

Selections

From the Sayings and Sermons of Imam Ali Ibn Abu Talib (ع) Including His Replies to Questions and Maxims Made for Various Purposes

1. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: During civil disturbance be like an adolescent camel who has neither a back strong enough for riding nor udders for milking.

“Labun” [which exists in the original Arabic text] means a “milch camel” and “ibnul-labun” means its two-year old young. In this age, the young is neither suitable for riding nor does it has udders which could be milked. It is called “ibnul-labun” because in this period of two years its mother bears another young and begins yielding milk again.

The intention is that during a civil disturbance or trouble, a man should behave in such a manner that he may be regarded of no consequence and is thus ignored. No need should be felt for his participation in either contending party. This is so because during mischief making, only dissociation can save one from being assaulted. Of course, when the clash is between right and wrong, it is not permissible to keep aloof, nor can it be called civil disturbance. But on such occasions, it is obligatory to rise up to support what is right and suppress what is wrong. For example, during the battles of Jamal and Siffin, it was obligatory to support the right and to fight against the wrong.

2. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: Whoever adopts greed as a habit devalues himself; whoever discloses his hardship agrees to be humiliated, and whoever allows his tongue to overpower his soul debases the soul.

3. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: Miserliness is a shame; cowardice is a defect; poverty disables an intelligent man from arguing his case, and a destitute person is a stranger in his own home town.

4. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: Incapability is a catastrophe; endurance is bravery; abstinence is a wealth; self-restraint

is a shield (against sinning), and the best company is submission (to Allah's will).

5. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: Knowledge is a venerable estate; good manners are new outfits, and thinking is a clear mirror.

6. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: The bosom of the wise is the safe of his secrets; cheerfulness is the bond of friendship; effective forbearance is the grave of shortcomings.

It is narrated that Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following in order to explain this meaning: Mutual reconciliation is the covering for shortcomings, and whoever admires himself attracts many opponents against him.²²²

7. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: Charity is an effective cure, and the actions of people in their present life will be before their eyes in the next.

This saying incorporates two phrases:

The first sentence relates to charity, and Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) describes it as an effective cure. This is so because when a man helps the poor and the destitute with alms, they pray for his health and recovery from the depth of their hearts and, therefore, their prayer is granted and it brings him a cure. In this regard, there is the saying of the Holy Prophet (ص) that, "Cure your sick with charity."

The second sentence relates to the disclosure of actions on the Day of Judgement, namely that the good and the bad deeds which a person performs in this world cannot be perceived by human senses because of the veil of material elements, but on the Day of Judgement, when material curtains will be lifted, they will so appear before the eyes

²²²In the last phrase, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) describes the consequences and effects resulting from self-admiration, namely that it creates hatred by and humiliation of others. Thus, the man who demonstrates his "greatness" by every pretext in order to make himself conspicuous is never regarded with esteem. People despise him because of his mental condition in seeking self-elevation. They are not prepared to accord him the worth which he claims to have. They regard him much less than what he regards him.

that there will be no possibility of denial by anyone. Thus, Allah has said the following: “On that Day, people shall come out (of their graves) in (scattered) groups to be shown their own deeds. Then whoever has done an atom-weight of good shall see it. And whoever has done an atom-weight of evil shall see it” (Holy Quran, 99: 6-8).

8. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: How wonderful is man: He speaks with fat, talks with a piece of flesh, hears with a bone and breathes through a hole!

9. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: When this world advances towards anyone (with its riches), it attributes to him the good of others, and when it turns away from him, it deprives him of his own good.²²³

They are friends of him whom the world favors
And they are foes of him whom the world hits.

10. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: Deal with people in such a manner that if you die, they should weep for you, and if you live they should long for you.²²⁴

11. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: When you gain power over your adversary, pardon him as your way of expressing thanks [to Allāh] for being able to overpower him.²²⁵

²²³The meaning is that when a man's fortune is helpful and the world is favorable to him, people will describe his performances with exaggeration and give credit to him for the actions of others. But if a man loses the favor of the world and the clouds of ill-luck and misfortune engulf him, people ignore his virtues and do not at all tolerate even to recall his name.

²²⁴To the person who behaves with others with benignity and mannerliness, people extend their hand of cooperation. They honor and respect him and shed tears when he dies. Therefore, a person should lead such an agreeable life that no one should have any complaint against him, nor should any harm be caused by him to anyone so that during his life-time, he should attract others, and after his death, too, he should be well remembered.

²²⁵The occasion for pardoning and forgiving is when there is power to take revenge. But when there is no such power, pardon is just the result of helplessness for which there is no credit. However, to practice pardon despite having power and ability to avenge is the essence of human distinction and an expression of thanks to Allah for bestowing such power. The feeling of

12. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The most helpless of all men is whoever cannot find a few brothers during his life, but still more helpless is whoever finds such a brother but loses him.²²⁶

13. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: When you get (only) small favors, do not push them away by being ungrateful.

14. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: Whoever is abandoned by near ones is dear to remote ones.

15. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: Every mischief monger cannot even be reproved.²²⁷

16. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: All matters are subject to destiny, so much so that sometimes death results from effort.

17. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) was asked to explain the saying of the Messenger of Allah that: "Banish your old age (by hair-dye) and do not acquire resemblance to the Jews." Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) replied: The Prophet (ص) said this at a time when the religion was

gratefulness necessitates. It is then that man should bow down to Allah in humbleness and humility by which the delicate feeling of pity and kindness will rise in his heart. The rising flames of rage and anger will cool down after. Thereafter, there will be no urge to take revenge under the effect of which he will use his power and ability to satisfy his anger instead of using it properly.

²²⁶It is not difficult to attract others with good manners and cheerfulness and to befriend them by sweet speech because. No physical exertion or mental worry is required for this. Having made friends, it is still easier to maintain the friendship and good relationships because for making real friends, some effort is needed, while for maintaining friendship, no difficulty is unsurmountable. Therefore, no one can be more wretched than one who cannot even retain a thing which could be retained just by keeping away from frowning. The idea here is that a man should meet everyone with good manners and cheerfulness so that people may like to associate with him and extend a hand of friendship towards him.

²²⁷Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) uttered this sentence when Sa'd ibn Abu Waqqas, Muhammad ibn Maslamah and Abdullah ibn `Umar refused to support him against the people of Jamal. He means to say that these people are so much against him that neither his words nor any evidence suffice to reproof, rebuke or correct them.

confined to a few, but now that its expanse has widened and it is firmly settled, everyone is free in his action.²²⁸

18. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following about those who avoided fighting on his side: They abandoned righteousness but did not support wrong.²²⁹

19. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: Whoever gallops with a loose rein collides with death.

20. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: Forgive the shortcomings of considerate people because when they fall into error, Allah raises them up.

21. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: The consequence of fear is disappointment and of bashfulness is frustration. Opportunity passes away like the cloud. Therefore, make use of good opportunities.²³⁰

²²⁸The idea here is that since in the dawn of Islam the number of Muslims was limited, it was necessary to keep them distinct from the Jews in order to maintain their collective entity. The Prophet (ص), therefore, ordered the use of hair-dye which was not in use among the Jews. Besides, it was also the aim that when facing the enemy the people should not look old and weak.

²²⁹This saying is about those who claimed to be neutral such as Abdullah ibn Umar, Sa'd ibn Abu Waqqas, Abu Musa al-Ash'ari, al-Ahnaf ibn Qays, Muhammad ibn Maslamah, Usamah ibn Zayd and Anas ibn Malik. Undoubtedly, these people did not openly support wrong but did not support right, either. Such a conduct is also a kind of support for wrong. Therefore, they will be counted among the opponents of what is right.

²³⁰However bad a thing may be regarded among the people, and however it may be looked down upon, if it is not really bad, then to feel bashful about it is quite foolish because it will often cause deprivation from things which are the source of successes and achievements in this as well as in the next world. For example, if a man fears lest people should regard him as ignorant; therefore, he feels bashful in asking about an important and a necessary issue, then this misplaced bashfulness will result in his being deprived of knowledge. Hence, no sane person should feel bashful about making enquiries. Thus, an old man who was learning despite his old age was asked once whether he did not feel ashamed of learning in his old age. He replied in the following: "I do not feel any shame for being ignorant in my old age. How can I feel shame for learning in old age? Of course, to feel shame in doing things which are really

22. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: We have a right. If it is granted to us, that is good; otherwise, we will ride on the hind of the camel even though the night journey may be long.

Sayyid ar-Radi says the following: “This is a very fine and eloquent expression. It means that if we are not allowed to enjoy our right, we will be regarded as humble. This sense comes out from this expression because on the rear part of the camel only slaves, prisoners or other people of this type used to ride.”²³¹

23. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: If the deeds of someone accord (him) a back status, he cannot be given a front status simply on account of his lineage.

24. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: To render relief to the grief-stricken and to provide comfort in hardship means the atonement of great sins.

bad and mischievous is the essence of humanity and nobility. For instance, there are immoral deeds which are bad according to religion, intelligence and ethics. In any case, the first kind of bashfulness is bad and the second is good.” In this regard, the Holy Prophet’s saying is this: “Bashfulness is of two kinds: bashfulness of intelligence and bashfulness of foolishness. The bashfulness of intelligence is knowledge, whereas the bashfulness of foolishness is ignorance.”

²³¹The interpretation written by Sayyid ar-Radi is that Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) intends to say that if our right, that lies with others in our status, as with the Imām whom it is obligatory to obey, is acknowledged and we are given the chance of worldly rule, it is well and good; otherwise, we will have to bear all sorts of hardships and ignominies, and we shall be compelled to live the life of ignominy and humiliation for some time to come. Some commentators have adopted a different meaning than this, namely that: “If our status is belittled and put aside while others are given precedence over us, we shall bear it patiently and agree to remain behind, and this is what is meant by riding on the hind part of the camel because the person who rides on the hind part is on the rear while the person who sits on its back is in the fore. Some people take it to mean that if we are allowed our right we will accept it, but if it is not given, we shall not behave like the rider who gives over the rein of his animal to someone else who is free to take him wherever he likes, but we shall stick to our right even though a long time may elapse rather than surrender to the usurpers.

25. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: O son of Adam! When you see that your Lord, the Glorified One, bestows His favors on you while you are disobeying Him, you should fear Him.²³²

26. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: Whenever a person conceals a thing in his heart, it manifests itself through unintentional words from his tongue and (in) the expressions of his face.²³³

27. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: Keep walking in your sickness as long as you can.²³⁴

²³²When a person goes on receiving favors despite his accumulated sins, he develops a misconception that Allah is pleased with him, and that this is the result of His pleasure because the increase in favors arises out of gratefulness. In the event of ungratefulness, the bestowal of favors stops. In this sense, Allah says the following: “Your Lord declared: ‘If you are grateful, I will increase (My favors) on you, and if you are ungrateful, verily, My torment is indeed severe’” (Holy Quran, 14: 7). Nevertheless, the continuous bestowal of favors, despite disobedience and ungratefulness, cannot be the result of Allah’s pleasure, nor can it be said that in this way Allah has put him under the misconception that he should regard this exuberance of favors as the result of Allah’s pleasure because when he knows that he is a sinner and disobedient, fully recognizing his sins and vices, then there are no grounds for misconception on his part by assuming Allah’s pleasure and consent. He should rather think that this is a sort of trial and a respite. When his sinfulness and high-handedness reaches its zenith, he will be caught at once. Therefore, in such a case, he should keep waiting as to when Allah’s favors are taken away from him and he is punished with deprivation.

²³³The things which a man wants to conceal from others do, indeed, come out on his tongue one time or another, and his effort at concealment is unsuccessful. This is so because although the far-sighted mind desires to keep them concealed, yet sometimes it gets entangled in some more important matter and becomes careless on this score when the concealed thing comes out in articulated words. When the mind becomes attentive, it is not possible to undo the matter just as an arrow cannot be recalled after being shot. Even if this is not the case and the mind is fully cautious and attentive, the thing cannot remain concealed because the lines of the face are indicative of mental feelings and reflect the heart’s emotions; consequently, redness of the face can easily point out to the sense of shame.

²³⁴The idea here is that as long as sickness does not become serious do not give it importance because by giving importance the feelings get affected and the illness increases. Therefore, continue your activity and regard oneself as

28. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: The best part of moderation is to conceal it.

29. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: When you are running away from the world and death is approaching, there is no question of delay in the encounter.

30. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: Fear! Fear! By Allah, He has hidden your sins, so much so that it is as though He has forgiven them!

Faith, Unbelief, Doubt and Their Pillars

31. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع), was asked once about faith. He said the following: "Faith stands on four pillars: endurance, conviction, justice and jihad.

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

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

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

being well. This will dispel your sickness and also prevent the power of resistance from getting weak. It keeps up its psychological power, while the psychological power curbs small ailments by itself, provided it is not forced to give up resistance by surrendering the imagination to the ailment.

Jihad, also, has four aspects: enjoining others to do good, keeping away others from doing evil, fighting (in the way of Allah) sincerely and firmly on all occasions and detesting anyone who is vicious. So, whoever asks others to do good provides strength to the believers; whoever dissuades others from committing evil humiliates the unbelievers; whoever fights sincerely on all occasions carries out all his obligations, and whoever detests the vicious and becomes angry for the sake of Allah, then Allah will be angry in favor of him and will keep him pleased on the Day of Judgement.

Unbelief stands on four pillars: hankering after whims, quarreling with others, deviating from the truth and dissenting. So, whoever hankers after whims does not incline towards right; whoever quarrels much on account of ignorance remains permanently blinded from what is right; whoever deviates from the truth, for him good becomes evil and evil becomes good and he remains intoxicated with misguidance, and whoever makes a breach (with Allah and His Messenger), his path becomes difficult, his affairs become complicated and his way of escape becomes narrow.

Doubt has also four aspects: irrationality, fear, wavering and undue submission to everything. So, whoever adopts irrationality as his way of life, for him there is no dawn after the night; whoever is afraid of what befalls him has to run on his heels; whoever wavers in doubt, the satans trample upon him with their feet, and whoever submits to the destruction of this and the next world succumbs to it.

Sayyid ar-Radi says the following: "We have left out the remaining portion of this saying for fear of length and for being outside the purpose of this chapter."

32. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The doer of good is better than the good itself, and the doer of evil is worse than the evil itself.

33. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: Be generous but not extravagant; be thrifty but not stingy.

34. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: The best of riches is the abandonment of desires.

35. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: If someone is quick in saying about people what they dislike, they will speak about him that with which they have no knowledge.

36. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: Whoever prolongs his desire ruins his actions.

37. Once Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) was proceeding towards Syria when the countrymen of al-Anbar met him. Seeing him, they began to walk on foot then ran in front of him. He inquired why they were doing so. They replied that this was the way they respected their chiefs. Then he said the following: "By Allah, this does not benefit your chiefs. You are belaboring yourself in this world and earning misery for the next by it. How harmful is the labour in whose wake there is punishment, and how profitable is the case with which there is deliverance from the Fire (of Hell)!"

The Imam Admonishing His Son:

38. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following to his son al-Hassan (ع): O son! Learn four things and (a further) four things from me: Nothing will harm you if you practice them. The richest of all riches is intelligence; the biggest destitution is foolishness; the most wild of the wild is vanity, and the best achievement is goodness of the moral character.

O my son! You should avoid making friends with a fool because if he intends to benefit you, he will harm you. You should avoid making friends with a miser because he will run away from you when you need him the most. You should avoid making friends with a sinful person because he will sell you for nought. And you should avoid making friends with a liar because he is like a mirage, making you see far things as near and near things as far.

39. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: Supererogatory worship cannot bring about nearness to Allah if it hampers what is obligatory.

40. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: The tongue of the wise man is behind his heart, while the heart of the fool is behind his tongue.

Sayyid ar-Radi says the following: “This sentence has a strange and beautiful meaning. It means that the wise man does not speak with his tongue except after consulting his mind and exercising his imagination, but the fool quickly utters whatever comes to his tongue without pondering. In this way, the tongue of the wise man follows his heart while the heart of the fool follows his tongue.”

41. This very notion has been related from Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) in a different version thus: The heart of a fool is in his mouth, while the tongue of the wise man is in his heart. The meaning of both the saying (40 and 41) is the same.

42. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following to one of his companions during the latter’s sickness: May Allah make your illness a means for wiping out your sins because there is no reward for sickness but that it erases sins and makes them fall like (dried) leaves. Reward lies in saying by the tongue and doing something with the limbs. Certainly, Allāh, the Glorified One, admits into Paradise by virtue of truthfulness of intention and chastity of heart whomsoever He wishes from among His servants.

Sayyid ar-Radi says the following: “Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) is right in saying that there is no reward for sickness as such because compensation is admissible with regard to how Allah, the Sublime One, deals with His creatures such as causing them grief, illness and the like. However, reward and recompense become admissible with regard to the actions of the creature. This is the difference between the two. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) has clarified it through his lustrous knowledge and sound view.

43. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following about Khabbab ibn al-Aratt:¹

May Allah have mercy on Khabbab ibn al-Aratt since he accepted Islam willingly, immigrated (from Mecca) obediently, remained content with what sufficed him, was pleased with Allah and lived the life of a mujahid. Khabbab ibn al-Aratt was a distinguished companion of the Holy Prophet (ص) and was one of the early Muhajirun. He suffered various sorts of hardships at the hands of the tribesmen of Quraish. He was made to stand in the scorching sun and to lie down on burning pieces of timber, but he did not at all abandon the side of the Holy Prophet (ص). He

accompanied the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) in Badr and other battles. He supported Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) in Siffin and Nahrawan. He had left Medina and settled in Kufa. Thus, he died there in 39 A.H. (659 A.D.) at the age of 73. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) led his funeral prayer service. He was buried outside Kufa. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) uttered these mercy-invoking words as he stood at his grave.

44. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: Blessed is the person who kept in mind the next life, acted so as to be able to render his account, remained content with what sufficed him and remained pleased with Allah.

45. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: Even if I strike the nose of a believer with this, my sword, so he may hate me, he will not hate me, and even if I pile all the wealth of the world before a hypocrite (Muslim) so he may love me, he will not love me. This is so because it is a verdict pronounced by the tongue of the revered Prophet (ﷺ) who said the following: “O Ali! A believer will never hate you and a hypocrite (Muslim) will never love you.”²³⁵

²³⁵This is one of the authentic traditions (*ahadīth*) of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) whose authenticity the scholars of traditions had never doubted. It was narrated by certain companions of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) such as `Abdullah ibn `Abbas, Imran ibn al-Hasin, Umm al-Mu`minin (mother of the faithful) Umm Salamah and others such as Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) himself who also narrated saying: *By the One Who split the seed and created the soul, verily the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and his progeny gave me a promise that no one but a (true) believer will love me, and none but a hypocrite will hate me (Sahīh, Muslim, Vol. 1, p. 60; [Muslim, in his book, regards the love of Ali as the sign of dissemblance] Al-Jami`al-Sahih, Vol. 5, pp. 635, 643; Al-Sunan, Ibn Majah, Vol. 1, p. 55; Al-Sunan, al-Nisa'i, Vol. 8, pp. 115-116, 117; Al-Musnad, Ahmed ibn Hanbal, Vol. 1, pp. 84, 95, 128; Vol. 6, p. 292; Allal al-hadith, Abu Hatim, Vol. 2, p. 400; Hilyat al-Awliya', Abu Nu'aym, Vol. 4, p. 185; Jami`al-Usul, Ibn al-Athir, Vol. 9, p. 473; Mujma' az-Zawa'id, Vol. 9, p. 133; Manaqib Ali ibn Abu Talib, Ibn al-Maghazili, pp. 190-195; Al-Isti'ab, Vol. 3, p. 1100; Usd al-Ghaba, Vol. 4, p. 26; Al-Isaba, Vol. 2, p. 509; Tarikh Baghdad, Vol. 2, p. 255; Vol. 8, p. 417; Vol. 14, p. 426; Tarikh, Ibn Kathir, Vol. 7, p. 354).* It was in this way that the companions of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) used to test the faith (*iman*) or hypocrisy (*nifaq*) of the Muslims through their love or hatred towards Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع), as is related from Abu Dharr al-Ghifari, Abu Sa'id al-Khudri, Abdullah ibn Mas'ud and Jabir ibn Abdullah [al-Ansari] that: *We (companions of the Holy Prophet [ﷺ]) used to distinguish the hypocrites by their hatred of*

46. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: The sin that displeases you is better in the view of Allah than the virtue that makes you proud.²³⁶

47. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: The worth of a man is according to his courage, his truthfulness is according to his balance of temper, his valor is according to his self-respect and his chastity is according to his sense of shame.

48. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: Victory is (won) with determination; determination is pondering over thoughts and thoughts are formed by guarding secrets.

49. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: Fear the might of a noble person when he is hungry and that of an ignoble person when he is satisfied.²³⁷

50. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: The hearts of the people are like wild beasts. If someone tries to tame them, they will pounce back upon him.²³⁸

Ali ibn Abu Talib (al-Tirmidhi, Vol. 5, p. 635; *Al-Mustadrak*, Vol. 3, p. 129; *Hilyat al-Awliya'*, Vol. 6, p. 294; *Mujma'az-Zawa'id*, Vol. 9, pp. 132-133; *Jami' al-Usul*, Vol. 9, p. 473; *Al-Durr al-Manthur*, Vol. 6, pp. 66-67; *Tarikh Baghdad*, Vol. 13, p. 153; *Ar-Riyad an-Nadira*, Vol. 2, pp. 214-215; *Al-Isti'ab*, Vol. 3, p. 1110; *Usd al-Ghaba*, Vol. 4, pp. 29-30).

²³⁶The person who feels ashamed and repentant after committing a sin and offers repentance before Allah remains safe from the penalty of that sin and deserves the reward of repentance. But the person who, having done a virtuous deed, begins to feel his "superiority" over others and becomes proud of his virtues thinks that he has no apprehension whatever. Thus, he destroys his virtue and remains deprived of the reward of that virtuous deed. Obviously, whoever has erased the shame of his sin by repentance will be better than one who ruins his action by being proud of it without having repented of such a pride.

²³⁷The meaning is that a man of prestige and esteem never tolerates humiliation or disgrace. If his honor is assailed, he will leap like a hungry lion and break away the shackles of humiliation. If a low and narrow minded person is raised beyond what he deserves, he will not be able to contain himself but, regarding himself very high, he will assail the status of others.

²³⁸This statement confirms the theory that by nature, human hearts love wildness and that the feeling of love and affection in them is an acquired attribute. Consequently, when the elements and causes of love and affection

51. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following: So long as your status is good, your defects will remain covered.

52. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The most capable of pardoning is whoever is the most powerful to punish.

53. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Generosity is that which is by one's own initiative because giving on being asked is either out of self-respect or to avoid rebuke.

54. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: There is no wealth like wisdom, no destitution like ignorance, no inheritance like refinement and no support like consultation.

55. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Patience is of two kinds: patience over what pains you, and patience regarding what you covet.

56. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: With wealth, a strange land is a homeland, while with destitution, even a homeland is a strange land.²³⁹ A stranger even in his own homeland.

57. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Contentment is wealth that does not diminish.²⁴⁰

crop up, they get tamed. But when these elements disappear, or when the feelings of hatred are created against them, the people return to wildness and thereafter they return to the path of love and affection with a great deal of difficulty. Do not tease the heart because it is a wild bird. If once it flies away, it will come down with a great deal of difficulty.

²³⁹A person who has wealth and riches will get friends and acquaintances wherever he may be. He, therefore, will not feel strange in any foreign land. But if he is poor and destitute, he will have no friends even in his homeland because people do not like to make friends with the poor and the destitute, nor to extend relations with them. He is, therefore, a stranger even at home and has no friends or well-wishers.

Whoever has no worldly successor remains unknown:

²⁴⁰Contentment means that a man should remain satisfied with what he gets and should not complain if he gets less. If he is not so contented, he will try to satisfy his greed by committing social crimes such as misappropriation, cheating and deceiving others because greed compels one to satisfy one's needs

Sayyid ar-Radi says, “This saying has also been related from the Prophet (ص).”

58. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Wealth is the fountainhead of passions.

59. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: One who warns you is like one who gives you good tidings.

60. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The tongue is a beast; when it is let loose, it devours.

61. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Woman is a scorpion whose touch is sweet.

62. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: If you are met with a greeting, give better greetings in return. If a hand of help is extended to you, do a better favor in return, although the credit will remain with the one who was the first.

63. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: One who intercedes is the wing of one who seeks.

64. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The people of the world are like travelers who are being carried while they are asleep.

65. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: A lack of friends means strangeness.

66. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: To miss what one needs is easier than to beg from an inappropriate person.²⁴¹

by any means whatever. Then the satisfaction of one's need opens the gate for another need and so on. As a man's needs get satisfied, his craving increases, and he can never get rid of his needs or of dissatisfaction. The increasing dissatisfaction can be stopped only by contentment which makes a man carefree from all wants except the most essential ones. This is that everlasting wealth that gives satisfaction for good.

²⁴¹The shame that is felt in putting a request before an inappropriate person gives more mental pain than the grief in not obtaining its fulfillment.

67. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Do not feel ashamed for giving little because refusal is smaller than that.

68. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Charity is the adornment of destitution, while gratefulness (to Allah) is the adornment of riches.

69. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: If what you aim at does not come about, then do not worry as to what you were.

70. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: You will not find an ignorant person but at one extreme or another (i.e. a person who neglects or a person who exaggerates).

71. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: As intelligence increases, speech decreases.²⁴²

72. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Time wears out bodies, renews desires, brings death nearer and takes away aspirations. Whoever is successful with it encounters grief, and whoever misses its favors also undergoes hardships.

73. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Whoever places himself as a leader of the people should commence with educating his own self before educating others, and his teaching should be by his own conduct before teaching by the tongue. The person who teaches and instructs his own self is more entitled to esteem than whoever teaches and instructs others.

That is why non-fulfillment of a request can be tolerated, but the obligation of a low and humble person is intolerable. Every self-respecting person will, therefore, prefer deprivation to being under obligation to an inappropriate man and will not tolerate placing his request before a low and mean person.

²⁴²Being talkative is an indication of a diffused thinking, while diffusion of thought is the result of the unripeness of wisdom. When wisdom attains perfection and understanding ripens, one's mind and thoughts are balanced. Wisdom acquires power and control over the tongue. As over other parts of the body, the tongue does not deed any thinking or anything outside the dictates of wisdom. Obviously, uttering after thinking is short and free from extras. As a man's intelligence increases, his speech decreases and he does not speak save at the opportune moment.

74. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Each breath taken by a man is a step towards his death.²⁴³

75. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Every countable thing is to pass way and every expected thing must come about.

76. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: If matters get mixed up, then the last ones should be appreciated compared to the previous one.²⁴⁴

77. It is related that when Dirar ibn Hamzah (the correct: Damrah) ad-Dibabi (or as-Suda'i²⁴⁵) went to Mu'awiyah and Mu'awiyah

²⁴³That is just as each step makes way for the other, and this exercise by steps is the means of nearing the goal. Similarly, every breath of life serves as a death-knell for the previous one and carries life towards death, as if the breath whose motion is regarded as a sign of life is, in fact, the sign of the passing away of one moment of life and a means of nearing the goal of death because each breath is death for the previous one and life is the name of those very death-carrying breaths. Every breath is a dead body of the life that passed by. Life is the name of living by facing successive deaths.

²⁴⁴By looking at a seed, a cultivator can say what plant will come out of it, what fruits, flowers or leaves it will have and what its expanse will be. Likewise, a guess can be made about the success of a student by looking at his labor and effort. The same applies to the failure of some other student by looking at his leisureliness and idleness because the beginning is indicative of the end and the premises of the conclusion. Therefore, if the end of any matter is not visible, its beginning should be looked at. If its beginning is bad, the end, too, will be bad, and if the beginning is good, the end, too, will be good. An auspicious river begins from the very spring.

²⁴⁵Dirar ibn Damrah was one of the companions of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع). After the death of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع), he went to Syria where he met Mu'awiyah. Mu'awiyah said to him, "Describe Ali to me." He replied, "Will you please excuse me from answering this?" But Mu'awiyah emphasized, "You must describe him," whereupon Dirar said the following: "If there is no alternative, then you should know that Ali (ع) was a man whose personality knew no limits, terrific in power, his speech was decisive, his judgements based on justice, his knowledge spread out in all directions and wisdom manifested itself on all his behavior. Among the food he liked the most was the coarse kind and among the clothes, the short (and humble) ones. By Allah, he was among us like one of us. He used to respond to our questions and fulfil all our requests. By Allah, although he used to let us get close to him and he himself was close to us, we did not dare address him due to our feeling of awe towards him nor did we dare to speak first due to his greatness in our hearts. His smile displayed a row

inquired from him about Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع), he said the following: “I testify that I have seen him on several occasions when night had spread and he was standing in the niche (of the mosque) holding his beard, groaning like a man bitten by a snake and weeping as a grieved man, saying: O world, O world! Get away from me! Why do you present yourself to me?! Or are you eager for me?! You may not get that opportunity to impress me. Deceive some other person. I have no concern with you. I have divorced you thrice after which there is no restitution. Your life is short, your importance is little and your liking is humble. Alas! The provision is little, the way is long, the journey is far and the goal is hard to reach.”

On the Subject of Predestination

78. A man inquired from Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) saying, “Was our going to fight the Syrians destined by Allah?” Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) detailed his reply, a selection from which is here:

Woe unto you! You take it as a final and unavoidable destiny²⁴⁶ (according to which we are bound to act). If it were so, there would have been no question of reward or chastisement and there would have been no sense in Allah’s promises or warnings. (On the other hand) Allah, the

of pearls. He used to honor the pious; to be kind to the needy, to feed the orphan, the near of kin or the needy man in the day of hunger, clothe bare ones and help the vulnerable person. He used to detest the world and its flowering. I testify to all of this.” (So far, the testimony is as quoted above by Sayyid ar-Radi). When Mu’awiyah heard this from Dirar, his eyes became full of tears and he said: “May Allah have mercy on Abul-Hassan. He really was so.” Then, turning to Dirar he said: How do you feel in his absence, O Dirar?” Dirar replied, “My grief is like that of a woman whose only child is butchered in her own arms” (*Al-Isti’ab*, Vol. 3, pp. 1107-1108; *Hilyat al-Awliya’*, Vol. 2, p. 84; *Sifatul-Safwah*, Ibn al-Jawzi, Vol. 1, p. 121; *Al-Amali*, Abu Ali al-Qali, Vol. 2, p. 147; *Zahr al-Adab*, al-Husari, Vol. 1, pp. 40-41; *Muruj al-Dhahab*, Vol. 2, p. 421; *Ar-Riyad al-Nadira*, Al-Muhibb al-Tabari, Vol. 2, p. 212; Ibn Abul-Hadid, Vol. 18, pp. 225-226).

²⁴⁶The end of this story is that after this, the man inquired, “What kind of destiny it was by which we had to go?” and Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said, “قضاء (destiny) means the command of Allah. For example, He has said: *wa qada rabbuka alla ta’budu illa iyyahu* (And your Lord commanded that you shall worship none but Him [Holy Quran, 17: 23]). Here, the Arabic word قضاء stands for commanded.

Glorified One, has ordered His servants to act according to their free will and has cautioned them and protected them (from evil). He has placed easy obligations on them and has not put heavy obligations. He gives them much (reward) in return for little action. He is disobeyed, not because He is overpowered. He is obeyed but not by force. He did not send prophets just for fun. He did not send down the Book for the people without a purpose. He did not create the skies, the earth and all that is in between them in vain. That is the imagination of those who disbelieve: "... then woe unto those who disbelieve because of the fire" (Holy Quran, 38: 27).

79. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Take wise points from wherever they may be because if a wise saying is in the bosom of a hypocrite, it flutters in his bosom till it comes out and settles with others of its own category: in the bosom of the believer.

80. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: A wise saying is a lost article of the believer. Therefore, get wise sayings even though from people of hypocrisy.

81. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The worth of every man is in his attainments.²⁴⁷

Sayyid ar-Radi says that this is the statement whose value cannot be assessed, with which no wise saying can be weighed and with which no other sentence can be matched.

82. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: I impart to you five things which, if you ride your camels fast in search of them, you will find them worth the effort:

None of you should repose hope save in his Lord (Allah); none of you should fear anything save his sin; none should feel ashamed of saying, "I do not know" when he is asked about a matter which he does

²⁴⁷The real value of a person is his knowledge (and perfection of attainment). His worth and status will be in accordance with the status of knowledge and attainment which he holds. Eyes that are conscious of real values do not look at the face, features, tallness of stature, size or worldly pomp and status. Rather, they look at the attainments of a person and assess his worth according to these attainments. The conclusion is that a man should strive to acquire distinction and be admonished. The worth of every person is according to the extent of his knowledge.

not know; none should feel ashamed of learning a thing that he does not know and you should practice endurance because endurance is for belief what the head is for the body: Just as there is no good in a body without the head, there is no good in belief without endurance.

83. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following about a man who praised him much, although he did not admire him: I am below what you express and above what you feel in your heart.

84. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The survivors of the sword are large in number and have many offspring.

85. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Whoever abandons saying, "I do not know" meets his destruction.

86. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: I love the opinion of an old man more than the determination of a young man: (or according to another version: more than the martyrdom of a young man.)

87. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: I wonder about the man who loses hope despite the possibility of seeking forgiveness.

88. (Imam) Abu Ja`far Muhammad ibn Ali al-Baqir (ع), has related from Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) that the Imam had said: There were two sources of deliverance from the punishment of Allah: one of them has been raised up, while the other is before you. You should, therefore, adhere to it. The source of deliverance, which has been raised up is the Messenger of Allah Muhammad (ص), while the source of deliverance that remains is the seeking of forgiveness. Allah, the Glorified One, has said the following: "And Allah is not to chastise them while you are among them, nor is Allah to chastise them while yet they seek [His] forgiveness" (Holy Quran, 8: 33).

Sayyid ar-Radi says that this is one of the most beautiful ways of deriving the meaning and a most delicate manner of an interpretation.

89. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: If a man behaves properly in matters between himself and Allah, then Allah will keep proper the matters between him and other people. And if a man keeps proper the affairs of his next life, then Allah keeps proper for him the affairs of this world. Whoever is a preacher for himself is protected by Allah.

90. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The perfect jurist of Islam is whoever does not let people lose hope from the mercy of Allah, does not make him despondent of Allah's kindness and does not make him feel safe from Allah's punishment.

91. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The hearts get disgusted as bodies get disgusted; so look for beautiful wise sayings for them.

92. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The most humble knowledge is that which remains on the tongue and the most honorable one is that which manifests itself through (the action of) the limbs and the organs of the body.

93. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: None of you should say, "O Allah! I seek Your protection from affliction" because there is none who is not afflicted. But whoever seeks Allah's protection should seek it from misguiding troubles because Allah, the Glorified One, says the following: "And be admonished that your wealth and your children are a trial" (Holy Quran, 8: 28). It means that He tries people with wealth and progeny in order to distinguish one who is displeased with his livelihood from one who is happy with what he has been given. Even though Allah, the Glorified One, knows them more than they know themselves, yet He does so to let them perform actions with which they earn reward or punishment. This is so because some of them like to have male (children) and dislike to have female (children), whereas some like to amass wealth and dislike adversity.

Sayyid ar-Radi says that this is a wonderful interpretation related from the Imam (ع).

94. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) was asked what is good; he replied thus: Good is not that your wealth and progeny should be much, but good is that your knowledge should be much, your forbearance should be great and that you should vie with other people in worshipping Allah. If you do good deeds, you should thank Allah, but if you commit evil, you should seek forgiveness of Allah. In this world, good is for two persons only: the man who commits sins but rectifies them by repentance, and the man who hastens towards good deeds.

95. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Action accompanied by fear for Allah does not fail; how can a thing fail that has been accepted?!²⁴⁸

96. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The persons most attracted to the prophets are those who know most what the prophets have brought. Then Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) recited this verse: “Verily, of men, the nearest to Abraham are surely those who followed him and this (Our) Prophet (ص) (Muhammad [ص]) and those who believe” (Holy Quran, 3: 68). Then he said the following: The friend of Muhammad (ص) is whoever obeys Allah, even though he may have no blood relationship [with him], and the enemy of Muhammad (ص) is whoever disobeys Allah even though he may have near kinship [with the Prophet (ص)].

97. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) heard about a Kharijite who said the mid-night prayers and recited the Holy Quran, then he said: Sleeping in a state of firm belief is better than praying in a state of doubt.

98. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: When you hear a tradition, test it according to the criterion of intelligence not to that of mere hearsay because those who relate knowledge are numerous, but those who safeguard it are few.

99. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) heard a man reciting the following: “Verily, we are Allah’s, and verily to Him shall we return” (Holy Quran, 2: 156). The Imam (ع) said: Our saying, “Inna li’llah (Verily we are Allah’s) is an admission of His majesty over us, while our saying, “Wa inna ilayhi raji’un” (and verily to Him shall we return) is an admission of our being mortal.

100. Some people praised Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) in his presence. The Imam (ع) said: O Lord! You know me better than I know myself, and I know myself better than they know. O Lord! Make us better people than what they think and forgive us for what they do not know.

101. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The fulfillment of (others’) needs becomes a lasting virtue in three ways: regarding it as small, so that

²⁴⁸ Allah says the following: “Verily, Verily, Allah does accept (an offering only) from those who guard (themselves against evil)” (Holy” Quran, 5: 27).

it attains bigness, concealing it so that it may manifest itself, and doing it quickly so that it becomes pleasant.

102. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Shortly, a time will come for people when high [government] positions will be given only to those who defame others, when vicious people will be regarded as witty and just will be regarded as weak. People will regard charity as a loss, consideration for kinship as a burden and worship as grounds for claiming greatness among others. At such a time, authority will be exercised through the counsel of women, and there will be posting of young boys in high positions and the running of the administration by eunuchs.

103. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) was publicly seen in worn-out clothes with patches. When it was pointed out to him, he said: With it [such shabbiness of dressing] the heart fears, the mind feels humble and the believers emulate it. Certainly this world and the next are two enemies of each other, two paths in opposite directions. Whoever likes this world and loves it hates the next and is its enemy. These two are like the East and the West. If the walker between them gets near to one, he gets farther from the other. After all, they are like two fellow-wives.

104. It is related by Nawf al-Bikali that: “One night, I saw Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) coming out of his bed and looking at the stars. Then he said to me: ‘O Nawf! Are you awake or are you sleeping?’ I said: ‘I am awake, O Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع)!’ whereupon the Imam (ع) said the following: O Nawf! Blessed be those who abstain from this world and are eager for the next one. They are the people who regard this earth as the floor; its dust as their bed-cloth, and its water as their perfume. They recite the Holy Quran in low tones and supplicate in high tones then they are cut off from the world like Īsa (Jesus) was.

‘O Nawf! Prophet Dawud (David) (ع) rose up at a similar hour one night and said: This is the hour when whatever a person pleads, his plea is granted to him unless he is a tax-collector, an intelligence man, a police officer, a lute player or a drummer.’”

Sayyid ar-Radi says the following: “It is also said that ‘artabah’ means طبل (drum) and ‘kubah’ means lute.”

105. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Allah has placed on you some obligations which you should not ignore, has laid down for you

limits which you should not transgress, has prohibited you from certain things which you should not violate and has kept quiet about certain things, but He has not left them out by mistake so that you should not find them.

106. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: If people give up something relevant to religion to set right their worldly affairs, Allah will inflict upon them something more harmful than that.

107. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Often the ignorance of a learned man ruins him while the knowledge he has does not avail him.

108. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: In man, there is a piece of flesh attached to him: a vein, and it is the strangest thing in him. It is the heart. It has a store of wisdom and things contrary to wisdom. If it sees a ray of hope, eagerness humiliates it, and when eagerness increases, greed ruins it. If disappointment overtakes it, grief kills it. If anger rises in it, a serious rage develops. If it is blessed with pleasure, it forgets to be cautious. If it becomes fearing, it becomes heedless. If peace extends all round, it becomes neglectful. If it earns wealth, freedom from care puts it in the wrong. If trouble befalls it, impatience makes it humble. If it faces starvation, distress overtakes it. If hunger attacks it, weakness seats it. If its food increases, heaviness of stomach pains it. Thus, every shortness is harmful to it and every excess is injurious to it.

109. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: We (members of the Prophet's family) are like the pillow in the middle. Whoever lags behind has to come forward to meet it, while whoever exceeds the bounds has to return to it.

110. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: None can establish the rule of Allāh, the Glorified One, except whoever shows no relenting (in the matter of right), who does not behave like wrong doers and who does not run after greed.

111. Sahl ibn Hunayf al-Ansari died at Kufa after his return from the battle of Siffin and he was very much loved by Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع). On this occasion, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Even if a mountain had loved me, it will have crumbled down.

Sayyid ar-Radi says that the meaning of this is that since the trial of the man who loves Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) will be so, severe troubles will leap towards him and this is not the case except with the God-fearing, the virtuous and the select good ones. There is another similar saying of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's individuals, namely:

112. Whoever loves us, members of the Household (of the Prophet [ص]), should be prepared to face destitution.

Sayyid ar-Radi says that this has been interpreted in a different way as well, but on this occasion, it is not fit to mention here.²⁴⁹

113. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: No wealth is more profitable than wisdom; no loneliness is more estranging than vanity, no wisdom is as good as tact, no honor is like fear from Allah, no companion is like the goodness of moral character, no inheritance is like civility, no guide is like promptitude, no trade is like virtuous deeds, no profit is like the Divine reward, no self-control is like inaction in time of doubt, no abstention is like that from prohibitions, no knowledge is like thinking, no worship is like the carrying out of obligations, no belief is like modesty and endurance, no attainment is like humility, no honor is like knowledge, no power is like forbearance and no support is more reliable than consultation.

114. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: At a time when virtue is in vogue in the world and among people, if a person entertains an evil suspicion about another person from whom nothing evil has ever been seen, then he has been unjust. And at a time when vice is in vogue in the world and among people, if a man entertains a good idea about another person, he flings himself in peril.

115. It was said to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع): "How are you, O Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع)?" He replied: How can he be whom life is driving towards death, whose state of health can change into sickness any moment and who is to be caught (by death) from his place of safety.

²⁴⁹Perhaps the other meaning of this saying is this: "Whoever loves us should not hanker after worldly matters even though in consequence he may have to face destitution and poverty; but he should rather remain content and avoid seeking worldly benefits."

116. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: There are many people who are given time (by Allah) through good treatment towards them and many who are deceived because their sinful activities are veiled (by Allah) and many who are impressed by good talk about themselves. And Allah does not try anyone as seriously as He tries him whom He allows time (to remain sinful).

117. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Two categories of persons will face ruin on my account: whoever exaggerates in loving me and whoever hates me intensely.

118. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: To miss an opportunity brings about grief.

119. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The example of the world is like a serpent: It is soft in touch but its inside is full of venom. An ignorant person who has fallen into deceit is attracted towards it, but a wise and intelligent man stays on guard against it.

120. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) was asked about the tribesmen of Quraish. He replied as follows: As for Banu Makhzum, they are the blossoms of the tribesmen of Quraish. It is delightful to talk to their men and to marry their women. As for Ban Abd Shams, they are far-sighted and cautious about all that is hidden from them. As for ourselves (Banu Hashim), we spend whatever we get and are very generous in offering ourselves to death. Consequently, those people are more numerous, more contriving and more ugly while we are most eloquent, well-wishing and handsome.

121. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: What a difference there is between two kinds of actions: "A deed whose pleasure passes away but its (ill) consequence remains, and a deed whose hardship passes away but its reward stays.

122. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) was present at a funeral when he heard someone laugh. He, therefore, said: Is it that death has been ordained only for others? Is it that right is obligatory only on others? Is it that those whom we see departing on their journey of death will come back to us? We lay them down in their graves then enjoy their estate (as if we will live for good after them). We have ignored every preacher, man or woman and have exposed ourselves to every catastrophe.

123. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Blessed be whoever humbles himself, whose livelihood is pure, whose heart is chaste, whose habits are virtuous, who spends his savings (in the name of Allah), who prevents his tongue from speaking nonsense, who keeps people safe from evil, who is pleased with the (Prophet's) Sunnah and who is unconnected with innovation (in religion).

Sayyid ar-Radi says that Some people attribute this and the previous saying to the Messenger of Allah (ص).

124. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The jealousy of a woman (with co-wives) is heresy, while the jealousy of a man is a part of belief.

125. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: I am defining Islam as none has defined it before me: Islam is submission, submission is conviction, conviction is affirmation, affirmation is acknowledgment, acknowledgment is carrying out (of obligations) and carrying out obligations is action.

126. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: I wonder at the miser who is speeding towards the very destitution from which he wants to run away and misses the very ease of life which he covets. Consequently, he passes his life in this world like the destitute but will have to render an account in the next world like the rich.

I wonder at the proud man who was just a drop of semen the other day and will turn into a corpse tomorrow. I wonder at the man who doubts Allah although He sees His creations. I wonder at him who has forgotten death although he sees people dying. I wonder at him who denies the second life although he has seen the first. I wonder at him who inhabits this transient abode but ignores the everlasting one.

127. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Whoever falls short of actions falls into grief, and Allah has nothing to do with him who spares nothing from his wealth in the name of Allah.

128. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Guard yourselves against cold in its (seasonal) beginning and welcome it towards its end because it affects bodies in the same way as it affects plants. In the beginning, it destroys them, but in the end it gives them fresh leaves.¹

During autumn, protection from cold is necessary because with the change of weather, the temperature of the body also changes and ailments such as flue, catarrh, cough, etc. occur. This is so because bodies are accustomed to hot weather. When suddenly cold comes on, the tissue becomes contracted, and cold dryness increases in the body. Thus, bathing with cold water soon after bathing with hot water is harmful for this very reason. With hot water, the tissues expand, so they at once admit the effect of cold water and in consequence the natural heat of the body is affected. On the other hand, there is no need for protection from cold during spring season, nor is it harmful for the health because the body is already accustomed to cold. Thus, the temperate cold of the spring is not unpleasant to the body. Rather, with the decline of cold, there is an increase of heat and dampness in the body as a result of which growth gets impetus, natural heat rises, the body grows, the temperaments feel pleasant and the spirit is joyful.

Similarly, there is the same effect in the plant world. Thus, during autumn, due to the prevalence of coldness and dryness, the leaves wither, the vegetative power decreases, the freshness of the plants fades and there is a death-like effect on the green areas. Spring brings the message of life for them. Then with the blowing of healthy winds, blossoms begin to sprout, plants become fresh and healthy, and forests and wildernesses acquire a green hue.

129. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The Greatness of the Creator appreciated by you will belittle the creatures in your view.

130. When Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) returned from (the battle of) Siffin and noticed the graves outside Kufa, he said: O residents of houses which give a sense of loneliness, of depopulated areas, of gloomy graves! O people of the dust! O victims of strangeness! O people of loneliness and O people of desolateness! You have gone ahead and preceded us while we are following you and will join you. The houses (you left) have been inhabited by others; the wives (you left) have been married by others; the properties have been distributed (among heirs). This is the news about those around us; what is the news about things around you?!

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) turned to his companions and said: Beware! If they were allowed to speak they will inform you that: “Verily, the best provision is fear of Allah” (Holy Quran, 2: 197).

About Those Who Unfairly Blame Life in this World

131. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) heard a man speaking ill of life in this world, so he said to him: O you who abuses the world! O you who has been deceived by it and cheated by its wrongs! Do you thus covet the world then abuse it?! Do you accuse it or should it accuse you?! When did it bewilder you or deceive you, whether by the decay and fall of your forefathers, or by the sleeping places of your mothers under the ground? How much did you look after them in their illness and nursed them during sickness, desiring them to be cured and consulting physicians for them in the morning when your medicine did not avail them and your wailing for them did not benefit them? Your mourning over them did not prove useful to them and you could not achieve your aim. You could not ward off (death) from them with all your power. In fact, through the dying man, the world presented an illustration for you and showed you by the example of his falling down how you will also fall.

Certainly, this world is a house of truth for whoever appreciates it, a place of safety for whoever understands it, a house of riches for whoever collects provision from it (for the next world), and a house of instructions for whoever draws instruction from it. It is the place of worship for those who love Allah, the place of praying for the angels of Allah, the place where the revelation of Allah descends, and the marketing place for those devoted to Allah. Herein, they earned mercy and herein they acquired Paradise by way of profit.

Therefore, who can abuse it when it has announced its departure and called out that it will leave?! It had given news of its own destruction and the death of its people. By its hardship, it set an example of their hardships. By its pleasures, it created eagerness for the pleasures (of the next world). It brings ease in the evening and grief in the morning by way of persuasion, dissuasion, alarm and warning. People abuse it on the morning of their repentance, but there are others who will praise it on the Day of Judgement. The world recalled to them the next life and they bore it in mind. It related to them (things of the next life) and they

acknowledged them. It preached to them and they took lesson therefrom.²⁵⁰

132. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: There is an angel of Allah who calls out every day: “Beget children for death! Collect wealth for destruction and raise construction for ruin!”

133. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: This world is a transient place, not a place of stay. The people herein are of two types: One is a man who sold away his soul (to his passions) and thus ruined it, and the other is a man who purchased his soul (by controlling his desires) and freed it.

134. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: A friend is not a friend unless he affords protection to his comrade on three occasions: in his adversity, in his absence and at the time of his death.

135. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Whoever is bestowed four things is not disallowed four things: whoever is allowed to pray is not deprived of the response to it; whoever is allowed to offer repentance is not deprived of its acceptance; whoever is allowed to seek forgiveness is not deprived of forgiveness, and whoever is allowed to be grateful is not deprived of furtherance of favors.

Sayyid ar-Radi says that this is confirmed by the Book of Allah. About praying, Allah says, “Call unto Me, I will answer you” (Holy Quran, 4: 60). About forgiveness Allah says, “And whoever does evil, or wrongs his own self and thereafter seeks Allah’s forgiveness shall find Allah oft-Forgiving, most Merciful” (Holy Quran, 4: 110). About gratefulness He says, “If you show gratitude, I will increase (my favors) to you” (Holy Quran, 14: 7). About repentance He says, “Verily,

²⁵⁰Every speaker and preacher manifests the force of his speech in subjects in which he is well-versed. If he has to change the subject, neither will his mind move, nor will his tongue be able to speak out. But anyone’s intellect has the capability of adaptation: his mind has the power of imagination. It can turn round his utterances in whatever manner he likes and can show the excellence of speech on whatever subject he desires. Consequently, when the tongue, which had for so long been abusing the world and unveiling its deceitfulness, starts praising the world, it shows the same mastery of speech and power of argument which have always been its chief distinction. Then, the use of commendatory words does not alter the principle. Although the ways are different, the objective remains one and the same.

repentance (acceptable) with Allah is only for those who do evil out of ignorance then turn (to Allah) soon (thereafter); to these, Allah will turn mercifully, and Allah is all-Knowing, all-Wise” (Holy Quran, 4: 17).

136. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: For the God-fearing, prayers is a means of seeking nearness to Allah, and for the weak, the hajj is as good as jihad. For everything there is a tax, and the tax of the body is fasting. The jihad of a woman is to afford pleasant company to her husband.

137. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Seek livelihood by giving alms.

138. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Whoever is sure of a good return is generous in giving.

139. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Assistance is allowed according to need.

140. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Whoever is moderate does not become destitute.

141. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: A small family is one of the ways of (securing) ease.

142. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Loving one another is half the measure of wisdom.

143. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Grief is half the old age.

144. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Endurance comes according to affliction. Whoever beats his hand on the thigh in his affliction ruins all his good actions.

145. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: There are many who fast but whose fast is nothing more than hunger and thirst. There are many who offer of prayers and whose prayer is no better than wakefulness and hardship: the sleep as well as the eating and drinking of the intelligent (God-fearing) person is far better.

146. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Protect your belief by charity; guard your wealth by paying Allah's share thereof, and ward off the waves of calamity by praying.

Imam Ali Ibn Abu Talib's Conversation with Kumayl Ibn Ziyad Al-Nakh'i²⁵¹

People are of three kinds:

147. Kumayl ibn Ziyad has related saying that Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) caught hold of his hand and took him to the graveyard. When the Imam (ع) had passed through the graveyard and left the city behind, he let a deep sigh and said the following:

O Kumayl these hearts are containers. The best of them is that which preserves (its contents); so, preserve what I say to you:

People are of three types: One is the scholar and the Divine. Then, the seeker of knowledge who is also on the way to deliverance. Then the common rot who runs after every caller and bends in the direction of every wind. They seek no light from the glory of knowledge and do not take protection from any reliable support.

O Kumayl! Knowledge is better than wealth. Knowledge guards you, while you have to guard the wealth. Wealth decreases by spending, while knowledge multiplies by spending, and the results of wealth die as wealth decays.

O Kumayl! Knowledge is belief which is acted upon. With it, man acquires obedience during his life and a good name after his death. Knowledge is the ruler while wealth is ruled upon.

O Kumayl! Those who amass wealth are dead even though they may be living, while those endowed with knowledge will remain as long as the world lives. Their bodies are not available but their figures exist in

²⁵¹Kumayl ibn Ziyad an-Nakh'i was the holder of the secrets of the Imamate and one of the most prominent companions of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع). He held a great status in knowledge and attainment and a chief place in abstinence and Godliness. He was Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's Governor of Hit for some time. He was killed by bloody-thirsty al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf ath-Thawafi in the year 83 A.H. (702 A.D.) although he was ninety years old.... He was buried outside Kufa.

the hearts. Look, here is a heap of knowledge (and Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib [ع] pointed to his bosom). I wish I could get someone to bear it. Yes, I did find (such a person), but either he was one who could not be relied upon, or he was one who exploits the religion for worldly gains and, by virtue of Allah's favors on him, he will dominate the people, and through Allah's pleas he will master His devotees. Or he was one who was obedient to the hearers of the truth but there was no intelligence in his bosom. At the first appearance of doubt, he will entertain misgivings in his heart.

So, neither this nor that was good enough. Either the man is eager for pleasures, easily led away by passions, or is covetous for collecting and hoarding wealth. Neither of them has any regard for religion in any matter. The nearest example of these is the loose cattle. This is the way that knowledge dies away with the death of its bearers.

O Lord! Yes! Yet the earth is never devoid of those who maintain Allah's plea either openly and reputedly or, being afraid, as hidden in order that Allah's pleas and proofs should not be rebutted. How many are they and where are they? By Allah, they are few in number, but they are great in esteem before Allah. Through them, Allah guards His pleas and proofs till they entrust them to others like themselves and sow the seeds thereof in the hearts of those who are like them.

Knowledge has led them to real understanding, so they have associated themselves with the spirit of conviction. They take easy what the easy going regard as hard. They endear what the ignorant take as strange. They live in this world with their bodies here but their spirits resting in the high above. They are the vicegerents of Allah on His earth and callers to His religion. O, how I yearn to see them!

Go away, O Kumayl, wherever you wish!

148. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Man is hidden under his tongue.²⁵² You cannot know his worth and value.

²⁵²The meaning is that a man's worth can be known by his speech because the speech of every person is indicative of his mind and manners. By virtue of it, his feelings and temperament can be very easily assessed. Therefore, so long as he is silent, his weakness as well as attainments are concealed, but when he speaks, his real self manifests itself.

Man is hidden under his tongue... unless he speaks,

149. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Whoever does not know his own worth is ruined.

On Preaching

150. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following to a man who had requested him to preach: Do not be like him who hopes for (bliss in) the next life without action and delays repentance by prolonging his desires, who utters words like ascetics in this world but whose deeds are like those who are eager for it. If he is granted something of it, he does not feel satisfied. If he is denied, he is not content. He is not grateful for what he gets and covets an increase in whatever remains with him. He curbs others (from wrongdoing) but not his own self. He commands others for what he himself does not do. He loves the virtuous but does not behave like them. He hates the vicious but he himself is one of them. He dislikes death because of the excess of his sins but adheres to that because of which he is afraid of death.

If he falls ill, he feels ashamed: if he is healthy, he feels secure and indulges in amusements. When he recovers from illness, he feels vain about himself. When he is afflicted, he loses hope. If distress befalls him, he prays like a bewildered man. When he finds ease of life, he falls into deceit and turns his face away. His heart overpowers him by means of imaginary things while he cannot control his heart by his conviction. For others, he is afraid of small sins, but for himself, he expects more rewards than his performance. If he becomes wealthy, he becomes self-conscious and falls into vice. If he is impoverished, he despairs and becomes weak. He is brief when he is doing a good thing but goes too far when he is begging. When passion overtakes him, he is quick in committing sin but delays repentance. If hardship befalls him, he goes beyond the canons of the (Islamic) community. He describes instructive events but does not take instruction himself. He preaches at length but does not accept any preaching for himself. He is tall on speech but short on action. He aspires for things that will perish and ignores things that will last for good. He regards profit as loss and loss as profit. He fears death but does nothing in its anticipation.

He regards the sins of others as big but considers the same things for himself as small. If he does something in obedience to Allah, he considers it much, but if others do the same, he considers it small. He,

therefore, rebukes others but flatters himself. Entertainment in the company of the wealthy is dearer to him than remembrance (of Allah) with the poor; he passes verdicts against others for his own interests and does not do so against himself for others' interests. He guides others but misguides himself. He is obeyed by others but he himself disobeys (Allah). He seeks the fulfillment of obligations (to himself) but does not fulfil his own obligations (towards others). He fears the people (and deeds) for others besides his Lord (Allah) and does not fear his Lord in dealing with the public.

Sayyid ar-Radi says that if this book had contained nothing save this short statement, it will have sufficed as a successful piece of preaching, a specimen of high philosophy, an objective of wisdom for the onlooker and a source of instruction for the meditative onlooker.

151. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Every human being has to meet the end, sweet or sour.

152. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Every comer has to return, and after returning, it is as though he never existed.

153. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The one who endures does not miss success although it may take a long time.

154. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Whoever agrees with the action of a group of persons is as though he joins them in that action. And everyone who joins in wrong commits two sins: one sin for committing the wrong and the other for agreeing with it.

155. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Adhere to your covenants and entrust their fulfillment to steadfast persons.

156. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: On you lies (the obligation of) obedience to the person about whom you cannot plead the excuse of ignorance.²⁵³ But it will ever remain on the oppressor.

²⁵³Just as Allah sent down a series of prophets by way of His justice and mercy to guide and direct us towards a perfect life and even a better hereafter, in the same way, He laid down the system of the Imamate to protect the creed from alteration so that every Imam may in his time save the Divine teachings from the onslaught of personal desires and give directions about the correct principles of Islam. And just as it is obligatory to know the originator of

157. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Your minds are opened when you see, and you are guided when you receive guidance, and you are made to hear when you do hear.

158. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Remonstrate with your brother by being kind to him, and respond to his evil by being generous to him.

159. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: If one places himself where he may be charged, let him not blame those who may think ill of him.

160. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: One who possesses prefers himself over others.

161. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: One who follows only his view perishes, and one who consults with others shares their wisdom

162. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: One who hides his secret holds his own option,.

163. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Poverty is the greatest death.

164. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: If one is fair to another who is not fair to him, it is as though he worships him.

the religion (i.e. the Prophet [ص]), in the same way, it is necessary to know the protector of the religion. Whoever remains ignorant of him cannot be excused because the issue of Imamate is supported by so many proofs and testimonies that no intelligent person can find any way to deny it. Thus, the Holy Prophet (ص) has said, "Whoever dies without knowing the Imam of his times dies the death of *jahiliyya*, the period of ignorance and oppression. One's life-span is limited, but the punishment for oppression is Hell. Its most fearful aspect is that life there will last forever, without an end, and there will be no death for one to be spared its punishment. This is why, if an oppressor kills someone, with such killing, the oppression terminates, and there is no further scope for any further oppression on the same person. A Persian couplet says:

The effect of oppression on us has passed away,

165. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: No creature should be obeyed so long as such obedience means disobedience of the Creator.

166. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: No blame should be placed on one in delaying taking what belongs to him; blame should be on one who takes what does not belong to him.

167. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Conceit stops one from seeking perfection.

168. The undertaking is near, but company is not.

169. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Morning surely shines for those who have vision.

170. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Abandoning a sin is easier than seeking help.

171. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: How often one meal blocks many!

172. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: People are enemies of what they do not know.

173. One who welcomes various views gets to know where error lies.

174. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: One who sharpens his weapon seeking revenge against those who incur the Wrath of Allah will be strong enough to kill those who are strong in committing falsehood.

175. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: If you fear doing something, then do it because your fear is greater than the deed itself.

176. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The mechanism whereby one earns mastership is forbearance.

177. Reprimand the evil doer by rewarding the doer of righteousness.

178. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Remove evil from the chest of others by eradicating it from your own.

179. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Fanatically insisting on disagreeing poisons one's view.

180. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Greed is perpetual bondage.

181. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The fruit of carelessness is regret, whereas the fruit of determination is safety.

182. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Preferring silence over articulating wisdom produces nothing good; likewise is to speak out of ignorance.

183. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: No two cases vary from each other except that one of them is falsehood.

184. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Never have I ever doubted the truth whenever it was shown to me.

185. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Never have I told a lie, nor was I ever called a liar. Never did I ever stray, nor could any use me to cause others to stray.

186. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The oppressor who starts the oppression will tomorrow bite his hand (in regret).

187. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Departure (from this world) is nigh.

188. One who openly opposes what is right perishes.

189. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: One who is not saved by patience will be finished by impatience.

190. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: How strange! Should caliphate be obtained through friends and relatives?!

Al-Shareef al-Radi, for whom verses of poetry are narrated, has said a couple of lines the gist of which is as follows:

If you through shura took charge of them,
How so since those whose advice is to be sought were absent?!
And if you through kinsfolk argued with the opponent,
Others are more worthy of and nearer than you to the Prophet.

191. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: One in this life is a target of death, a loot to calamities. With every sip there is hardship, with every morsel there is pain. Whenever a servant of Allah receives a blessing, he bids farewell to another. Whenever he welcomes a new day, he bids farewell for its sake to another. This is so because we are assistants of the fates: Every breath we draw is a target of death; so, how can we hope to last since this night and this day never raise anything in honor except that they are more swift in destroying what they build and scatter what they gather?

192. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: O son of Adam! Anything you earn beyond your need is stored for others.

193. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Hearts have desires, coming or going; so, approach your hearts according to their desires and approaches, for if you force the heart, you will blind it.

194. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: What shall I satisfy my anger when I am enraged? Is it when I am unable to seek revenge, so it will be said to me: "Why did you not have patience?" Or should I do it when I am able, so it will be said to me: "Why did you not forgive?"!

195. Passing by some garbage, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: This is some people were too miser to give others.

In another narrative, he is reported as having said, "This is what you used to compete with each other for!"

196. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: None of your wealth was wasted so long as it provided you with admonishment.

197. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: These hearts wear out just as bodies wear out; so, seek for them beautiful pieces of wisdom

198. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع), having heard the Kharijites say, "There is no government except Allah's", said: "A true statement intended to reap falsehood."

199. Describing the mobs, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: They are the ones who overwhelm when they gather and who are known when they disperse. It is said that he, peace be upon him, rather said, "They are the ones who do harm when they gather and they do good when they disperse." The Imam (ع) was asked, "When understand their mischief when they gather, but what is the benefit when they disperse?" The Imam (ع) said, "Each one of them returns to his profession, so people benefit from them, such as the builder returning to build, the weaver returns to his craft and the baker returns to his bakery, and so on."

200. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following when a criminal was brought to him escorted by mobs: There is no welcome for you here, O faces that are not seen except when a bad deed is committed.

201. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: With every human being, there are two guardian angels. When fate comes, they make room for him; fate is a secure protection..

202. Talhah and az-Zubair said to the Imam (ع), "We shall swear the oath of allegiance to you provided we are your prtnrs in this matter (in caliphate)." Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: No, but you both are partners when strength and aid are sought, and you both are aides against inability and extreme effort.

203. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: O people! Fear Allah Who hears you when you speak, Who knows what you hide in your breasts, and be more swift than death which catches up with you when you flee, which take you when you stay, and which remembers you when you forget about it.

204. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Do not be discouraged by ingrates from doing good deeds, for you may be thanked by those who do not benefit from your good deed and who still are grateful to you for it. You may obtain gratitude from a grateful person much more than what someone who hides it has wasted, "... and Allah loves the doers of righteousness."

205 Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Every container becomes straitened by what is put in it except the container of knowledge: It expands.

206. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The first compensation for a clement person for his clemency is that people are his supporters against the ignorant ones.

207. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: If you are not clement, then put on the garb of clemency, for many are those who imitate others and who become almost just like them.

208. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: One who holds himself to account succeeds. When who overlooks it loses. One who is cautious earns security. One who receives admonishment expands his vision. One who expands his vision gains understanding, and who gains understanding earns knowledge.

209. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The life of this world shall be kind to us after being cruel to us just as a she-camel that rejects those who milk it but turns with affection to its newborn. Having said so, the Imām (ع) recited the following verse: “And We wished to be gracious to those who were being oppressed in the land, to make them leaders (in faith) and to make them heirs” (Quran, 28:5).

210. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Fear Allah like one who is willing to risk everything [just to please Allāh], who urges himself to walk towards Allah, who starts in awe, who looks into the outcomes of matters, into the penalty of anything forbidden, who is apprehensive of the final end.

211. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Generosity is the guard of honors. Clemency is ship’s restrainer. Forgiveness is the zakat of victory. Solace is your compensation for one who betrayed you. Consultation is the same as guidance. One who sticks only to his own view takes a risk. Patience struggles against calamities. Impatience aids against time’s fluctuations. The best of wealth is to abandon high hopes. How many are the minds that are subdued by aggressive desires! A sign of success is to remember experience. Affection is a useful kinship. And do not place your trust in someone who has no patience.

212. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: One's self-conceit is one of the envies of his own mind.

213. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Overlook imperfections and pains and you will always be pleased.

214. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: One whose stem is lean, his leaves will be thick. (That is, one who is kind to others will grow in health.)

215. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Disputes destroy views.

216. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: One who wins becomes greater.

217. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: In the alterations of conditions lies the knowledge of the gems of men.

218. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Envy of a friend is a sign of fault in one's friendship.

219. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Most places where minds are conquered fall under the glitter of high hopes.

220. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: It is not fair to put an end to trust by entertaining doubt.

221. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: How miserable the ration of a servant of Allāh to the Hereafter is if he oppresses Allāh's servants!

222. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The very best of a generous man's acts of generosity is that he is mindless of what he knows (of people's faults).

223. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: One who is attired with the outfit of modesty, people never see his fault.

224. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Through abundance of silence does one earn respect. Through fairness does one win lovers. Through acts of favors does one's value get greater. Through humility

does one's blessing become complete. Through bearing hardships, loftiness is earned. Through fair dealing, an opponent is subdued. And through clemency with regard to a shallow-minded person does one earn supporters.

225. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: How strange it is that the envious ones overlook the soundness of their own bodies!

226. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: A covetous person is tied with the ropes of humiliation.

227. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) was asked about imān. He said: Imān is a knowledge with the heart, an admission with the tongue, and an action according to the [Islamic] injunctions.

228. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: If one becomes sad about this world, he becomes angry with what Allāh decrees. One who complains about a calamity that befell him, he complains against his Lord. And one who goes to a wealthy man and humbles himself to him on account of his wealth wipes out two-thirds of his creed. If one recites the Qur'ān, and when he dies he goes to hell, he is one of those who used to mock the Signs of Allāh. If one keeps talking about his love for this world, his heart will be burnt by it in three instances: a worry which he never overcomes, a miserliness which never abandons him, and a hope which he never realizes.

229. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Satisfaction suffices for wealth and good manners for a bliss. He (ع) was asked about the meaning of this verse: "... We shall let him lead a good life." He (ع) said, "It (good life) is satisfaction."

230. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Be partners of one to whom sustenance go for this is the best means for acquiring wealth and the most worthy of earning a good luck.

231. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following in explanation of the verse saying, "Allāh enjoins you to abide by justice and kindness": Justice means equity, while kindness is doing others favors.

232. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: If one gives with the short hand, he will be given with the long one.

Al-Radi has said, "The meaning of this statement is that if one spends out of his wealth in the way of goodness and kindness, though it may be little, Allah Almighty will make its reward great. The short hand here is a reference to that of the servant of Allah, whereas the long one is a connotation of the Lord, the most Exalted One, Who is never weakened by giving and Who provides with a lot for what is little.

233. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Do not invite anyone to a duel, but if you are called upon to duel, respond, because one who calls to a duel is an oppressor, and the oppressor is always defeated.

234. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The best of women's attributes are the men's worst: self-conceit, cowardice and miserliness. So if a woman is self-conceited, she will not let one approach her (in bed). If she is miser, she safeguards her wealth and that of her husband. And if she is a coward, she is scared of anything displayed before her.

235. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) was asked, "Describe to us the wise person." He (ع) said: He is the one who puts everything in its right place. He (ع) was then asked to describe the ignorant person, so he said, "I have just done so!"

Al-Radi has said, "He means to say that the ignorant person is the one who does not put things in their right places. He simply is the antithesis of the wise person.

236. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: By Allāh! Your world is cheaper in my eyes than the intestines of a pig in the hands of leper.

237. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Some people worship Allāh out of their desire (to worship Him). Such is the worship of traders. Some people worship Allah out of fear of Him; such is the worship of slaves. And some people worship Allah to thank Him; such is the worship of the free.

238. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Woman is evil, and the worst of her evil is that we cannot do without her!

239. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: One who obeys postponements loses track of rights. One who obeys a tale-teller loses friends.

240. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: A rock taken by force in the building of a house is a pawn for its destruction.

241. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The oppressed one's day (of judgment) is to the oppressor much more hard than the day of the oppressor against the oppressed.

242. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: If many answers crowd together, the truth is hidden.

243. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Fear Allāh to some degree (even) though it may be little, and set a curtain between you and Allāh (even) though it may be thin.

244. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: When replies are numerous, the correct point remains obscure.²⁵⁴

245. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Surely in every blessing there is a right of Allah. If one carries out that right, Allah increases the blessing, and if one falls short of doing so, one stands in danger of losing the blessing.

246. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: When capability increases, desire decreases.

247. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Keep on guard against the slipping away of blessings because not everything that runs away comes back.

²⁵⁴If replies to a question begin to be given from all sides, every reply will raise another question and thus open the door for arguing. And as the number of replies will further necessitate search for the real truth, detection of the correct reply will become more and more arduous, because everyone will try to have his reply accepted as correct as a result of which he will try to collect arguments from here and there to have his reply accepted as correct. As a result of which the whole matter will become confused and this dream will turn into an aimless one because of the multiplicity of interpretation.

248. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Generosity is more prompting to good than regard for kinship.

249. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: If a person has a good idea about you, make his idea come true.

250. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The best deed is that which you have to force yourself to do.

251. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: I came to know Allāh, the Glorified One, through breaking determinations, a change of intentions and the loss of courage.²⁵⁵

252. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The sourness of this world is the sweetness of the next while the sweetness of this world is the sourness of the next.

253. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Allāh has laid down iman (conviction) for purification from polytheism; salat (prayer) for purification from vanity; zakat as a means of livelihood; siyam (fasting) as a trial of the people; hajj for the honor of Islam; persuasion for good (al-amr bil-ma'ruf) for the good of the common people; dissuasion from evil (an-nahy 'anil-munkar) for controlling the mischievous; regard for kinship for increase of number; revenge for stopping bloodshed, the award of penalties for the realization of importance of the prohibitions; the abstinence from drinking wine for the protection of one's wits; the avoidance of theft for inculcating chastity; the abstinence from adultery for safeguarding lineage; the abstinence from sodomy for increasing the progeny; tendering testimony for furnishing proof against contentions; abstinence from telling lies for increasing the esteem of the truth; the maintenance of peace (salam) for the protection from danger; Imāmate

²⁵⁵The breaking of determinations and the loss of courage can be argued to prove the existence of Allah in this way that, for example, a man determines to do a thing but before the determination is transformed into action, it changes and some other idea takes its place. This alteration of ideas and determinations and the emergence of change therein is a proof that there is some higher controlling power over us which has the capacity to bring them from non-existence into existence and again from existence into non-existence, and this is beyond human power. Therefore, it is necessary to acknowledge a super authority which effects change and alteration in determination.

(Divine Leadership) for the orderliness of the community and obedience (to Imāms) as a mark of respect to the Imāmate.

Before describing some of the aims and good points of the commands of the Sharī`a, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) has begun with the aims and objectives of conviction (iman) because iman serves as the basis of religious commands. Without it, no need is felt for any religious code or jurisprudence. Iman is acknowledging the existence of the Creator and the admission of His Oneness. When this iman takes root in the heart of a man, the latter does not agree to bow before any other being, nor is he over-awed or affected by any power or authority. Rather, getting mentally freed of all ties, he regards himself as a devotee of Allah. The result of this adherence to this Unity is that he is saved from the pollution of polytheism.

Prayer (salat) is the most important of all forms of worship. It consists of standing, sitting, bending and prostrating, and these postures are a successful way of destroying the feeling of vanity and pride, erasing self-conceit and egotism and creating humility and submissiveness. This is so because the actions and movements of a vain person produce pride and haughtiness while humble actions engender the quality of submissiveness and humbleness in the mind. With the exercise of these deeds, a man, by and by, acquires a humble temperament. This is how the Arabs, who were so vain that if their whip fell off during riding, they would not bend down to pick it up or if the strap of the shoe gave way, they thought it insulting to bend down to mend it..., began to rub their faces on the dust during prostrations in their prayers and place their foreheads in the status of others' feet during congregational prayers. This way, they acquired the true spirit of Islam after abandoning the pre-Islamic vanity and partisanship.

Zakat, namely that a person who is financially able to do so should pay annually out of his money or property a fixed share (10%) for those who are either destitute or do not have means of livelihood for a year, is an obligatory command of Islam. The purpose behind it is that no individual in the community should remain poor, and they should all remain safe from the evils that result from need and poverty. Besides, another objective is that wealth should keep rotating from one individual to another and should not be centered in a few persons.

Fasting (siyam) is a form of worship in which there is not an iota of show, and no motive is active in it except that of pure intention. As a

result, even in seclusion, when hunger perturbs a man or thirst makes him uneasy, he does not extend his hand for eating, nor does the longing for water make him lose his control although if something is eaten or drunk, none is to peep into his stomach: The purity of conscience prevents his will from deflecting. This is the greatest advantage of fasting: It engenders purity of will in action.

The purpose of hajj is that Muslims from all corners of the globe should assemble at one place so that this world assembly should prove to be an occasion for the manifestation of Islam's greatness, the renewal of the passion for worship and the creation of bonds of mutual brotherhood.

The purpose of jihad is to fight with all possible might and means those forces which oppose Islam, so that Islam may achieve stability and progress. Although there are dangers for life in this course and difficulties crop up at every step, yet the tidings for eternal ease and everlasting life produce the courage to bear all these hardships.

The persuasion for good and dissuasion from evil are effective ways of showing others the correct path and preventing them from committing wrongdoings. If a community has no persons to perform these duties, nothing can save it from ruin, and it falls to an extreme depth morally and socially. That is why Islam has laid a great emphasis on it as compared to other matters and held disregard to it as an unpardonable sin.

Doing good for kinship means that a man should do favors to his relatives. He at least should not stop mutual accosting and speaking with them so that attitudes may become clean and family ties may develop. Dispersed individuals may render strength to one another.

Seeking restitution is a right given to the survivors of the killed person. They can demand a life for a life so that, for fear of punishment, none will dare kill anyone. At the same time, the survivor's passion for revenge should not result in the killing of more than one single person. No doubt, forgiveness or pardon does carry weight in its own place but where it means trampling of an individual's right or a danger to world peace, it cannot be regarded as favorable. Rather, on such an occasion, restitution, or the payment of the blood money (diyya), becomes the sole way of stopping bloodshed and for the safety of the human life. Thus, Allāh says: "And for you, there is (security of) restitution (qisas), O men of understanding, so that you may guard yourselves (against evil)" (Quran, 2: 179).

The purpose behind the awarding of penalties is to make the offender appreciate the seriousness of violating the prohibitions of Allāh so that he may keep off the prohibitions for fear of being punished.

Wine causes diffusion of thinking, dispersion of senses and weakness of comprehension. As a result, a man commits such actions which will not be expected of him while in the state of his senses being weak. Besides, it ruins health and renders the body liable to catch infectious diseases, while sleeplessness, nervous weakness and rheumatism are its main side effects. The Sharī'a has prohibited it in view of these ill effects.

Theft, that is, taking what someone else owns, is an evil which is produced by the sway of greed and evil passions. Since bringing down evil passions from the status of excess to the bounds of moderation means chastity, the abstinence from theft by curbing greed and evil passions will produce it.

Adultery and sodomy have been prohibited in order that one's lineage may be regulated and the human race may continue and prosper, because the issues by adultery are not regarded as legitimate for the purposes of lineage. Consequently, they are not entitled to inheritance, while there is no question of issues in the case of unnatural practices. Besides, as a consequence of these evil practices, one may contract such diseases which cause ruination of life in addition to discontinuity of progeny.

The law of testimony is needed because if one party denies the right of another party, the latter may establish it through testimony and thereby safeguard it.

Abstention from lies and falsehood has been commanded so that the standing and importance of its antithesis, namely the truth, may become prominent. In observing the benefits and the advantages of the truth, the moral weakness of falsehood may be avoided.

“Salam” means peace and peace-loving, and it is obvious that a peaceful attitude is a successful way of protecting one from dangers and for the prevention of war and fighting. Generally, commentators have taken the word salam to mean “mutual greetings and well-wishing”, but the context and the fact that it has been mentioned in the series of obligations does not support this interpretation. However, according to this interpretation, salam is a means of safety from dangers because it is

regarded as a way of peace and peace-loving. When two Muslims meet each other, they offer salam to one another, it means that they announce the wishes of each for the welfare of the other. Afterwards, each feels safe with the other.

Imamate (imamah): This word has appeared in the same context in the authentic editions of Nahjul-Balagha as well as in its commentaries like that of Ibn Abul-Hadid, Vol. 19, p. 90, Ibn Maytham, Vol. 5, pp. 367-378; Minhaj al-Bara'ah, Vol. 21, p. 318, and other sources besides Nahjul-Balagha such as Nihayat al-'Arab by an-Nuwayri ash-Shafi'i, Vol. 8, p. 183 and Bihar al-Anwar by al-Majlisi, Vol. 6, p. 111.

In fact, this word, "imāmah", has been distorted to "amanah" (trust) or "amanat" (trusts) in some copies such as those printed in Egypt. It is very surprising to note that the word has appeared as amanah in the text of Nahjul-Balagha printed with a commentary by Ibn Abul-Hadid in Egypt in the first edition, Vol. 4, p. 350 as well as in the second edition edited by Muhammad Abul-Fadhl Ibrahim, Vol. 19, p. 86, while he himself (Ibn Abul-Hadid) based his commentary on its correct reading, namely imamah as did other commentators.

However, in explanation of this sentence, "Imamate for the orderliness of the community," as the theological scholars say: Whoever has known dark experiences and has examined political principles knows, out of necessity, that whenever men have among them a chief and a guide whom they obey, one who restrains the oppressor from his oppression and the unjust man from his injustice and avenges the oppressed of his oppressor, and along with that leads them to rational principles and religious duties and restrains them from the corruption which causes the destruction of order in their worldly affairs and from the evils which result in wretchedness in the world to come, so that every individual might fear that punishment..., then because of all of this, they will draw near to soundness and depart from corruption (Ch. 11, English translation, p. 63).

The institution of Imamate is intended to cater for the unification of the nation and to protect the commandments of Islam from alteration and change. In the absence of a head for the nation and a protector for the religion, the order of the nation cannot be maintained, nor can the commandments of Islam remain safe from interference by others. This objective can be achieved only when obedience to him is obligatory on the people. This is so because if he is not obeyed and followed by obligation, he will neither be able to maintain justice and equity, nor

secure the rights of the oppressed from the oppressor, nor issue and enforce the laws of the Shari'a and consequently the extinction of evil and mischief from the land cannot be expected.

254. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) used to say: If you want an oppressor to take an oath, ask him to swear like this: that he is out of Allāh's might and power, because if he swears falsely in this way, he will be swiftly punished while if he swears by Allah Who is such that there is no god but He, he will not be quickly punished since he is acknowledging the Unity of Allah, the Sublime.²⁵⁶

255. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib(ع) said: O son of Adam! Be your own representative in the matter of your property, and do about it

²⁵⁶It is narrated that someone levied some charges against Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (ع) before the 'Abbaside caliph 'Abdullah ibn Muhammad al-Mansur. Al-Mansur sent for the Imam and told him that such-and-such a person had told him such-and-such about him. The Imam said it was all wrong and there was not an iota of truth in it. He desired the man to be sent for and questioned before him. Consequently, he was sent for and questioned. He said that whatever he had said was true and correct. The Imam said to him, "If you are speaking the truth, then you swear as I ask you to swear." Thereafter, the Imam (ع) made him swear by saying, "I am out of Allah's might and power and I rely on my own might and power." Soon after swearing like this, the man was attacked with paralysis and he became motionless. The Imam, returned with full honor and prestige (*Al-Kafi*, al-Kulayni, Vol. 6, pp. 445-446; *Bihar al-Anwar*, Vol. 47, pp. 164-165, 172-175, 203-204; *Al-Fusul al-Muhimmah*, Ibn as-Sabbagh al-Maliki, pp. 225-226; *As-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah*, Ibn Hajar ash-Shafi'i, p. 120; *Jami' Karamat al-Awliya'*, an-Nabhani ash-Shafi'i, Vol. 2, p. 4). Such an event took place during the reign of Harun ar-Rashid (149/766-193/809 grandson of al-Mansur) when 'Abdullah ibn Mus'ab (grandson of 'Abdullah ibn az-Zubayr, the well-known enemy of Ahl al-Bayt (ع) of the Holy Prophet) slandered Yahya ibn 'Abdallah ibn al-Hassan ibn (al-Imam) al-Hassan ibn Ali ibn Abu Talib before Harun ar-Rashid by saying that he was plotting a revolution against him (Harun). Then Yahya made 'Abdullah swear before Harun in the same manner as the Imam had done. When 'Abdullah swore as he was required to, the symptom of leprosy soon appeared in him in the presence of Harun and he died after three days, while every part of his flesh cracked open and all the hair of his body fell out. After this, Harun used to say, "How soon Allah took revenge on 'Abdullah for Yahya!" (*Maqatil at-Talibiyyin*, Abul-Faraj al-Isfahani, pp. 472-478; *Muruj al-Dhahab*, al-Mas'udi, Vol. 3, pp. 340-342; *Tarikh Baghdad*, al-Khatib, Vol. 14, pp. 110-112; *Ibn Abul-Hadid*, Vol. 19, pp. 91-94; *At-Tarikh*, Ibn Kathir, Vol. 10, pp. 167-168; *Tarikh al-Khulafa'*, al-Sayyuti, p. 287).

whatever you want to be done with it after your death.²⁵⁷ Since after you, it will be out of your control.

256. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Anger is a kind of madness because the victim to it repents afterwards. If he does not repent his madness is confirmed.

257. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Health of body comes from paucity of envy.²⁵⁸

258. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following to Kumayl ibn Ziyad an-Nakha'i: O Kumayl! Direct your people to go out in the day to achieve noble traits and to go out in the night to meet the needs of those who might be sleeping, for I swear by the One Whose hearing extends to all voices, if someone pleases another's heart, Allāh will create a special thing out of this pleasing so that whenever any hardship befalls him, it will come running like flowing water and drive away the hardship as wild camels are driven away.

259. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: When you fall in destitution, trade with Allāh through charity.

260. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Faithfulness with faithless people is faithlessness with Allāh, while faithlessness with faithless people is faithfulness with Allāh.

261. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: There is many a man being gradually brought towards punishment by good treatment with him; many a man who remains in deceit because his evils are covered, and many a

²⁵⁷The meaning of it is that if a person desires that after his death a portion of his property should be spent on charity, he should not wait till the time of his death but should spend it wherever he desires even during his lifetime. It is possible that after his death, his successors may not act upon his will or he may not get an opportunity to write a will. A Persian couplet says:

Give away money and property while you are living,

²⁵⁸Envy produces such a poisonous matter in the body which destroys the natural heat of the body. As a result, the body weakens and the spirit withers. This is why an envious person never prospers and melts away in the heat of envy.

man who is in illusion because of good talk about him, while there is no greater ordeal by Allāh, the Glorified One, than the giving of time.

Sayyid ar-Radi says: “This saying has appeared earlier as well but here it contains a beautiful and useful addition.”

Section where we have included selections from wonderful sayings of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) which require explanations:

262-1. A tradition related from Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) says: When the situation is like this, then the head of the religion will rise and people will gather around him as pieces of rainless cloud gather during autumn...

Sayyid ar-Radi says: “ya`sub”²⁵⁹ is the great chief who is in charge of the people’s affairs, and “quza” means the pieces of cloud which have no rain.

²⁵⁹“Ya`sub” [which exists in the original Arabic text] is the name given to the queen bee, and the saying of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib is: “fa idha kana dhalika daraba ya`subu`d-din bi dhanabihi”. The word “daraba” means to beat, strike, hit, etc.; “ya`subu`d-din” means “the head of religion and of the Sharī`a”, and “dhanab” means tail, end, adherent or flower. In this sentence, “ya`subu`d-din” stands for the Present Imam (Imam al-Mahdi [ع]). Although this title was given by the Holy Prophet to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) specifically, as he said, “O Ali! You are the *ya`sub* (head) of the believers while wealth is the *ya`sub* of the hypocrites” (*Al-Isti`ab*, Vol. 4, p. 1744; *Usd al-Ghabah*, Vol. 5, p. 287; *Al-Isabah*, Vol. 4, p. 171; *Ar-Riyad an-Nadira*, Vol. 2, p. 155; *Majma` az-Zawa'id*, Vol. 9, p. 102; Ibn Abul-Hadid, Vol. 1, p. 12; Vol. 19, p. 22). Also, the Holy Prophet said to Ali: “You are the *ya`sub* of the religion” (*Ar-Riyad an-Nadira*, Vol. 2, p. 177; *Taj al-Arus*, Vol. 1, p. 381; Ibn Abul-Hadid, Vol. 1, p. 12; Vol. 19, p. 224). Also, the Holy Prophet said to Ali: “You are the *ya`sub* of the Muslims” (*Yanabi` al-Mawaddah*, al-Qunduzi, p. 62). Again the Holy Prophet said: “You are the *ya`sub* of Quraysh” (*Al-Maqasid al-Hassanah*, as-Sakhawi, p. 94). Therefore, the reason for giving the Imam this name is that just as the queen bee is pure alone and in the society of other bees, collecting her nectar from the blossoms and flowers, keeping away from pollution, in the same way, the present Imam (ع) is free from all pollution and is perfectly clean and pure. This saying has been interpreted in several ways: Firstly, it means that “When the present Imam (ع) settles at his seat after his tour and rotation around the world, people will gather around him.” Secondly, it means that “When the Imam (ع) moves about on earth along with his friends and associates...” In this case the word “daraba” will mean moving about, and the word “dhanab” will mean helpers and associates. Thirdly, it means that “when the Imam rises with a

263-2. A tradition of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) says: He is a versatile speaker.²⁶⁰

Sayyid ar-Radi says: “Ashahshah” means one expert and free in speech, and everyone who is free in speech or in walking is called “Ashahshah”, while in another sense this word means a miserly and niggardly person.

264-3. A tradition from Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) says: Quarrels bring about ruin.

Sayyid ar-Radi says: “Quhm” means “ruin” because quarrels often drive men into ruin and grief. In the same way, it is said “quhmatul-A`rub” which means the period (of drought) when the cattle owned by the nomad desert Arabs are reduced to bones. Another argument is also advanced in this matter, namely that the situation drives them to green areas. In other words, the hardship of the desert life drives them to hadar (metropolis area, a more sophisticated and complex living environment than that wherein nomads of the desert live).

265-4. A tradition from Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) says: When girls come of age, relatives on the father’s side are preferable.

Sayyid ar-Radi says, “Instead of ‘nassa’l-hiqaq’, the combination of ‘nassa’l-haqa’iq’ has also been related.” “Nass” means the last end of things or their most remote limit, such as “an-nassi fi’ssayr” means the maximum a beast can walk. Or you say “nasastur-rajula anil-amri” when you have questioned a man to the extreme to make him utter all that he has. Thus, “nassul-haqa’iq” means prudence because it is the last limit of childhood and is the time when a child crosses childhood into maturity. This is a very eloquent reference to the point, and a strange one, too.

sword in hand...” In this case the word “dhanab” will mean stinging by the bee. Fourthly, it means that “When the Imam rises for the propagation of the true faith with full fervor...” In this case, the sentence is suggestive of the state of anger and the posture to attack.

²⁶⁰The reference about the “versatile speaker” is to Sa’sa’ah ibn Suhan al-‘Abdi who was among the chief companions of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع). This saying throws light on the greatness of his speaking ability and the force of his utterances. In this regard, Ibn Abul-Hadid has written the following: “It suffices Sa’sa’ah’s greatness that a personality like Ali (ع) has praised him for versatility and eloquence of speech” (*Sharh Nahjul-Balagha*, Vol. 19, p. 106).

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) intends to say: “When girls reach this stage, their relatives on the father’s side have a better right [to marry them] than their mother, provided they are those with whom marriage is not prohibited, such as brothers and uncles, etc., to arrange for their marriages if they so desire. “Al-hiqaq” also means the quarreling of the mother with a girl’s paternal relatives. This quarrel is that everyone of them says he has a better right for her. That is why it is said “haqatuhu hiqaqan” on the lines of “jadaltuhu jidalan”. It has also been said that “nassul-hiqaq” means acquiring understanding. This is prudence, too, because Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) refers to the stage when rights and duties become applicable. The person who has related the word as “haqa’iq” intends to signify the plural of “haqiqah” (reality, fact, truth).

The above is what Abu ‘Ubayd al-Qasim ibn Sallam has stated (in *Gharib al-Hadith*, Vol. 3, pp. 456-458); but I think that what is meant here by the word “nassul-hiqaq” is a girl’s reaching the stage when it is possible to marry her and allow her to dispose of her rights herself on the analogy of “bil hiqaqi mina’l-ibili” (a camel’s attaining majority) wherein “hiqaq” is the plural of “hiqqah” or “hiqq”; it means completion of three years and entry into the fourth, which is the time when it reaches the age when it is possible to ride on its back. “Haqa’iq”, too, is the plural of “hiqqah”. Thus, both the versions point to the same meaning, and this interpretation is more in keeping with the way of the Arabs than the other one stated earlier.

266-5. A tradition of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) says: Faith produces a “Alumazah” in the heart. As faith develops, “Alumazah” also increases.

Sayyid ar-Radi says: “Alumazah” is a white spot, or something like that. On that analogy, if a horse has a white spot on its lower lip, it is called “farusun al-mazu”, that is, a white-spotted horse.

267-6. A tradition of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) says: If a man has “ad-daynu’z-zanun” (i.e. doubtful loan), it is his duty to pay zakat thereon for all the past years when he recovers it.

Sayyid ar-Radi says: “Az-zanun” is the loan about which the lender does not know whether he will be able to recover it from the borrower or not. He is like the one who hopes as well as loses hope. This is the most eloquent way of expression. In this way, everything about which you do not know where you stand will be zanun. In the same strain,

the poet al-Aisha (Maymun ibn Qays al-Wa'ili [d. 7/629]) says, "The az-zanun well (i.e. the one that may or may not have water), which is also deprived of the rain of the clouds and cannot be compared to the Euphrates whose waves are rising high and which ever pushes the boat away on its current as it does the adept swimmer."

"Jubb" means "well" (located in a wilderness), while zanun is that about which it is not known whether or not it has water.

268-7. A tradition of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) relates that he arranged a force for advancing for jihad and said: i'dhibu (turn away) from women as far as you can.

Sayyid ar-Radi says: It ("i'dhibu") means "stay away" from thoughts of women and from clinging your heart to them, and do not have union with them, because all this produces weakness in enthusiasm, affects the firmness of determination, weakens one against his enemy and prevents one from excelling in fighting. Anything which prevents from something is called "adhaba 'anhu" i.e. turned away from it. Thus, "al-'adhib" and "al-adhub" mean one who gives up eating and drinking.

269-8. A tradition of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) says: ... Like the successful shooter (al-yasir al-falij) who looks forward to achieving success at his first shot.

Sayyid ar-Radi says: "Al-yasirun" (pl. of al-yasir) means those who shoot with arrows on the slaughtered camel by way of gambling, while "al-falij" means successful or victorious. For example, it is said: "falaja `alayhim" or "falajahum" (that is, he got victory over them or overpowered them). A poet has said by way of war this recital: "When I noticed a successful person securing victory..., etc."

270-9. A tradition of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) runs as follows: When the crisis became red-hot, we sought refuge with the Messenger of Allah (ص), and none of us was closer to the enemy than he himself was.

Sayyid ar-Radi says: "This means that when fear of the enemy increased and fighting became serious, the Muslims begin to think that since the Messenger of Allah had taken up fighting himself, Allah must give them victory through him and that, therefore, they will be safe from all the dangers because of his presence."

And the words “idha’hmarra’l-ba’su” (when the crisis became red-hot) refers to the seriousness of the matter. For this purpose, several expressions have been used out of which this is the best, since Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) has likened war with fire which combines heat and redness both in action as well as in color. This is confirmed by the words of the Messenger of Allah (ص) when during the battle of Hunayn, he noticed the people of Hawāzin (tribe) fighting, he said: “Now the watis has heated up” and watis is the place where fire is lighted. In this way, the Messenger of Allah (ص) likened the seriousness of fighting by men to the seriousness of the fire and its flames.

This section ends and we return to the original theme of the chapter.

271. When the news of the attack of Mu’awiyah’s men on al-Anbar reached Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع), he himself came out walking till he reached an-Nukhaylah where people overtook him and said: “O Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib! We are [mighty] enough for [defeating] them.” He said: You cannot be enough for me against yourselves, so how can you be enough for me against others? Before me, the people used to complain of the oppression of their rulers, but now I have to complain of the wrongful actions of my people; as though I am led by them and they are the leaders, or that I am the subject and they are the rulers.

The narrator says: “When Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) uttered this during his long speech, which we have included in the collection of sermons (No. 27), two men from among his companions advanced towards him and one of them said: “I rule none except myself and my brother’ (Quran, 5: 25). So, order us with your command, O Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib and we will carry it out.” Thereupon, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: “How can you two accomplish what I aim at?”

272. It is said that al-Harith ibn Hawt came to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib and said: “Do you believe that I can ever imagine that the people of Jamal were wrong?” Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: “O al-Harith! You have seen below yourself but not above yourself, so you have been confused. Certainly, you have known right, so that you can recognize the righteous. And you have not known wrong, so that you can recognize the people who are wrong!” Then al-Harith said: “In that case, I shall

withdraw along with Sa'd ibn Malik²⁶¹ and 'Abdullah ibn Umar," whereupon Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: "Verily, Sa'd and 'Umar have neither sided with right nor forsaken wrong."¹

273. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: One who holds authority is like one who rides a lion; he is envied for his status but he well knows it.²⁶²

274. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Do good with the bereaved ones of others so that good is done to your bereaved ones, too.

²⁶¹Sa'd ibn Malik (i.e. Sa'd ibn Abu Waqqas, father of 'Umar ibn Sa'd who killed Imam Hussain [ع]) and Abdullah ibn 'Umar were among those who were keeping themselves away from Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib's help and support. As for Sa'd ibn Abu Waqqas, after the killing of Othman he retired to some wilderness and passed his life there, but did not agree to swear the oath of allegiance to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) (as caliph). But after the death of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib he used to express his repentance, saying, "I held an opinion but it was a wrong opinion." (*Al-Mustadrak*, al-Hakim, Vol. 3, p. 116). And when Mu'awiyah blamed him for not supporting him in his fight with Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib, Sa'd said: I only repent for not having fought against the rebellious group (i.e. Mu'awiyah and his folks). (*Ahkam al-Quran*, al-Jassas al-Hanafi, Vol. 2, pp. 224, 225; *Al-Furu'*, Ibn Muflih al-Hanbali, Vol. 3, p. 542). As for 'Abdullah ibn Umar, although he had sworn allegiance, he refused to help Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) in his battles putting forth this excuse: "I have sought seclusion to devote myself to worship and do not, therefore, want to involve myself in war and fighting." A Persian couplet says that intelligence regards such excuses to be worse than the offence itself. "Abdullah ibn 'Umar also frequently used to express his repentance, even up to the last moments of his life, saying: I do not find anything in myself to be distressed about in this world, except my not having fought alongside Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) against the rebellious group as Allah, to Whom belongs Might and Majesty, had commanded me (*Al-Mustadrak*, Vol. 3, pp. 115-116; *Al-Sunan al-Kubra*, al-Bayhaqi, Vol. 8, p. 172; *Al-Tabaqat*, Ibn Sa'd, Vol. 4, part 1, pp. 136, 137; *Al-Isti'ab*, Vol. 3, p. 953; *Usd al-Ghabah*, Vol. 3, p. 229; Vol. 4, p. 33; *Majma' az-Zawa'id*, Vol. 3, p. 182; Vol. 7, p. 242; *Al-Furu'*, Vol. 3, p. 543; *Ruh al-Ma'ani*, al-Alusi, Vol. 26, p. 151).

²⁶²The notion here is that if a person holds a high position in, say, a royal court, people look at his rank, status, honor and prestige with envy. But he himself has always the fear lest the royal pleasure should turn against him and he falls in the pit of disgrace and dishonor or death and destruction. He is like the rider on a lion with whom people are awed, but he himself ever faces the danger lest the lion should devour him or throw him in some fatal pit.

275. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: When the utterance of the wise is to the point, it serves as a cure, but if it is wrong, it acts like an illness.²⁶³

276. Someone asked Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) to define religion for him. The Imam said, "Come to me tomorrow so that I may enlighten you in the presence of all people; thus, if you forget what I say, others might retain it. This is so because an utterance is like a fluttering prey which may be grappled by someone but missed by others."

Sayyid ar-Radi says, "We have already stated in the earlier chapter how Imām Ali ibn Abū Tālib replied to this man, namely his saying (No. 31): 'Faith stands on four pillars, etc.'"

277. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: O son of Adam! Do not inflict the worry of the day that has not yet come on the day which has already come because if that day is in your life, Allah will also bestow its livelihood.

278. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Have love for your friend up to a limit, for it is possible that he may turn into your enemy some day. And hate your enemy up to a limit, for it is possible that he may turn into your friend some day.

279. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: There are two kinds of workers in the world. One is a person who works in this world for this world and his work for this world keeps him unmindful of the next. He is afraid of destitution for those whom he will leave behind but feels safe about it. So, he spends his life seeking the good of others. The other is one who works in this world for what is to come hereafter, and he secures his share of this world without an effort. Thus, he gets both the benefits and becomes the owner of both homes. In this way, he is prestigious before Allah. If he asks Allah anything, He does not deny him.

²⁶³The learned and the reformers are responsible for improvement as well as deterioration because the common people are under their influence; they regard their words and actions as correct and sound. They rely on them and act upon their words. Thus, if their teaching caters for improvement, then thousands of individuals will acquire improvement and betterment thereby. But if there is evil in it, thousands of individuals will get involved in misguidance and straying. That is why it is said: "When a scholar gets into evil, the whole world gets into evil."

280. It is related that during the days of (caliph) Umar ibn al-Khattab, the question of the excess of the ornaments of the Ka‘bah was mentioned to him and some people suggested the following: “If you raise by it an army of Muslims, it will be a matter of great reward, and what will the Ka‘bah do with the ornaments?” Umar thought of doing so but asked Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) what he thought. The Imam said: When the Quran was revealed to the Prophet (ص), there were four kinds of property: One, the property of a Muslim which he distributed among the successors according to fixed shares. Second, the tax (fay’) which he distributed to those for whom it was meant. Third, the one-fifth (khums) for which Allah had fixed the ways of disposal. Fourth, the amounts of charity (sadaqat) the disposal of which was also fixed by Allah. The ornaments of the Ka‘bah did exist in those days, but Allah left them as they were. He did not leave them by omission, nor were they unknown to Him. Therefore, you should keep them where Allah and His Prophet placed them.

Thereupon, Umar ibn al-Khattab said, “If you had not been here, we would have been humiliated.” He left the ornaments as they were.¹ Among the first three caliphs, ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab often used to call upon Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) to help him solve many intricate problems, so as to benefit from his vast knowledge. But Abu Bakr, due to the short period of his caliphate, as well as Othman, due to the special circumstances of the latter’s caliphate and entourage, seldom used to call upon Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) and benefit from his advice. Umar used to praise Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) very much for his vast knowledge, saying, “The most knowledgeable person among us in jurisprudence and judgement is Ali” (Sahih, al-Bukhari, Vol. 6, p. 23; Al-Musnad, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Vol. 5, p. 113; Al-Mustadrak, al-Hakim, Vol. 3, p. 305; At-Tabaqat, Ibn Sa‘d, Vol. 2, part 2, p. 102; Al-Isti‘ab, Vol. 3, p. 1102).

Certainly, there is no need for a testimony from Umar or from others in this regard. Umar himself and a group of the companions confess that the Holy Prophet used to say, “Ali is the most knowledgeable in jurisprudence and judgement among my ummah (Muslim community)” (Akhbar al-Qudat, Waki‘, Vol. 1, p. 78; Masabih as-Sunnah, al-Baghawi, Vol. 2, p. 203; Al-Isti‘ab, Vol. 1, pp. 16-17; Vol. 3, p. 1102; Ar-Riyad an-Nadira, Vol. 2, p. 108; Al-Sunan, Ibn Majah, Vol. 1, p. 55).

In this regard, Ahmad ibn Hanbal narrates from Abu Hazm that a certain man approached Mu‘awiyah and put to him some theological

questions. Mu'awiyah said, "Refer these questions to Ali who possesses better knowledge." The man said, "But I rather have your own reply than that of Ali." Mu'awiyah silenced him and said, "This is the worst thing that I have ever heard from you! You have expressed hatred towards the person whom the Messenger of Allah used to coach and tutor as a mother bird feeds a nestling by putting grain after grain into the mouth of the nestling with its beak and to whom the Messenger of Allah said: 'You hold the same status in relation to me as Harun held in relation to Musa except that there shall, in all certainty, be no prophet after me', and to whom Umar used to turn for the solution of unsolved problems" (Fayd al-Qadir, al-Munawi, Vol. 3, p. 46; Ar-Riyad an-Nadira, Vol. 2, p. 195; As-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah, p. 107; Fath al-Bari, Vol. 17, p. 105).

Also, Umar used to say the following quite frequently: "Women lack the ability to give birth to the like of Ali ibn Abu Talib. Had it not been for Ali, Umar would have perished" (Ta'wil Mukhtalaf al-Hadith, Ibn Qutaybah, p. 202; Al-Isti'ab, Vol. 3, p. 1103; Qudat al-Andalus, al-Maliqi, p. 73; Ar-Riyad an-Nadira, Vol. 2, p. 194; Al-Manaqib, al-Khawarizmi, p. 39; Yanabi' al-Mawaddah, p. 75, 373; Fayd al-Qadir, Vol. 4, p. 356).

He also used to say, "I seek the protection of Allah from the problems for the solution of which Abul-Hassan (Ali) is not present!" (Al-Isti'ab, Vol. 3, pp. 1102-1103; At-Tabaqat, Vol. 2, part 2, p. 102; Sifat-us-Safwah, Ibn al-Jawzi, Vol. 1, p. 121; Usd al-Ghabah, Vol. 4, pp. 22-23; Al-Asabah, Vol. 2, p. 509; At-Tarikh, Ibn Kathir, Vol. 7, p. 360).

Umar used to often address Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) thus: "O Abul-Hassan! I seek the protection of Allah from being in a community among which you are not found" (Al-Mustadrak, Vol. 1, pp. 457-458; At-Tafsir, Fakhr ad-Din ar-Razi, Vol. 32, p.10; Ad-Durr al-Manthur; al-Sayyuti, Vol. 3, p. 144; Ar-Riyad an-Nadira, Vol. 2, p. 197; Fayd al-Qadir, Vol. 3, p. 46; Vol. 4, p. 356; As-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah, p. 107).

Above all, this confession is the acknowledgment by the Holy Prophet of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) as narrated by Umar ibn al-Khattab himself, Abū Sa'id al-Khudri and Mu'ath ibn Jabal that the Holy Prophet said: "O Ali! I have exceeded you in Prophethood, for there will be no prophet after me, and you exceed others in seven noble qualities. You are: i) the first [among all contemporary males] to believe in Allah, ii) the best fulfiller of the promise made to Allah, iii) the best adherer to the commandments of Allah, iv) the most equitable distributor among the

people, v) the best dispenser of justice (or the most clement) to the (Muslim) subjects, vi) the one who has the best insight into controversial issues (or the most learned in judgement), and vii) the most conspicuous in virtue and honor before Allah” (Hilyat al-Awliya’, Vol. 1, pp. 65, 66; Ar-Riyad an-Nadira, Vol. 2, p. 198; Al-Manaqib, al-Khawarizmi, p. 61; Kanz al-Ummal, Vol. 12, p. 214; Ibn Abul-Hadid, Vol. 13, p. 230).

It is also narrated by Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib, Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, Ma’qil ibn Yasir and Buraydah ibn Husayb that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said to Fatima (ع), “Are you not satisfied that surely I have married you to the foremost of my ummah in believing in Islam, the most knowledgeable among them and the superior among them in clemency?” (Al-Musnad, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Vol. 5, p. 26; Al-Musannaf, as-San’ani, Vol. 5, p. 490; Al-Isti’ab, Vol. 3, p. 1099; Usd al-Ghabah, Vol. 5, p. 520; Kanz al-Ummal, Vol. 12, p. 205; Vol. 15, p. 99; Majma’ az-Zawa’id, Vol. 9, pp. 101, 114; As-Sirah al-Halabiyyah, Vol. 1, p. 285).

Once we read the following saying by the Holy Prophet (ﷺ), we will no longer be surprised when taking note, based on the above acknowledgments, of the vast knowledge of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib, his efficiency in the field of jurisprudence and judgement: “I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its gate; whoever wants to acquire (my) knowledge must come through the gate. (Al-Mustadrak, Vol. 3, pp. 126, 127; Al-Isti’ab, Vol. 3, p. 1102; Usd al-Ghabah, Vol. 4, p. 22; Tahthib at-Tahthib, Vol. 6, pp. 320-321; Vol. 7, p. 337; Majma’ az-Zawa’id, Vol. 9, p. 114; Kanz al-Ummal, Vol. 12, pp. 201, 212; Vol. 15, pp. 129-130).

Also, the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) said, “I am the store-house of wisdom and Ali is its gate. Whoever wants to acquire wisdom must come through the gate” (Al-Jami’ as-Sahih, at-Tirmidhi, Vol. 5, pp. 637-638; Hilyat al-Awliya’, Vol. 1, p. 64; Masabih as-Sunnah, al-Baghawi, Vol. 2, p. 275; Ar-Riyad an-Nadira, Vol. 12, p. 193; Kanz al-Ummal, Vol. 12, p. 201).

281. It is related that two persons were brought to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) once. They had stolen a public property. One of them was a slave purchased with public money and the other had been purchased by someone from among the people. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said, “As for this one who has stolen the public property, there is no punishment for him, for it means one who is the property of Allah has taken another property of Allah. As for the other, he should be punished.” Consequently, the thief’s hand was cut off.

282. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: If my steps acquire firmness out of these slippery places, I will alter several things.²⁶⁴

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع), who was the greatest scholar of the Shari'a, used to protest against these orders and had his own views about the companions. In this regard, Ibn Abul-Hadid writes the following: "There is no possibility for us to deny that Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib had views on the commands of the Shari'a and opinions at odds with those of the companions" (Sharh Nahjul-Balagha, Vol. 19, p. 161).

When Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) assumed charge of the formal caliphate, rebellions soon cropped up on all sides and he did not get rid of these troubles up to the last moment. Consequently, the altered commands could not be fully corrected, and many wrong or doubtful commands gained currency in areas far removed from the center. Nevertheless, the group of people who were associated with Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) used to inquire about the commands of the Shari'a from him and recorded them. As a result, the correct commands did not disappear and the wrong ones did not become unanimously accepted, thanks to Allah.

²⁶⁴It cannot be denied that after the Prophet of Islam (ص), changes came into existence in the Islamic faith when some people, acting upon their own imagination or inclination, amended or altered the commands of the Shari'a, although none has the right to make alteration in it. This will be ignoring the clear commands of the Quran and the Sunnah and enforcing commands produced by one's own imagination, way of thinking or inclination. Thus, the Quran contains this clear method of divorce: that "(revokable) divorce (i.e. divorce in which resumption of conjugal relations is permissible without a marriage to another man taking place) may be done with two pronouncements" (Quran, 2: 229). But in view of certain supposed advantages, caliph 'Umar ordered three pronouncements to be required on a single occasion. Similarly, he introduced the system of 'awl in inheritance and introduced four *takbirs* in the funeral prayer. In the same way, caliph Othman added an *adhan* to the Friday prayer service, ordering the offering of full prayers in place of *qasr* (shortened) ones, and allowed the sermon to precede the 'Id prayer service. In fact, hundreds of commands of this type were altered or fabricated. As a result, even correct commands got mixed with wrong ones and lost their authenticity. (For such changes to the creed made, see: *Al-Ghadir, Al-Amani* [by Abu Bakr], Vol. 7, pp. 74-236; [by Umar], Vol. 6, pp. 83-325; [by Othman], Vol. 8, pp. 98-387; *An-Nass wal-Ijtihad*, Sharafu'd-Din [by Abu Bakr], pp. 76-154; [by Umar], pp. 155-276; [by Othman], pp. 284-289. See also *Muqaddimat Mir'atul-Uqul*, al-'Askari, Vol. 1 & 2).

283. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Know with full conviction that Allāh has not fixed for any person more livelihood than what has been ordained in the Book of Destiny, even though his means (of seeking it) may be great, his craving for it intense and his efforts for it acute. Nor does the weakness of a person or the paucity of his means stand in the way between what is ordained in the Book of Destiny and himself. Whoever realizes it and acts upon it is the best of them all in comfort and benefit, while whoever disregards it and doubts it exceeds all men in disadvantages. Very often, a favored person is being slowly driven (towards punishment) through those favors, and very often an afflicted person is being done good through his own affliction. Therefore, O listener, increase your gratefulness, lessen your haste and stay within the bounds of your livelihood.

284. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Do not turn your knowledge into ignorance or your conviction into doubt. When you gain knowledge act (upon it), and when you acquire conviction, proceed (on its basis).²⁶⁵

285. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Greed takes a person to the watering place but brings him back without letting him drink. It undertakes responsibility but does not fulfil it. Often, the drinker gets choked before he quenches his thirst. The greater the worth of a thing yearned for, the greater is the grief for its loss. Desires blind the eyes of understanding. The destined share will reach him who does not approach it.

286. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: O Allāh! I seek Your protection from this: that I may appear to be good in the eyes of the people while my inward self may be sinful before You, and that I may guard myself (from sinning) only for show before the people although

²⁶⁵ Knowledge and conviction demand that they should be acted upon. If they are not acted upon, they cannot be called knowledge and conviction. Consequently, if a man says he knows the dangers that exist on particular path but he adopts that very path for his journey instead of the path that has no dangers, then who can say that this man had full certainty about the dangers of that path? This is so because the consequence of such certainty should have been that he would have avoided going on that path. Similarly, the person who has a firm belief (i.e. conviction, *iman*) in the resurrection and revival of life, or in chastisement and reward, cannot be overpowered by those things of this world that make a man neglectful to the extent that he disregards the next life, nor can he fall short in good actions for fear of chastisement and evil consequences.

You are aware of everything about me. Thus, I appear before the people in good shape although my evil acts are placed before You. This means achieving nearness to Your creatures but remoteness from Your pleasure.

287. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: I swear by the One Who let us pass the dark night after which there was a bright day that such and such²⁶⁶ did not happen.

288. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: A small action which is continued with regularity is more beneficial than a long one performed with grudge.

289. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: When optional issues stand in the way of obligatory ones, abandon them.

290. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Whoever keeps in view the distance of the journey remains prepared.

291. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Perception by the eyes is not real observation because the eyes sometimes deceive people; but wisdom does not deceive whomsoever it counsels.

292. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Between you and preaching there is a curtain of deception.

293. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The ignorant among you get too much while the learned are just put off.

294. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Knowledge dispels the excuse of those who advance excuses.

295. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Anyone whom death overtakes early seeks time while the death of anyone who is deferred puts forth excuses for the postponement (of doing good deeds).

296. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: For every thing to which people say "how good!" there is an evil hidden in this world.

²⁶⁶Sayyid ar-Radi has not written what it was that did not happen, leaving us only with the first part of the sentence!

297. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) was asked about destitution. He said the following: It is a dark path; do not tread upon it. It is a deep ocean; do not dive in it. And it is the secret of Allah; do not take trouble about (knowing) it.

298. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: When Allāh intends to humiliate a person, He denies him knowledge.

299. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: In the past, I had a brother-in-faith²⁶⁷, and he was prestigious in my view because the world was humble in his eyes, the needs of the stomach did not have a sway over him. He did not long for what he did not get. If he got a thing, he would not ask for more. He remained most of the time silent. When he spoke, he silenced the other speakers. He quenched the thirst of inquirers. He was weak and feeble, but at the time of fighting, he was like the lion of the forest or the serpent of the valley: he would not put forth an argument unless it was decisive.

He will not abuse anyone in an excusable matter unless he had heard the excuse. He would not speak of any trouble except after its disappearance. He said what he would do and would not say what he will not. Even if he could be exceeded in speech, he could not be excelled in silence. He was more eager for keeping quiet than speaking, and if two things confronted him, he would see which was more akin to the longing of the heart and he would oppose it.

These qualities are incumbent upon you. So, you should acquire them and compete with each other in upholding them. Even if you cannot acquire them, you should know that acquiring a part is better than giving up the whole.

300. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Even if Allāh had not warned of chastisement on those who are disobedient to Him, it will be

²⁶⁷The man whom Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) refers to here as his “brother” and whose qualities he has stated has been taken by some commentators to be Abu Dharr al-Ghifari, by some as Othman ibn Maz’un al-Jamhi, and by some as al-Miqdad ibn al-Aswad al-Kindi. But it is not unlikely that no particular individual is referred to here at all because it is customary with Arabs to speak of a “brother” or a “comrade” although they have no particular individual in mind.

obligatory by way of gratitude for His favors that He should not be disobeyed.

301. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following to express his condolences to al-Ash'ath ibn Qays about (the death of) his son: O Ash'ath! If you grieve over your son, certainly it is the consequence of the blood relationship; but if you endure, then Allāh provides recompense for every affliction. O Ash'ath! If you endure even then, matters will move on as ordained by Allah. But in that case, you will deserve to be rewarded, while if you lose patience, matters will again move as ordained by Allāh. But in this case, you will be bearing the burden (of your sins). O Ash'ath! Your son (when he lived) gave you happiness while, at the same time, he was a trial and a hardship and (when he died) he caused you to grieve while, at the same time, he has proved to be a source of reward and mercy for you.

302. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following at the grave of the Messenger of Allah (ص) at the time of his burial: Certainly endurance is good except about you. Fretting is bad except over you. And the affliction about you is great while every other affliction before or after it is small.

303. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Do not associate with a fool because he will beautify his actions before you and wish that you, too, be like him.²⁶⁸

304. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) was asked about the distance between the East and the West when he replied as follows: A day's trip for the sun.

²⁶⁸A fool considers his ways of action to be most appropriate, and he wants his friend also to adopt the same ways, so that he should become as he himself is. This does not mean that he desires that his friend should become as foolish as he is. He cannot be thinking like this because he does not consider himself to be foolish. If he, in fact, considers himself to be foolish, then he will not have been as such! Rather, he considers his ways of action as correct and desires his friend to be equally "wise". That is why he presents his view before him in an embellished form and desires him to act upon it. It is possible that his friend may be influenced by his advice and tread on the same path. Therefore, it is better to keep away from him.

305. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Your friends are three and your enemies are (also) three. Your friends are: your friend, your friend's friend and your enemy's enemy. And your enemies are: your enemy, your friend's enemy and your enemy's friend.

306. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) saw a man busy against his enemy with what was harmful to his own self as well, so he said: You are like one who pierces a spear through himself in order to kill the person sitting behind him.

307. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: How many are the objectives of lessons, but how few are those who take lessons!²⁶⁹

308. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Whoever goes too far in quarreling is a sinner, but if one falls short in it, one is oppressed, and it is difficult for a quarreling person to fear Allah.

309. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: I am not worried about a fault after which I get time to offer prayers in two units (rek'as) and beg safety from the wrath of Allāh.

310. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) was asked once: "How will Allah conduct the accounting of all persons despite their large number?" He replied: "Just as He provides them livelihood despite their large number." Then it was said to Him: "How will He conduct their accounting without their seeing Him?" He replied: "Just as He provides them with livelihood although they do not see Him."

²⁶⁹If the vicissitudes and changes of this world are observed, the circumstances and conditions of the people attended to and their histories noted, then from every corner edifying stories can be heard which are fully capable of arousing the mind out of its forgetful slumber or providing instruction and imparting teaching and clear mindedness. Thus, the creation and dissolution of everything in this world, the blossoming of flowers and their withering, the thriving of vegetation and its withering away and the subjugation of every atom to change are such instructive lessons that they are enough to curb any hope of attaining eternity in this deceitful life as long as the eyes and ears are not closed to these instructive events.

A Persian couplet says:

*The world is full of stories of folk gone by,
But unless one lends an ear to it, its call is feeble.*

311. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Your messenger is the interpreter of your intelligence while your letter is more eloquent in expressing your true self.

312. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The person who is afflicted with hardship is not in a greater need for praying than the one who has been spared affliction but is not immune to it.

313. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: People are the progeny of the world and none can be blamed for loving the mother.

314. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The destitute person is a messenger of Allah. Whoever denies him denies Allah, and whoever gives him gives Allah.

315. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: A self-respecting man never commits adultery.

316. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The fixed limit of life is enough to remain watchful.²⁷⁰

317. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: A man can sleep over the death of his child but cannot sleep over the loss of his property.

Sayyid ar-Radi says: "This statement means that a man remains patient about the death of his children but does not do so at the loss of his property."

318. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Mutual affection between fathers creates a relationship between the sons. Relationship is more in need of affection than affection is for a relationship.

²⁷⁰The idea here is that lighting may flash a hundred thousand times, tempests may rise, earth may quake and mountains may collide with each other. But as long as the fixed period of life has yet to run its course, no occurrence can cause any harm, nor the typhoon of death may put out the flame of life. There is a fixed hour for death, and nothing can cut it short before that time. Thus, death itself is the watchman and guardian of life. A poet has said, "What is known as death is the watchman of life."

319. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Be afraid of the thoughts of believers because Allah, the most Exalted One, has placed the truth on their tongues.

320. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The belief of a person cannot be regarded as true unless his trust in what is with Allāh is more than his trust in what he himself has.

321. When Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) came to Basra, he sent Anas ibn Malik to Talhah and az-Zubayr to make them recall what he (Anas) himself had heard the Messenger of Allah (ص) saying concerning them both, but he avoided doing so. When he came back to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع), he said that he had forgotten that matter. Thereupon, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: "If you are speaking a lie, Allah will afflict you with white spots (leucoderm) which even the turban may not cover."

Sayyid ar-Radi says: "White spot means leucoderma. After sometime this disease did occur to Anas's face, so much so that he was never seen with his face uncovered."²⁷¹

²⁷¹The occasion and circumstances surrounding this statement, as related by Sayyid ar-Radi, were as follows: During the Battle of Jamal (Camel), Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) sent Anas ibn Malik to Talhah and az-Zubayr so that he should remind them of the Prophet's statement to the following effect: "You both will fight Ali and will commit excess in his regard." Anas ibn Malik went back stating that he had forgotten to mention it. Then, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) uttered these words about him. However, it is said that Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) made this statement when he wanted Anas to confirm the Prophet's saying: "Whoever accepts me as his master, Ali is his master. O Allah! Love whoever loves Ali and hate whoever hates Ali." Consequently, numerous persons have testified to this *hadith*, but Anas kept quiet [and did not narrate it]... Then, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said to him, "You, too, were present at Ghadir Khumm. What is keeping you silent on this occasion?" Anas said, "I have grown old and my memory does not serve me well." Then, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) made this statement (see *Ansab al-Ashraf*, al-Baladhiri, concerning the biography of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع), pp. 156-157; *Al-A'laq an-Nafisah*, Ibn Rustah, p. 221; *Lata'if al-Ma'arif*, ath-Tha'alibi, pp. 105-106; *Muhadarat al-Udaba'*, *Ar-Raghib*, Vol. 3, p. 293; Ibn Abul-Hadid, Vol. 4, p. 74; *Arjah al-Matalib*, Shaikh 'Ubaydullah al-Hanafī, pp. 578, 579, 580). In this regard, Ibn Qutaybah (Abdullah ibn Muslim ad-Dinawari [231/828-276/889] writes the following: "People have related that Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) asked Anas ibn Malik about the Prophet's saying: 'O Allah! Love whoever loves

322. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Sometimes the hearts advance [towards their Creator] and sometimes they retreat. When they advance, get them to perform the optional [acts of worship] (as well). But when they retreat, keep them confined to only what is obligatory.

323. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The Quran contains news about the past, foretelling about the future and commandments for the present.

324. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Throw a stone in return from where one comes to you because evil can be met only with evil.

325. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said to his secretary ‘Ubaydullah ibn Abu Rafi’: Put cotton flake in the ink pot, keep the nib of your pen long, leave some space between the lines and close up the letters because this is good for the beauty of the writing.

326. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: I am the ya’sūb (leader) of the believers, while wealth is the leader of the wicked.

Sayyid ar-Radi says: “It means that the believers follow me while the wicked follow the path that take them to wealth and riches just as the bees follow their ‘ya’sub’, their leader.”²⁷²

Ali and hate whoever hates Ali,’ and he replied, ‘If you are a liar, may Allah afflict you with white spots which even the turban may not cover” (*Al-Ma’arif*, p. 580). Ibn Abul-Hadid has also supported this view. Denying his knowledge of the incident mentioned by Sayyid ar-Radi, he writes the following: “The incident mentioned by Sayyid ar-Radi that Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) sent Anas ibn Malik to Talhah and az-Zubayr is an unrecorded event. If Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) had sent him particularly to remind them of the Prophet’s saying concerning them, then he could hardly have come back and said that he had forgotten it because when he left Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) and went to these two persons, he should have admitted and remembered the saying, and, therefore, how could he, on his return after an hour or a day, plead that he had forgotten it and deny it? This is something that cannot happen” (*Sharh Nahjul-Balagha*, Vol. 19, pp. 217-218).

²⁷²We have already explained the meaning of the word “ya’sub” in the footnote of saying No. 262-1 and pointed out that this title was given to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) by the Holy Prophet himself. We quoted some of his different statements on this subject. Here we quote one of the traditions in which this word appears. It is narrated by Abu Layla al-Ghifari, Abu Dharr, Salman,

327. Some Jews said to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع): “You did not bury your Prophet when you picked up differences about him.” It is then that Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) replied thus: “We did not differ about him; we differed after him (i.e. about his succession). You had not dried up your feet yet, having come out of the river, when you began asking your Prophet: ‘Make you for us a god as they have gods of their own.’ Said he; ‘Verily you are a people behaving ignorantly’ (Quran, 7: 138).”²⁷³

328. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) was asked: “With what did you overpower your adversaries?” He answered:

“Whenever I confronted one of them, he helped me against himself.”

Ibn Abbas and Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman. It states that the Holy Prophet used to say: “Soon after my death, there will be discord. When it occurs, uphold Ali ibn Abu Talib since he will be the first person to see me and the first to shake hands with me on the Day of Judgement. He is the greatest man of the truth (*as-siddiq al-akbar*), and he is the one who discriminates between right and wrong (*faruq*) from among this *ummah*, and he is the *ya'sub* (leader) of the believers while wealth is the *ya'sub* of the hypocrites. (In addition to the references given in the above-mentioned footnote, see also *Fayd al-Qadir*, Vol. 4, p. 358; *Kanz al-Ummal*, Vol. 12, p. 214; *Muntakhab al-Kanz*, Vol. 5, p. 33; Ibn Abul-Hadid, Vol. 13, p. 228; *Tarikh*, Ibn 'Asakir (where the biography of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib [ع] is discussed), Vol. 1, pp. 74-78; *As-Sirah al-Halabiyyah*, Vol. 1, p. 380; *Thakha'ir al-'Uqba*, p. 56; *Yanabi' al-Mawaddah*, p. 62, 82, 201 and 251).

²⁷³The purpose behind this criticism by the Jews was to show that the Prophethood of Prophet Muhammad (ص) was a controversial matter. But Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) clarified the fact that the exact focus of controversy was not about his Prophethood but about his succession and vicegerency. Then, commenting on the status of the Jews, he pointed out that those who were today criticizing the mutual differences among Muslims after the Prophet were of the same kind as those who had begun to waver about belief in the Unity of Allah even during the lifetime of Moses (ع). Thus, when, on becoming free of the slavery of the Egyptians they reached the other side of the river and saw the figure of a calf in a temple in the Sinai desert, they asked Moses to get a similar figure for them, whereupon Moses rebuked them for being still as stubborn as they were in Egypt. This meant that people who were so immersed in their desire for idol-worship that even after being initiated into the belief in the Unity of Allah, they still became restless on seeing an idol and made the request for a similar idol to be made for themselves. Such people had no right to criticize any differences among the Muslims.

Sayyid ar-Radi says: “Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) is pointing out his striking of awe in the hearts.”²⁷⁴

329. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said to his son Muhammad ibn al-Hanafīyyah: “O my son! I fear lest destitution overtakes you. So, you should seek Allah’s protection from it because destitution is [an indication of] a deficiency in religious beliefs, perplexity of intelligence, and it is conducive to hatred of obstinate people.”

330. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) replied to a man who had asked him a difficult question with the following: Ask me for understanding but do not ask for confusion because the ignorant person who tries to learn is like the learned man, but the learned man who tries to create confusion is like the ignorant.

331. Abdullah ibn Abbas once advised Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) against his views, so the Imam (ع) said: You have only to advise me, but then I have to see (what to do), and if I act against your advice, you have to follow me.²⁷⁵

352. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) returned to Kufa from Siffin, he passed by the residences of the Shibamites (who belonged to the tribe of Shibam) and heard their women mourning those killed in Siffin. At that time, a Shibamite, namely Harb ibn Shurahbil ash-Shibami, who was one of the nobles of those people, went to him. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع)

²⁷⁴The man who is over-awed by his adversary is sure to be defeated because in facing a foe, physical prowess is not enough but steadfastness of heart and strength of courage are also necessary. When the adversary loses courage and feels sure that he will be defeated, he will certainly then be defeated. This is what happened to the adversary of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع); he was so affected by his acknowledged reputation that he was sure of his own death, in consequence of which his spiritual power and self-confidence came to an end and eventually this mental state dragged him to his own death.

²⁷⁵Abdullah ibn al-Abbas had advised Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) to issue a letter of appointment to Talhah and az-Zubayr as the Governors of Kufa and to retain Mu’awiyah as the Governor of Syria till such time as his status became stabilized and the government gained strength. In reply, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said that he could not expose his own religion to danger for the sake of the worldly benefit of others, adding that “Instead of insisting on your own point of view, you should listen to me and obey me.”

said to him, "Do your women have control over you as regarding the weeping that I hear? Do you not refrain them from such crying?" Harb began to walk with him while Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) was on horseback, so Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said to him: "Get back because the walking of a man like you with one like me is mischief for the ruler and a disgrace for the believer."

333. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) passed by the dead bodies of the Kharijites on the day of the battle of Nahrawan and said: "Woe unto you! You have been harmed by him who deceived you." He was asked: "O Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع)! Who deceived them?" He replied: "Satan, the deceiver, and the inner self [nafs] that leads one to evil deceived them through passions. It made it easy for them to get into sins, promised them victory and eventually threw them into the Fire."

334. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Beware of disobeying Allāh in solitude because the Witness (of that situation) is also the Judge.

335. When the news of the killing of Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr reached Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع), he said: Our grief over him is as great as their (i.e. the enemy's) joy for it, except that they have lost an enemy and we have lost a friend.

In the year 38 A.H., Mu'awiyah sent 'Amr ibn al-As to Egypt with a large force. 'Amr ibn al-As called upon Mu'awiyah ibn Hudayj for assistance. They brought together the supporters of Othman and waged a war against Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr (son of caliph Abu Bakr), capturing him. Mu'awiyah ibn Hudayj beheaded him. Stitching his body into the belly of a dead ass, he burnt his corpse... Muhammad was at that time twenty-eight years old. It is reported that when the news of this tragedy reached his mother, she fell onto a great rage and indignation. Aisha, his paternal sister, took a vow that, as long as she lived, she would never eat roasted meat. Since then, she used to curse Mu'awiyah ibn Abu Sufyan, 'Amr ibn al-As and Mu'awiyah ibn Hudayj after every prayer.

When Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) heard the news of Muhammad's martyrdom, he became immensely sad. He wrote in a very somber language to Ibn 'Abbas who was in Basra about the tragic death of Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr.

Hearing the news of Muhammad's martyrdom, Ibn Abbas came from Basra to Kufa to offer his condolences to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع).

One of the official informers of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) came from Syria and said: "O Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع)! When the news of Muhammad's murder reached Mu'awiyah, he went to the pulpit and praised the group that took part in his martyrdom. The people of Syria rejoiced so much at hearing the news that I had never seen them in such an elated mood before." It was then that Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) uttered the above saying. He further said that although Muhammad was his step-son, he was like his own son (at-Tabari, Vol. 1, pp. 3400-3414; Ibn al-Athir, Vol. 3, pp. 352-359; Ibn Kathir, Vol. 7, pp. 313-317; Abul-Fida', Vol. 1, p. 179; Ibn Abul-Hadid, Vol. 6, pp. 82-100; Ibn Khaldun, Vol. 2, part 2, pp. 181-182; Al-Isti'ab, Vol. 3, pp. 1366-1367; Al-Isabah, Vol. 3, pp. 472-473; Al-Gharat, at-Thaqafi, Vol. 1, pp. 276-322; Tarikh al-Khamis, Vol. 2, pp. 238-239).

We have written before (in the footnote to Sermon n.67) concerning the biography of Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr.

336. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The age up to which Allah accepts any excuse for a human being is sixty years.

337. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: One whose sin overpowers him is never victorious, and whoever secures victory by evil means is (in fact) vanquished.

338. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Allāh, the Glorified One, has fixed the livelihood of the destitute in the wealth of the rich. Consequently, whenever a destitute remains hungry, it is because some rich person has denied (him his share). Allah, the Sublime, will question them [the rich] about it.

339. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Not to be in need of putting forth an excuse is better than putting forth a true excuse.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁶The meaning here is that obligations should be carried out so that there is no occasion for putting forth excuses. After all, in making excuses, there is a hint for shortcomings and perhaps a sense of humiliation.

340. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The least right of Allah on you is that you should not make use of His favors in committing His sins.²⁷⁷

341. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: When the disabled fall short in performing acts of obedience to Allah, the Glorified One, it is a good opportunity given by Allah for the intelligent to perform such acts.

342. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The sovereign is the watchman of Allāh on earth.

343. Describing a believer, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: A believer has a cheerful face, a sorrowful heart, a very broad chest (very generous), and a very humble heart. He hates high status and dislikes fame. His grief is long, his courage is far-reaching, his silence is much and, his time is occupied. He is grateful, enduring, buried in his thoughts, sparing in his friendship (with others), of a bright demeanor and of a soft temperament. He is stronger than stone but more humble than a slave.

344. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: If a man happens to see the end of (his) life and his final fate, he will begin hating desires and their deception.

345. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: There are two shares in the property of every person: heirs and accidents.

346. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The person who is approached with a request is free till he makes a promise.

347. Imām Ali ibn Abū Tālib (ع) said: Whoever prays but does not exert effort is like one who shoots without a bow-string.

²⁷⁷There are a few grades of denial of favors and ingratitude. The first is that a person may not be able to appreciate (the real significance of) a favor. For example, the vision of the eyes, the speech of the tongue, the hearing of the ears and the movements of the limbs. These are all favors bestowed by Allah, but many people do not realize them to be favors and do not entertain feelings of gratitude, taking them for granted. The second grade is that a person may see a favor and appreciate it but may not feel grateful for it. The third grade is that a person may oppose the One Who bestows the favors. The fourth grade is that instead of using the favors granted by Him, a person may use them in committing sins against Allah. This is the highest grade of denial of favors, i.e. of ingratitude.

348. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Knowledge is of two kinds: that which is absorbed and that which is just heard. The one that is heard does not give benefit unless it is absorbed.

349. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Correctness of decisions goes together with power. One emerges with the other's emergence and disappears when the other disappears.²⁷⁸

350. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The beauty of destitution is chastity and the beauty of riches is gratitude.

351. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The day of justice will be more severe on the oppressor than the day of oppression on the oppressed.

352. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The biggest wealth is that one should not have an eye on what others possess.

353. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Utterances are preserved and actions are to be tired. "Every soul, for what it earned, is pawned" (Quran, 74: 38). People are to be made deficient (as regarding their bodies) and meddled with (as regarding their minds) except those whom Allah protects. The ones who inquire from among them aims at confusing, while the one who answers creates hardship. It is possible that the man who has the best views among them will be deviated from the soundness of his thinking by pleasure or displeasure, and it is possible that a single glance may affect even the man with the best wisdom from among them or a single expression may transform him.

354. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: O folks! Fear Allah, for there is many a man who aspires for what he does not get, many a builder of a house who does not live to occupy it, and many a collector of that

²⁷⁸When anyone's star is auspicious and his luck is good, he steps automatically towards the goal in view, and his mind confronts no perplexity in determining the correct way of approach. But the person whose luck is about to ebb stumbles even in the light and his mental faculties become paralyzed. Consequently, when the downfall of the Barmakids began, ten persons from among them assembled for consultation about a matter but were not able to take a decision even after a long discussion. Seeing this, Yahya [the Barmaki] said, "By Allah! It is a forerunner of our decline and a sign of our downfall that even ten of us have not been able to settle a matter, although when we were in ascendancy, just one of us could easily solve ten problems."

which he shall just leave behind. Possibly he may have collected it wrongfully or by denying one's right. He acquired it unlawfully and had to bear the weight of sins on its account. Consequently, he returned (from this world) with that weight and came before Allah with sorrow and grief. "He lost this world and (also) the thereafter; that is a loss (which is) manifest" (Quran, 22: 11).

355. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Lack of access to sins is also a kind of chastity.

356. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The dignity of your face is solid, but begging dissolves it; therefore, look carefully before whom you dissolve it.

357. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: To praise more than what is due is sycophancy; to do it less is either because of inability to speak or of envy.

358. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) peace be upon one who keeps away even from minor sins and, hence, his burden is considered light.²⁷⁹

359. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: One who sees his own shortcomings abstains from looking into other's shortcomings. Whoever feels happy with the livelihood with which Allah provides him does not grieve over what he misses. Whoever draws out the sword of rebellion gets killed by it. Whoever strives without means perishes. Whoever enters the depths gets drowned. Whoever visits places of ill-repute receives blame.

Whoever speaks more commits more errors. Whoever commits more errors becomes shameless. Whoever is shameless will have less fear of Allāh. Anyone who decreases his fear of Allah causes his heart to die. One whose heart dies enters the Fire. Whoever observes the shortcomings of others and disapproves of them then accepts them for himself is definitely a fool. Contentment is a capital that does not dwindle. Whoever

²⁷⁹The result of lack of restraint and care with regard to small sins is that a man becomes rather careless in the matter of sins and, by and by, this habit produces boldness to commit larger sins. Then he begins to commit them without hesitation. Therefore, one should regard small sins as a harbinger of bigger sins and should avoid them so that the stage for committing big sins will not materialize.

remembers death much is satisfied with small favors in this world. Whoever knows that his speech is also a part of his action speaks less except where he has some purpose.

360. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The oppressor among the people has three signs: He oppresses his superior by disobeying him, and his junior by imposing his authority and he tops other oppressors.

361. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: At the extremity of hardship comes relief, and at the tightening of the chains of tribulation comes ease.

362. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following to one of his companions: Do not devote much of your activity to your wife and children because if your wife and children are lovers of Allah, then He will not leave His lovers without caring for them. And if they are enemies of Allah, then why should you worry and keep yourself busy about the enemies of Allah?

363. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The greatest defect is when you are concerned about the defect (in others) which is already present in yourself.²⁸⁰

364. Someone congratulated another person in the presence of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) on the birth of a son saying: "Congratulations for getting a rider of horses" Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع), said: Do not say so; but say: You have an occasion to be grateful to Allah, the Giver, and be blessed with what you have been given. May he attain full life, and may you be blessed with His devotion.

365. One of the officers of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) built a stately house about which Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: These are silver coins showing their faces. Certainly, this house speaks of your riches.

²⁸⁰What a worse defect can there be that a man should criticize those defects in others which exist in himself? The requirement of justice is that before casting one's eye on the defects of others, one should look at his own defects and realize that a defect is a defect whether it is in others or in himself. A Persian couplet says: "Looking at other's defects is neither property nor manliness. Better look at your own self since you are full of defects."

366. It was said to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع), peace be upon him: "If a man is left in his house and the door is closed, from where will his livelihood reach him?" He replied: "From whatever way his death reaches him."²⁸¹

The meaning is that a man should be content in the matter of livelihood because whatever is destined for him will in any case reach him wherever he may be.

A Persian couplet says: "Livelihood, like death, will reach a man even if the door is closed, but greed keeps people (unnecessarily) anxious."

367. Offering condolences to people one of whom had just died, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: This thing has not started with you nor does it end with you. This fellow of yours was used to journeying and, therefore, it is better to think of him as still journeying. Either he will rejoin you or you will rejoin him.

368. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: O people! Let Allah see you fearing at the time of happiness just as you fear Him at the time of distress. Certainly, whoever is given ease (of life) and does not consider it as a means of slow approach to tribulation (wrongly) considers himself as safe against what is to be feared while whoever is afflicted with straitened circumstances but does not perceive them to be a trial loses to a coveted reward.

369. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: O slaves of desires! Cut them short because whoever leans on the world gets nothing out of it except the pain of hardships. O people! Take upon yourselves to train your own souls and turn away from the dictates of your natural inclinations.

²⁸¹ If Allah considers it appropriate to keep a man living while he is confined to a closed house, then He is certainly powerful enough to provide the means of living to him. Just as a closed door cannot prevent death, in the same way, it cannot prevent the entry of livelihood because the Might of Allah, the Almighty, is equally capable of either.

370. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Do not regard an expression uttered by any person as evil if you can find it capable of bearing some good.

371. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: If you have a need from Allah, the Glorified One, then begin by seeking Allah's blessing on His Messenger, may Allah bless him and his descendants, then ask your need, because Allah is too generous to accept one (seeking His blessing on His Messenger) of the two requests made to Him while denying the other.

372. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Whoever is jealous of his esteem should keep from quarreling.

373. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: To make haste before the proper time or to delay after a proper opportunity, in either case there is folly.

374. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Do not ask about things which may not happen because you have enough to worry about with what already happens.

375. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Imagination is a clear mirror, and the taking of lessons (from things around you) provides warning and counsel. It is enough for improving yourself that you should avoid what you consider as bad in others.

376. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Knowledge is associated with action. Therefore, whoever knows should act [upon it] because knowledge calls for action. If there is a response, well and good; otherwise, it (i.e. knowledge) departs from him.

377. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: O people! The wealth of this world is broken into sorts that may bring an epidemic; therefore, keep off this grazing land. Leaving it is a greater favor than peacefully staying in it, and its part which suffices for subsistence is more blissful than its riches. Destitution has been ordained for those who are rich here, while comfort has been designated for those who keep away from it. If a person is attracted by its dazzle, it blinds both his eyes. And if a person acquires eagerness towards it, it fills his heart with grief which keeps alternating in the black part of his heart, some grief worrying him and another giving him pain. This goes on till the suffocation of death overtakes him. He is

flung in the open while both the shrines of his heart are severed. It is easy for Allah to cause him to die and for his comrades to put him in the grave.

The believer sees the world with eyes that derive instruction and takes from it food enough for his barest needs. He hears in it with ears of hatred and enmity [towards this world]. If it is said (about someone) that he has become rich, it is also said that he has turned destitute. And if pleasure is felt on one's own living, grief is felt over his death. This is the status, although the day has not yet approached when they will be disheartened.

378. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Allāh, the Glorified One, has laid down rewards for obedience to Him and punishment for committing sins against Him in order to save men from His chastisement and to drive them towards Paradise.

379. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: A time will come when nothing will remain of the Qur'ān except its writing and nothing of Islam except its name. The mosques in such days will be busy with regard to construction but desolate with regard to guidance. Those staying in them and those visiting them will be the worst of all people on earth. From them, mischief will spring up and, toward them, all wrong will turn. If anyone isolates himself from it (mischief), they will fling him back into it. And if anyone steps back from it, they will push him towards it. Says Allāh, the Glorified One, (in one hadith qudsi, i.e. the tradition in which Allāh Himself speaks): I swear by Myself that I shall send upon them an evil wherein the one who endures will be bewildered," and He will do so. We seek Allah's pardon against stumbling through neglect.

380. It is related that seldom did Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) ascend the pulpit without uttering the following statement before starting his sermon: O people! Fear Allah, for man has not been created for naught so that he may waste himself, nor has he been left without anyone caring for them so that he may commit foolish acts. This world, which appears to him to be beautiful cannot be the replacement for the next which appears in his eyes to be bad, nor is the vain person, who is successful in this world, is sure that he will prosper in the next even to a small extent.

381. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: There is no distinction higher than Islam, no honor more honorable than fear of Allah, no asylum better than self-restraint, no intercessor more effective than repentance, no treasure more precious than contentment, and no wealth is a bigger

remover of destitution than satisfaction with mere subsistence. Whoever confines himself to what is just enough for maintenance achieves comfort and prepares his abode in ease. Desire is the key of grief and the conveyance of distress. Greed, vanity and jealousy are incentives to falling into sins and mischief-making, the collection of all bad habits.

382. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following to Jabir ibn ‘Abdullah al-Ansari: O Jabir! The mainstay of religion and the world are four persons: The scholar who acts upon his knowledge, the ignorant person who does not feel ashamed of learning, the generous person who is not niggardly in his favors, and the destitute who does not sell his next life for his worldly benefits. Consequently, when the scholar wastes his knowledge, the ignorant feels too ashamed to learn, and when the generous is niggardly with his favors, the destitute sells his next life for the worldly benefits.

O Jabir! If favors of Allah abound on a person, the people’s needs toward him also abound. Therefore, whoever fulfills for Allah all that is obligatory on him in this regard will preserve them (Allah’s favors) in continuance and perpetuity, while whoever does not fulfil those obligations will expose them to decay and destruction.

383. Ibn Jarir at-Tabari has, in his History (Vol. 2, p. 1086; also Ibn al-Athir in his History, Vol. 4, p. 478) related from ‘Abd ar-Rahman ibn Abu Layla, al-faqih, who was one of those who had risen with (‘Abd ar-Rahman ibn Muhammad) Ibn al-Ash‘ath to fight al-Hajjaj (ibn Yusuf ath-Thaqafi), that he (Ibn Abu Layla) was exhorting people to carry out jihad by recalling the following: “On the occasion of the encounter with the people of Syria, I heard Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع), may Allah exalt his rank among the righteous and may He reward him with the reward of martyrs and men of truth, saying: ‘O believers, whoever observes excesses being committed and people being called towards evil and disapproves it with his heart is safe and free from responsibility for it, and whoever disapproves of it with his tongue will be rewarded and he is in a higher status than the former, but whoever disapproves it with his sword in order that the word of Allah may remain superior and the word of the oppressors may remain inferior, catches hold of the path of guidance and stands on the right way, while his heart is lit with conviction.’”

384. Another saying in the same strain runs as follows: So..., among them (the Muslim community) there is one who disapproves evil with his hand, tongue and heart. This man has perfectly attained the

virtuous habits. And among them there is one who disapproves evil with his tongue and heart but not with his hand. This man has attained only two virtuous habits but lacks one. And among them there is the third who disapproves evil with his heart but not with his tongue and hand. This is the one who lacks the two better qualities out of the three and holds only one. Then, among them there is also one who does not disprove evil with his tongue, heart or hand. He is just a dead man among the living.

All the virtuous acts, including waging a war in the way of Allah, as compared to the persuasion for good and dissuasion from evil, are just like spitting in the deep ocean [i.e. of no consequence]. The acts of persuasion for good and dissuasion from evil do not bring death nearer, nor do they lessen the livelihood. And better than all this is to utter a just expression before a tyrannical ruler.

385. The following is related from Abu Juhayfah who said, “I heard Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) saying: The first fighting with which you will be overpowered is fighting with the hands. Thereafter, you will fight with your tongues then with your hearts. Consequently, whoever does not recognize virtue with his heart or does not disprove evil will be turned upside down. Thus, his upside will be turned downwards and his low side will be turned upwards.

386. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Certainly, right is weighty and wholesome while wrong is light and epidemic.

387. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Do not feel safe from the punishment of Allah even about the best man in the whole community because Allah, the Sublime, says: “But none feels secure from the plan of Allah save the people (who are the) losers” (Quran, 7: 99). Again, do not lose hope even for the worst man of the community because Allah, the Sublime One, says: “Verily, none despair from Allah’s mercy save the disbelieving people” (Quran, 12: 87).

388. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Miserliness contains all other evil vices and is the rein with which one can be led to every evil.

389. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: O son of Adam! Livelihood is of two kinds: The livelihood which you seek and the livelihood which seeks you; if you do not reach it, it will reach you. Therefore, do not turn your one day’s worry into a year’s worry. Whatever you get every day should be enough for you for the day. If you

have a whole year of your life, even then Allah, the Sublime, will give you every next day what He has destined as your share. If you do not have a year in your life-span, then why should you worry for what is not for you? No seeker will reach your livelihood before you, nor will anyone overpower you in the matter of livelihood. Likewise, whatever has been destined as your share will not be delayed for you.

Sayyid ar-Radi says: "This statement has already appeared elsewhere in this Chapter except that here it is clearer and more detailed. This is why we have repeated it according to the principle laid down in the beginning of the book."

390. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Many a man faces a day after which he finds no day, and many a man is in an enviable status in the earlier part of the night but is mourned by wailing women in its later part.

391. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Words are in your control till you have not uttered them. But when you have spoken them, you are under their control. Therefore, guard your tongue as you guard your gold and silver, for often one expression snatches away a blessing and invites a penalty.

392. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Do not say what you do not know; rather, do not say all that you know because Allah has laid down some obligations for all your limbs by means of which He will put forth arguments against you on the Day of Judgement.

393. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Fear lest Allah should see you committing His sins or misses you when it is time to obey Him and, as a result, you will become a loser. Therefore, when you are strong, be strong in obeying Allah, and when you are weak, be weak in committing sins against Allah.

394. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Leaning towards this world despite what you see of it is a folly, and lagging behind in doing good deeds when you are convinced of good reward for them is an obvious loss, while trusting in everyone before trying is a weakness.

395. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: It is (the proof of the) humbleness of the world before Allah that He is disobeyed only herein and His favors cannot be achieved except by renouncing it.

396. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: One who is in search of something will obtain it, at least some of it.

397. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: That good is no good after which there is the Fire, and that hardship is no hardship after which there is Paradise. Every bliss other than Paradise is minor, and every calamity other than the Fire is comfort.

398. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Beware that destitution is a calamity, but worse than destitution is ailment of the body, while worse than bodily ailment is the disease of the heart. Beware that plenty of wealth is a blessing, but better than plenty of wealth is the health of the body, while still better than the health of the body is the purity of the heart.

399. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: “Anyone whose his action keeps him behind, his lineage cannot push him forward.” In another version, it is expressed thus: “Whoever misses his own personal attainments cannot gain any benefit from his forefathers’ attainments.”

400. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The believer’s time has three periods: The period when he is in communion with Allāh, the period when he manages for his livelihood, and the period when he is free to enjoy what is lawful and pleasant. It does not behoove a wise person to be away (from his house) save for three matters, namely: for the purposes of learning, or going for something for the next life, or for enjoying what is not prohibited.

401. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Abstain from the world so that Allāh may show you its real evils, and do not be neglectful because (in any case) you will not be neglected.

402. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Speak so that you may be known, since man is hidden under his tongue.

403. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Take of the favors of the world whatever comes to you and keep away from what keeps away from you. If you cannot do so, be moderate in your pursuits.

404. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Many an expression is more effective than an onslaught.

405. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Every small thing that is contented upon suffices.

406. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Let it be death but not humiliation. Let it be little but not through others. Whoever does not get while sitting will not get by standing either. The world has two days: one for you and the other against you. When the day is for you, do not feel proud, but when it is against you, endure it.

407. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The best scent is musk, its weight is light while its smell is sweet.

408. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Put off boasting, give up self-conceit and remember your grave.

409. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The child has a right on the father while the father, too, has a right on the child. The right of the father on the child is that the latter should obey the former in every matter save in committing sins against Allah, the Glorified One, while the right of the child on the father is that the latter should give the first a beautiful name, provide him with good training and teach him the Quran..

410. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Evil effect of sight is right, charm is right, sorcery is right, and fa'l (auguring good) is right, while tayrah (auguring evil)²⁸² is not right, and spreading of a disease from one to the other is not right. Scent gives pleasure, honey gives pleasure, riding gives pleasure and looking at greenery gives pleasure.

Auguring well is not objectionable. For example, when after the migration of the Prophet (from Mecca to Medina), Quraysh announced

²⁸²“Fa’l” means something from which one augurs well while “tayrah” means something from which one augurs evil. From the point of view of religious laws, auguring evil from anything has no basis and it is just the product of whims.

that whoever apprehended the Prophet would be given one hundred camels as a reward. Thereupon, Buraydah ibn al-Husayb al-Aslami set off in his search with seventy of his men. When they met at a halting place, the Prophet asked him who he was. He said he was Buraydah ibn al-Husayb al-Aslami. Buraydah said, "The Holy Prophet was not auguring evil. Instead, he used to augur good." On hearing this, the Prophet remarked: "Barada amruna wa saluha" (our affair will be cooled and sound). Then he asked him what tribe he came from. When he replied that he was from Aslam, the Prophet remarked: "Salimna!" (We are safe). Then he asked from which scion he was. When Buraydah replied that he was from Banu Sahm, the Prophet remarked: "Kharaja sahmuka" (your arrow has missed its aim). Buraydah was much impressed by this pleasing conversation and inquired from the Prophet who he was. The Prophet replied, "Muhammad ibn Abdullah". Hearing this, he spontaneously exclaimed, "I do stand witness that you are the Messenger of Allah!" Forsaking the prize announced by the Quraysh, he instead acquired the wealth of belief" (Al-Isti'ab, Vol. 1, pp. 185-186, Usd al-Ghabah, Vol. 1, pp. 175-176).

411. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Nearness with people in their manners brings about safety from their evil.

412. Someone uttered an expression above his status. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: You have started flying soon after growing feathers and commenced grumbling before attaining youth.

Sayyid ar-Radi says: Here, "shakir" [in the original Arabic text] means the first feathers that grow on a bird before it is strong enough to fly. And "saqb" means the young camel who does not grumble unless it becomes mature.

413. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Whoever hankers after contraries gets no means of success.

414. On being asked about the meaning of the expression: "la hawla wala quwwata illa billah" (there is no strength nor power except through Allah), Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: We are not masters of anything along with Allāh, and we are not masters of anything save what He makes us masters of. So, when He makes us masters of anything of

which He is a superior Lord over us, He also assigns some duties to us. And when He takes it away, He takes away those duties as well.²⁸³

415. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) heard ‘Ammar ibn Yasir (may Allah have mercy on him) conversing with al-Mughirah ibn Shu‘bah and said: Leave him alone, O ‘Ammār, for he has entered religion only to the extent of his deriving advantage of the world, and he has willfully involved himself in misgivings in order to adopt them as cover for his shortcomings.

416. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: It is good for the rich to show humility before the poor to seek rewards from Allah, but better than that is the pride of the poor towards the rich with trust in Allah.

417. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Allah does not grant wisdom to a person except that some day He will save him from ruin with its help.

418. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Whoever clashes with the truth will be knocked down by it.

419. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The heart is the book of the eye.

420. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Fear of Allah is the chief trait of the human character.

²⁸³What Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) meant is that man does not enjoy regular mastery over anything. Rather, such mastery is assigned by Allah. So long as this mastery lasts, the obligations of the Shari‘a also continue, whereas when the mastery is taken away, the obligations, too, are lifted off, since in such a case, the laying of obligations will mean placing the responsibility beyond capacity which cannot be permitted by any wise or prudent person. This is why Allah has placed the responsibility of performing various acts after having conferred the necessary energy in the limbs. It follows that this responsibility will remain only so long as the energy subsists and that on the disappearance of the energy, the responsibility for action will also disappear. For example, the obligation to pay *zakat* applies only when there is wealth, but when Allāh takes away the wealth, He removes the liability to pay *zakat* because in such a case, the laying of obligation is against prudence.

421. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Do not try the sharpness of your tongue against the One Who gave you the power to speak, nor the eloquence of your speech against the One Who set you on the right path.

422. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: It is enough for your own discipline that you abstain from what you dislike from others.

423. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: One should endure like free people; otherwise, one should keep quite like the ignorant.

In an incident, it is related that Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said to al-Ash'ath ibn Qays by way of offering his condolences on the death of his son: Either endure like great people or else you will forget like animals.

424. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: It deceives, it harms and it passes away. Allah, the Sublime, did not approve it as a reward for His lovers nor as a punishment for His enemies. In fact, the people of this world are like those riders that as soon as they descended, the driver called out to them and they marched off.

425. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said to his son al-Hassan (ع): O my son! Do not leave anything of this world behind you because you will be leaving it for either of two sorts of persons: a person who uses it in obeying Allah, in this case he will acquire virtue through what was evil for you, or a person who uses it in disobeying Allah and, in that case, he will be reaping evil with what you collected for him. So, you will be assisting him in his sinfulness. Neither of these two deserves to be preferred by you over your own self.

Sayyid ar-Radi says: "This saying is also related in another version thus: Whatever of this world is now with you was with others before you, and it will pass to some others after you. Thus, you are collecting things for either of two sorts of men: a man who uses whatever you collected in obedience of Allah and thus acquired virtues with what was evil for you, or a man who uses it in disobeying Allah, so you will be getting evil for what you collected. Neither of these two is such that you should prefer him over your own self, for you may burden yourself for his own sake. Therefore, hope for the mercy of Allāh: Divine livelihood for whoever survives anyone who passes away.

426. Someone said “Astaghfirullah!” (I seek Allah’s forgiveness) before Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع). Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: May your mother may lose you! Do you know what “istighfar” is? “Istighfar” is meant for people of a high status. It is a word that stands on six pillars: The first is to repent over the past, the second is to make a firm determination never to revert to it, the third is to carry out all the rights of people so that you may meet Allah quite clean with nothing to account for, the fourth is to fulfil every obligation which you ignored (in the past) so that you may now do justice with it, the fifth is to aim at the flesh grown as a result of unlawful earning, so that you may melt it by grief (of repentance) till the skin touches the bone and a new flesh grows between them, and the sixth is to make the body taste the pain of obedience as you (previously) made it taste the sweetness of disobedience. It is only on such an occasion that you may say: “Astaghfirullāh!”

427. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Clemency is (like) kinsfolk.

428. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: How wretched the son of Adam is! His death is hidden, his ailments are concealed, his actions are preserved, the bite of a mosquito pains him, choking cause his death and sweat gives him a bad smell.

429. It is related that Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) was sitting with his companions when a beautiful woman passed by and they began to look at her. It was then that Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The eyes of these men are covetous, and such glances are the cause of their becoming covetous. Whenever anyone of you sees a woman who attracts him, he should meet his wife [for cohabitation] because she is a woman just like his wife.

One of the Kharijites said: “May Allah kill this heretic! How logical he is!” People then leapt towards him to kill him, but Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: “Wait a little bit. There should either be abuse [for an abuse] or else pardoning from the offence.”

430. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Suffices you if your wisdom distinguishes for you the ways of going astray from those of guidance.

431. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Do good and do not regard any part of it small because its small is big and its little is much. None of you should say that “Another person is more deserving than me” in doing good. Otherwise, by Allah, it will really be so. There are people of good and evil. When you leave either of the two, others will perform it.

432. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Whoever mends his inward self, Allah mends his outward self. Whoever performs acts for the sake of his religion, Allah accomplishes his acts of this world. Anyone whose dealings between himself and Allah are good, Allah turns the dealings between him and other people good, too.

433. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Forbearance is a covering curtain, and wisdom is a sharp sword. Therefore, conceal the weaknesses in your conduct with forbearance and kill your desires with your wisdom.

434. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: There are some creatures of Allāh whom Allah particularly chooses for His favors so that they may be of benefit to other people. Therefore, He keeps such favors in their hands so long as they give them out to others. But when they deny them to others, He takes away the favors from them and gives them to others.

435. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: It does not behoove a man to have trust in two things: health and riches, because there is many a man whom you see healthy but he soon falls and many a man whom you see rich but soon turns destitute.

436. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Whoever complains about a need to a believer, it is as though he has complained about it to Allah. But whoever complains about it to an unbeliever, it is as though he complained about Allah.

437. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said on the occasion of an ‘Id: It is an ‘Id for anyone whose fast is accepted by Allah and for whose prayers He is grateful, and (in fact) every day wherein no sin against Allah is committed is an ‘Id.²⁸⁴

²⁸⁴If vision and conscience are alive, even the remembrance of a sin destroys one’s peace of mind because tranquility and happiness are achieved only when the spirit is free from the burden of sin and one’s robe is not polluted with disobedience. And this real happiness is not bound by time, but on whenever one desires, he can avoid sin and enjoy this happiness. Such happiness will be

438. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: On the Day of Judgement, the greatest regret will be felt by the man who earned wealth through sinful ways, although it is inherited by a person who spends it in obeying Allah, the Glorified One, and he will be awarded Paradise on that account while the first one will be dragged into the Fire on its account.

439. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The worst in bargaining and the most unsuccessful in striving is a man who exerts himself in seeking riches although fate does not help him in his aims and, consequently, he goes from this world in a sorrowful state while in the next world, too, he will face its ill consequences.²⁸⁵

440. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Livelihood is of two kinds: the seeker and the sought. Therefore, whoever hankers after this world, death traces him till it turns him out of it. But whoever hankers after the next world, worldly ease itself seeks him till he receives his livelihood from it.

441. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The lovers of Allah are those who look at the inward side of the world, while the other people look at its outward side. They occupy themselves with its most remote benefits while the other people occupy themselves with the immediate benefits. They kill those things which they feared will have killed them, and they leave here in this world what they think will leave them. They took the amassing of wealth by others as a small matter and regarded it like losing. They are enemies of those things which others love while they love things which others hate. Through them, the Quran has been learned, and they have been given knowledge through the Quran. With them, the Quran is staying while they stand by the Quran. They do not see any

the real happiness, and the harbinger of an 'Id. A Persian poet says: "Every night is the Grand Night provided you appreciate its value."

²⁸⁵Despite efforts throughout life, a man does not always achieve all the successes of life. If on some occasions he succeeds, as a result of effort and seeking, on many others he has to face defeat and to give up his objectives, admitting defeat before fate. A little thinking can lead to the conclusion that when things of this world cannot be achieved despite one's effort and pursuit, how can the success of the next world be achieved without striving and pursuing? A Persian couplet says: "You hankered after the world but did not attain the objective. O Allah! What will be the result when the good of the next world has not even been sought?"

objective of hope above what they hope and no objective of fear above what they fear.

442. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Remember that pleasures will pass away while the consequences will stay.

443. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Try (a man) and you will hate him!

Sayyid ar-Radi says: "Some people say that this saying was articulated by the Prophet (ص), but what confirms that it is the saying of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) is the statement related by Tha'lab from Ibn al-Arabi, that is, that (caliph) al-Ma'mun said, "If Ali had not said 'ukhbur thiqlihi' (try a man and you will hate him)," I will have said: 'aqlihi takhbur' (hate a man in order to try him)."

444. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: It is not that Allah, to Whom belongs Might and Majesty, may keep the door of gratitude open for a person and close the door of plenty upon him, or to open the door of prayer to a person and close the door of acceptance upon him, or to open the door of repentance on a person and close the door of forgiveness upon him.

445. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The most appropriate person for an honorable status is whoever descends from the people of honor.

446. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) was asked: "Which of the two is better: justice or generosity?" Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) replied: "Justice puts things in their places while generosity takes them out from their directions. Justice is the general caretaker, while generosity is a particular benefit. Consequently, justice is superior and more distinguished of the two."

447. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: People are enemies of what they do not know.

448. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The whole of asceticism is confined between two expressions of the Quran: Allah, the Glorified One, says: "... lest you should distress yourselves because of what you miss and

be over-joyous for what He has granted you” (Quran, 57: 23). Whoever does not grieve over what he misses and does not revel over what comes to him acquires asceticism from both its sides.

449. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: What a breaker is sleep for the resolutions of the day!

450. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Governing power is the proving ground for people.

451. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: No town has a greater right on you than the other. The best town for you is that which bears you.

452. When the news of the death of (Malik) al-Ashtar (may Allah have mercy on him), reached Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع), he said: Malik, what a man Malik was! By Allah! If he had been a mountain, he would have been a big one (a find), and if he had been a stone, he would have been quite stiff. No horseman could have reached it and no bird could have flown over it.

Sayyid ar-Radi says: “find” means a lonely mountain (rising in height above the others in the range).

453. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: A little that lasts is better than much that brings grief.

454. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: If a man possesses a revealing quality, wait and see his other qualities.²⁸⁶

455. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) asked Ghalib ibn Sa‘sa‘ah, father of al-Farazdaq (the famous Arab poet), during a conversation between them: “What about the large number of your camels?!” The man replied: “They have been swept away by (the performing of) obligations,

²⁸⁶The good or bad quality that is found in a man springs from his natural temperament. If the temperament produces one quality, his other qualities will also be akin to this one because the dictates of temperament will be equally effective in either. Thus, if a man pays *zakat* and *khums*, it means that his temperament is not miserly. Therefore, it is expected that he will not be niggardly in spending in other items of charity as well. Similarly, if a man speaks a lie, it can be expected that he will indulge in backbiting, too, because these two habits are similar to each other.

O Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع)!” Whereupon Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: “That is the most praiseworthy way of (losing) them.”

456. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Whoever trades without knowing the rules of religious law will be involved in usury.

457. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Whoever regards small distresses as big, Allāh involves him in big ones.

458. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Whoever maintains his own respect in view, his desires appear light to him.

459. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Whenever a man cuts a joke, he separates himself away a bit from his wit.

460. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Your turning away from the one who inclines towards you is a loss of your share of advantage, while your inclining towards one who turns away from you is self-humiliation.

461. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Riches and destitution will follow presentation before Allah.

462. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Al-Zubayr remained a man from our house till his wretched son ‘Abdullah came forth.

Abdullah ibn az-Zubayr ibn al-Awwam (1/662-73/692), whose mother was Asma’, sister of Aisha (daughter of Abu Bakr), had grown in his dislike of Banu Hashim especially towards Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) to such an extent that he was able to change the opinion of his father, az-Zubayr, against Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) although the latter was the son of his father’s aunt. That is why Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: “Az-Zubayr had always been from us, Ahl al-Bayt (ع) (our household), till his ill-owned son ‘Abdullah grew up. (Al-Isti’ab, Vol. 3, p. 906, Usd al-Ghabah, Vol. 3, pp. 162-163, Ibn Asakir, Vol. 7, p. 363, Ibn Abul-Hadid, Vol. 2, p. 167, Vol. 4, p. 79, Vol. 20, p. 104).

Abdullah was one of the instigators of the battle of Jamal. His aunt, Aisha, his father, az-Zubayr, and the son of his mother’s uncle, Talhah, all fought against Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع).

Thus, Ibn Abul-Hadid writes the following: “It was ‘Abdullah who urged az-Zubayr to fight (in the battle of Jamal), and made the march to Basra seem attractive to Aisha” (Sharh Nahjul-Balagha, Vol. 4, p. 79).

Aisha loved her nephew Abdullah very much. To her, he was like the only child of a mother, and none in those days was more beloved to her than he was” (Al-Aghani, Abul-Faraj al-Isbahani, Vol. 9, p. 142, Ibn Abul-Hadid, Vol. 20, p. 120, Ibn Kathir, Vol. 8, p. 336).

Hisham ibn ‘Urwah relates the following: “I have not heard her (Aisha) praying for anyone as much as she used to pray for him (Abdullah). She gave ten thousand dirhams (as a gift) to the one who informed her of Abdullah’s safety from getting killed (by al-Ashtar in the fight of the Battle of Jamal), and prostrated to Allah in thanks-giving for his safety” (Ibn Asakir, Vol. 7, pp. 400, 402, Ibn Abul-Hadid, Vol. 20, p. 1117).

This was the reason for Abdullah’s authority over her and his complete command over her affairs. He was the one who directed and guided her in the direction which he wished.

However, Abdullah’s hatred towards Banu Hashim had reached such a stage that according to the narrations of a group of historians, “During his (Abdullah’s) caliphate (in Mecca), he did not send blessings on the Holy Prophet in his Friday prayer sermon (khutba) for forty Fridays. He used to say: ‘Nothing prevents me from mentioning the Prophet’s name except that there are certain men (i.e. Banu Hashim) who become proud (when his name is mentioned).’” In another rendering, the text reads as follows: “Nothing prevents ... except that the Prophet has a bad household who will shake their heads on the mention of his name” (Maqatil at-Talibiyyin, p. 474, Muruj ath-Dhahab, Vol. 3, p. 79, At-Tarkh, al-Ya‘qubi, Vol. 2, p. 261, Al-‘Iqd al-Farid, Vol. 4, p. 413, Ibn Abul-Hadid, Vol. 4, p. 62, Vol. 19, pp. 91-92, Vol. 20, pp. 127-129).

Abdullah ibn az-Zubayr said to Abdullah ibn ‘Abbas once: “I have been concealing my hatred towards you, the people of this house (i.e. the Household of the Prophet [أهل البيت]) for the last forty years...” (al-Mas‘udi, Vol. 3, p. 80, Ibn Abul-Hadid, Vol. 4, p. 62, Vol. 20, p. 148).

He also used to hate Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) in particular, defame his honor, abuse and curse him (al-Ya'qubi, Vol. 2, pp. 261-262, al-Mas'udi, Vol. 3, p. 80, Ibn Abul-Hadid, Vol. 4, pp. 61, 62-63, 79).

He gathered Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah (son of Imam Ali ibn Abu Tālib [ع]) and Abdullah ibn 'Abbas with seventeen men from Banu Hashim, including al-Hassan ibn al-Hassan ibn Ali ibn Abu Talib [al-Hassan II] and imprisoned them in the shi'b (valley) of 'Arim. He intended to burn them alive, so he placed plenty of wood at the entrance of the shi'b. Meanwhile, al-Mukhtar ath-Thaqafi dispatched four thousand soldiers to Mecca. On their arrival, they attacked 'Abdullah ibn az-Zubayr unexpectedly and rescued Banu Hashim. 'Urwah ibn az-Zubayr made an excuse for his brother's (Abdullah) deed saying that this action of his brother's was a result of Banu Hashim's refusal to swear the oath of allegiance to him (Abdullah), like the action of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab towards Banu Hashim when they gathered in the house of Fatimah and refused to swear the oath of allegiance to Abu Bakr. So, Umar brought wood and intended to burn the house on them. (Maqatil at-Talibiyyin, p. 474, al-Mas'udi, Vol. 3, pp. 76-77, al-Yaqubi, Vol. 2, p. 261, Ibn Abul-Hadid, Vol. 19, p. 91, Vol. 20, pp. 123-126, 146-148, Ibn 'Asakir, Vol. 7, p. 408, al-'Iqd al-farid, Vol. 4, p. 413, Ibn Sa'd, Vol. 5, pp. 73-81, at-Tabari, Vol. 2, pp. 693-695, Ibn al-Athir, Vol. 4, pp. 249-254, Ibn Khaldūn, Vol. 3, pp. 26-28).

In this regard, Abul-Faraj al-Isfahani writes the following: "Abdullah ibn az-Zubayr always instigated others against Banu Hashim and persuaded them (to adopt his viewpoint) by every worst method. He spoke against Banu Hashim from the pulpit, remonstrating against them. Once, Ibn 'Abbas, or someone else from (Banu Hashim) raised an objection against him. But afterwards, he changed his way and imprisoned Ibn al-Hanafiyyah at the shi'b 'Arim. Then he gathered Ibn al-Hanafiyyah along with other members of Banu Hashim who were present (in Mecca) in a prison and collected wood to set fire to it. This was so because of the news that had reached him that Abu 'Abdullah al-Jadali and other followers of Ibn al-Hanafiyyah had arrived (in Mecca) to support Ibn al-Hanafiyyah against fight 'Abdullah ibn az-Zubayr. Therefore, he hastened to do away with the prisoners. But when this news reached Abu 'Abdullah al-Jadali, the latter went when the fire was already set on them, putting the fire out and rescuing them (Al-Aghani, p. 15).

So, all these prove what Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said about him.

463. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: What has a man to do with vanity? His origin is semen, his end is a carcass, while he cannot feed himself nor ward off death?²⁸⁷

464. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) was asked who the greatest poet was. He said: "Any group of them that did not proceed on the same lines in such a way that we can know the height of their glory, but if it has to be done, then it is 'al-Malik ad-Dillil'"²⁸⁸.

Sayyid ar-Radi says, "Amir al-Mu'minin here is referring to Imri'ul-Qays.

²⁸⁷If one ponders over his original condition, the eventual breaking up and ruining of his body, he will be compelled to admit his lowliness and humble status instead of being proud and vain. He will see that there was a time when he did not exist, then Allah originated his existence with a humble drop of semen which took the shape of a piece of flesh in the mother's womb and continued feeding and growing on thick blood. Upon completion of the body, he set foot on earth. He was then so helpless and incapable that he had neither control over his hunger and thirst nor on his sickness and health, nor could he do himself any benefit or harm. He had no authority over life and death, not knowing when the energy of limbs might be exhausted. He felt his senses might stop functioning, his eyesight might be taken away, his ability to hear might be snatched away. He could not tell when death might separate the spirit from the body and leave the latter to be cut into pieces by vultures and kites or for worms to eat in the grave. An Arabic couplet says: "How does one whose origin is semen and whose end is a carcass dare be vain?"

²⁸⁸This means that a comparison can be made among the poets when their imagination runs in the same field. But when the expression of one differs from that of another, and when the style of one varies from that of another, it is difficult to decide who is defeated and who has wins the prize. Consequently, from various considerations, one is preferred over the other, and someone is considered greater for one consideration, while the other wins the other consideration, as the famous saying goes: "The greatest poet of Arabia is Imri'ul-Qays when he rides, al-A'sha when he is eager for something, and an-Nabighah [the genius] when he is terrified." Nevertheless, despite this categorization, Imri'ul-Qays is held in high esteem among the poets of the first era because of the beauty of his imagery, the excellence of his description, his inimitable similes and rare metaphors, although many of his couplets are below moral standards and speak of obscene subjects. But in spite of this obscenity, the greatness of his art cannot be denied. An artist looks at a poetic production from the point of view of art, ignoring the other elements which do not affect art.

465. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Is there no free man who can leave this chewed morsel (of the world) to those who like it? Certainly, the only price for your souls is Paradise. Therefore, do not sell your soul except for Paradise.

466. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Two greedy persons never get satisfied: the seeker of knowledge and the seeker of this world.

467. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Belief means that you should prefer truth (even) when it harms you rather than falsehood (even) when it benefits you, that your words should not be more than your action and that you should fear Allāh when speaking about others.

468. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Destiny holds sway over (our) predetermination till effort itself brings about ruin.

Sayyid ar-Radi says, "Something of this meaning has already appeared earlier though in words different from these."

469. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Forbearance and endurance are twins and they are the product of high courage.

470. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Backbiting is the tool of the helpless.

471. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Many a man gets into mischief because of being spoken well of.

472. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: This world has been created for other than itself and has not been created for itself.

473. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Banu Umayyah (the Umayyads) have a fixed period (mirwad) wherein they are having their way. But when differences arise among them, even if the hyena attacks them, it will overpower them.

Sayyid ar-Radi says, "Here, mirward is a form derived from irwad which means: to allow time, to wait for, to give a respite. It is an extremely eloquent and wonderful expression. It is as though Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) has likened the period of Banū Umayyah to a limited

area meant for the training of horses for racing where they are running towards the limit, so that when they reach its extremity, their organization is destroyed.²⁸⁹ 474. Eulogizing the Ansar, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: By Allah, they nurtured Islam with their generous hands and eloquent tongues as a year-old calf is nurtured.

475. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The eye is the strap of the rear.

Sayyid ar-Radi says, "This is a wonderful metaphor. It is as though Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) has likened the rear part of the body to a bag and the eye to a strap. When the strap is let loose, the bag cannot retain anything. According to the well-known and reputed view, this is a saying of the Prophet, but some people have stated it belong to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع). Al-Mubarrad has mentioned it in his book *Al-Muqtadab* under a chapter titled "Words of single letters". We, too, have discussed this metaphor in our book titled *Majazat al-Athar an-Nabawiyyah*."

²⁸⁹This is a prediction about the decline and fall of the Umayyads that proved true, word for word. This rule was founded by Mu'awiyah ibn Abu Sufyan and ended with Marwan ibn Muhammad al-Himar in 132 A.H. (749 A.D.) after a life of ninety years, eleven months and thirteen days. The Umayyad period was second to none in tyranny, oppression, cruelty and despotism. The despotic rulers of this period perpetrated such tyranny that it put blots on Islam, blackened the pages of history and injured the spirit of humanity. They allowed every kind of ruin and destruction only to retain their own authority. They led armies into Mecca, hurled fire on the Ka'ba, made Medina the victim of their brute passions and shed streams of Muslim blood. At last, this bloodshed and ruthlessness resulted in rebellions and conspiracies from all sides against the Umayyads. The latter's own internal strife and agitation as well as mutual fighting paved the way for their ruin. Although political unrest had set in among them earlier, during the days of al-Walid ibn Yazid, open disturbances began to take place. On the other hand, Banu al-Abbas (the 'Abbasids) also started preparations [to take over power from the Umayyads]. During the reign of Marwan al-Himar, they started a movement under the name of "al-Khilafah al-Ilahiyyah" (the Divine Caliphate). For successful piloting of this movement, they got a martial leader, namely Abu Muslim al-Khurasani who, in addition to his knowledge of political events and occurrences, was also an expert in the art of warfare. Making Khurasan his base, he spread a whole net against the Umayyads and succeeded in bringing the Abbasids to power. In the beginning, this man was quite unknown, and it is for this reason and for his humble status that Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) likened him and his associates to the hyena as this simile is used for modest and humble people.

476. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said in one of his speeches: A ruler came to power over them. He remained upright and made them upright till the entire religion put its bosom on the ground.

477. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: A severe time will come to people wherein the rich will seize their possessions with their teeth (by way of miserliness) although they have not been commanded to do so. Allah, the Glorified One, says: “Do not forget generosity among yourselves” (Quran, 2: 237). During this time, the wicked will rise up while the virtuous will remain low. Purchases will be made from the helpless, although the Prophet (ص) has prohibited purchasing from the helpless.²⁹⁰

478. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Two types of persons will fall into ruin on my account: One who loves me and exaggerates, and the other who lays on me false and baseless blames.

Sayyid ar-Radi says, “ This is on the lines of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) own saying which runs thus: ‘Two categories of persons will be ruined on my account: One who loves me with exaggeration, and one who hates [me] and is a bearer of malice’.” The Holy Prophet (ص) used often to urge and order the ummah to love Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع), forbidding them from bearing any hatred against him. Moreover, the Holy Prophet (ص) used to regard the love for Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) as the sign of Faith (iman) and hating him as the sign of hypocrisy (nifaq) (as we have already mentioned in a footnote above).

We would like to quote one of the traditions of the Holy Prophet (ص) with regard to this subject. It has been narrated through fourteen companions that the Holy Prophet (ص) said, “Whoever loves Ali, he surely loves me, and whoever loves me, he surely loves Allah, and whoever loves Allah, He will permit him to enter Paradise. Whoever hates Ali, he surely hates me, and whoever hates me, he surely hates Allah, and whoever hates Allah, He will surely let him enter the Fire. And whoever harms Ali, he surely harms me, and whoever harms me, he

²⁹⁰Generally, purchases are made from helpless people in such a way that taking advantage of their need and necessity, things are purchased from them at cheap prices and are sold to them at high prices. No religion allows taking advantage of such helplessness and extreme need, nor is it ethically permissible to profiteer by taking advantage of others' helplessness.

surely harms Allah, (Surely, those who harm [the Cause of] Allah and His Messenger, Allah has cursed them in the present life and in the one to come and has prepared for them a humiliating chastisement [Quran, 33: 57]) (Al-Mustadrak, Vol. 3, pp. 127-128, 130, Hilyat al-Awliya, Vol. 1, pp. 66-67, Al-Isti'ab, Vol. 3, p. 1101, Usd al-Ghabah, Vol. 4, p. 383, Al-Isabah, Vol. 3, pp. 496-497, Majma' az-Zawa'id, Vol. 9, pp. 108-109, 129, 131, 132, 133, Kanz al-Ummal, Vol. 12, pp. 202, 218-19, Vol. 15, pp. 95-96, Vol. 17, p. 70, Ar-Riyad an-Nadira, Vol. 2, pp. 166, 167, 209, 214, Al-Manaqib, Ibn al-Maghazili, pp. 103, 196, 382).

At the same time, the Holy Prophet used to caution the ummah against exaggerating with regard to love for Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) that exceeds the bounds of Islam. One who does so is called ghali (extremist). In other words, such a person is anyone who believes that the Holy Prophet (ص) or Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) or any of Shi'ite Imam is a god, or attributes to them the special attributes of Allah, or believes that the twelve Imams are prophets, or makes any claim which they (the Holy Prophet and the Imams) did not make about themselves.

On the contrary, the Holy Prophet had also forbidden any offense or denigration concerning them (the Imāms). He used to blame those who lay false and baseless accusations against them as well as those who hated and harbored malice against them.

It was for this reason that the Holy Prophet (ص) sometimes used to refrain from mentioning some of the excellent qualities of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) as Jabir ibn 'Abdullah al-Ansari narrates: "When Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) approached the Holy Prophet with the news of the conquest over Khaybar by himself (by Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib [ع]), the Holy Prophet (ص) said to him: 'O Ali! Had it not been for some groups of my ummah who may say about you what the Christians say about 'Isa son of Maryam, I would have said (something) about you so that you will not pass before any Muslim but that he will seize the dust from the tracks of your feet to seek a blessing from it. But it suffices to say that you hold the same status in relation to me as Harun held in relation to Musa except that there shall, in all certainty, be no prophet after me'" (Majma' az-Zawa'id, Vol. 9, p. 131, Ibn Abul-Hadid, Vol. 5, p. 4, Vol. 9, p. 168, Vol. 18, p. 282, Manaqib 'Ali ibn Abu Talib, Ibn al-Maghazili, pp. 237-239, Manaqib Ali ibn Abu Talib, al-Khawarizmi, pp. 75-76, 96, 220, Kifayat at-Talib fi Manaqib 'Ali ibn Abu Talib, al-Ganji, pp. 264-265, Arjah al-Matalib, pp. 448, 454, Yanabi' al-Mawaddah, pp. 63-64, 130-131).

The Holy Prophet (ﷺ) had also informed the Muslim ummah that there will appear two types of deviated groups among the Muslims who will exceed the bounds of Islamic principles with regard to understanding Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) as he himself has related: “The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) called upon me and said: ‘O Ali! There is a resemblance between you and ‘Isa son of Maryam whom the Jews hated so much that they laid a false accusation against his mother, and whom the Christians loved so much that they assigned to him the status which is not his’”.

(Then, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) continues to say:) Beware! Two types of persons will fall into ruin on my account: One who loves (me) and praise me for what is not in me, and one who hates me and whose detesting me will lead him to any false and baseless accusation on me. Beware! I am not a prophet, and nothing has been revealed to me. But I act according to the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Prophet as much as I can (Al-Musnad, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Vol. 1, p. 160, Al-Mustadrak, al-Hakim, Vol. 3, p. 123, Mishkat al-Masabih, Vol. 3, pp. 245-246, Majma’ az-Zawa’id, Vol. 9, p. 133, Kanz al-Ummal, Vol. 12, p. 219, Vol. 15, p. 110, Ibn Kathir, Vol. 7, p. 356).

The above mentioned sayings of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) as well have been reported from the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) when he said to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع): “O Ali! Two types of people will fall into ruin on your account: One who loves you with exaggeration, and the liar who lays false accusation on you” (Al-Isti’ab, vol.3, p. 1101).

Also, he said to him, “Two categories will be ruined on your account: One who loves with exaggeration, and one who hates you and who bears malice [against you]” (Ibn Abil-Hadid, Vol. 5, p. 6).

The famous scholar of tradition, Amir ibn Sharahil ash-Sha‘bi (19/640-103/721), has confirmed this saying that these two categories appeared and both became disbelievers and were ruined (Al-Isti’ab, Vol. 3, p. 1130, Al-‘Iqd al-Farid, Vol. 4, p. 312).

479. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) was asked about the Unity of Allah (Tawhid) and His justice (Adl). He replied: Unity means that you do not subject Him to the limitations of your imagination, while justice

means that you do not lay any blame on Him.²⁹¹ His words, and He is the all-Hearing, the all-Knowing” (Quran, 6: 115).

480. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: There is no good in silence about matters involving wisdom just as there is no good in speaking with ignorance.

481. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said the following in his prayer for rain: “O Lord! Send us rain by submissive clouds, not by unruly ones.”

Sayyid ar-Radi says, “This is an expression of wonderful eloquence, because Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) has likened the cloud, which is accompanied by thunder, lightning, wind and flashes with unruly camels that throw away their saddles and throw down their riders, describing the clouds that are free from these terrible things to the submissive camels which are easy to milk and obedient to ride.”

482. It was said to Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع): “We wish you had changed your gray hair, O Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع)!” He said: “Dye is a way of adornment, whereas we are in a state of grief.”

Sayyid ar-Radi says, “Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) is referring to the death of the Messenger of Allah (ص).

²⁹¹The belief in the Unity of Allah is not complete unless it is supported by belief in Allah being free from all imperfections, that is, one should regard Him as being above the limitations of body, shape, place or time and should not subject Him to his own imagination and whims. This is so because the being who is contained by imagination and whims cannot be Allah, but a creation of the human mind can, while the field of mental activity remains confined to things which are seen and observed. Consequently, the greater man will try to appreciate Him through illustrations connected by the human mind or through his imaginative efforts, the more remote he will get from reality. In this regard, Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (ع) says, “Whenever you contain Him in your imagination, he will not be Allah but a creation like your own self and is revertible to you.” Justice means that whatever the form of injustice and inequity is, it should be dissociated from Allah, and He should not be given such attributes which are evil, useless and which the mind can in no way agree to attribute to Him. In this regard, Allah says, “And perfect is the word of your Lord in truth and justice: There is none who can change

483. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The fighter in the way of Allah who gets martyred will not get a greater reward than whoever remains chaste despite means. It is possible that a chaste person may become one of the angels.

484. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Contentment is a wealth that is not exhausted.

Sayyid ar-Radi says, “Some people have narrated saying that this is the statement of the Messenger of Allah (ص).”

485. When Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) put Ziyad ibn Abih in place of ‘Abdullah ibn al-Abbas over Fars (in Persia) and its revenues, he had a long conversation with him in which he prohibited him from advance recovery of revenue. Therein he said: Act upon justice and stay away from violence and injustice because violence will lead them to forsake their abodes while injustice will prompt them to take up arms.

486. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The worst sin is that which the one who commits it takes it lightly.

487. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: Allah has not made it obligatory on the ignorant to learn till He has made it obligatory on the learned to teach.

488. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: The worst comrade is he for whom formality has to be observed.²⁹²

Sayyid ar-Radi says, “This is so because formality is inseparable from hardship, and it is an evil that is caused by a comrade for whom formality is observed. Consequently, he is the worst of all comrades.”

489. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع) said: “If a believer enrages (ihtashama) his brother, it means that he will leave him.”

²⁹²The friendship that is based on love and sincerity makes a man free from ceremonial formalities, but the friendship for which formalism is necessary is unstable. Such a friend is not a true friend. True friendship requires that a friend should not be a cause of trouble for his friend. If he is a cause of trouble, he will prove tedious and harmful and this harmfulness is a sign of his being the worst of all friends.

Sayyid ar-Radi says, “It is said that hashamahu or ahshamahu means: ‘He enraged him’. According to another view, it means ‘He humiliated him’, while ihtashamahu means ‘He sought these for him’, and that is most likely to cause him to separate.”

This is the end of our selection of the utterances of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (ع). We praise Allah, the Glorified One, for having enabled us to collect the scattered utterances from various sides and to bring together from different places the material that was lying far away. We have no ability save through Allah. In Him we trust, and He is Sufficient for us. He is the best Supporter.

This book was completed in the month of Rajab, in the year 400 A.H. (1009 A.D.).

May Allah bless our master Muhammad, the last of the prophets and the one who guided us towards the best path, and bless his virtuous descendants and companions who are the stars of conviction.