the universe. Patience and gratitude are the fruits and implications of this same belief that differ due to a believer's circumstances. For this reason – according to several hadiths – the reward of one who is grateful and benevolent in health, wealth, and comfort is the same as the reward of one who is patient in affliction, poverty, and fasting.<sup>41</sup> Imam al-Bāqir said, “A servant is always in [at least] one of three things: an affliction, a decree, or a bounty. When God afflicts him, his duty is to forbear (ṣabr); when God carries out His decree about him, his duty is to submit (taslīm); and when God blesses him with a bounty his duty is to be grateful (shukr).”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> *Kāfī*, vol 2, p. 94. Ṭabrisī, Ali ibn al-Ḥasan, *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, p. 27.

<sup>42</sup> *Khiṣāl*, vol. 1, p. 86, ḥ 17. *Rawḍat al-Wā‘iẓīn*, vol. 2, p. 472. Ṭabrisī, Ali ibn al-Ḥasan, *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, p. 300.

# MAINTAINING A JUST ECONOMY THROUGH BELIEF IN THE HEREAFTER

MAJID REZA'I DAWANI

TRANSLATED BY MAHBOOBEH MORSHEDIAN

**ABSTRACT:** Islam advises heedfulness to the hereafter, and urges humankind to turn away from attachment to this world. What is the outcome of this attitude, and how is it related to the development of societies? Referring to Qur'anic text, hadiths, and the conduct of religious leaders, this article expounds on the effect of Qur'anic belief in the hereafter on stabilizing a community in its economic development and social justice, as well as its spiritual condition. A definition of belief in the hereafter will be offered, along with its impact on man's consumption and production, and reveals that – through belief in the hereafter – Islam paves the way for refraining from inappropriate economic behaviours in issues that commonly do not receive the attention of economic experts, such as justice, protecting the rights of the needy, and avoidance of a life of luxury.

## Introduction

The prophets opened our eyes to the Unseen world, a world in which reward or punishment for the deeds done in this world, namely their inner aspect, emerges. After introducing monotheism, the main mission of the prophets and religions in general is to show life in the hereafter,

its features, and its relation to man's deeds in this world. Thus, all religious injunctions are replete with attention to the next world – a basic difference between divine religions and man-made religions and schools of thought. On the other hand, the prophets were chosen from among the people, lived in this material world, and lived like the rest of humankind, with physical needs to be met. Living in this world entails meeting the requirements of life. Human survival and reproduction lead to starting a family; consequently, man continuously needs to make a living. To have a more comfortable life, he also needs to ponder on hidden relationships in the material world. Over the centuries, human life has changed from simple to the complicated modern one. Every day, new discoveries are made; as a result, man's ability to dominate and conquer the forces of nature improves, and his material life becomes increasingly more comfortable. All human beings are instinctively interested in life, survival, comfort, and material enjoyment. The intense love for wealth acquired through his efforts is found in all men: “*And most surely he is tenacious in the love of wealth*” (al-'Adiyat: 8), “*And you love wealth with exceeding love*” (Fajr: 20). He loves increased wealth, power and comforts; “*Abundance diverts you,*” (Takathur: 1), so he cannot be blamed on this instinctive interest.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the prophets' efforts to show the next world and the role of man's behaviour in shaping his life in the hereafter was confronted with man's carnal desires because man is interested in material issues to satisfy his needs by a variety of possible means, and not all these means have a positive and desirable outcome in the hereafter. Man who can conquer this world tries to dominate other people and take possession of resources.

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<sup>1</sup> Nahj-ul-Balaghah, saying no. 303, p. 529

Throughout the history, oppression, invasion, usurpation, slavery and man's other evil behaviours have resulted from his love for wealth and power.

The conduct and lifestyle of prophets are completely different. They had a special approach to life in this world. According to the Qur'an and words of divine people, they on the one hand belittled this world and invited people to refrain from it, and on the other, they considered it an aid to achieve salvation in the hereafter and suggested using the world for this purpose. The divine people were very strict with their personal use, but sought to realize a society replete with prosperity, security, and spirituality.

Thus, the following questions are raised: How much can man benefit from this world? What does asceticism in life mean? What is the relationship between this world and the hereafter? Does attention to this world prevent man from interest in the hereafter? To what extent can a religious society develop economically? How do consumption and production behaviours of a religious person differ from those of others? How does a government that believes in the hereafter behave? To answer the above questions, it is necessary to find out about the relationship between this world and the hereafter so that the basis for the economic development of a religious society can be known. Are the material prosperity and economic development the desired and valuable ideals for the religious community? What principles and criteria should be applied in order to achieve them?

This article addresses the economic development realized through belief in the hereafter. Religious belief in the hereafter is a constructive behaviour that promises sustainable and universal economic

development. The growth and rise of the entire human community in a balanced way constitutes the basis of this belief. After introducing key concepts, the characteristics of this world and the hereafter as well as their relationship in the religious texts are presented, along with a description of true asceticism. Finally, the impacts of belief in the hereafter on economic behaviours are defined.

## Concepts

### **This world and the Hereafter**

Because of its proximity to mankind, this world is called *dunya* or “close” in Arabic. In other words, this world is the first state of being, with the hereafter as the second state of being. In the religious texts, the word *dunya* has several meanings, such as nature, the material world, and that which prevents us from striving to attain a successful afterlife. The hereafter refers to the next world, the world of eternity, the world beyond this material world, and the realm of reward and punishment.

### **The characteristics of this world and the Hereafter in Islamic texts**

In the religious texts, some of the some negative and positive characteristics of this world as related to human beings are as follows:

1. This world that flows into the next world has been created carefully and systematically by God. It is a place where creatures live and humankind have the potential to be the vicegerent of God, and in which people spend their lives taking advantage of its beauty.
2. The world is the mount of the believer. Through it, he achieves the good and is saved from evil and hardship. It is a place where the

prophets worshipped God, revelation was sent down, the angels pray, and lovers of God live. It is the abode of honesty for those who choose to live an honest life. Also, for those who stock up with otherworldly provisions in it, it is the place of freedom from attachment to this world and needlessness from the people. It is also for those who take advice, it is the abode of advice. For the Friends of God, it is the marketplace where they can gain the mercy of God and Heaven. For that reason, Imam Ali rebuked the one who blamed this world for anything wrong.<sup>2</sup>

3. This world is the place of affliction, trial, suffering, calamity, and corruption: “*Surely We have made whatever is on the earth an embellishment for it, so that We may try them [as to] which of them is best in works*” (Kahf: 7). In contrast, the hereafter is the place of punishment, reward, and consequences of our deeds.

4. This world is a place from which we emigrate and travel to the hereafter. It is a passage and a means; not a place for stay. It declines quickly and is short-lived while the hereafter is eternal and permanent.<sup>3</sup> As a passage, this world is a place to stock up otherworldly provisions for the hereafter as well as a place where we experience parting from this world with death.<sup>4</sup> Conversely, the next world is the abode of survival and settlement. For this reason, it is wise to use the transient for the purpose of the eternal.<sup>5</sup> Compared to the hereafter, we live for a short time in this world. In addition, man does not know how long he will live here.

<sup>2</sup> Nahj-ul-Balaghah, saying no. 131, pp. 492-493

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, sermon no. 196, p. 310, saying no. 133, pp. 493, & sermon no. 132 p. 190

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, sermon no., 45, p. 85, letter no. 69, p. 459

<sup>5</sup> Muhammadi Rey-Shahri, 1384 solar, pp. 35-37; Kulaini, 1362, vol. 2, p. 459

5. This world is surrounded by carnal desires, whereas the hereafter is surrounded by hardships and problems.<sup>6</sup> The man's carnal desires take him to comfort, arrogance, domination, seizure of others' properties, and access to comforts at any cost and by any means. On the other hand, in order to achieve salvation in the afterlife, a person's deeds must conform to religion and wisdom.

6. This world has been created for man, and man has been created for the afterlife.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the aim of this world is the hereafter, and the life in this world is an introduction to the life in the next world and a bridge to reach the latter.<sup>8</sup> The Prophet likened this world to a farm for the hereafter; life in it is an opportunity to prepare for a contest, and the hereafter the contest when we reap the rewards.<sup>9</sup>

7. Like a deep sea, this world is the place where people perish. Like a shadow, it is illusive and transient; it flees if you seek it, and if you turn away from it, it will follow you. Finally, like a dream, it is sweet and true only before awakening. People are travellers and guests who stay in it, but only for a short time. The world is like a mirage and does not quench the thirst of a thirsty one.<sup>10</sup> It resembles poison, a serpent, carrion, salty water, and a trap, all which harms man. This world and the hereafter resemble two pans of a scale, east and west, and the rival wives; closeness to each leads to distance from the other.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Nahj-ul-Balaghah, sermon no. 111, p. 164

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, letter no. 55, p. 446

<sup>8</sup> Muhammadi Rey-Shahri, 1384 solar, p. 41

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, p. 66-67

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 42-51

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 162-169

8. According to Imam Ali, “This world is the farm of evil and the market of loss.”<sup>12</sup> It is the abode of arrogance, deception, and deceit. In the Qur’an, God said, “*I swear by the time. Most surely man is in loss*” (al-Asr: 1-2).

9. This world is the place of frivolity, whereas the hereafter is the abode of life (Ankabut: 64). It is the place where sins are committed, and the house of oppressors and wrong-doers. It is also the prison of the believer and the disbeliever’s heaven.<sup>13</sup>

10. To God, the Almighty, this world is less valuable than a fly’s wing. It is the least valuable creature of God and lower in quality than carrion. God does not look at it and does not want it for His friends. It is more worthless than patchy shoes, pig bones in the hands of a leprous, a goat’s mucus, and a chewed leaf in the grasshopper’s mouth.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, sometimes this world is defined in relation to man and sometimes separated from him and only as a creature of God. As related to man, it is considered both positive and negative. Religion aims to raise man’s awareness of the realities. If man has a correct understanding of the world and the hereafter, his deeds, behaviours and conduct will be influenced by that understanding, and he will make the most out of this world. Considering the above features of this world and the hereafter, the following conclusions can be drawn:

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<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 148-149

<sup>13</sup> Muhammadi Rey-Shahri, 1384 solar, pp. 154-156

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, pp.177-193

## **The relationships between this world, man, and the Hereafter**

The world can also be viewed in isolation, regardless of its relationship with mankind. Alternatively, it can be examined by taking the quality of man's relationship with it into account. Accordingly, the first sense refers to the material world irrespective of man's approach to it, and the second refers to people's approaches to it.

1. This world refers to the material cosmic universe created by God, and man lives on the earth. This world has been created systematically and accurately as an outcome of God's work. Pondering on it leads to belief in monotheism and resurrection. Its beauties indicate the power and knowledge of its Creator, and it is the dwelling of men who benefit from its blessings. In the Qur'an and hadiths, it is sometimes called *creatures*, or its constituents such as the sky, earth, air, clouds, wind, and plants are mentioned. In this sense, the world is the outward aspect of the universe compared to its inward aspect. It is also considered as a stage of universe, and the Day of Judgment are regarded as its end and returning point.

Regarding this world as related to man, there are three categories:

a) This world means attachment to – and fondness of – material embodiments and transient comforts and blessings as well as sacrificing all the values for it. It also implies separating this world from the hereafter, considering the former independent of the latter, spending one's life to find salvation in it, and not using it for the purpose of human and religious values. The only assets the lover of this world has are his properties and power. In this sense, the world deceives man. Whatever exists in this material life is considered worthless compared to

the hereafter and does not bring about anything for man but evil and loss because it leads to his neglecting the truths of the universe. This sense of world is blameworthy in shari'ah and is warned against. Regarding preference of the world over the hereafter, God says:

*[Behold], you prefer the life of this world; But the Hereafter is better and more enduring” (A’laa: 16, 17); and “Those who desire the life of the present and its glitter, - to them we shall pay [the price of] their deeds therein, - without diminution. They are those for whom there is nothing in the Hereafter but the Fire: vain are the designs they frame therein, and of no effect the deeds that they do!” (Hud: 15, 16).*

Those who possess this world are delighted at it, relying on it and disbelieve in the hereafter. (Yunus: 7, 8). Imam Sajjad said, “Do not rely on this world as a permanent dwelling.”<sup>15</sup> The life and comforts of the world cause its lover to behave arrogantly before God (Fatir: 5). As Imam Ali says: “This world has not deceived them, but they have been deluded by it.”<sup>16</sup>

Delusion by this world means man trusts it and is delighted by it which becomes the main objective of his endeavours. This world turns into his greatest aim and his ultimate knowledge, and he does not have sufficient understanding of the eternal abode.<sup>17</sup>

b) Man’s relationship with this world means abandoning it and adopting extreme monasticism and austerity. Throughout the history,

<sup>15</sup> Muhammadi Rey-Shahri, 1384 solar, p. 136

<sup>16</sup> Nahj-ul-Balaghah, sermon no. 223, p. 345

<sup>17</sup> Mafatih al-Jinan, the supplication recited in the twenty-third night of the Month of Ramadan

this lifestyle has been chosen by Christian monks, Indian ascetics, and Sufis. In early Islam, sometimes Muslims refrained from permissible (*halal*) worldly pleasures and abandoned their families in order to strengthen their spirituality and get closer to God. The verse 87 of the chapter al-Ma'idah states: "*O you who Believe! Make not unlawful the good things which Allah has made lawful for you*" was revealed to negate their behaviour. Prophet Muhammad prohibited his companions from constantly fasting, keeping a vigil the whole night, and abstaining from their wives.<sup>18</sup> Imam Ali also reproved Asim ibn Ziyad for his abandonment of this world and his seclusion. In addition, the first Imam prohibited Asim from being like him, namely being strict on himself, and abstaining from delicious foods and soft clothing because the Imam of Muslims has another duty.<sup>19</sup> Likewise, Imam Sadiq considered Sufis' behaviours against Islam, stating that they did not have complete knowledge of Islam.<sup>20</sup>

c) The world which refers to a means of – and an introduction to – achieving the highest values and the next world. This view does not consider this world independent; rather, it is regarded as a means of reaching perfection and benefiting from this life. In other words, worldly blessings are used reasonably and enough to the extent that one's needs are met, and the rest is saved for attaining salvation in the afterlife and gathering provisions for it. And if the worldly blessings (even the *halal* ones) are used unreasonably and more than enough, on the Day of Judgment one will long for higher ranks. Prophet Muhammad said three times, "Leave this world for its people," and

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<sup>18</sup> Muhammadi Rey-Shahri, 1384 solar, p. 79

<sup>19</sup> Nahj-ul-Balaghah, sermon no. 209, p.324

<sup>20</sup> Kulaini, 1362, vol. 5, p. 6

“Whoever hoards it too much will not make use of it and only reserves it for others without benefiting from it himself.”<sup>21</sup> Of course, these sentences definitely do not mean that one should not earn more than his need because the Prophet earned more than he needed. Rather, they mean one should not amass wealth more than his needs; instead, he should spend it on the afterlife.<sup>22</sup> In his will to his son, Luqman said, “Do not get involved in this world in such a manner that your hereafter is harmed, and do not abandon it so that you may become needy.”<sup>23</sup>

In this sense, salvation in the afterlife is achieved through this world, wherein it is a good opportunity to worship God, generously serve people, meet other’s needs, and endow one’s property in the way of God. In this approach, as this world is a means of achieving salvation in the afterlife, it is not blameworthy to go after it as it is indeed seeking the hereafter.<sup>24</sup>

Hence, this world is important. It is necessary for mankind to use it, and thus Muslims are prohibited from monasticism. People pass through this world to attain salvation in the afterlife through their endeavour and work. They make money, spend whatever money is necessary, and their family, neighbours, and relatives also benefit from their income; all ways to achieve the hereafter. They also spend the surplus money on Muslims and all humankind. Commenting on the verse, “*To those who do right is a Husna [good reward] - Yes, more [in measure!]*” (Yunus: 26), Imam al-Baqir said:

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<sup>21</sup> Muhammadi Rey-Shahri, 1384 solar , p. 142; Nahj-ul-Balaghah, saying no. 192, p. 503

<sup>22</sup> Muhammadi Rey-Shahri, 1384 solar, p. 143

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, p.145

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 51-52

“‘Husna’ means Heaven and ‘more in measure’ refers to this world. God, the Almighty, will not reckon what He has granted them in this world and will reward them well in both worlds.”<sup>25</sup>

True believers pay attention to both worlds simultaneously. According to Prophet Muhammad and the Imams, the believer does not abandon either of worlds for the sake of the other; they take advantage of both.<sup>26</sup> God said:

*Say, ‘Who has forbidden the adornment of Allah which He has brought forth for His servants, and the good things of [His] provision?’ Say, ‘These are for the faithful in the life of this world, and exclusively for them on the Day of Resurrection.’ Thus do We elaborate the signs for a people who have knowledge. Say, ‘My Lord has only forbidden indecencies, the outward among them and the inward ones, and sin and undue aggression, and that you should ascribe to Allah partners for which He has not sent down any authority, and that you should attribute to Allah what you do not know.’ (Araf: 32, 33).*

*By the means of what Allah has given you, seek the abode of the Hereafter, while not forgetting your share of this world. Be good [to others] just as Allah has been good to you, and do not try to cause corruption in the land. Indeed Allah does not like the agents of corruption.’ (Qasas: 77)*

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<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, p. 63

<sup>26</sup> Harrani, 1404 A.H., p. 410

Thus, from an Islamic perspective, this world and the hereafter are connected. While giving attention to this world in his lifetime, one must save up provisions for the afterlife. Islam has developed a unified plan for and guarantees salvation in both worlds. It prohibits us from going to extremes in worship and belief in the hereafter in such a way that we might avoid all halal worldly pleasures. Negating non-Islamic monasticism, Islam considers Muslims' monasticism to be jihad, hajj, umrah, prayer and fasting, and it disapproves of inattention to family members' rights and seclusion.<sup>27</sup> It also considers providing livelihood and handling worldly affairs as necessary.<sup>28</sup> When one makes endeavour to improve his worldly conditions, he is not regarded as a lover of this world; rather, he makes money for family needs as well as the hereafter,<sup>29</sup> and such a person's face will shine in the hereafter. According to Imam Baqir:

Whoever makes a living to save his face to provide his family's livelihood and or to help his neighbours will meet God with his face shining on the Day of Judgment.<sup>30</sup>

### **Islamic asceticism**

Throughout history, various groups and sects have defined asceticism in several ways, sometimes in the form of complete abstinence from this world, austerity, and prohibition of all halal pleasures. They even attributed themselves to being religious leaders while the lovers of God – who emphasized on positive and active asceticism – rejected them. In

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<sup>27</sup> Muhammadi Rey-Shahri, 1384 solar, p. 75-91

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p. 91

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, p. 92

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, p.102

general, asceticism means reluctance to a thing to which one is naturally attached. Imam Ali described asceticism with the verse, “*In order that you may not despair over matters that pass you by, nor exult over favours bestowed upon you,*”<sup>31</sup> because the ascetic does not regret the past and what he has lost and is not delighted by what he has gained.<sup>32</sup>

Qur’anic asceticism has ranks, the first of which is refraining from prohibited acts or *haram*. This is the basis of piety. The second rank of asceticism is reluctance to prohibitions. The ascetic avoids worldly aspirations, is content with divine providence, is thankful for divine blessings, opposes his carnal desires, and patiently refrains from *haram*.<sup>33</sup> This rank is higher than avoiding *haram*. Imam Ali said:

If it is difficult for you to uphold all these issues (i.e., avoidance of high aspirations, gratitude for blessings, and piety when faced with *haram*), at least do not give up gratitude for blessings and patiently refraining from *haram* because no excuse is accepted in this regard.<sup>34</sup>

Although asceticism is a mental quality, where one is not attached to the this world, and in Imam Ali’s words, he is only willing to have what God will grant him in the afterlife, this attitude should be revealed in man’s behaviours and deeds. Asceticism in this world accompanies willingness for the hereafter, and in numerous narrations, these concepts appear together: “The best of you is the most ascetic in this world and the most eager for the hereafter.”<sup>35</sup> Thus, attention to

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<sup>31</sup> Hadid, 23

<sup>32</sup> Nahj-ul-Balaghah, saying no. 439, p. 553

<sup>33</sup> Mohammadi Rey-Shahri, 1384 solar, p. 279

<sup>34</sup> Nahj-ul-Balaghah, sermon no. 81, p. 106

<sup>35</sup> Mustadrak al-Wasa’il, vol. 12, p. 51.

anything worldly that is useful for the afterlife is not incompatible with asceticism. Although acquiring halal wealth is not consistent with all ranks of asceticism, it is not contrary to it either. According to Imam Ali, “The ascetic accepts what is he advised for and puts what he knows into practice. He reacts to his certitude about the hereafter and is aware of a bad ending.”<sup>36</sup>

However, the pretentious behaviour without an intellectual and spiritual basis is not regarded as asceticism. The main principle is the full attention to truth, spirituality, and non-attachment to transitory worldly blessings – albeit gained by halal means – and this is a higher rank. The Prophet said:

Asceticism does not refer to the prohibition of halal and the destruction of one’s property; rather, it is being content with divine decree and patient with afflictions and hardships as well as not pinning one’s hope on [what] people [have].<sup>37</sup>

The Prophet also said:

Asceticism does not mean prohibition of halal and the destruction of one’s property; instead, it means not relying on what one has more than on what God has, and if an affliction is inflicted on, you should be so willing to receive its reward that you want it to be permanent.<sup>38</sup>

It is important to make a belief-based use of blessings; hence, it is not improper to use blessings to the halal extent.

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<sup>36</sup> Muhammadi Rey-Shahri, 1384 solar, p. 284

<sup>37</sup> Nuri, 1407 AH, vol. 12, p. 44

<sup>38</sup> Muhammadi Rey-Shahri, 1384 solar, p. 288

Of course, as in the hereafter, one will be asked about both halal and haram, the higher rank of asceticism is that he sacrifices his wants and avoids halal as far as possible, is content with what is sufficient for him, and spends the rest on the hereafter so that he will be reckoned easily on the Day of Judgment. Imam Sadiq said:

People act differently in this world. There are those who are 1) content with halal and avoiding the dubious, 2) content with the halal and the dubious and avoiding haram, 3) satisfied with haram, and 4) not desiring sheer halal. The believer also makes use of this world only as much as it is necessary.<sup>39</sup>

If in this world man is content with the least, refrains from the haram and even the halal, and is fearful of the Day of Judgment, he reaches a higher rank of asceticism. The Prophet and Imam Ali were quoted as saying:

Blessed is the ascetic in this world who is willing to attain the hereafter; those who regard the ground as their tablecloth and their seat, water as their perfume, the Qur'an as their motto, and supplication their appearance (outfit); and the ones who, like Jesus Christ, detached themselves from this world.<sup>40</sup>

Sometimes attachment to this world means the desire to live one day longer in it. From the first Imam's perspective, this is a worldly aspiration and abstinence from it promises a higher rank of asceticism.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Kulayni, 1362, vol. 5, p. 125

<sup>40</sup> Tabarsi, 1401 A.H., vol 2, p. 370; Nahjul-Balaghah, saying no. 104, p. 486

<sup>41</sup> Muhammadi Rey-Shahri, 1384 solar, p. 348

In a narration about the Prophet's ascent to heaven, God told him, "O' Ahmad! If you would like to be the most pious, then be an ascetic in this world and yearn for the afterlife." The Prophet then asked God, "How should I be an ascetic?" God replied, "Do not acquire of this world except for a little food and drink and a few articles of clothing. Do not reserve anything for the future and remember Me constantly."<sup>42</sup>

Of course, the physical appearance of ascetics should conform to the requirements of their time and place so that they are not accused of hypocrisy and pretense. In fact, one should not conduct himself in such a way that he becomes well-known. In numerous narrations, Imam al-Sadiq came across some of his contemporary Sufis such as Sufyan Thawri and prohibited them from pretense, saying, "I wear a beautiful garment so that people do not accuse me of hypocrisy, but in order not to be attached to this world, I also wear some coarse clothing beneath this."<sup>43</sup>

The point to be underlined here is that man's appearance differs under various circumstances. Even though man is not attached to this world, he should make use of comforts and blessings. Sometimes it is haram for man to use something while it is permissible to do so under normal circumstances. The just rulers acquire of halal worldly comforts differently from others. In response to Asim ibn Ziyad Haithi, who objected to the way Imam Ali used to eat and dress, the Imam said, "God has required just rulers to live as simple a life as the poor so that

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, p. 336. The original text in Arabic is as follows:

عَنْ أَمِيرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ع عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ص أَنَّهُ قَالَ قَالَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى لَهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْإِسْرَاءِ يَا أَحْمَدُ إِنَّ أَحْسَبْتَ أَنْ تَكُونَ أَوْزَعَ النَّاسِ فَارْزُقْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَارْزُقْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ فَقَالَ لِهُي وَ كَيْفَ ارْزُقُ فِي الدُّنْيَا (وَ ارْزُقْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ) فَقَالَ خُذْ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا حِفْظًا مِنَ الطَّعَامِ وَ الشَّرَابِ وَ اللَّبَاسِ وَ لَا تَدَّخِرْ شَيْئًا لِغَدٍ وَ دُمَّ عَلَى ذِكْرِي

<sup>43</sup> Kulayni, 1362, vol. 5, pp. 65, 66

poverty was not harsh and grievous on them.”<sup>44</sup> Thus, empathy with the poor and the needy is a duty that the Friends of God perform through leading a simple life.

Sometimes one’s lofty spirit and freedom from caprice cause him to ward off any internal and external embodiment of attachment to this world, fulfilling the highest rank of asceticism. A feature of the Prophet was his acquiring of worldly comforts the least in order to emancipate his soul from any worldly constraint. The ascetic behaviour is intertwined with the spirit of contentment. Sometimes Imam Ali did not use halal comforts so that his ego might not get used to them; or on the Day of Judgment he will not be distanced from the rank and position of Prophet Muhammad; and sometimes his self-sacrificing spirit made him not use some comforts and instead grant them to others. Asceticism makes man devote his comforts to others and prefer them over himself even though it is not obligatory for him to spend so generously. He is not attached to this world and gives up pure halal worldly blessings in return for a high position in the hereafter. Examples are setting many slaves free by means of one’s income, helping the needy and the poor, and endowment of one’s properties and gardens in the way of God.<sup>45</sup>

What can be concluded from the above discussion is that – in contrast to seeking the world – belief in the hereafter eliminates attachment to this world; as a result, one is content with the halal when it comes to acquiring worldly blessings, avoids prohibitions, and even uses the halal less either due to his eagerness for spiritual elevation or his social position. The following are ascetic ranks in Islam:

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<sup>44</sup> Nahjul-Balaghah, sermon no. 209, p. 324

<sup>45</sup> Reza’i, 1380 solar, p. 179-184

1. Mere avoidance of haram;
2. Mere unwillingness to haram;
3. No attachment to the worldly halal;
4. Adequate use of worldly blessings;
5. Minimum and strict use of worldly comforts to empathize with the needy along with complete disregard for this world.

Every higher rank includes the previous one which is reinforced, but this is the case with personal use of this world and not the case with making an income, manufacturing goods, and producing wealth.

### **Belief in the Hereafter and economic activities**

A brief look at the Qur'an and other Islamic texts reveals that God has stressed attention to the hereafter to encourage believers to engage in positive economic activities such as protecting the rights and properties of orphans; taking care of the poor; avoiding stinginess; paying zakat; spending money in the way of God (phrased "lending Him money" in the Qur'an); refraining from accumulation of wealth, revolt against God, disdain, usury, hypocrisy, short-changing, frivolity, wastefulness, self-glorification, corruption, and devaluing others' properties; selling according to exact measure and weight; setting slaves free and being content and satisfied with halal sustenance. Making use of the origin and the end of man and world, the Quran encourages and warns people. There are hundreds of verses on the link between the hereafter and economic issues, all of which warn against being deluded by the life in this world and neglecting the hereafter. Negligence leads to excessive attention to ephemeral wants and pleasures, increased covetousness and avarice, ignorance of others' rights in society, use of false methods to

accumulate wealth and a having life of luxury. The verses seek to guide man to moderation and protection of others' rights, and to prevent them from going to extremes. In no verse is man prohibited from making money and producing wealth; rather, he is warned against how money is made and spent.<sup>46</sup>

### **A) Individual consumer conduct**

Belief in the hereafter leads people to consume only halal and avoid haram (*Taha*: 81). Thus, there is no wastefulness and a life of luxury in one's consumption behaviour (*Araf*: 31-32; *Qasas*: 76-83). Hence, a person's income is spent on necessities and essentials as befits him. Likewise, one does not live like Sufis and monks who even give up an ordinary life.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, this is a happy medium between wastefulness and stinginess. Denial of a life of luxury results in definite amount of consumption as well as savings. As a result, people will voluntarily spend their savings on more production and their increased income on others, particularly the needy or in the public section in which the way for other people's use of these savings is paved through endowment.<sup>48</sup>

Low consumption is not the primary meaning of the Islamic asceticism, which is unwillingness to this world. Sometimes while the ascetic has enough income, having divine motives, he tries to reduce his consumption. Motives like assistance to others and empathy with them pave the way for lower consumption. Sometimes the motive behind

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<sup>46</sup> Ma'arij: 24-25; Hadid: 7, 10-11 & 18; Shu'ara: 183; Balad: 20; Araf: 31-32; Fatir: 5; Taha: 81 & 131; Qasas: 83-76; Ma'un:1-4; Humaza: 1-9; Muddaththir: 11-26; Qalam: 14-33; Alaq: 6-7; Baqarah: 262, 254, 245 & 275; Nisa': 10, Muhammad: 36; Tawbah: 34; Takathur: 1-8; Fajr: 15-26; Mu'minun:51, 56

<sup>47</sup> Ma'ida: 5; Araf: 31-32

<sup>48</sup> Luqman: 4; Fatir: 29; Hadid: 7, 10-11 & 18; Ma'arij: 24-25

lower consumption is unworldliness and negating any dependence on others or this world, in other words, consuming the halal results in some kind of dependence that is not desirable for mystics and the chosen by God. Hence, the Friends of God have always chosen to live a simple life and have consumed less of the halal.<sup>49</sup>

Contentment is considerably praised in Islam, as it leads to correct consumption and avoiding wastefulness. Contentment means being satisfied with what we have, and not coveting what is not achievable. It is revealed more in consumption than in production, so it does not mean none or decreased production. In terms of production, it refers to efficient use of productive sources and trying to avoid wasting raw materials that are used least in order to produce the most. Of course, sometimes excessive production involves inappropriate use of nature and leads to its destruction. Here, contentment means being satisfied with sufficient production because loss of the natural environment is remarkably huge compared to other losses.

The content man is the opposite of the covetous one. Covetousness are epitomes of love for this world, causing man to unnecessarily accumulate wealth that prevents him from attention to the hereafter.<sup>50</sup> The content man is neither lazy nor idle; rather, he endeavours as much as necessary (*Najm*: 39), but he spends money reasonably (*Taha*: 81). He is content with what God has ordained for him and does not go after others' share. He is a person who makes efforts, is content with what he gains in this world, does not commit any error, and does not

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<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*, p. 188-189

<sup>50</sup> *Nazi'at*: 37-39; *Nisa*: 32

disregard any rule to accumulate wealth either.<sup>51</sup> The content person is modest and takes rational steps to achieve his goals. He benefits from this world moderately and is also careful not to indulge in pleasures and not to go to extreme consuming halal less. The fruit of such modesty and avoidance of carnal desires is contentment. When contentment is coupled with asceticism, luxuries are used minimally and as long as they are usable. It paves the way for using savings to endow properties and spend money in the way of God.<sup>52</sup>

### **B) Production behavior and income-making**

Belief in the hereafter and Islamic asceticism do not conflict with one's efforts to develop this world, use the natural environment, and produce necessary goods in society, whether basic necessities or some goods for people's convenience. Due to his belief in the hereafter, the ascetic does his best to consume the halal less and increase his efficiency at the service of society. The world that the ascetic abandons refers to indulging in a life of luxury and being distanced from moral perfection. At the peak of asceticism, Imam Ali revealed his complete inattention to this world in his actions and sayings, never giving up making endeavours. When he was finished with the smaller jihad, he got involved in cultural activities and spreading Islamic principles. When his *wilayah* was not accepted, he turned to taking economic measures and developed many lands himself, then endowed all of them in the way of God. He did not consider having a spacious house as it was inconsistent with asceticism.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Alaq: 6-7; Muddaththir: 11-26; Hijr: 93-88

<sup>52</sup> Muzzammil: 20; Hadid: 7; Ma'arij: 24-26; Baqarah: 177, 215 & 277

<sup>53</sup> Nahj-ul-Balaghah, sermon no. 209, p. 324; Mutahhari, 1354, p. 216-217

In Islamic culture, working is considered an act of worship; and in an Islamic state, it is mandatory to meet the needs of people by producing what the country needs. It is also right to make money in the above ways, since people can choose between the halal and the allowable goods. The community should avoid idleness and lethargy and efficiently use raw materials, work forces, and techniques – along with abstaining from wastefulness. In addition, a maximal balanced use that is not beneath one's dignity prepares the ground for savings as well as material and spiritual investments. The one who believes in resurrection regards this world as a farm for the hereafter. As he does not know how long he will stay in this world, he takes every opportunity to increase his efficiency. In order to fulfill his religious obligations to his family (prosperity, improvement of life quality, and financial independence) and those to the society (i.e., helping the needy and solving social problems, etc.), he tries to make enough money to be spent on family, relatives, or others. Having a decent life and meeting various commitments involve enough income that cannot be made except through economic activities. Imam Ali would endow numerous gardens and water wells, and set many slaves free in the way of God. Through working, he would earn money and accumulate wealth. Spending money in the way of God entails earning income and acquiring wealth. Belief in the hereafter links man to society, not separating him from it. A main part of worship involves spending one's wealth in the way of God, helping the needy, and endowing one's property in the way of God.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Reza'i, 1380 solar, pp. 189 & 195

Belief in the hereafter prepares work forces for more efforts; as a result, they stay more committed and avoid neglecting their duties. They keep the employees' properties in trust, and this leads to increased efficiency and income. In Islam, people are urged to acquire sciences that prevent wastefulness and improve the economy.

Such workers avoid making an income through false means such as usury and short-changing.<sup>55</sup> They also refrain from being greedy, accumulating wealth, and appropriating others' properties<sup>56</sup> as well as oppressing the orphans and appropriating their properties (*Nisa*: 10). They pursue a pure course of actions available to them and make a halal living.<sup>57</sup>

### **C) The effect of belief in the hereafter on government**

The goal of the Islamic government is to benefit from this world for the purpose of salvation in the hereafter. A government that believes in the hereafter considers itself accountable to God and meets the people's needs. Among the duties of an Islamic government is to create economic welfare leading to people's use of God's blessings in a way that this does not result in a life of luxury and wastefulness; its other duty is meeting people's basic and conventional needs. As welfare is only an introduction to salvation in the hereafter, all that is done for this world must be in line with the spread of spirituality. Thus, government objectives include both worldly and otherworldly issues that are juxtaposed in a balanced way. The purposes of establishing an Islamic government include safety, social security, economic welfare,

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<sup>55</sup> Muttaffifin, 1-8; Baqarah, 275; Hud, 84-86

<sup>56</sup> Takathur, 1-8; Tawbah: 34; Fajr: 15-26

<sup>57</sup> Hud, 61; Malik: 15; Taha: 81; Qasa: 77; Ma'idah: 2-3

urban development, and rectifying people's behaviours to attain proper morals.

As the government believing in the hereafter considers rulership a divine trust and its duty is administering justice,<sup>58</sup> it does its best to provide social security, develop cities, improve people's livelihood, and protect public properties.<sup>59</sup> Government in itself is a trust, and it is the governor's duty to treat people justly and kindly. Since government considers itself accountable to God, it establishes some rights for people and should render those rights. Among the ruler's responsibilities to people are paying their monetary rights, teaching them the sciences and moral principles, and treating them benevolently.<sup>60</sup>

Having a look at religious teachings, we can identify instances where a ruler or governmental authorities' behaviours are linked to the hereafter. All man's deeds are revealed on the Day of Judgment, so in the divine words and sayings of religious leaders, the hereafter is used to urge rulers to be mindful because all governments look for security, although many do not seek to redistribute money in society. Economic issues linked to the hereafter include:

1. Administering justice and eliminating oppression in every respect – as this will occur in the rule of Imam Mahdi.<sup>61</sup>
2. Satisfying the needs of the poor.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Nahj-ul-Balaghah, sermon no. 3, p. 50

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*, letter no. 53, p. 427

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*, sermon no. 34, p. 78

<sup>61</sup> Kulaini, 1362, vol. 1, pp. 405, 542; Hakimi, 1409 A.H., vol. 2, pp. 25-30, pp. 53-58; Majlisi, 1372, vol. 52, p 338

<sup>62</sup> Nahj-ul-Balaghah, pp. 438-439

3. Safeguarding the rights of farmers and workers when it comes to their relations with employees and investors.<sup>63</sup>
4. Implementing divine punishments, reviving prophetic Sunnah, and keeping up religious rituals.<sup>64</sup>
5. Natural redistribution of money and government properties to prevent social class divides.<sup>65</sup>
6. Properly gathering and redistributing the public treasury (*Tawbah*: 103-105).

## Conclusion

The society that heeds to belief the hereafter – besides benefiting from economic advantages (such as security, development, and production of necessary goods and services) limits manufacture to prevent production of harmful or inappropriate goods. Avoiding a life of luxury and consumerism, the excess of income is to be saved, invested, or devoted to creating job opportunities and meeting the needs of the poor. Belief in the hereafter leads to moderation in production, consumption, and allocation of budget. In such a society, the government emphasizes on the protection of public properties and the rights of the oppressed as well as administration of justice and implementing religious rituals. Attention to the hereafter is not a barrier to satisfying economic needs; rather, it leads to a balanced enjoyment of worldly blessings. When there are ascetics in society, particularly its rulers, the principle that will be established in society is that excessive consumption and a life of

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<sup>63</sup> Hakimi, 1409 A.H., vol. 2, p 495

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 32, 414 & 417

<sup>65</sup> Hashr: 7; Hakimi, 1409 A.H., vol. 5, pp. 272 -276, pp. 282-289

luxury are considered appropriate only if all people enjoy the minimum comforts. In such a society, it is not only the government that is responsible for providing the society with necessities and security; rather, all people consider themselves responsible; “All of you are protectors of each other, and all of you are responsible to your subordinates.”<sup>66</sup> The economy may grow slowly, but it is immune from economic and social crises arising from improper wealth redistribution in society. Islamic belief in the hereafter is positive and dynamic. The life in this world is taken seriously, but its opportunities are taken to develop the hereafter. Islamic belief in the hereafter is also distinct from the Sufi belief. Through this belief, the positive consumption behaviour exempt from wastefulness and a life of luxury is formed, and active production behaviour is displayed and leads to progress, proper behaviour of statesmen, justice, and welfare. All these bring about economic development coupled with spirituality; as a result, wealth is redistributed evenly and appropriately. This way, improper personal behaviours that stem from avarice and love for wealth and rebellion against God are not exhibited. Saving and investing systems will not be disrupted; there will be no over-accumulation of wealth, and the dealing of goods and the offering of services will be transparent with no corruption. Finally, through legal obligatory and recommended payments (i.e., zakat and spending money in the way of God), the system of wealth redistribution improves, and the desirable economic balance is achieved.

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<sup>66</sup> *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 72, p. 38.

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## ALLAMAH AL-HILLI ON IMAMATE IN HIS *KASHFUL MURAD*, PART III

TRANSLATED BY KARIM AGHILI

**ABSTRACT:** This series is a list of responses to objections raised against Imamate from prominent scholar Allamah Hilli's *Kashf ul-Murād*, expanded on from Nasir al-Din al-Tusi's *Tajrid al-I'tiqād* – the first treatise on Shi'i theology. *Kashful Murad* is one of the most widely read of Allamah al-Hilli's publications as it is the first commentary written on Allamah al-Tusi's work. The concept of Imamate in Shi'i Islam refers to the necessity of having a divinely-appointed leader who will lead the Islamic nation after the Prophet's death. An Imam who exceeds all people in every virtue whether it be piety, knowledge, or bravery, and who justly leads the people and guides them towards morality is a grace of God. The previous parts included discussions on the proofs for the Imamate of Ali, the rules concerning those opposed to his leadership, and the proofs for his authority over the companions that qualify him for leadership such as his extraordinary courage, deep insight, matchless asceticism and devotion, and boundless patience. This part expands on his qualifications over the companions, such as his noble character, eloquence, wisdom, and foresight.

## Seventh Issue Continued

**Allamah al-Tusi: He was of the noblest character.**<sup>1</sup>

**Allamah al-Hilli:** Ali was the noblest in character and the most cheerful of them. ‘Umar ibn Khattab described him as having a sense of humour in spite of his strength and awe. Sa‘sa‘at ibn Sawhan said, “When he was among us, he was like any of us. He was of a gentle nature and very humble and compliant; we stood in awe of him like a bound prisoner dreading an executioner standing ready to behead him.”

Mu‘awiyah said to Qays ibn Sa‘d, “May God have mercy on Abu’l-Hasan. He was soft and cheerful with a sense of humour.” Qays ibn Sa‘d said to him, “I swear by God, in spite of his sense of humour and cheerfulness, he was more splendid than a lion with a thick mane while he is starving. Such awe results from God-wariness (*taqwa*) but not just as – and quite different from – the way in which the common people of Shaam (Syria) fear you. He is the best of all others inasmuch as he combines within himself all the opposite qualities, such as good character, cheerfulness, great bravery, great strength and participating in numerous battles.”

**Allamah al-Tusi: He was the first to have believed in Islam.**<sup>2</sup>

**Allamah al-Hilli:** Salman al-Farsi narrated from the Prophet saying, “The first of you who will attend the Pond of Kawthar is Ali ibn Abi Talib, who is the first to have believed in Islam.” Anas said, “The

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<sup>1</sup> *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah* of Ibn Ab‘il Hadid, vol. 1, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah* of Ibn Ab‘il-Hadid, vol. 13, pp. 251-227-229-251; al-Mustadrak of al-Hakim, vol. 3, p. 136; *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah* of Ibn Ab‘il-Hadid, vol. 1, p. 30; A detailed account of it is given in *al-Ghadir*, vol. 3, p. 220.

Prophet was charged with the prophetic mission on Monday, and Ali embraced Islam on Tuesday.”

The Messenger of God said to Fatimah, “I gave you in marriage to the man who is the first to have embraced Islam and who is the most knowledgeable of all.”

Ali said on the pulpit one day, “I am the most truthful of all and the best at distinguishing truth from falsehood. I was a believer before Abu Bakr believed, and I embraced Islam before Abu Bakr did. He said this in the presence of a group of companions, and none of them denied it.”

Abdullah ibn Hasan narrated saying, “The Commander of the faithful said: ‘I am the first to have prayed and the first to have believed in God and His Messenger, and no one preceded me in prayer except the Prophet.’”

He used to be in the house of the Messenger of God and he was extremely devoted to him. He followed his commands wholeheartedly and never opposed him. Abu Bakr was not a close associate of the Prophet; therefore, it is unlikely that Islam was proposed to Abu Bakr before it was proposed to Ali especially when the verse "*And warn your closest relatives*" (26:214) was revealed.<sup>3</sup>

It is incorrect if the opponents say: Ali embraced Islam before puberty, therefore his conversion to Islam before that age is invalid.

Argument: Two premises of their argument are invalid.

First premise: Ali was sixty-five or sixty-six years old when he was martyred, and the Prophet lived for twenty-three years after the

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<sup>3</sup> Quran, 26:214.

commencement of his prophetic mission. Ali lived for about thirty years after the Prophet, therefore, Ali was twelve or thirteen years old at the beginning of the prophetic mission and the descent of the revelation. It is legally possible to reach puberty at this age. Apart from its being possible, it actually happened, because the Prophet said to Fatimah: "I gave you in marriage to the man who is the first to have embraced Islam and who is the most knowledgeable of all."

Second premise: A boy may be mentally responsible (*rashid*) and fully sane (*kamil al-'aql*) before the age of puberty; therefore, he is legally accountable. For this reason, Abu Hanifah passed a verdict in favour of the validity of the conversion of a child to Islam, and if such is the case, it indicates the maturity of the child for the following reasons:

First, children are naturally born with a propensity and affection for their parents; their turning away from them and their inclination to God indicates their full maturity.

Second, the nature of children is incompatible with reflection on rational matters and religious obligations and compatible with entertainment and amusement. The avoidance of a child from that which is compatible with his nature towards that which is incompatible with it indicates his high degree of perfection. Thus, it is proven that Ali was the first to have believed in Islam as God says: "*And the Foremost Ones are the foremost ones: they are the ones brought near [to Allah]*" (56:11).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Quran, 56: 10-11.

**Allamah al-Tusi: He was the most articulate (*afсах*) of them all.<sup>5</sup>**

**Allamah al-Hilli:** This is the tenth proof in that Ali was the most eloquent and articulate of all mankind and holds the highest status among the Arab literary men after the Messenger of God, to such an extent that the men of eloquence have said, “His speech is below the Word of the Creator but above the speech of creatures. People learn from him different kinds of eloquence.”

Mu‘awiyah: “No one established eloquence for the Quraysh except him.”

Ibn Nabatah: “I memorized a hundred of his sermons.”

‘Abd al-Hamid ibn Yahya: “I memorized seventy of his sermons.”

**Allamah al-Tusi: He possessed the soundest and most appropriate views and advice.<sup>6</sup>**

**Allamah al-Hilli:** This is the tenth proof in that Ali used to give the most relevant and appropriate advice after the Messenger of God and he was the best of all in terms of management; he knew it better than all others when it was best to do the right thing.

It is he who advised ‘Umar to desist fighting with the Romans and the Persians, and to send his representatives. He informed Uthman what was in his best interest and in the best interests of the Muslims, but he did not follow his advice, and as a result, he was killed.

**Allamah al-Tusi: He was more intent than others on carrying out divinely-prescribed punishments.<sup>7</sup>**

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<sup>5</sup> *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah* of Ibn Ab‘il-Hadid, vol. 1, pp. 24-25

<sup>6</sup> *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah* of Ibn Ab‘il-Hadid, vol. 1, p. 28.

**Allamah al-Hilli:** Ali did not show any consideration for anyone in this regard, even his own kin; rather, he was firm in his administration and accurately carried out those divinely prescribed punishments, as this was the command of God.

**Allamah al-Tusi:** He tried to preserve the Qur'an more than others did.<sup>8</sup>

**Allamah al-Hilli:** Ali had been trying to preserve the Qur'an during the lifetime of the Messenger of God, while no one else was occupied with preserving it. He is also known to be the first to have collected the Qur'an. It has been narrated by the majority of the Sunnis that he delayed pledging to allegiance to Abu Bakr because of being occupied with collecting it. The seven leading Qur'anic reciters, such as Abu 'Amr ibn Abi'l-'Ala', 'Asim, and others ascribe their recitation to him, because they reach back to Abi 'Abd al-Rahman al-Silmi, who was the student of Ali; therefore, Ali is superior to others in this regard.

**Allamah al-Tusi:** Ali predicted numerous unseen and future events.<sup>9</sup>

**Allamah al-Hilli:** This is the fourteenth proof in that Ali informed about many of the unseen events on many occasions, and this knowledge was not achieved by any of the companions. The following are some of his predictions:

1. The murder of Dhu al-Thadyah. When his followers did not find Dhu al-Thadyah among those who were killed, he said, "I swear by God, I did not lie nor did the Prophet lie to me about this event as

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<sup>7</sup> *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah* of Ibn Ab'il-Hadid, vol. 1, p. 28.

<sup>8</sup> *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah* of Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, vol. 1, p. 27.

<sup>9</sup> *Tarikh Baghdad*, vol. 1, p 159; and vol. 7, pp. 236 and 237; *al-Irshad* of al-Shaykh al-Mufid, p. 167; Qum, Mansurat Maktabah Basirati; *Fada'il al-khamsah min al-sihah al-sittah*, vol. 2, pp. 444-453.

foretold by him.” He looked for him among those who were killed until he found him.

2. Before the beginning of the Battle of Nahrawan, his followers said the people of Nahrawan crossed the water. Ali said, “They have not crossed yet.” They informed him about it once more. He still said, “They have not crossed.” Then, Jundab ibn ‘Abd Allah al-Azdi thought to himself: “If I find out that the people of Nahrawan have crossed the water, I will be the first to fight him,” and later said, “Yet when we reached the river, we did not find that they had crossed it.” Ali said, “O brother Azd, has the matter become clear to you?” And this indicates that he knew what had gone through Azd’s mind.<sup>10</sup>
3. His own murder in the month of Ramadan.<sup>11</sup>
4. The rule of al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf al-Thaqafi in Kufah<sup>12</sup> and his revenge against the Kufans.<sup>13</sup>
5. That the hands and feet of Juwayriyyah ibn Musahhar would be cut off and that he would be hanged on the trunk [of a date-palm]. It was done during the lifetime of Mu‘awiyah.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *al-Irshad* of al-Mufid, pp. 167-168; *Tarikh Baghdad*, vol. 7, p. 249; *Majma' al-zawa'id* of al-Bayhaqi, vol. 6, p. 241; *Bihar al-anwar*, vol. 41, p. 284, al-hadith no. 3.

<sup>11</sup> *al-Sawa'iq al-muhriqah* of Ibn Hajar, pp. 134-135, Maktabat al-Qahirah, Egypt; *Bihar al-anwar*, vol. 41, p.300, al-hadith no. 31; *al-Riyaz al-nazrah* of Muhibb al-Din al-Tabari, vol. 2, p. 234 and *al-Irshad*, p. 168.

<sup>12</sup> Translator’s note: When the Umayyad Caliph Abdul Malik wanted to exact revenge on the people of Iraq and particularly inhabitants of the Shi’a city of Kufa he entrusted al-Hajjaj with such a mission. Al-Hajjaj who entered the mosque where the Iraqis were gathered had a turban on that he used to cover his face except for his piercing and hate filled eyes.

<sup>13</sup> *Sharh Nahj al-balaghah* of Ibn Ab'il-Hadid, vol. 2, p. 289; *Madinat al-ma'ajiz*, vol. 2, pp. 216-217.

6. That Maytham al-Tammar would be hanged beside the house of ‘Amr ibn Hurayth and that he would be the tenth one to be hanged by Ibn Ziyad]. Ali showed him the palm-date on whose trunk he would be hanged. What he said [i.e., his prophecy] came true.<sup>15</sup>
7. That Qanbar would be beheaded, and it was al-Hajjaj who beheaded him.<sup>16</sup>
8. When it was told to Ali that Khalid ibn ‘Arfatah died on the Wadi’l-Qura, Ali replied, “He did not die; and he will not die until he becomes the leader of the misguided army whose standard bearer will be Habib ibn Jammaz.” A man stood up at the foot of the pulpit and said, “By God, I love you and am [one of] your lovers.” Ali then said, “Beware of bearing the standard; you will carry it and will enter the mosque with it through this gate (and he pointed to the gate – called *Bab al-Fil – The Elephant door*). When Ibn Ziyad sent ‘Umar ibn Sa’d to fight Husayn, he assigned Khalid to lead the vanguard, and Habib was his standard-bearer. He set out with the standard and entered the Mosque through *Bab al-fil*.<sup>17</sup>
9. Once Ali said on the pulpit: “Ask me before you miss me. By God, if you ask me anything about the group who will guide a hundred people and also misguide a hundred people I will tell you who is announcing its march, who is driving it in the front and who is driving it at the rear till the Day of Resurrection.”

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<sup>14</sup> *al-Irshad*, p. 170; *Bihar al-anwar*, vol. 41, p. 301; *Sharh Nahj al-balaghah* of Ibn Ab’il-Hadid, vol. 2, pp. 290-291.

<sup>15</sup> *al-Irshad*, *al-Irshad*, pp. 170-171; *Sharh Nahj al-balaghah* of Ibn Ab’il-Hadid, vol. 2, p. 291.

<sup>16</sup> *al-Irshad*, *al-Irshad*, p. 173; *Kashf al-ghummah fi ma`rifat al-a`immah*, vol. 1, p. 383.

<sup>17</sup> *al-Irshad*, pp. 173-174; *Sharh Nahj al-balaghah* of Ibn Ab’il-Hadid, vol. 2, pp. 286 and 287; *Bihar al-anwar*, vol. 41, pp. 288-289.

Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas stood up and said: "Let me know how many pieces of hair there are on my head and beard."

Ali replied: "My friend, the Prophet informed me that for every piece of hair on your head, there is an angel who curses you, and for every piece of hair on your beard, there is a devil who provokes you. There is a worthless child [‘Umar ibn Sa’d, who was at that time a toddler still crawling] in your house will kill the son of the Holy Prophet." When the [tragic] events in the affairs of al-Husayn occurred, he undertook [the crime of] killing [Imam] Husayn.<sup>18</sup>

And there are innumerable traditions in this regard narrated by friends and opponents.

**Allamah al-Tusi: Ali’s supplications were always answered.**

**Allamah al-Hilli:** The supplications of Ali were immediately answered by God, and other than him, none of the companions were endowed with such a status, rendering Ali superior to them.

The first premise can be stated based on that which has been widely narrated from Ali in this regard.

1. When Ali called down evil upon Busr ibn Artah, he said, "O God, surely Busr sold his religion for the world. O God, take his reason away. Do not let there remain to him in his religion anything by which he would merit your mercy." His mind then became disoriented.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *al-Irshad* of al-Mufid, p. 174; *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah* of Ibn Ab'il-Hadid, vol. 2, p. 286.

<sup>19</sup> *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah* of Ibn Ab'il-Hadid, vol. 2, p. 18; *al-Irshad* of al-Mufid.

2. Ali accused 'Izar of giving the information about him to Mu'awiyah. When 'Izar denied it, Ali said, "If you have lied, may God blind you." Indeed, 'Izar went blind within a week.<sup>20</sup>
3. Ali called upon a group of the companions to bear witness to the Hadith of Ghadir. Twelve men from among the Helpers (*al-Ansar*) testified in his favour, although Anas said nothing. Ali said to him, "O Anas, what prevents you from testifying, while you heard what they heard?" He replied, "O Commander of the faithful! I have become old and forgot that event." Then Imam Ali said, "O God, if he has lied, afflict him with leprosy in such a way that no turban can hide it." Thereafter, he became leprous (*abras*).<sup>21</sup> Moreover, when Zayd ibn Arqam denied the Event of Ghadir he lost his eyesight.<sup>22</sup> There are many such widely transmitted narrations reported about the Imam.

### **Allamah al-Tusi: The miracles (extraordinary acts) worked by Ali.**

**Allamah al-Hilli:** Many miracles (extraordinary acts) occurred by Ali, some of which have already been mentioned. None of the companions possessed this privilege except him, making him the most meritorious of them all.

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<sup>20</sup> *al-Irshad*, pp. 184-185; *Kashf al-ghummah*, vol. 1, p. 390.

<sup>21</sup> *Tarikh of Ibn 'Asakir, tarjam al-imam 'Ali ibn abi Talib* (the biography of Imam 'Ali ibn abi Talib, peace be upon him), vol. 2, pp. 12-13, no. 508, *Sharh Nahj al-balaghah* of Ibn Ab'il-Hadid, vol. 4, p. 74; *Ihqaq al-haqq*, vol. 6, pp. 315-320.

<sup>22</sup> *Tarikh of Ibn 'Asakir, tarjam al-imam 'Ali* (the biography of Imam 'Ali, vo. 2, p. 5, no. 501, and p. 35, nos. 533 and 544; *Sharh Nahj al-balaghah* of Ibn Ab'il-Hadid, vo. 4, p. 74; *Ihqaq al-haqq*, vol. 6, pp. 315-320.

# SPIRITUAL ACCOUNTING BASED ON *MUHASABA AL-NAFS* BY SAYYID IBN TAWUS

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**ABSTRACT:** Muhasaba al-nafs, or spiritual accounting, plays a key role in the spiritual journey with the goal of nearness to God. It works as a self-assessment of a person's thoughts and deeds on a daily, weekly, monthly, or yearly basis – such as thanking God for every accomplishment and asking forgiveness for all wrongs committed with the intention of not repeating them. Many Islamic scholars throughout history have explored this subject and have either taught, compiled, or were prolific authors in the field. This article touches upon the work of Sayyid ibn Tawus called *Muhasaba al-Nafs*, offering a biography of the author, an overview of the book, and a summary of each chapter, which includes topics such as the recording of our deeds and its exposure to God, the Prophet, and the Infallibles; the importance of self-accounting, practical steps to self-purification, and the special days, times, and places for prayer and to fulfill one's duties.

## Introduction

As an ethical expression, *muhāsaba al-nafs* (literally, self-accounting) plays a key role in spiritual and moral discussions. Commonly translated as spiritual accounting or inward accounting, it has been largely considered in scholarly works and Shi'a traditions. In a nutshell, *muhāsaba al-nafs* requires one to appropriate a specific time (usually on a daily basis) and contemplate deeply on his deeds in the past (day, weeks, months, or year) and thank Allah for every accomplishment and ask for forgiveness for all the sins committed, along with the intention not to repeat them. In spiritual wayfaring, the process of *muhāsaba al-nafs*, if followed properly, will lead to reducing one's sins and his progress in the spiritual journey.

Due to the great importance of spiritual accounting, many scholars throughout Islamic history either compiled independent books on this subject, such as *Muhāsaba al-Nafs* by Ibrahim ibn Ali Al-'Amili Al-Kafami, Shaykh Ibrahim Kashifi, and Sayyid Muhammad Husain Shahrestani) or dedicated a chapter of their books to this subject. In this regard, *Muhāsaba al-Nafs* by Sayyid ibn Tawus is a notable work.

## About the author

Sayyid Radi al-Din Ali bin Musa ibn Ja'far ibn Tawus, a descendant of Imam Hasan and Imam Sajjad, was born on 15<sup>th</sup> of Muharram in 589 AH in Hilla. His father, Musa ibn Ja'far, was among the great narrators, and his mother, the daughter of Warram ibn Abi Firas,<sup>1</sup> a renowned Shi'a scholar. Sayyid ibn Tawus passed his early educations before his father and maternal grandfather and soon showed his excellent talent.

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<sup>1</sup> d. 605 AH

Benefited by the scholars of Hilla, he travelled to other cities. Kazimayn was his first destination, where he married and afterwards went to Baghdad in 625 AH and became a well-known and revered scholar by others scholars and the general public. When the Abbasid Caliph pressured him to undertake some official posts in the government, he returned to his hometown Hilla. He also travelled to Mashhad, Najaf, and Karbala and stayed for 3 years in each of them. His last journey was then to Baghdad where he stayed until his death. A great man of letters, a jurist, and a poet, Sayyid ibn Tawus was prominent for his piety and leading position in mysticism. He stayed in Baghdad for 15 years where he continued teaching and writing.

Among his well-known students are Sadid al-Din al-Hilli (Allama Hilli's father), Allamah Hilli, Hasan ibn Dawud Al-Hilli, Abd Al-Karim ibn Ahmad ibn Tawus (his nephew) and Ali ibn 'Isa Al-'Irbili. He had about 50 works, a great deal of which include supplications and *ziyarat* (special prayers when visiting the tombs of the Infallibles and great people). Among them one are the following:

- *Al-Muhimmat wa al-Tatimmat* in 10 vols. each of which has been published with an independent title such as *Falah al-Sa'il*, *Zuhra al-Rabi'*, *Jamal al-'Usbu'*, and *'Iqbal al-'Amal*.
- *Kashf al-Mahajja li Thamara al-Muhja*: a moral book containing his recommendations to his children;
- *Misbah al-Za'ir wa Janah al-Musafir*;
- *Al-Malhuf 'ala Qatla al-Tufuf*: an authentic and well-known work on the description of the event of Karbala and

- *Muhaj al-Da'awat wa Manhaj al-'Inayat.*

Sayyid ibn Tawus passed away in 664 AH in Baghdad at the age of 75 and was buried in the holy shrine of Imam Ali in Najaf.

### **An overview of the book**

*Muhasaba al-Nafs* by Sayyid ibn Tawus comprises of an introduction and five chapters. The first chapter deals with Qur'anic verses regarding the importance of spiritual accounting; the second chapter considers the same subject in narrations; the third is on the days and times suitable for spiritual accounting; the fourth refers to important days and times in the Islamic calendar that a person is required more so to carefully consider his deeds; and the last chapter gives an overall and motivating general and detailed account of the values of spiritual accounting.

### **The introduction of the book**

The bigger part of the introduction revolves around Ibn Tawus' motivation for writing the book – which the atmosphere of the Qur'an and hadith is a spiritual one and instructions are given on self-purification; hence, the topic is a worthwhile to dig deeper. However, the ones who want to know the details of spiritual accounting may not have access to those references. He deemed it upon himself to compile an independent book on this crucial subject.

### **Chapter One**

In this chapter, Sayyid ibn Tawus refers to three verses of the Qur'an on the fact that all our deeds are recorded by specified angels:

- Chapter 82 Verses 10-12:

وَ إِنَّ عَلَيْكُمْ لِحَافِظِينَ كِرَامًا كَاتِبِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ

*Indeed, there are over you watchers, noble writers who know whatever you do.*

- Chapter 50 Verse 18:

مَا يُلْفِظُ مِنْ قَوْلٍ إِلَّا لَدَيْهِ رَقِيبٌ عَتِيدٌ

*He says no word but that there is a ready observer beside him.*

- Chapter 45 Verse 29:

إِنَّا كُنَّا نَسْتَنْسِخُ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ

*Indeed We used to record what you used to do.*

## Chapter Two

This chapter revolves around the narration of ten traditions from the Infallibles regarding the importance of spiritual accounting and its practical steps:

- The well-known tradition by the Prophet:

Do self-spiritual accounting before the day when you will be accounted and weigh your soul before the day when it will be weighed and make ready for [the day of] the greatest manifestation.<sup>2</sup>

- Kulayni in his book in the chapter on belief and disbelief quotes Imam al-Kadhimi as saying:

<sup>2</sup> Shaykh Hurr al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'a*, vol. 16 p. 99 (with a slight difference).

حَاسِبُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ قَبْلَ أَنْ تُحَاسَبُوا وَ زِنُوا قَبْلَ أَنْ تُوزَنُوا وَ جَهِّزُوا لِلْعَرْضِ الْأَكْبَرِ

The one who does not do spiritual accounting every day in order to thank Allah if he has done good deed or ask Him for forgiveness and repent if he has committed a sin, is not from us [i.e. such person is not a real follower of us, the household of the Holy Prophet].<sup>3</sup>

- Yahya ibn al-Hasan ibn Harun al-Husayni in his *Al-'Amali* narrates from al-Hasan ibn Ali who quotes the Prophet as saying:

A servant [of Allah] is not considered as a faithful believer unless he brings his soul to account [i.e. spiritual accounting] much harder than a person who brings his partner to account or a master who brings his slave to account.<sup>4</sup>

- Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Mahbub narrates from Imam al-Sadiq who quotes his father as saying:

In each and every day, that day tells human beings that 'I am a new day and I will testify against you. Therefore, be beneficent toward me and do good deeds in this day so that I will make your affairs easy on the Day of Judgment as you will never see me again after that.'<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Kulayni, *Al-Kafi*, vol. 2 p. 453; Shaykh Hurr Al-'Amili, *Wasa'il Al-Shi'a*, vol. 16 p. 95 (with a slight difference in both sources).

لَيْسَ مِثْلًا مَنْ لَمْ يُحَاسِبْ نَفْسَهُ فِي كُلِّ يَوْمٍ فَإِنَّ يَوْمَ قَلْبٍ عَمِلَ حَسَنًا أَزَادَ اللَّهُ شُكْرًا وَ إِنْ عَمِلَ سَيِّئًا اسْتَغْفَرَ اللَّهُ وَ تَابَ إِلَيْهِ

<sup>4</sup> Shaykh Hurr Al-'Amili, *Ibid.*, p. 99.

لَا يَكُونُ الْعَبْدُ مُؤْمِنًا حَتَّى يُحَاسِبَ نَفْسَهُ أَشَدَّ مِنْ مُحَاسَبَةِ الشَّرِيكِ شَرِيكُهُ وَ الْمَسِيدِ عِبْدَهُ

<sup>5</sup> Shaykh Hurr Al-'Amili, *Ibid.*, p. 99.

مَا مِنْ يَوْمٍ يَأْتِي عَلَى ابْنِ آدَمَ إِلَّا قَالَ لَهُ ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمُ يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ أَنَا يَوْمٌ جَدِيدٌ وَ أَنَا عَلَيْكَ شَهِيدٌ فَافْعَلْ بِي خَيْرًا وَ اعْمَلْ فِي خَيْرٍ أَسْهَلُ لَكَ فِي يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ فَإِنَّكَ لَنْ تَرَانِي بَعْدَهَا أَبَدًا

- Mas'ada ibn Ziyad al-Raba'i in his book (which is among the *as/s* of Shi'a) narrates from Imam Sadiq who quotes his father as saying:

When the night envelops, an announcer calls out so loudly that all creations except for the two weighty ones hear: 'O the son of Adam! I am a new creation bearing witness on whatever occurs in me. So take benefit from me since as soon as the sun rises I would not return to the world again and you would not be able to increase a good deed in me or repent for a sin in me'. When night is over and the day begins the day says the same".<sup>6</sup>

- Shaykh Mufid in his *Al-'Amali* quotes Imam Ali ibn al-Husayn as saying:

The appointed angel for every servant writes in that servant's book of deeds: 'Do good deeds in its beginning and ending so whatever occurs between the two will be forgiven for you'.<sup>7</sup>

Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Saffar in his *Fadl Al-Du'a* narrates from Imam Sadiq who quotes the Prophet as saying:

Good for the one who, on the Day of Judgment, finds in his book of deeds 'I ask Allah for forgiveness' under every sin.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Shaykh Hurr Al-'Amili, *Ibid.*; Kulayni, *Ibid.*, p. 523 (with some slight differences in both sources).

إِنَّ اللَّيْلَ إِذَا أَقْبَلَ نَادَى مُنَادٍ بِصَوْتٍ يَسْمَعُهُ الْخَلَائِقُ إِلَّا التَّقْوَىٰ يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ إِنِّي خَلَقْتُ جَدِيدًا إِنِّي عَلَىٰ مَا فِيَّ شَهِيدٌ فَخُذْ مِنِّي فَإِنِّي لَوْ قَدْ طَلَعَتِ الشَّمْسُ لَمْ أُرْجَعْ إِلَى الدُّنْيَا وَ لَمْ تَزِدْ فِي حَسَنَتِهِ وَ لَمْ تَنْسَخْ فِي مَنْ سَيِّئِهِ وَ كَذَلِكَ يَقُولُ النَّبِيُّ إِذَا أَذْبَرَ اللَّيْلَ

<sup>7</sup> Shaykh Hurr Al-'Amili, *Ibid.* (with some slight differences).

إِنَّ الْمَلِكَ الْمُوَكَّلَ بِالْعَبْدِ يَكْتُبُ فِي صِيفِهِ أَعْمَالَهُ فَأَعْمَلُوا بِأَوْلَهَا خَيْرًا وَ آخِرَهَا خَيْرًا يُغْفَرُ لَكُمْ مَا بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ

<sup>8</sup> Shaykh Hurr Al-'Amili, *Ibid.* p. 69.

The other narrations in this chapter are in the same line.

### Chapter 3

According to Sayyid ibn Tawus, based on various narrations, all deeds are exposed to Allah, His messenger, and the Infallible Imams on Mondays and Thursdays. In this regard, Chapter 9 Verse 105 reads:

وَقُلْ اَعْمَلُوا فَسَيَرَى اللّٰهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ

*And say, 'Go on working: Allah will see your conduct, and His Apostle and the faithful [as well]'.*

According to many scholars and exegetes of the Qur'an, "the faithful" in the above-mentioned verse refers to the Infallible Imams who together with the Prophet come to know the deeds of all people every Monday and Thursday. Ibn Tawus then cites some narrations that explicitly or implicitly refer to the importance of these two days:

- When Ya'qub ibn Shu'aib says he asked Imam al-Sadiq about the above-mentioned verse, the Imam said that it referred to the Imams. Yazid ibn Mu'awiya al-'Ijli narrates a narration with the same content from Imam al-Sadiq.
- Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri narrates that once Ammar told the Prophet, "I wish that you have such a long life as that of Noah." The Prophet replied, "O Ammar! My life is better for you and my demise is not bad for you. As for my life, you commit some sins and I ask Allah to forgive you, but after my life, be Godwary and send peace and salutation to me and my household, since you will be shown to me

by your names, your fathers' names, and your tribes' names. If your deeds are good, I praise Allah; and if they are bad, I ask Allah to forgive your sins."

- Muhammad ibn 'Imran al-Marzbani in the seventh part of his *Kitab al-Azmina* narrates that the Prophet fasted on Mondays and Thursdays. When he was asked the reason, he replied, "All the deeds are raised up every Monday and Thursday. I like to be fasting while my deeds are raised up."<sup>9</sup>

Sayyid ibn Tawus then indicates that based on these narrations, it behooves everyone to take heed on Mondays and Thursdays by performing the duties and avoiding acts of disobedience, since both narrative and rational arguments demonstrate that at the time when the acts of a slave are exposed to his master, he should be more careful than other times.

Ibn Tawus then suggests a supplication to be read in the beginning hours of these two days. Although this prayer has not been narrated from the Infallibles, its content is worthy enough to be mentioned here:

اللهم إن هذا يوم وجدنا الأخبار النبويه و الآثار الأحمديه تضمنت أن الأعمال تعرض فيه عليك و على من يقرأ عليك و نحن نسألك و نتوسل إليك بكل وسيله لها قبول لديك أن توفقنا فيه لما تريد منا و لما ترضى عنا و تجعل حركاتنا و سكناتنا صادره عن إلهامك لنا ما فيه زياده السعادات بالعبادات و تصوننا عن موافق الغرامات و الحياتات و أن تتقدم من الملكين الحافظين أن لا يكتب علينا فيه إلا ما يقربنا إليك و يزيدنا إقبالا منك علينا و

<sup>9</sup> The text is as follows:

إِنَّ الْأَعْمَالَ تُرْفَعُ فِي كُلِّ إِثْنَيْنِ وَ حَمِيسٍ وَ أُجِبُّ أَنْ يُرْفَعَ عَمَلِي وَ أَنَا صَائِمٌ

إقبالاً منا عليك و أن تتجاوز عما يقتضي معاتبه منا أو مجانبه أو مغابنه أو  
 إجحالاً أو نقصاناً أو امتحاناً أو تهبيناً ما بيننا و بينك و تعفو عما قصرنا فيه  
 من الاستدراك و لا تفضحنا بين الروحانيين من الملائكة و أرواح المؤمنين  
 و عند سيدنا خاتم النبيين و المرسلين و أن تدخلنا في حماه و حمى عترته  
 الطاهرين و حمى الرحمه التي تفضلت بها علينا بالإنساء و البقاء على العلم بما  
 يصدر عن سوء الآراء و غلط الأهواء و لا تخلج رسولك محمداً العزيز  
 عليك و عترته المعظمين لديك إن عترتهم و رعيتهم لا تضيق عليهم سعه  
 رحمتك و أن تستر على مخالفتك و عدم طاعتك برحمتك يا أرحم الراحمين

The translation of this prayer is as follows:

O Allah! Today is the day when, based on Prophetic narrations, our deeds are exposed to You and those who will relate them to you [apparently the angels]. Therefore, we ask you... to grant us the succour to act upon whatever You want from us in this day and whatever that would satisfy You... so that the two appointed angels should not write in our books of deeds anything but that which makes us closer to You... We ask You not to dishonour us among the spiritual entities such as the angels and the souls of pious believers and more specifically before our master, the seal of Prophets and Messengers... and do not make your beloved Prophet, Muhammad and his household ashamed before you [as a result of our hideous actions]..."

In the last part of this chapter, Sayyid ibn Tawus narrates some traditions regarding Thursdays:

- The merit of reciting *salawat* in the afternoon on Thursdays. Imam Sadiq said:

On Thursdays, in the afternoon, Allah sends some of the angels from heaven to the earth with whom are silver tablets and golden pens by which they write the *salawat* on Muhammad at the time of sunset.<sup>10</sup>

- There have been narrated some prayers to be recited at the end of every Thursday such as:

أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ وَ أَتُوبُ إِلَيْهِ تَوْبَةَ عَبْدٍ خَاشِعٍ  
خَاضِعٍ مُسْكِنٍ مُسْتَجِيرٍ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُ لِنَفْسِهِ صَرْفًا وَلَا عَدْلًا وَلَا  
نَفْعًا وَلَا ضَرًّا وَلَا حَيَاةً وَلَا مَوْتًا وَلَا نُشُورًا وَ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَ  
عَثَرْتِهِ الطَّيِّبِينَ الطَّيِّبِينَ الْأَبْرَارِ وَ سَلَّمَ تَسْلِيمًا كَثِيرًا

- On the last Thursday of every month, all deeds of the month are ascended to heaven and exposed to Allah, the Prophet, and his household. Regarding this, 'Abd al-Samad ibn 'Abd Al-Malik narrates from Imam Sadiq who has said, "On the last Thursday of every month, the deeds of that month are raised up."<sup>11</sup>

## Chapter 4

Using verses of the Qur'an and hadith, Ibn Tawus shares the special times and places to take heed concerning fulfilling his duties and avoiding sins. He refers to:

1. The month of Ramadan.

<sup>10</sup> The Arabic text is as follows:

إِذَا كَانَ يَوْمُ الْخَمِيسِ عِنْدَ الْعَصْرِ أَهْبَطَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ مَلَائِكَةً مِنَ السَّمَاءِ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ مَعَهَا صَحَائِفٌ مِنْ  
فِضَّةٍ بِيَدَيْهِمْ أَقْلَامٌ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ تَكْتُبُ الصَّلَاةَ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ عِنْدَ غُرُوبِ الشَّمْسِ

<sup>11</sup> أَخْرَجَ كُلُّ حَمِيمٍ فِي الشَّهْرِ تَرَفَعَتْ فِيهِ أَعْمَالُ الشَّهْرِ

2. The four sacred months (*al-Ashhur al-Hurum*: Dhi al-Qa'da, Dhil Hijja, Muharram, and Rajab in lunar calendar).
3. The Known Days (*Ayyam Ma'lumat*) – based on verse 28 of the chapter *al-Hajj*]. Qur'anic commentators have differing views regarding the meaning of this term. According to some, *Ayyam Ma'lumat* refers to the first 10 days of Dhil-Hijja while others hold that the known days are its 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> days (commonly known as *Ayyam al-Tashriq*), and still some other believe that the 10<sup>th</sup> day of Dhil-Hijja should be added to these 3 days.
4. The Appointed Days (*Ayyam Ma'dudat*), based on verse 203 of the chapter *al-Baqara*] which has been interpreted as the 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> days of Dhil-Hijja or them plus the 10<sup>th</sup> day of Dhil-Hijja).

And among the specific places, Sayyid ibn Tawus mentioned the following:

1. The Holy Mosque (*Al-Masjid al-Haram*),
2. The Holy Kaa'ba,
3. The mosque of the Prophet [in Medina],
4. Jerusalem (*Bayt al-Maqdis*);
5. Other honoured sanctuaries, shrines, and holy mosques; and every area the Qur'an and narrations deem venerable.

## Chapter 5

This longer chapter entitled *The Virtues and Merits of Spiritual Accounting* includes practical details on self-accounting. The author validates each point by referring to the following narrations:

## Spiritual accounting at the end of the day.

Imam al-Sadiq said:

“At sunset, remember Allah, the Almighty, and if you are among people who distract you then leave them and be engaged in prayer.”<sup>12</sup>

Sayyid ibn Tawus then suggests the following prayer, written in his own words:

سلام الله جل جلاله و سلام خاصته و سلامي عليكما أيها الملكان الحافظان  
أستودعكما الله جل جلاله و أقرأ عليكم السلام و أسألكما بالله جل جلاله  
أن تستوهبا ما بيني و بين الله جل جلاله و ما بيني و بين عباده ما كتبنا و  
يقول يا أرحم الراحمين حتى تنقطع النفس أنا عبدك الذي خلقته من التراب و  
الطين و الماء المهيمن و قد سمعت في كتابك الكريم و إن عليكم لحافظين كراما  
كاتبين يعلمون ما تفعلون و بلغني عن رسولك و آله ع أنهم قالوا ليس منا من  
لم يحاسب نفسه و قد حضرت بين يديك و ما معي عمل أَرْضَى أن أعرض  
عليك لأن قبائح عملي يَجْلِي قَصِيرَه و فاسد عملي يفضحني يسيره و قد  
قدت نفسي إلى مجلس القود و العود و الاستسلام و أنا أتوب إليك من  
الذنوب و الآثام فإن قبلت توبتي و رضيت عني و إلا فأسألك أن تغفو عني  
فقد يعفو المولى عن عبده و هو غير راض عنه و قد جعلت الاستغفار  
طريقا إلى قبول التوبه و غفران الآثام فيها أنا أقول أستغفرك و أسألك التوبه و  
يكرر ذلك مائه مره ثم يقول و قد أمرت يا سيدي بالعفو و عفوت و دلت  
عبادك على العفو و مدحت الكاظمين الغيظ و العافين عن الناس و بذلت  
الثواب على العفو و جعلت العفو من صفات الكمال و عاتببت عبادك على  
ترك العفو من سوء الأعمال و أنت أحق ممن إذا أمر عمل و إذا قال فعل فيها  
أنا أسألك العفو العفو و يكرر ذلك مائه مره.

<sup>12</sup> Kulayni, *Al-Kafi*, vol. 2 p. 524; Shaykh Hurr Ak-'Amili, *Wasa'il Al-Shi'a*, vol. 7 p. 71.

إِذَا تَغَيَّرَتِ الشَّمْسُ فَادْكُرْ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ وَ إِنْ كُنْتَ مَعَ قَوْمٍ يَشْغَلُونَكَ فَتَمِّمْ وَ ادْعُ.

What follows is the translation of some parts:

O two appointed [upon me] angels! May the peace of Allah and His special servants and that of mine be upon you... I ask you by Allah to ask for forgiveness for the sins that I have committed with regards to right of Allah and right of humans... [O Allah!] I am Your servant whom You have created from soil and clay and base fluid and I have recited in Your Holy Book [i.e. Qur'an] that *'Indeed, there are over you watchers, noble writers who know whatever you do'*<sup>13</sup> and Your Messenger and his household have reminded us that 'whoever does not do spiritual accounting is not from us'. Now I am in Your presence while I have no deed to be content with since the most trivial of my hideous acts makes me ashamed and the least of my corrupted deeds dishonour me... I repent for all the sins I have accumulated... and I ask You for forgiveness since it happens that a master forgives his slave with whom he is not satisfied... You have ordered us to pardon others and You have praised those who suppress their anger, and excuse [the faults of] the people<sup>14</sup> and have promised to reward those who forgive others and ... it behooves You more than others to do so. Thus, pardon me (and he repeats this 100 times).

The author reminds the readers that reciting such supplications is the least that one may do for spiritual accounting. Thus, no one has any excuse for neglecting it.

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<sup>13</sup> Chapter *al-'Infitar*, Verses 10-120.

<sup>14</sup> See Chapter 3 Verse 134.

## Narrated supplications for spiritual accounting

According to Imam al-Baqir, the Prophet, while in tears, read the following prayer during sunset:

اللَّهُمَّ أَمْسَى ظُلْمِي مُسْتَجِيراً بِعَفْوِكَ وَ أَمْسَتْ ذُنُوبِي مُسْتَجِيرَةً بِمَغْفِرَتِكَ وَ  
 أَمْسَى خَوْفِي مُسْتَجِيراً بِأَمْنِكَ وَ أَمْسَى ذُلِّي مُسْتَجِيراً بِعِزِّكَ وَ أَمْسَى فَقْرِي  
 مُسْتَجِيراً بِغِنَاكَ وَ أَمْسَى ضَعْفِي مُسْتَجِيراً بِقُوَّتِكَ وَ أَمْسَى وَجْهِي الْبَالِي الْفَانِي  
 مُسْتَجِيراً بِوَجْهِكَ الدَّائِمِ الْبَاقِي الْإِسْنِي عَافِيَتِكَ وَ عَشِيَّتِي بِرَحْمَتِكَ وَ جَلَلِي  
 كَرَامَتِكَ وَ فِي شَرِّ خَلْقِكَ مِنَ الْجِنِّ وَ الْإِنْسِ يَا اللَّهُ يَا رَحْمَانُ يَا رَحِيمُ.

O Allah! this day has come to an end while I seek refuge to Your pardon for my wrongdoing and to Your forgiveness for my sins and to Your safety for my fear and to Your grandeur for my degradation and to Your richness for my poverty and to Your strength for my weakness and to Your everlasting face for my mortal face. Clothe me with Your pardon and engulf me into Your mercy and honour me by Your generosity and protect me from the evil of the jinn and humans O Allah! O Beneficent! O Merciful!

In his *Al-Kafi*, Shaykh Kulayni narrates that at nightfall, Imam Ali used to say: "Welcome to the new night and the witnessing writer. Write (you two) in the Name of Allah."<sup>15</sup>

Then the Imam would continue his *dhikr*, or remembrance of Allah.

Imam al-Sadiq said:

<sup>15</sup> Kulayni, *Al-Kafi*, vol. 2 p. 523; Shaykh Hurr Ak-'Amili, *Wasa'il Al-Shi'a*, vol. 7 p. 71.

مَرْحَباً بِاللَّيْلِ الْجَدِيدِ وَ الْكَاتِبِ الشَّهِيدِ أَكْتُبَا عَلَى اسْمِ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يَذْكُرُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ

مَنْ قَالَ عِنْدَ غُرُوبِ الشَّمْسِ فِي كُلِّ يَوْمٍ يَا مَنْ خَتَمَ النَّبُوَّةَ بِمُحَمَّدٍ صَاحِتِمَ  
لِي يَوْمِي هَذَا بِخَيْرٍ وَشَهْرِي بِخَيْرٍ وَسَنَّتِي بِخَيْرٍ وَعُمْرِي بِخَيْرٍ فَمَاتَ فِي تِلْكَ  
اللَّيْلَةِ أَوْ فِي تِلْكَ الْجُمُعَةِ أَوْ فِي ذَلِكَ الشَّهْرِ أَوْ فِي تِلْكَ السَّنَةِ دَخَلَ الْجَنَّةَ.

Whosoever recites the following supplication every day at sunset: ‘O the One who sealed the Prophethood by Muhammad! End this day of mine with goodness; and this month of mine with goodness; and this year of mine with goodness; and my lifetime with goodness’ then if it so happens that he dies during that day or week or month or year, he would enter Paradise.

### **Spiritual accounting during the last hours of the night**

According to *Muhasaba al-Nafs*, it is recommended prostrate after waking up to thank Allah for all the blessings He has granted him – just as the Prophet did – and to sit in front of God, the Master who created and nurtured him. The same is to be done for one hour at night – to contemplate about our deeds, and ask the two appointed angels (for the night-time) to ask forgiveness for him just as he had asked the two appointed angels (for daytime) to do so. It is worth mentioning that Ibn Tawus assumes that the “night” angels at differ from the “daytime” and endeavour to purify the book of deeds from sins and mistakes.

Ibn Tawus then addresses those who are not able to stand or sit for prayer, as well as those whose low degree of knowledge regarding their happiness in both this world and the next has become an obstacle for standing for worship in the last hours of the night, mentions a special supplication to recite while lying down:

يَا رَاحِمَ الضَّعِيفِ الْهَالِكِ يَا وَاهِبَ الْمَالِكِ قَدْ سَمِعْتُ مِنْ حُكْمِكَ الشَّامِلِ لِأَهْلِ  
الْأَبْصَارِ الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَ قُعُودًا وَ عَلَى جُنُوبِهِمْ وَ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ  
السَّمَاوَاتِ وَ الْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَاطِلًا سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ وَ هَا  
أَنَا أَسْأَلُكَ عَلَى جَنبِي أَنْ تَعْفُو ذَنْبِي وَ أَنْ تَجْعَلَنِي مِمَّنْ أَعْتَبْتَهُ بِعِلْمِكَ عَنِ الْمَقَالِ  
وَ بِكَرَمِكَ عَنِ السُّؤَالِ.

O The One who has mercy upon the weak and perishable and grants great deals of gifts! I have heard Your Decree about those who have insight; *Those who remember Allah standing, sitting, and lying on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth [and say] 'Our Lord, You have not created this in vain! Immaculate are You! Save us from the punishment of the Fire'*.<sup>16</sup> Thus, I ask you, while I am still in my bed, to forgive my sins and take me with those whom You, through Your knowledge, exempt from discourse and through Your generosity, exempt from asking."

### Narrations regarding the phrase "يا ارحم الراحمين" – O Most Merciful of the merciful:

Imam Sadiq said:

كَانَ أَبِي إِذَا أَلَحَّتْ بِهِ الْحَاجَةُ سَجَدَ مِنْ غَيْرِ صَلَاةٍ وَ لَا رُكُوعٍ ثُمَّ يَقُولُ يَا أَرْحَمَ  
الرَّاحِمِينَ سَبْعَ مَرَّاتٍ ثُمَّ يَسْأَلُ حَاجَتَهُ ثُمَّ قَالَ مَا قَالَهَا أَحَدٌ سَبْعًا إِلَّا قَالَ اللَّهُ  
تَعَالَى هَا أَنَا أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ سَلْ حَاجَتَكَ.

Whenever my father had an essential request and petition, he prostrated himself (without initiating a prayer or bowing down), and repeated 'O Most Merciful of the merciful ones'

<sup>16</sup> Chapter 3 Verse 191.

seven times, and then asked Allah for his request." Imam al-Sadiq then continued: "No one repeats this seven times except that Allah, the Almighty, replies: 'Here I am; the Most Merciful of the merciful. Ask Me your request.'"

Imam al-Sadiq said:

إِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَلَكًا يُقَالُ لَهُ إِسْمَاعِيلُ سَاكِنٌ فِي السَّمَاءِ الدُّنْيَا إِذَا قَالَ الْعَبْدُ يَا أَرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ سَمِعَ مَرَّاتٍ قَالَ لَهُ إِسْمَاعِيلُ قَدْ سَمِعَ اللَّهُ أَرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ صَوْتَكَ فَاسْأَلْ حَاجَتَكَ.<sup>17</sup>

The Allah Almighty has an angel named Ishmael who resides in the lowest heaven. Whenever a servant calls: 'O Most Merciful of the merciful', and repeats it seven times, Ishmael tells him: 'Allah, Most Merciful of the merciful, heard you. You may ask your request.'"

Imam al-Sajjad said:

سَمِعَ النَّبِيُّ ص رَجُلًا يَقُولُ يَا أَرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ فَأَخَذَ بِمَنْكِبِ الرَّجُلِ فَقَالَ هَذَا أَرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ قَدْ اسْتَقْبَلَ بَوَجهِهِ فَسَلْ حَاجَتَكَ.<sup>18</sup>

The Prophet heard someone calling out: 'O Most Merciful of the merciful,' the Prophet took his shoulder and told him: 'The Most Merciful of the merciful has turned His face to you. So ask Him your request.'

Sayyid ibn Tawus then mentions three narrations that informs us of the Prophet's habit of prostration when he woke up.

<sup>17</sup> Shaykh Hurr Al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'a*, vol. 7 p. 88.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

### Repetition of other phrases in supplications.

The last part of the book is about the virtue of calling the Names and Attributes of Allah and its effect in fulfilling one's needs and requests. Ibn Tawus mentions three expressions, along with its the relevant narrations:

1. Repeating the following ten times: "يا الله" (O Allah!), recommended in the following narration:

اشْتَكَى بَعْضُ أَصْحَابِ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ ع فَقَالَ لَهُ قُلْ يَا اللَّهُ يَا اللَّهُ عَشْرَ مَرَّاتٍ مُتَتَابِعَاتٍ فَإِنَّهُ لَمْ يَفْلُحْ مُؤْمِنٌ إِلَّا قَالَ رَبُّهُ لَبَّيْكَ عَبْدِي سَلْ حَاجَتَكَ.<sup>19</sup>

One of the companions of Imam al-Baqir complained to him regarding a specific problem, whereupon the Imam said: 'Say 'O Allah' ten times; no believer does so except that his Lord responds: 'Here I am, O My servant! Ask me your request'.

2. Repeating the following ten times: "يا رب" (O my Lord!). Imam al-Sadiq said:

مَنْ قَالَ عَشْرَ مَرَّاتٍ يَا رَبِّ يَا رَبِّ قَالَ لَهُ رَبُّهُ لَبَّيْكَ سَلْ حَاجَتَكَ.<sup>20</sup>

"Whoever says 'O my Lord!' ten times, his Lord responds: 'Here I am. Ask your request.'"

3. Repeating the following three times: "أَيُّ رَبِّ" (O my Lord!). Imam al-Sadiq said:

إِنَّ الْعَبْدَ إِذَا قَالَ أَيُّ رَبِّ ثَلَاثًا صِيحَ مِنْ فَوْقِهِ لَبَّيْكَ سَلْ تُغْطَلَهُ.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p.89.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> See *Ibid.*

When a servant says 'O my Lord' three times, it will be called out from his above: 'Here I am. Ask [your request] and you will be given [what you have asked for].'

Sayyid ibn Tawus ends his invaluable book with the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> verses of the chapter *al-Zumar*:

فَبَشِّرْ عِبَادِ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ أَحْسَنَهُ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَاهُمُ اللَّهُ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمْ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ.

*So give good news to My servants who listen to the word [of Allah] and follow the best [sense] of it. They are the ones whom Allah has guided, and it is they who possess intellect.*

Undoubtedly, spiritual accounting is considered as an essential part of spiritual wayfaring. The guidelines, recommendations, and supplications mentioned by Sayyid ibn Tawus in his *Muhasaba al-Nafs* are of great value and importance for every wayfarer who aims at spiritual progress as outlined by the Prophet and Infallible Imams.

# LEGAL RULINGS DERIVED FROM QUR'ANIC STORIES, PART II

HAMID REZA FAHIMI-TABAR

TRANSLATED BY MAHBOOBEH MORSHEDIAN

**ABSTRACT:** Can legal rulings be derived from Qur'anic stories? Much of the Qur'an comprises of stories on specific nations and prophets of God. Based on narrations from the Ahlul Bayt, legal verses have indeed been derived from these universal stories. To demonstrate these rulings, the first part of this article used these narrations, using topics such as the permissibility of self-praise and dissimulation (*taqiyya*), and justifying punishment for the disabled and ill wrongdoers. This second part includes the implications or inspirations drawn from the Ahlul Bayt's method of interpretation of Qur'anic stories.

## Implications of the legal interpretation of Qur'anic Stories

“Implications” here refers to the inspirations derived from the Ahlul Bayt's legal interpretation of Qur'anic verses that make up stories. These implications stimulate our thinking and resolve some of the ambiguities in Qur'anic research. In this section, some fundamental questions on the abrogation of previous codes of religions law and the nature of the Qur'anic stories on the one hand; and implications drawn from the

process of legal interpretation of Qur'anic stories by the Ahlul Bayt on the other are addressed.

## **2.1. Legal interpretation of Qur'anic stories is considered a proof**

According to Shi'a beliefs, the Ahlul Bayt are regarded as the scientific and religious authority, after the Qur'an and Sunnah. Their sayings and actions are considered standard in every respect.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly to hadiths on Qur'anic commentary, fundamental principles of commentary can be explored, and the Ahlul Bayt's method of interpretation can be discovered.<sup>2</sup> It is also possible to check one's understanding of the Qur'an in terms of beliefs, moral principles, and legal rulings. The Ahlul Bayt referred to Arabic literature in understanding the Qur'an,<sup>3</sup> used some verses to understand others,<sup>4</sup> made Sunnah the means of interpreting the Qur'an,<sup>5</sup> used the decisive human findings to discover the aims of the verses,<sup>6</sup> encouraged people to resort to the Qur'an,<sup>7</sup> and never prohibited people from benefiting from the outward appearance of the it. Relying on the outward appearance of verses, linguistic and rational rules, the Ahlul Bayt deduced legal rulings from Qur'anic verses on the stories and has not prevented others from doing the same.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Babaei, 1385 solar: 57

<sup>2</sup> Tabataba'i, 1374: 64

<sup>3</sup> Babaei, 1385 solar: 104

<sup>4</sup> Tabataba'i, 1364, vol. 1:10

<sup>5</sup> Nasih, 1387 solar, 110

<sup>6</sup> Tabataba'i, 1364, 118 and 121

<sup>7</sup> Feiz, no date, vol.15

<sup>8</sup> Jawadi Amuli, 1384 solar, vol. 102

## 2.2. The multidimensional language of the Qur'an

Although classification and dissecting is an intellectual asset, this also suggests our mental limitations.<sup>9</sup> We can neither create nor recognize an unlimited product as befits it, so we classify to better understand them. Though it may be simple to classify limited human products, it is difficult to analyse the Qur'an thematically<sup>10</sup> because all its propositions are united and the verses are so intertwined that each verse is inclined to – and paves the way for – manifestation of the others. Thus, no verse can be studied separate from other verses.<sup>11</sup> All those who turned to the thematic interpretation of the Qur'an have acknowledged the difficulty of thematic analysis.<sup>12</sup> That may be why it has not been as voluminous as its sequential interpretation yet. Despite this fact, thematic interpretation, particularly interpretation of verses on legal rulings, has run its course, albeit with fluctuations.<sup>13</sup>

Deducing legal rulings from Qur'anic stories, the Ahlul Bayt have shown that the Qur'an has a multi-faceted language. In other words, Qur'anic stories should not be merely considered the artistic expression of documentary and real events; rather, the necessary legal rulings can be drawn from these documented events.

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<sup>9</sup> Muzaffar, 1400 A.H., 106 & 107

<sup>10</sup> Misbah, 1373 solar: 10

<sup>11</sup> Jawadi, no date, vol.1:15

<sup>12</sup> Makarem Shirazi, 1370 solar: 30; Raja'i, 1386 solar: 20

<sup>13</sup> Makarim Shirazi, 1370 solar, 25-30

### 2.3. The expansion and development of Qur'anic verses on legal rulings

The development of a legal approach to thematic interpretation dates back to the second century A.H. Mohammed ibn Sa'ib Kalbi,<sup>14</sup> who authored *The Qur'anic Rulings*.<sup>15</sup> For a thousand years or so, the number of legal verses fluctuated depending on the researchers' views. Allegedly, the first person to consider legal verses to be 500 in number was Maqatil ibn Sulayman, though some have doubted this number. Muhaqqiq Ardabili thought the number to be 370, Fazil Miqdad fewer than 500, and Abdullah ibn Mubarak 900.<sup>16</sup> These differences are rooted in researchers' aptitude, legal and interpretative principles, scientific approach, and the requirements of their time and setting.<sup>17</sup>

The impact of researchers' social situations and scientific approaches to verses can be clearly observed in the literature of the recent decades. For example, we know that verse no. 246 and 247 of the chapter *al-Baqarah* tells the story of Saul and Goliath. Muntazeri searched for the characteristics of an Islamic ruler in this story,<sup>18</sup> and from it Khaza'ili concluded the connection and association between political and religious leadership of society.<sup>19</sup> 'Amid Zanjani deduced giving full measure from verse 88 of the chapter *Yusuf* and *advocacy* from verse 19 of the chapter *al-Kahf*.<sup>20</sup> In addition, Ayatollah Qurbani concluded the legal ruling of

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<sup>14</sup> date of death: 146 A.H.

<sup>15</sup> Ayazi, 1380 solar: 36; Alawi Mehr, 1381:67

<sup>16</sup> Ayazi, 1380: 122

<sup>17</sup> See Jurjani, 1329: 203, 106; Miqdad, 1343, vol.1: 20, vol.2: 11

<sup>18</sup> Muntazeri, 1409 A.H.: 282, 289

<sup>19</sup> Khaza'ili, 1358 solar, 564, 567

<sup>20</sup> Amid Zanjani, 1388 solar:171, 203 & 230

enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, along with its requirements, from verses 16-166 of the chapter *al-'Araf*;<sup>21</sup> and Hashemi Rafsanjani inferred to the necessity of evaluating how obedient the forces under command are from the verse 251 of the chapter *al-Baqarah* as well as the necessity of patience by the one who spends in the way of God from verse 262 of the same chapter.<sup>22</sup>

As mentioned in hadiths on interpretation in the first part of the article, the Ahlul Bayt have presented a normative understanding of the stories that are statements. Thus, following the Ahlul Bayt and observing the linguistic and conversational rational rules, we can take a legal approach and deduce the necessary legal rulings from Qur'anic verses on stories, or at least we can confirm the commands and prohibitions found in the Qur'an and Sunnah. Of course, in the Qur'anic stories, legal rulings are not expressed as commands, prohibitions, and being obligatory and forbidden. Thus, in the verses on stories, there is increasing flexibility, and of course, the jurists face a far more difficult task. However, a legal approach to Qur'anic stories develops Qur'anic legal sources and gives jurists opportunities to respond to modern needs.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, the researcher on Islamic jurisprudence does not have to merely search in the commands and prohibitions of the Qur'an for legal rulings and does not have to limit himself to its normative phrases. Accordingly, the legal Qur'anic verses both expand and develop.

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<sup>21</sup> Qurbani, 1380 solar, no.7, 132

<sup>22</sup> Hashemi Rafsanjani et al., 1380, vol. 2:88, 239

<sup>23</sup> Ayazi, 1380: 360

## 2.4. Legal rulings beyond time

A significant part of legal rulings in the Qur'an is related to a specific time in the history and a specific region. Sacrificing one's children for idols and dividing the sacrificed animal among God and His associates in the sphere of religious and society are instances indicating the careful attention the Qur'an gives to its initial addressees. Naturally, a book that presents a new system of life cannot overlook realities. Only through addressing these matters was it possible to correct the Arabs' beliefs and behaviours as the primary audience of the Qur'an as related to Jinns, angels, God, Resurrection, worship, and trade. Therefore, the majority of Qur'anic beliefs and legal rulings are Arabic in nature. These beliefs and behaviours addressed in the Qur'an remind us of the tribal and geographical aspects of it to such an extent that the customs, habits, beliefs, teachings, and worldviews of the people in the time of revelation were included in the divine word in a deliberate manner. Therefore, if the Ptolemaic astronomy or Galen medicine is reflected in the Qur'an, they should not be denied even though this knowledge is currently outdated.<sup>24</sup>

The Qur'an is the language of a tribe, which means it is culture-bound. The language of each tribe reflects its culture, beliefs, theories and worldviews.<sup>25</sup> The Prophet received the revealed Qur'an in the language of the Arabian Peninsula in the seventh century A.D.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Khorramshahi, 1374 solar, issue 5: 91

<sup>25</sup> Jalili, issue 3:40

<sup>26</sup> Farasatkah, no date: 33 &1:29

Of course, the theory that the Qur'an is time-bound has been criticized.<sup>27</sup> As this is beyond the constraints of this paper, what is important is the consequences of this view. According to this theory, the scientific durability and reliability of the verses on legal rulings come under question because the time-bound legal rulings do not apply to all eras; rather, they are age-specific and reflect a specific culture.<sup>28</sup>

However, the interpretive hadiths mentioned in the first part of the article which contain legal rulings drawn from Qur'anic stories indicate that Qur'anic legal rulings go beyond time and negate the absolutism found in the theory of time-bound Qur'anic rulings. Some rulings were inferred from the verses on stories 200 years after the revelation, and considering the fact that the Ahlul Bayt's words are authoritative, it is clear that these verses go beyond time.

## **2.5. The legal rulings of shari'ahs before Islam are not abrogated**

In Islamic principles, *abrogation* technically refers to elimination of a former law by a subsequent one in a way that these two laws are in a complementary distribution and cannot co-exist; the reason for this can be found in their inherent discord or scholars' consensus and explicit text.<sup>29</sup> However, the context of some verses on stories shows that the legal rulings of previous shari'ahs were still in force after Islam.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ayazi, 1380 solar: 65

<sup>28</sup> Farasatkah, no date, 129

<sup>29</sup> Marefat, 1425 A.H., vol. 2: 277

<sup>30</sup> Modir Shanehchi, 1380 solar: 329

On the basis of definition of abrogation and the rule of “no abrogation” in Islam, abrogation of any legal ruling in shari’ah needs a definite reason.<sup>31</sup> Thus, scholars of Islamic jurisprudence refer to the rule of “no abrogation” in deducing legal rulings from Qur’anic stories. The contemporary Qur’anic scholar, Amid Zanjani wrote, “The durability of legal rulings of previous Shari’ahs – as long as they are not abrogated – is considered not only a requirement of principle of *istishab* (continuity) but also a definite principle in Islam.

Some narrations suggesting the derivation of legal rulings from the Qur’anic verses on stories confirm that some rulings of religions prior to Islam are not abrogated. They also demonstrate that the Ahlul Bayt did not consider some rulings before Islam as abrogated.

## **2.6. Distinguishing fixed legal rulings from the variable ones**

A requirement of Mohammedan religion is that it is not abrogated; rather, it is eternal. But how can belief in eternity of rules on the one hand and time change and constant variation in different aspects of human life on the other coexist? This is the question believers have attempted to answer because at first glance, time change and eternity of rules which imply a fixed nature are polar opposites that cannot coexist.<sup>32</sup> There have been discussions on features of fixed and variable legal rulings. As a result, there appeared a new discussion on “Islam and time requirements” in which Islamic rulings are divided into two: fixed

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<sup>31</sup> Muzaffar, 1405 A.H., vol. 2:52

<sup>32</sup> Mutahhari, 1372:11

and variable.<sup>33</sup> However, there are opinions about which ruling is fixed or variable, and about the criteria to distinguish them. Some believe the eternal, fixed rulings meet our permanent needs, and variable rulings depend on our changeable needs. Others believe that “value-laden principles” are eternal and originate from man’s monotheistic conduct, and all rulings on family and social matters, government, judgment, punishment, and trade follow from – and depend on – these value-laden principles.<sup>34</sup> Accordingly, value-laden principles are referred to as the primordial commands, prohibitions, and regulations are the secondary ones.<sup>35</sup> Others regard fixed rulings as general ones, believing general rulings are considered as principles and regulations; while variable ones should be regarded as minor ones inferred by experts from general rulings, depending on man’s life and his situations.<sup>36</sup> What different views have in common is the acknowledgment of the existence of inalterable rulings and principles in Islam, but the views on what makes fixed rulings distinct from variable ones differ.<sup>37</sup> Another group have regarded justice as the fixed principle and believe rulings follow from it, still another group have criticized this view due to changeability of the concept of justice.<sup>38</sup> Finally, some scholars have considered the humanistic aspects as the eternal criterion of rulings,<sup>39</sup> and as a way out of the problem posed by the concepts of fixed and variable, they have introduced this criteria as “identifying the topic of ruling”, “social condition of understanding it”, “the occasion and the reason for its

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<sup>33</sup> Mutahhari, 1383:218

<sup>34</sup> Mujtahid Shabestari, 1379 solar, 86-87, 188

<sup>35</sup> Mujtahid Shabestari, 1379 b: 105, 159, 264, 269

<sup>36</sup> Ayazi, 1380 solar: 285, 287

<sup>37</sup> Sa’idi Roshan, 1380 solar: 354, 355

<sup>38</sup> Misbah, 1388 solar:147

<sup>39</sup> Ayazi, 1380 solar: 138

revelation”, “discovering the criterion of ruling through division” and “how conditions have changed compared to the time the ruling was issued.”<sup>40</sup>

After the above introduction, the question is raised: many years after the prophetic mission of Prophet Muhammad, if an infallible Imam deduced a ruling from a Qur’anic story, was it fixed or variable? When Imam al-Rida – using the verse, “*My covenant does not include the unjust*” (*al-Baqarah*, 124) – considered justice the condition for legitimacy of a ruler, can it not be regarded as a fixed ruling? Or when Imam al-Sadiq deduced mitigation of punishment of a diseased male or female sinner from the Qur’anic verse, can’t this mitigation be regarded as a ruling beyond time? No doubt, the era and circumstances of Imams also entailed some requirements, and from the Ahlul Bayt’s words when deducing legal rulings from the Qur’anic verses on stories, we can conclude that a ruling is either fixed or variable. In the same way, from the Imam’s conduct during 250 years, variable and invariant principles can be inferred, and variables of their conduct can be discovered as well.<sup>41</sup>

## 2.7. Qur’anic stories are real

After dramatic developments in empirical sciences during the industrial revolution in the West, the sciences became the measure of truth; philosophers tuned into researching the facts and the truth.<sup>42</sup> They considered the real and authentic proposition to be the one whose

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<sup>40</sup> Ayazi, 1380 solar, 297- 295

<sup>41</sup> Mutahhari, 1377: 16

<sup>42</sup> Mutahhari, 1373: 204

veracity or falsity could be proved through experience and experimentation. The empiricism of John Locke, David Hume, and Berkeley disregarded intellectual knowledge, thus limiting it to the five senses.<sup>43</sup> However, some Muslims tried to understand the Qur'an from a positivist approach. They argued that there was no conflict between human findings and sciences and the Qur'anic revelation-based insights.

One example to demonstrate the consistency of Qur'anic teachings with empirical findings is Sayyid Ahmad Khan Hindi's<sup>44</sup> interpretations of – and justifications about – the angels, Jinns, the Trusted Spirit, revelation, and metaphysical issues related to the unseen world as mentioned in the Qur'an.<sup>45</sup>

Muhammad ibn Ahmad Khalaf-Allah was another figure who believed that the Qur'an does not seek to present facts and real events. He held that it is necessary to compare some Qur'anic stories with historical facts as Qur'anic stories do not aim to provide us with realities and facts; it narrates events and people in an artistic and literary manner, telling the stories prevalent in the time it was revealed.<sup>46</sup>

The functional view of Qur'anic stories deny its reality, as if they are similar to fantasy stories, with their special geometric structure that are evaluated against their specific criteria. In contrast, Qur'anic stories are believed to document actual events and are void of fiction, fantasy, and imagination.<sup>47</sup> Of course, the Qur'an does not talk about lacklustre and

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<sup>43</sup> Fa'ali, 1377 solar: 60

<sup>44</sup> Date of birth, 1232 A.H

<sup>45</sup> Khorramshahi, 1376 solar: 223

<sup>46</sup> Khalaf-Allah, 1999: 152

<sup>47</sup> Bostani, 1376 solar: 13-14

literal realities; rather, its language is realistic, with an artistic structure. Realism in art does not mean the denial of real-world events.<sup>48</sup>

The fact that the Ahlul Bayt as the true interpreters of Qur'anic stories and had a legal understanding of them reveals that these stories are real, that they expressed the realities of man's life which are universal. Those one who comes across Qur'anic stories discover real events within its themes,<sup>49</sup> learns the rules of life, and adjusts his relation with God accordingly.

## 2.8 The single truth of the divine religions

The Qur'an considers all divine religions as one: "*He has made plain to you of the religion what He enjoined upon Nuh and that which We have revealed to you*" (Shura, 13), and calls this single religion Islam, "*Ibrahim was not a Jew nor a Christian but he was [an] upright [man], a Muslim*" (Ale-Imran, 67). However, there are some differences in some rulings of this unified religion depending on the time and its requirements: "*To each among you have we prescribed a law and an open way*" (Ma'idah, 48). Nevertheless, the differences between religions and their rules do not have any impact on the essence and nature of the single religion. They differ in the plans implemented in a country, albeit once.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, there are no rulings on acts of worship such as legal purity, prayer, fasting, and the greater and the lesser Hajj as well as economic and political rulings in the Mohammedan religion that are unprecedented in previous religions.<sup>51</sup> An outcome of drawing legal

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<sup>48</sup> Hosseini, 1377: 46 & 82

<sup>49</sup> Bostani, 1376 solar: 14

<sup>50</sup> Mutahhari, no date: 13, 20

<sup>51</sup> Ayazi, 1380: 138, 167

rulings from verses on stories by the Ahlul Bayt is, in fact, a revival of the rulings of the divine single religion, and it demonstrates the unfired truth and nature of religions and the similar and consistent forms of religious rules.

## Conclusion

While interpreting the Qur'an, the Ahlul Bayt deduced legal rulings from Qur'anic stories and referred to the verses in issuing most legal rulings. In the first section, a few instances were given; for example, taking a government post in false political systems, permissibility of self-praise and drawing lots, recommending a woman who has just borne a baby to eat dates, recommending Muslims to enter Mecca in a pure state, knowledge about conditions for enjoining good and forbidding evil, a woman not needing to compensate for prayers not performed during menstruation, mitigating a diseased sinner's punishment, and the legal ruling of prayers not performed.

Examining the Ahlul Bayt's method in deducing legal rulings and interpreting past peoples' events and previous prophets' lives legally, we conclude that the Ahlul Bayt considered the divine religions to entail a single truth, and according to them, some legal rulings of shariahs before Islam are not abrogated and can be used in – and referred to – in deducing legal rulings. On the basis of the Ahlul Bayt's legal interpretation of prophetic and Qur'anic stories, not only is it proved that Qur'anic stories are real but also deducing legal rulings from such stories is valid; the legal rulings that go beyond time and last to the present. Thus, it is possible to raise and examine the issue of discovering

the Ahlul Bayt's interpretation method as the standard method of understanding legal rulings from Qur'anic stories. Delineating this method, we see development and change of Qur'anic resources of legal rulings. This procedure itself indicates the multi-faceted language of the Qur'an; thus, the analysis of Qur'anic stories expands, and we can involve these verses in the legal understanding and deduction of legal rulings.

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# COMMUNITY BUILDING IN ISLAM, PART II<sup>1</sup>

MOHAMMAD ALI SHOMALI

**ABSTRACT:** Though personal identity is truly important, it is essential for a community to likewise have an identity that is shared by other members of the same group, and to work in a united way for the same causes. Regardless of whether it is on a worldwide or lesser scale, establishing a community is currently becoming more crucial. To consider a group of people a successful community involves specific requirements and qualities. The first part of this series demonstrated the importance of community-building and Prophet Muhammad's efforts to put it into practice. Prioritized qualities were expounded on, such as truthfulness, trustworthiness, persistence, and maintaining a healthy balance in working for this world to eventually lead to a blissful hereafter. This part further builds upon qualities such as moderation, humbleness, enjoining good and forbidding wrong, unity, truth, justice, environmental awareness, and having firm faith in God.

## Introduction

The issue on how to establish an Islamic Community has always been of great importance but is especially so for today, whether it is on a general

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<sup>1</sup> This series is based on a nine-session course conducted by the author on Community Building at the Islamic Centre of England in London in 2009.

scale in the worldwide Islamic community or on a smaller scale in minority Muslim communities in non-Muslim countries. It is essential for us to know the qualities and characteristics of an Islamic Community and how we can move towards establishing it. It is not simply the case that when we have a number of Muslims living, working or worshipping together that we can finally call it an Islamic community. However, in many cases this is actually what we find: a group of Muslims interacting together is deemed an Islamic community, even though it is not. As we will explain, a community must be a very unified and integrated group of people who behave like one body, and in addition to his or her own personal identity, every individual should have an identity that is shared with other members of the community. All must work together in a united way for the same causes.

This article in this series briefly highlights some of the most important points relating to this issue, which will then be further elaborated on in future parts of the series.

### **An Islamic community is moderate and balanced**

In the previous session we reached the stage of talking about this verse:

*Thus We have made you a middle nation that you may be witnesses to the people, and that the Apostle may be a witness to you. (2:143)*

Allah emphasises that the Muslim nation must be a moderate and balanced one – a nation that does not go to any extremes – so that this nation can become witnesses over other people in the same way that the Prophet is a witness over them. A crucial point in this verse is rather

than merely verbally instruct others on the Prophet's teachings and conduct, we are to demonstrate them through our conduct and interpersonal relations. Only then can we enable ourselves to be a testimony and witness for what the Prophet taught just as the Prophet did himself.<sup>2</sup>

## Examples of balanced Islamic community

### Material and spiritual life

One aspect of being moderate and balanced is to strike a balance between being materially or spiritually inclined by paying attention to both the physical, material life in this world and to make preparations for life in the Hereafter, as Imam Hasan said: "With respect to your life in this world, be as if you are going to remain here forever."<sup>3</sup> As both an individual and part of a society, Muslims neither sacrifice the material world for the sake of the Hereafter, nor do they sacrifice the Hereafter for the sake of this life. Indeed, these two aspects of life greatly complement each other. We have a better chance of working successfully for our eternal life if we have a decent and comfortable life in this world. As previously said, it is for this reason that all the prophets attempted and struggled to establish social justice (57:25).

<sup>2</sup> Imam Ali (a) is also quoted as saying:

ما امرتكم بشيء إلا وقد سبقتم بالعمل به، ولا نهيتكم عن شيء إلا وقد سبقتم بالنهي عنه  
I did not ask you to do anything unless I preceded you in doing it. And I did not ask you to refrain from anything except that I myself was the first to act thus so. (*Nahj al-Balaghah*, Sermon 157)

<sup>3</sup> *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 44, p. 139. The hadith is as follows:

وَ اعْمَلْ لِدُنْيَاكَ كَأَنَّكَ تَعِيشُ أَبَدًا وَ اعْمَلْ لِآخِرَتِكَ كَأَنَّكَ تَمُوتُ غَدًا

When people have peace of mind while living conveniently, they are better able to concentrate on fulfilling their spiritual needs.

### Treatment of differing ideas and opinions

An Islamic society must be balanced and moderate in its treatment of other people's differing views. Some societies and communities are closed-minded – automatically against any new way of thinking or living. On the other extreme, some societies and communities are open to such an extent that they are unable to make judgements and cannot choose between what is beneficial or not, since they simply accept everything.

An Islamic society has a clear policy: we are open to everything that is good. We are to firstly acknowledge and secondly accept anything good, whether it is from our friends or enemies; whether they are from believers or unbelievers. On the other hand, we are to reject anything bad even if they are from our friends or fellow believers. We are to be very selective while at the same time open; a combination of both attitudes is needed. Indeed to some extent, this has been the case with the Muslim nations throughout history; they strived to benefit from the scientific and technological information of other nations.

Thus, we must not only verbally declare that we are open, but rather to have open hearts – to see goodness even in our enemy. In one anecdote, Prophet Jesus was passing by a dead dog with his companions who were his apostles. Everything seemed to be disgusting about this dog, as they criticized it by commenting on its ugliness and its odour. But Prophet Jesus said, “What white teeth this dog has.” With all its negative traits,

Jesus found and acknowledged the good in it. Likewise, we are to acknowledge anything good, even when it is in our enemies. As the Qur'an says:

*O you who have faith! Be maintainers, as witnesses for the sake of God, of justice, and ill feeling for a people should never lead you to be unjust. Be just; that is nearer to Godwariness, and be wary of God. God is indeed well aware of what you do. (5:8)*

### A decent life and balanced use of technology

An Islamic society must not deprive itself from having a convenient and comfortable life. Technology is one aspect that has, to a more or lesser extent, offered convenience. We are not against technology. There are those who deem technology as an obstacle to good living. For example, in North America, there are those with good intentions and ideas, and yet believe modernity to be a deprivation to humankind, that with the development of technology and our dependency on machines, we have been greatly deprived of the concentration and peace of mind we had in the past. Thus, they do not use such things as electricity, telephones, and cars. Though their intentions and ideas may be good, this attitude seems somehow not right or appropriate.

We must not be against technology or using machines; at the same time, we must not rely on them so much that we become weak and dependent. Nowadays there are machines for practically everything, even to simply peel an orange or to de-stone an olive, or using our car to drive a few minutes walking distance. We have become so dependent;

we almost cannot live without electricity, cell phones, internet, and cars. Perhaps a good idea is to have a policy that technology should also be governed by certain moral principles so that not everything scientists invent and produce and out of which people can make money is permitted in the market. This is a field in which we are to maintain a balanced attitude. We should encourage scientists to develop the scientific research because as far as science is concerned, we have no limits. However, when it comes to technology, research methods, and introducing scientific findings, then caution should be considered in observing moral requirements. We should refrain from producing everything in our capacity without restrictions.

### **Characteristics of those living in an Islamic community**

#### Righteousness and moderation

In Nahjul Balaghah, Imam Ali talks about Prophet Muhammad, saying, “So he threw open the Truth, gave advice to the people, guided them towards **righteousness**, and ordered them to be **moderate**.”<sup>4</sup>

People are either balanced or acting in the wrong way. In the Qur’an, we read:

*Had they observed the Taurat and the Injeel and what was sent down to them from their Lord, they would surely have drawn nourishment from above them and from beneath their feet. (5:66)*

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<sup>4</sup> Sermon 195 (according to some editions, it may be Sermon 194)

The Jews and the Christians are being told that if they had established and implemented the teachings of *Taurat* (the Torah) and *Injeel* (the Gospel) in their lives and in their societies, they would have been able to have drawn nourishment from above and from beneath their feet, and this means to benefit from the Divine Blessings coming from above and below them, in other words, a prosperous life. Then Allah says: “*There is a balanced (muktasidah) group among them, but evil is what many of them do.*” The people who believed in *Taurat* and *Injeel* were divided. Some of them were balanced (*muktasidah*) and moderate, but on the other hand there were people who were acting inappropriately: “*...but evil is what many of them do.*” In other words, they were either balanced or acted wrongly, displaying the significance of being balanced.

#### Humbleness and balance

In the *Sermon on the Pious*, Imam Ali uses the root ‘*iktisaad*’. ‘*Muktasad*’ sometimes means economical though in many cases it means to be balanced. Imam Ali refers to the pious people as “those who are humble and balanced in their life.”

There are also further verses from the Qur’an regarding this subject which can be used for further reading and reflection. Verse 25 of Surah Furqan emphasises on the necessity of balance and moderation in giving charity. Verse 110 of Surah Israa also highlights the need for striking a balance in the volume of our voice during prayer and calling on Allah – that is, to avoid praying in either a loud or very soft voice.

## The Islamic community is the best nation in benefiting others

In verse 3:110 we read:

*You are the best nation (ever) brought forth for mankind: you bid what is right and forbid what is wrong and have faith in Allah. And if the People of the Book had believed, it would have been better for them. Among them (some) are faithful, but most of them are transgressors.*

The Muslim community is the best nation to have been brought out, which means the best nation to have been created, declared, and introduced by God for the sake of humankind. It is worth noting that the Arabic word ‘*naas*’ means the whole of mankind.

This is quite different from apartheid or racism because this does not mean that we should consider ourselves to be the best in the sense that we should be served by others. It means that we are those who are best able to benefit and serve others so that mankind benefits from us more than it does from other people.

### Reasons for being described as the best nation

The verse then goes on to explain a few of the reasons why Allah has declared that the Muslim Nation (*Ummah*) is the best Ummah to serve and benefit mankind, although of course there may be other reasons found elsewhere.

Enjoining good and prohibiting bad: The Qur’an says: “*You bid what is right and forbid what is wrong and have faith in Allah.*”

We uphold the principle that we should not be indifferent towards what people do. What makes the Islamic Ummah capable of being the best at serving humankind is feeling responsible for encouraging good actions and requesting others not to do wrong. This shows the significance of enjoining good and prohibiting bad, because it is the first quality mentioned by Allah after calling the Islamic nation the best nation. People are always in need of mutual advice, support, and guidance. No one should think that they are not in need of advice or guidance from others when doing wrong, or any encouragement when doing right.

The Islamic Ummah must be able to offer testimony for moral and social values not only in word but also in deed. For example, nowadays many societies, especially modern ones, are suffering from the breakdown of families. We should stand up for family values in words and practise to model the proper way of safeguarding the family.

### Faith in God

Commenting on “*and have faith in God (tu’minun-a billah)* (3:110),” in his *Al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur’an*, Allamah Tabatabai mentions that faith in God (*tuminun-a billah*) is the foundation for enjoining good and prohibiting bad, because faith is mentioned at the end. Of course, there are also other interpretations. However, what is perhaps sufficient for us is to know that enjoining good, prohibiting bad, and having complete faith in Allah help the Islamic community survive and benefit and serve others. Similarly, verse 3:104 reads: “*There has to be a nation among you summoning to the good, bidding what is right and forbidding what is wrong. It is they who are felicitous.*”

Question: Is enjoining good and prohibiting bad the responsibility of a few or all members of the community? In both *Al-Mizan* and *Tafseer Nemuneh* – two contemporary exegeses of the Qur’an – it is explained that there must exist a group within the Islamic nations who enjoin good and prohibit bad on behalf of the entire community, although to a smaller extent this is also the responsibility of every person. A select qualified group of people should enjoin good and prohibit bad, and also call and invite everyone towards good.

I have another point of view. “*There has to be a nation among you*” does not necessarily refer to a certain group of people who enjoin good. I think that in this case, “*minkum*” does not mean ‘part’ or ‘some’; rather, it means ‘from.’ Thus, the phrase becomes ‘*from you*’ a community must be produced, or from among this nation a nation must be produced that enjoins good and forbids bad. Therefore, it does not mean that only some of us, a select group of us are to do this because that would then create various problems and complications around the question of why only a select group of people. Of course, the authors have attempted to answer it. However, again, my opinion is that “*minkum*” means ‘from,’ so we should understand that from this nation we must make a nation that follows a principle and practise of enjoining everyone towards good and prohibiting bad. Such people are described as those who are felicitous, which is also a good support for this interpretation, because Allah is saying it is those who will be happy and who will attain salvation. So according to the first interpretation only those select people will obtain salvation and so surely we should ask

what happens to the rest of the Ummah? Yet with the second interpretation, salvation and happiness are achievable for all.

Unity is essential for the effectiveness of the community

Preceding the above verse is a very famous and well-known verse:

*Hold fast, all together, to Allah's cord and do not be divided (into sects). And remember Allah's blessing upon you when you were enemies, then He brought your hearts together, so you became brothers with His blessing. And you were on the brink of a pit of Fire, whereat He saved you from it. Thus does Allah clarify His signs for you so that you may be guided. (3:103)*

Allah advises us to hold onto the divine rope and not to become divided by fighting each other; and to remember that because of His blessing our hearts are united. Allah has saved us from falling into the hell of hostility and separation that leads to the fire of eternal Hell, and has explained His communications for us to find the right path.

Immediately after this, Allah speaks of the essential necessity of producing from amongst us a community that calls people towards good and prohibits bad. He is telling us that firstly the Muslim community must be united; if we are disunited then whatever we do is useless. If we, as individual Muslims or as a community disagree amongst ourselves, disapprove of what other people say and criticise each other, then we cannot positively influence other communities and they would not deem it necessary to learn from us. Although we could possibly

agree on some terms due to some similar doctrines, when they witness hostility amongst ourselves, they will not be prepared to take seriously what we say. Indeed, this is exactly why the Qur'an says: "*And obey God and His Apostle, and do not dispute, or you will lose heart and your power will be gone. And be patient; indeed God is with the patient.*" (8:46) Having no fragrance is having no effect, rendering us useless.

### Concern for oneself versus responsibility towards society

The following verse which is sometimes misunderstood is beautifully explained by the late Allamah Tabatabai. Allah says:

*O you who have faith! Take care of your own souls. He who goes astray cannot hurt you if you are guided. To Allah will be the return of you all, whereat He will inform you concerning what you used to do. (5:105)*

Some people think Allah is saying that we must only be concerned with ourselves – our personal lives and our relationship with God – without having social responsibilities towards others. They think that what other people do has nothing to do with them and is no concern of theirs. However this is a misunderstanding of this verse.

"*Take care of your own souls*" does not discharge our social responsibilities, that we put aside our role in enjoining good and prohibiting bad. Since, as we know, one part of the Qur'an can interpret another part of the Qur'an, is it possible that "*Take care of your own souls*" means we should have nothing to do with other people when

there are many verses about enjoining good and prohibiting bad? On the contrary, the verse means that each and every one of us must do our very best to fulfil our obligations and responsibilities. Once we perform our duties properly, whatever others do or not do will not harm us. We are to enjoin good whether people listen to us or not, and even if they do not listen, it will not harm us. If all of humanity decides to go in the wrong direction, it will not harm us in the least if we are on the Right Path. This is especially encouraging for those who want to get involved in the community for fear of not feeling appreciated or supported. It is encouraging to know that we should simply do our best and not need to worry about whether other people appreciate or not, listen or not, or go in the same direction or not. None of this would harm us. It is sufficient for us if we please Allah by fulfilling the requirements of being an active member of society and it is irrelevant whether other people accept or not.

Thus “*Take care of your own souls*” means to fulfil whatever we need for our personal and social development and for achieving proximity to Allah.

### **Qualities of an Islamic community**

The following is a list of several qualities of an Islamic community for further reflection.

#### Truth and Justice

An Islamic community is very concerned with truth and justice. In two places in the Qur’an, Allah is clear and direct about the community as

that which is concerned with truth and justice. Moreover, there are dozens of other verses regarding the general importance of truth and justice.

Verse 7:159 reveals the truthfulness of the community who truly followed Prophet Musa: “*Among the people (or community) of Moses is a group who guide (the people) by the truth and do justice thereby.*” This warrants a detailed discussion about how a community can and must be truthful just as an individual person must be truthful. Just as some people can be hypocritical and dishonest, communities can also be hypocritical and dishonest.

The above-quoted verse reveals that indeed there is a group of people who guide truthfully, who when they give advice, they implement that in themselves; they do not cheat, deceive others, or show off. “*...and do justice thereby*” means they truthfully try to exercise justice.

In verse 181 of the same chapter, a more general idea is stated: “*Among those We have created are a nation who guide by the truth and act justly thereby.*” The previous verse included “*among the people of Moses,*” but this verse states “*Among those We have created.*”

Thus, one of the requirements of a good community, pleasing to Allah, and whom Allah is happy with, is that they must follow the truth, be truthful, and establish justice.

### Rationality

From the Qur’anic point of view, a good community is one in which rationality governs every aspect of life. A Muslim community must be a

rational community that can think clearly and carefully, and decipher right from wrong based on the Qur'an and Sunnah. It is not a closed-minded community that blindly follows certain customs or the ways of its ancestors. Rationality is essential, especially in the school of the Ahlul Bayt. Even our ijtiḥad is performed in a rational way; reason is one of the sources we use in understanding Islam, particularly for deriving Islamic law.

### Seeking Knowledge

An Islamic community is greatly interested in acquiring knowledge and developing different types of sciences. When Prophet Muhammad started his mission, the number of people able to read and write in the entire Arabian Peninsula was extremely limited; the literate were known by name due to their scarcity. However, in a few years, that ignorant society transformed so much that many sciences had been developed. Firstly, the Qur'anic sciences were numerous. In addition to developing religious sciences, they also developed and enhanced sciences from other nations such as philosophy and logic; and experimental sciences such as chemistry, physics, geography, and geology. Indeed, the Muslim community was so advanced and ahead of other nations that during the Middle Ages, Europe greatly benefited from them; they were compelled to translate the numerous philosophical and scientific books from Arabic into Latin to run their universities as they functioned using those texts.

Why did the Prophet place so much emphasis on knowledge? Why does the Qur'an say, "*Are those who know equal to those who do not know?*"

(39:9)” Why did the Prophet say “Seek knowledge even as far away as China.”<sup>5</sup>

A community will die without knowledge. For a society or community, knowledge and new scientific discoveries are like taking in fresh oxygen. Though religious sciences are vital, Islam encourages seeking any type of scientific knowledge. At the time when the Prophet said “Seek knowledge even as far away as China,” there were no Muslim scholars in China to teach Islamic ethics or Qur’anic interpretation. We should seek all useful available knowledge. For example, there are those who spend their lives researching knowledge that does not have any positive effect. That type of knowledge is irrelevant, although we are not entirely against it. As previously mentioned, there is no limit regarding the acquisition of scientific knowledge but pursuing something without benefit is not very much encouraged. Conversely, Islam is highly open to the development of any type of knowledge or science, whether religious or not, that can be beneficial to mankind, a small group of people, or even an individual. One just should observe the priorities.

### Charity

Charity and charitable organisations, movements, and enterprises are required in Islam. In an Islamic community, charity is part of every person’s life. It is not something marginal, nor accidental. In the Qur’an, dozens of verses on giving alms is mentioned immediately after prayer, which is undoubtedly extremely important – one of the pillars and foundations of Muslim life. In many verses, giving charity is

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<sup>5</sup> For example, see *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 1, pp. 177 & 180.

mentioned immediately after the establishment of prayer which shows its vital importance. A key verse reads as follows:

*Those who, if We granted them power in the land, maintain the prayer, give the alms, and bid what is right and forbid what is wrong. And with Allah rests the outcome of all matters. (22:41)*

The Qur'an also teaches us that we should feel obliged to have a fixed budget for charitable purposes in both our personal and communal possessions:

*...and there was a share in their wealth for the beggar and the deprived. (51:19)*

*...and in whose wealth there is a fixed share for the beggar and the deprived (70:24 and 25)*

### Environmental awareness

An Islamic community and society should pay due care and attention to the environment, and must not waste or damage it. The environment is a trust. There are two types of trust according to Islam: those that can be utilised and those which cannot, and environment is understandably an aspect that can be used. For example, if someone leaves on a trip and entrusts his or her laptop to us, we cannot use it unless we are specifically told that we can do so. Or someone entrusts us with money and asks us to look after it till he or she returns. This is then a trust we cannot use. However, there are those who permit us to use their laptop or money until they return. So trusts can sometimes be used or

sometimes should not be used. All these natural resources are given to us as trusts from Allah for our use. For example, the Qur'an says:

*Do you not see that God has disposed for you whatever there is in the heavens and whatever there is in the earth and He has showered upon you His blessings, the outward and the inward? Yet among the people are those who dispute concerning God without any knowledge or guidance or an illuminating scripture. (31:20)*

We can use water, air, minerals, oil – pretty much everything provided for us. We can benefit from animals and plants, while remembering that they are still trusts. We must not harm, waste, or damage them. We are responsible for developing them. As Allah says in the Qur'an, "...He brought you forth from the earth and asked you to develop it..." (11:61) Attention to the environment is a great concern for an Islamic community.

### Security

Everyone must feel safe in an Islamic community. This is not only in the sense of there being no war; this concerns something much more than that. In an Islamic community, we should feel safe in the sense that we must not feel any threat from our fellow brothers or sisters. This is the overwhelming sense of safety and security that we need to have. When we have tens, hundreds, or even thousands of people living in such a community, everyone must feel sure that no one will plot against them, or have ill will; no one will try to damage their reputation, and indeed, no one will allow others to damage their reputation. Sincerely

implementing this Islamic principle would bring much safety and security to everyone. In a hadith from Prophet Muhammad (s) we read: “A Muslim is the one that other Muslims feel safe from his hand and from his tongue.”<sup>6</sup>

Unfortunately, sometimes we fail to respect the reputation of our own brothers and sisters, let alone non-Muslims. We must prevent ourselves from damaging others’ reputations. According to a hadith, a believer (*mu’min*) has so much respect in the sight of Allah that their respect for them exceeds the respect for the Ka’aba. Who dares to insult the Ka’aba? Is there any Muslim who disrespects the Ka’aba? If a *mu’min* has to be more respected than the Ka’aba, then how can we allow ourselves to do something that would damage a fellow believer? How can we allow ourselves to remain silent and indifferent to other people damaging our fellow believers? This is not Islamic.

In an Islamic society, we can ensure that everyone only wishes good for us and would defend us in our absence. If we have such a spirit in our lives and in our community, then life becomes joyful, like Heaven on earth.

### Family solidarity and strength

Families must be very strong in an Islamic society. The relationships between parents and children, husbands and wives, and between the older generation and the younger generation must be strong and firm. Indeed, this must also spread out to include the extended family of

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<sup>6</sup> *Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 235.

grandchildren and grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins whom we must all have strong connections with.

### Hospitality

Muslims whether as individuals or as a community should be very hospitable. Prophet Muhammad is quoted as saying, “Whoever has faith in Allah and the Hereafter, must respect his guest.”<sup>7</sup> It is a requirement – not merely a recommendation – of faith to be respectful and hospitable to our guests. It is not something that we can do if or when we feel like it. It is necessary. Furthermore, this hospitality is not only for relatives and friends, it must also be extended to strangers. We must be hospitable even towards people whom we do not know, that is, to refugees, tourists, visitors and so forth.

### Keeping promises

A requirement of an Islamic community is that promises must be kept. A culture must be established in which we keep any covenant made. People should have confidence in making any treaty or covenant with Muslims and with an Islamic community. They must know that Muslims will never cancel, disregard, or break their promises.

### Pardon and forgiveness

Though it is natural that every community entails problems, we should not continuously punish others for them. The main, overriding principle

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<sup>7</sup> *Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 667. The Arabic text is as follows:

مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَ الْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلْيُكْرِمْ ضَيْفَهُ

must be to pardon and forgive others unless there is a systematic violation of values and rights where we realise that if we forgive, it would worsen the situation, and the other party would be encouraged in their wrongdoing. Otherwise, an Islamic society is to show overwhelming mercy towards its members and outsiders.

Thinking optimistically about others' words and deeds is vital. For example, we should believe they are telling the truth unless we have definite evidence to the contrary. Holding doubts or suspicion without proof can be detrimental to our relationships. In the Qur'an we read:

*O you who have faith! Avoid much suspicion. Indeed some suspicions are sins. And do not spy on or backbite one another. Will any of you love to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would hate it. And be wary of God; indeed God is all-clement, all-merciful. (49:12)*

*Do not follow that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed the hearing, the eyesight, and the heart —all of these are accountable. (17:36)*

Even if people seem to say or do that which can be understood in a negative way, we are reminded in the hadith that we should give 70 excuses for our fellow believers before accusing them. Our overwhelming attitude should be a very positive one, full of understanding and sympathy.

Constant reaction and retaliation to people's mistreatment of us is not wise. For example, we certainly are responsible for clarifying an issue and stating the truth when a non-Muslim activist or politician makes a

negative statement about Islam or Muslims. However, using foul language, misbehaving, or making accusations is not the way to respond. It might well be possible that the person genuinely did not understand the case, or perhaps that person is honest although was not exposed to – or understood – the truth. Making quick judgments about a person's ill-will towards us is plain wrong. We are to speak using soft, gentle, and polite language; although, of course, there will sometimes be some cases where we need to use strong language. Overall, the governing rule is to use less force and more patience and mercy.

### Patience

Patience is a highly recommended quality of a believer often mentioned in the Qur'an. Patience is also a fundamental quality of an Islamic community. The rewards for being patient are described as being endless and immeasurable; indeed, there is saying that describes how, on the Day of Judgement, those who were consistently patient when faced with the repeated daily challenges of life are ahead of the martyrs in entering Paradise.

### Fairness and wanting for others what we want for ourselves

The Golden Rule encourages us to want for others what we want for ourselves. In an Islamic community, we need to have an attitude and work towards achieving a situation that ensures that all members of the community have those material and spiritual things that make an individual content, comfortable, and able to progress and succeed in this life and the next. Conversely, we should also not want for others what we would not want for ourselves. There may be occasions when we

should want others to be able to have or achieve things which we cannot. For example, we may very much want to study in university or seminary, work in a particular field, marry or have children, but due to personal circumstances are unable to do so. However, this should not mean that we do not sincerely want and pray for others to have them, and indeed help them achieve them.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper, we studied some of the important aspects and qualities of an Islamic community and of its members. These qualities which should be present not only in the character and behaviour of a faithful believer but should also be manifested in a truly Islamic community so that as Muslims we can honestly say that we are the best nation for benefitting and serving humankind. As Muslims we should not merely be concerned with our own personal situation; we must also accept the responsibility for our community and society as a whole.