



# **Narratives Of The Veracious Vol. 1**

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**This text is the first volume of a collection of anecdotes about prominent personalities, some well-known and others unknown, both Muslim and non-Muslim, but mainly about the Holy Prophet (S) and the A'imma of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a). These serve to guide us on the wisdom, morality and ethics that we should carry in our day-to-day affairs.**

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**The composing errors are not corrected.**

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## Foreword

Murtadha Mutahhari, the author of this work, was born on 2nd February, 1919 in Fariman, a town in the north-eastern Iranian province of Khurasan, and was assassinated by the pseudo-Islamic group, Furqan on 2nd May 1979, about three months after the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran.

Having studied advanced literature, philosophy, Islamic jurisprudence and other Islamic fields in the religious city of Qum, Martyr Murtadha Mutahhari began teaching philosophy and religious sciences at Tehran University. He played a significant role in illuminating the minds of people from different walks of society, particularly university students. Subsequently, his political activity against the Shah dynasty resulted in his imprisonment by the SAVAK many times, as well as prohibition of him teaching at university.

By compiling more than forty works, mostly in the domain of philosophy and Islamic sociology, he can truly be considered as one of the outstanding forerunners of the revival of Islamic thought in the contemporary world.

The late Leader of the Islamic Revolution Imam Khomeini (may Almighty Allah shower His peace and blessings upon his soul) said on the occasion of his martyrdom, *"I have lost a very dear son."*

Narratives of the Veracious, 'Dastan Rastan', is not a philosophical text, nor an analysis. Rather, it is a series of narratives extracted, not only from Islamic traditions, but also from diverse historical books that relate anecdotes about prominent personalities, some well-known and others unknown, both Muslim and non-Muslim.

The martyred author's purpose, as he has explained in the introduction of the Persian edition, was to contribute to guidance and moral education by the instructive histories re-transcribed in the simple language, accessible to all, the expert and lay person alike. Ethics is a fundamental field in Islam to which this work refers and transmits authentic accounts.

Among the many works of Ayatullah Martyr Murtadha Mutahhari are:

1. Society and History
2. An Introduction to the Islamic World Outlook (7 Volumes)
3. Man and Faith
4. The Rights of Feminism in Islam
5. Divine Help in Human Life
6. The Martyr
7. A Recognition of Islamic Sciences (3 volumes)
8. Islam and Iran (A Historical Study of Mutual Services), and many others.

In recognizing the importance of the work by Martyr Murtadha Mutahhari, the ICRO wishes to publish this book with the hope of strengthening unity among the Muslim brotherhood, as well as with other communities.

**Department of Translation and Publication,  
Islamic Culture and Relations Organization**

## Story 1: The Holy Prophet (S) And Two Circles Of Believers

One day when the Holy Prophet (S) entered the Mosque (Masjid un-Nabi),<sup>1</sup> his eyes were cast over two groups who were busy with their own affairs, forming separate circles. One group was engaged in prayers and supplication, while the other was busy in educational activities.

The Holy Prophet (S), after critically examining both groups, became very happy and turned towards his companions who were assisting him, and said, *“Both the groups are engaged in useful pursuits and are blessed and prosperous.”* He (S) added, *“I have been sent to educate and instruct them.”*

He (S) then made his way towards the group who had assembled for educational activities and sat in their circle.<sup>2</sup>

### Notes

1. At the advent of Islam, Masjid un-Nabi (The Mosque of Madinah), was not exclusively devoted to the performance of ritual prayers. It was also a centre to carry out the religious and social activities of Muslims. Whenever Muslims were called to an assembly, they gathered in this Mosque. They were informed about any significant events and any crucial decisions made were publicly announced.

When the Muslims lived in Makkah, they were deprived of all forms of liberty and social activities. They could neither freely perform their religious obligations and practices, nor were they able to properly receive their religious instruction. This situation lasted until Islam spread to more tolerant parts of Arabia, for example Yathrib, before it became famous and came to be known as ‘Madinat ul-Nabi’ (The City of The Prophet). According to the proposition of the inhabitants of Madinah, and the pact made between them and his Eminence, the Holy Prophet (S) emigrated to this city, and all the other Muslims gradually emigrated in turn.

From that time onwards, Muslims acquired their liberty of conscience. The first achievement of the Holy Prophet (S) after his emigration to Madinah was to choose a plot of land where he (S) with the help of his Companions was able to erect this Mosque.

2. Muniyat ul-Murid, p. 10.

## Story 2: A Man Who Asked For Help

Reflecting on his own painful past, full of afflictions, a man recalled how those bitter days had slipped away. The days when he was not even in a position to provide sustenance for his wife and innocent children. He mused on how a few words, which fell upon his ears three times, invigorated his soul, changed the course of his life, and rescued his whole family from being overwhelmed by poverty and calamity.

He was a companion of the Holy Prophet. Poverty and indigence had the upper hand on him. One day after reaching a dead end, he consulted with his family, and decided to go to the Holy Prophet (S), as his wife had suggested, to explain his situation and ask for financial assistance. With this intention he left his home, yet before he was able to make his request, the following words fell upon his ears, *“We help whoever asks us for assistance, but Allah preserves the needs of those who feel enriched and refrain from stretching out their hands to others.”*

He returned home without uttering a single word. He found himself again face to face with the awful shadow of poverty over his dwelling. The next day, he hurriedly rejoined the assembly of the Holy Prophet (S) with the same intention. He heard the same words from the Holy Prophet (S), *“We help whoever asks us for assistance, but Allah preserves the needs of those who feel enriched and refrain from stretching out their hands to others.”*

He returned home once again without putting forward his request. For the third time, he saw himself deep in the web of poverty, debility, misery, and helplessness. He decided once again to go to the assembly of the Holy Prophet (S) in order to put forward his request. Once again, the lips of the Prophet (S) moved and the same words were repeated, invigorating the heart and giving certainty to the soul.

This time, by hearing those words, the man felt more confident and realized that he had found the key to his problem. He left with more determination, thinking, *“I will never ask for someone else’s help. I will rely on Allah and take advantage of the energy and capacity which exists in me, and I will pray to Him (Allah) for success in whatever I undertake and to provide for me.”*

He thought about what kind of work would be suit him best. In such circumstances, he decided to go to the desert to gather firewood and sell it. He borrowed an axe, then he left for the desert. By gathering the firewood and selling it, he relished the fruits of his own labour. He continued working hard for the following days until he managed to buy an axe of his own, a beast of burden, and other tools with the money he gained. He continued working until he gained more capital and hired servants.

One day the Holy Prophet (S) met him with a smile on his lips. He (S) said, *“We help whoever asks us for assistance, but Allah preserves the needs of those who feel free from want.”*<sup>1</sup>

### Note

1. Usul al-Kafi, Vol. 2, p. 139 (Al-qina’a) and Safinat ul-Bihar (qana’a).

### Story 3: A Request For A Prayer

Excited and agitated, a man came to Imam Al-Sadiq ('a) and said, *"Could you do a favour for me and say a prayer so that Allah may grant me ease of life, for I am really poor and indigent."*

The Imam ('a) replied, *"I will never say the prayer for you!"*

The man said, *"Why?"*

The Imam ('a) replied, *"Because Allah has determined a purpose for this. Allah has commanded man to search for his subsistence and do his utmost for his earnings. But you would like to use prayer to have your daily subsistence brought to you while sitting at home."*<sup>1</sup>

#### Note

1. Wasa'il, v. 2, p. 529.

### Story 4: Tying The Knees Of The Camel

The caravan having travelled for hours, weariness overcame both the riders and animals. As soon as they reached an oasis where there was water, they had their camels kneel down. The Holy Prophet (S) accompanying the caravan, made his camel kneel down and dismounted from it. All were rushing to the water to prepare for the preliminaries of prayer. Dismounting from his camel, the Holy Prophet (S) also made his way towards the water.

After covering a certain distance, without speaking to anyone, he (S) returned to his camel. Surprised, his companions thought he (S) was not pleased with the place and would order them to set out again. Lending their ears to him, in full attention, they awaited his order. The companions were astonished when they saw the Holy Prophet (S) reach up to his camel, pick up a rope and bind its knees. He (S) then returned towards his original destination. Exclamations arose among the companions, *“O Messenger of Allah! Why did you not command us to do that for you. Why did you trouble yourself while we would all be proud to be at your service?”*

The Holy Prophet (S) replied, *“Do not ever ask for help from others for your own affairs and do not count upon others even if it would be for a tooth-pick.”*<sup>1</sup>

#### Note

1. Kuhl Al-Basar Fi Sirat Sayyid Al-Bashar, Muhaddith al-Qummi, p. 69.

### Story 5: A Companion Of Hajj (Pilgrimage)

On returning from the journey of Hajj, a man related his and his companions' experiences to Imam Al-Sadiq ('a). He was stirred by and admired them, particularly one of his fellow travelers. *"How noble he was. We were proud to accompany such an honourable man. He was praying continuously. No sooner did we stop at a place, then he would immediately part from us, seek a corner, spread his prayer mat, and engage himself in prayer and worship."*

The Imam ('a) asked, *"Then who was looking after his affairs? Who was tending to his animal?"*

He replied, *"Of course, we were. We had the honour to be at his service. He had nothing to worry about. He would engage himself in his devotional affairs."*

The Imam ('a) replied, *"Then all of you were better than him."*<sup>1</sup>

#### Note

1. Kuhl Al-Basar Fi Sirat Sayyid Al-Bashar, Muhaddith al-Qummi, p. 69.

## Story 6: Having A Meal Together

As soon as the Holy Prophet (S) and his companions alighted from their mounts and untied their luggage, they decided to slaughter a sheep and prepare a meal.

One of the Companions said, *"I will slaughter the sheep."*

The second one said, *"I will skin it."*

The third one said, *"I will cook it."*

The fourth .....etc.

The Holy Prophet (S) said, *"I will go to the desert to gather firewood."*

The Companions said, *"O Messenger of Allah! Take no pains! Please be seated and rest! Let it be our honour to serve you!"*

The Holy Prophet (S) said, *"I know you would do that, but Allah hates to see his servant enjoy a state of privilege among his friends and companions and distinguish between himself and the others."*<sup>1</sup>

He (S) then proceeded to the desert and fetched the firewood.<sup>2</sup>

### Notes

1. إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَكْرَهُ مِنْ عَبْدِهِ أَنْ يَرَاهُ مُمْتِزًا بَيْنَ أَصْحَابِهِ

2. Kuhl Al-Basar Fi Sirat Sayyid Al-Bashar, Muhaddith al-Qummi, p. 68

## Story 7: A Caravan On The Way To Hajj (Pilgrimage)

A Muslim caravan that had started on a trip for Hajj (pilgrimage) heading towards Makkah, stopped for rest upon reaching Madinah. Then, after few days, it set out for Makkah again. In between Madinah and Makkah, the people of the caravan met a man who was well acquainted with them. While talking to them, the man recognized a person among the caravan whose face was of a pious man, who was willingly and happily busy serving the men of the caravan.

He recognized him immediately and asked them with amazement, *“Do you know this man who is serving you and tending to your affairs?”*

They said, *“No, we do not know him. He joined the caravan in Madinah. He is a righteous, pious and virtuous man. No-one asked him to serve us, but it was he who volunteered to help and to assist with our affairs.”*

*“It is quite obvious that you do not know him, otherwise you would not be so impudent nor let him work as a servant.”*

They were surprised and asked, *“Then who is this man?”*

*“He is Ali ibn al-Husayn, Zain ul-Abidin.”*

The people became flustered and stood up to kiss the Imam's hand and feet in order to apologize to him. Then they said reproachfully, *“Why did you behave so? We might, may God preserve us, have committed a sin or offended you!”*

The Imam replied, *“I deliberately chose your group as my fellow travelers, for you did not know my identity. At times, I journeyed with the people who knew me. They were sympathetic and affectionate towards me for the sake of the Messenger of God (S). They did not allow me to do any type of work or render my services to them. This is the reason I choose, of my own desire, fellow travelers who did not recognize me, and I refrained from identifying myself to them so that I can enjoy serving my companions.”<sup>1</sup>*

### Note

1. Bihar, v. 11, p. 21.



## Story 8: A Muslim And A Man (People Of The Book)

In those days, the city of Kufah was the center of Islamic government. Throughout the entire territory of the vast Muslim nation, with the exception of Syria, all eyes were on that city, waiting to receive the latest orders and for vital decisions to be made.

On the road to the city, two men, a Muslim and a ‘man of the Book’ (i.e., Jew, Christian or Zoroastrian) met each other. They each inquired of their companion’s destination respectively, and it became evident that the Muslim was going to Kufah and the other man was going to another nearby place.

They proceeded cordially, conversing about various topics. When they arrived at the bifurcation of the road, the non-Muslim was surprised to see that his Muslim companion did not take the road to Kufah, but instead he accompanied him.

He asked, *“Did you not say you were going to Kufah?”*

*“Yes.”*

*“Then why are you coming this way? The road to Kufah is that one!”*

*“I know, but I would like to accompany you for a few steps. Our Prophet (S) said, ‘When two people are travelling together on the same path, they acquire rights over each other. Now you have a right over me, thus I want to accompany you a few steps and then I shall surely be on my way.’”*

*“Oh! It is certainly due to his noble ethics that your Prophet gained such influence and power among people, and that his belief has spread so quickly all over the world.”*

The amazement and admiration of that non-Muslim rose to even greater heights when he discovered that his Muslim companion was none other than the Caliph of the time, Ali ibn Abi Talib (‘a). He soon embraced Islam and was counted among the most devout and faithful companions of Imam Ali (‘a).<sup>1</sup>

### Note

1. Usul al-Kafi, v. 2, p. 670 (Chapter, Hussn al-sahaba)

### Story 9: In The Procession Of The Caliph

Ali ('a), while on his way to Kufah, entered a nearby city called Anbar where its inhabitants were Iranian. The chiefs and the farmers were exulted and overjoyed that their beloved Caliph would pass through their town. They ran to welcome him. As he prepared to depart, Ali ('a) mounted his horse and started to move when they started running in front of him.

Ali ('a) called out to them and asked, *"Why are you running? What happened to you?"*

They replied, *"This is the way we show respect for our governors and distinguished personalities. It is a tradition as well as a type of courtesy, customary among us."*

The Imam ('a) replied, *"This custom makes you suffer in this world and will make you unfortunate in the hereafter. Refrain from practicing these kinds of deeds which will only humiliate and degrade you. Moreover, what is the benefit of this custom for your people?"*<sup>1</sup>

#### Note

1. Nahj al-Balaghah, Hikam No. 37.

## Story 10: Imam Baqir (‘A) And A Christian

Imam Muhammad ibn Ali ibn al-Husayn (‘a) had the title of ‘Baqir’, meaning ‘the one who analyzes’. He was called ‘Baqir ul-ulum’ which means ‘the one who analyzes knowledge’.

A Christian, in mockery, tried to play on the word Baqir, mispronouncing it as “*baqar*”. He said to him, “*You are a baqar!*” (i.e. You are a cow!)

Without expressing any annoyance or anger, the Imam (‘a) replied calmly: “*No, I am not baqar, but I am Baqir.*”

The Christian said, “*You are the son of a lady cook.*”

The Imam (‘a) said in reply, “*It was her job and is not considered an insult or disgrace to her dignity.*”

The Christian said, “*Your mother was black, immodest and had an abusive tongue.*”

The Imam (‘a) said, “*If what you attribute to my mother is true, I pray to Allah to forgive her and absolve her sins; and if it is a lie, may Allah forgive you for your lies and slander.*”

Observing such a clemency from a person who had the authority to subject a non-Muslim to punishment, was sufficient to provoke a transformation in the soul of the Christian and invite him towards Islam. Later, he accepted Islam and became a Muslim.<sup>1</sup>

### Note

1. Bihar ul-Anwar, v. 11, p. 83

### Story 11: The Holy Prophet (S) And The Bedouin

A nomadic, rough Arab arrived in Madinah and made his way towards the mosque in the hope of getting some gold and silver from the Messenger of Allah (S). When he entered the mosque, the Holy Prophet (S) was among a group of friends and companions. The man put forward his request and asked for charity.

The Holy Prophet (S) gave him something, but he was not pleased and considered it less than what he expected. In addition, he uttered harsh words and yelled out, insulting the Messenger of Allah (S). The companions lost their temper and were about to harm him, but the Holy Prophet (S) prohibited them.

Later, the Prophet (S) took the bedouin to his own home and extended him hospitality. The bedouin noticed the status of the Holy Prophet's (S) living conditions, which did not resemble that of any of the chiefs or governors that he had ever seen before. Neither gold nor wealth accumulated there.

Thus, the bedouin expressed his thanks and satisfaction.

Meanwhile the Holy Prophet (S) said to him, *"You uttered harsh words yesterday, which provoked the anger of my companions. I am afraid you may be violated by them. Now that you have thanked me and said kind words in my presence, could you repeat the same words in front of my companions so as to ease the anger and the wrath which they had towards you?"*

The bedouin said, *"I have no objection."*

The following day he came to the mosque, while all were present. The Holy Prophet (S) turned the face towards his companions and said, *"This man claims that he is pleased with me. Am I right?"*

The bedouin replied, *"Yes! You are right."* And he repeated the same words that he uttered privately with the Holy Prophet (S). The companions of the Holy Prophet (S) started smiling and were happy.

The Holy Prophet (S) then, turned to his companions and said, *"My example with such persons is like the man whose camel was startled and ran away. People began shouting and running after the camel, thinking that this would help the camel's owner, but the camel kicked more and ran away faster. The owner of the camel said, 'I ask of you to let my camel be at ease. I know better how to calm it.'" Once he kept people back from its pursuit, he picked up a handful of herbs and stood calmly in front of the camel. Without running or shouting, he slowly moved towards the camel and showed the herbs. Then he easily grasped the bridle of his camel and set off on his way."*

The Holy Prophet (S) added, *"If I had let you free yesterday, surely you would have killed this poor bedouin and with such a bad attitude! But I stood between you and him, and treated him kindly and gently."*<sup>1</sup>

#### Note

1. Kuhl Al-Basar Fi Sirat Sayyid Al-Bashar, Muhaddith al-Qummi, p. 70.

## Story 12: Imam Husayn ('A) And The Syrian

A man from Syria, with the intention of performing the Hajj pilgrimage or some other aim, arrived in Madinah. His eyes were cast over a man sitting in a corner. Paying attention to him, he asked, *"Who is this man?"*

They said, *"He is Husayn, son of Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a)."*

Due to widespread propaganda against Husayn,<sup>1</sup> anger penetrated the man's soul and made him boil with rage. In his mind, in order to please Allah, he insulted and defamed Husayn ibn Ali ('a) as much as he could. In order to unburden his hostility, he said whatever was on his mind.

Without losing his temper or expressing anger, Imam Husayn ('a) looked at him full of affection and kindness and started reciting a few verses of the Holy Qur'an relating to good character, forgiveness and tolerance. He ('a) said, *"We are ready to help you, no matter what. Are you from Syria?"*

He replied, *"Yes."*

The Imam ('a) said, *"I have experience with this sort of disposition and character. I know the origin of this."*

Then he added, *"You are a stranger in our city. If you are in need, we are ready to offer you help, and to welcome you and show you hospitality in our home. We can clothe you and provide you with money."*

Expecting a violent reaction and never supposing he would face such leniency and tolerance, the Syrian was so touched by Husayn's ('a) words that he said, *"I wished the earth had split open and swallowed me whole at that moment, and that I had not been so rude and brazen. Until this moment no one was more hateful towards Husayn ('a) and his father than me, but from this moment onwards no one is more beloved and dearer to me than them in the whole world."*

### Note

1. Syria was conquered at the time of the Caliphate of Umar. The first person who was selected to govern Syria was Yazid ibn Abu Sufian. He died after two years of rule. The government of this rich province was entrusted to his brother, Mu'awiyah ibn Abu Sufian who was the governor for twenty years and ruled with absolute authority. Even during the Caliphate of Umar, when governors were frequently appointed and dismissed, nobody had ever governed a region for so many years. Mu'awiyah had a firm footing in his region and no-one trifled with him.

He became entrenched to such an extent that he started dreaming of the Caliphate. After twenty years of rule, and the bloody transgressions committed by him, he managed to achieve his goal. He reigned as Caliph over Syria and other regions of the vast Islamic territory for another twenty years. Hence, Syrians lived under the rule of the Umayyad dynasty from the day that they came to know the world of Islam.

As is well known, the Umayyads were hostile towards the Hashemites from days of old. After the advent of Islam, this hostility intensified, became more vigorous, and spread to the descendants of Imam Ali (as). Due to the spread of false propaganda, when Syrians came to hear the name of Imam Ali's descendants, they felt enmity towards them and they considered hostility against them a religious duty. They became well-known for such habits and character.

### Story 13: A Man Who Sought Guidance And Advice

Once a bedouin arrived in Madinah and came to the Holy Prophet (S), seeking guidance and advice from him (S).

The Holy Prophet (S) advised him by saying, *“Do not lose your temper.”*, and said nothing more than this.

The man returned to his tribe. When he reached among his people, he noticed that an important incident had taken place in his absence. A few young men of his tribe had committed theft and stolen belongings of another tribe, and the other tribe had retaliated. The situation had gradually reached such a climax that each tribe had formed a row of soldiers against the other and were about to wage war. Hearing this dramatic news, his anger was provoked.

Immediately he sought his armour, and equipped himself with it. Just as he was about to join his tribe, he suddenly recalled what he had seen and heard in Madinah. He remembered he had sought an advice from the Messenger of Allah (S) and his Eminence said to him, *“Do not lose your temper.”*

He soon went into deep thought. *“Why did I become so agitated? For what reason did I equip myself with armour and prepare for battle? Why did I become so furious without reason?”*

He thought the time had come to make use of those brief words of advice. He came forward and addressed the leaders of the opposite side, *“What is this war for? If the problem is due to the transgression which our ignorant young men have committed, I am ready to compensate you from my personal wealth. There is no reason to jeopardize our lives and shed blood for nothing.”*

When the opposite side heard the reasonable and magnanimous proposition from this man, their generosity and zeal was aroused and they said in reply, *“We are in no way inferior to you. Now that it is so, we will also forego our demands.”* Consequently, both parties retreated to their tribes.<sup>1</sup>

#### Note

1. Usul al-Kafi, v. 2, p. 404.

### Story 14: The Christian And Ali's ('A) Armour

At the time of the Caliphate of Imam Ali ('a) in Kufah, the Imam ('a) lost his cuirass (armour) which was later found with a Christian.

Imam Ali ('a) took him to court, and lodged a complaint against him. *"This cuirass is mine; I neither sold it nor did I gift it to anyone. Now I have found it with this man."*

The Judge asked the Christian, *"The Caliph has laid his claim, so what is your reply?"*

He answered, *"This is my own cuirass, however I do not object to the Caliph's claim. It is possible that the Caliph might be mistaken."*

The judge turned towards Ali ('a) and said, *"You are the plaintiff and this man is denying your claim. Accordingly, it is on you to present a witness on your behalf."*

Ali ('a) began laughing and said, *"The judge is right. I should present a witness, but I have none."*

Since the plaintiff had no witness, the judge passed a sentence in favour of the Christian. Thus, he took the cuirass and set off on his way.

After taking a few steps, the Christian realized the cuirass did not belong to him and to whom it really belonged. Conscience stricken, he returned and said, *"Such a manner of rule and conduct is not of an ordinary human being. Rather it is the governance of Prophets. He confirmed that the cuirass belonged to Ali ('a). It was not long before he was seen with firm belief and as a Muslim fighting in the battle of Nahrawan under the banner of Imam Ali ('a)."*<sup>1</sup>

#### Note

1. Al-Imam Ali, The Voice Of Justice And Humanity, p. 63.

### Story 15: Imam Al-Sadiq ('A) And A Group Of Sufis

Sufian Sawri,<sup>1</sup> who lived in Madinah, came to Imam Al-Sadiq ('a). He saw the Imam ('a) dressed in a white garment which was very soft, like the fine material which separates the white of the egg from its shell. He objected, and said, *"This garment is not worthy of you. You should not adorn yourself with the ornaments of this world. You are expected to be pious and abstemious from this world."*

Imam Al-Sadiq ('a) said, *"I want to teach you something, so please listen carefully. It will benefit you both in this world and in the hereafter. If you have made an error and do not know the Islamic view on this subject, my address will be very useful and profitable to you. However, if your intention is to innovate in Islam and distort its realities, that will be another case, and these words will not be useful to you."*

*"You might think that the simple lifestyle of the Holy Prophet (S) and his companions in those days is a duty and obligation for all Muslims until the Day of Resurrection, as well as an example for people to always live like the poor. However, I must inform you that the Holy Prophet (S) lived in a time and place where poverty and indigence was widespread. The majority of people were deprived of the primary necessities of life. The particular lifestyle of the Holy Prophet (S) and his companions were confined to the conditions of those days."*

*"In a certain age, if the means of livelihood and the conditions for benefiting from Divine bounties exist, dignified people who take advantage of these comforts of life, would be pious men not libertines or mischief-makers, and Muslims not unbelievers. What fault did you find with me? I swear by Allah, while you see me benefiting from Divine gifts, I have not passed a day nor a night, since the age of maturity, without being aware if there were a right in my property, I would immediately paid it to its case."*

Ashamed and defeated, Sufian did not have an answer to the Imam's ('a) reasoning. He went out and joined his classmates. He told them about the event, so they decided to go in a group to debate with the Imam ('a). A few of them came together and said, *"Our friend was not able to explain his reasoning well. Now we are here to debate with you with our clear arguments!"*

The Imam ('a) said, *"What are your arguments? State them."*

They replied, *"Our reasons are deduced from the Holy Qur'an."*

Imam Al-Sadiq ('a) said, *"No reasons are better than the Holy Qur'an. I am ready to hear, and explain them."*

They said, *"We have chosen two verses of the Holy Qur'an for our assertion and the correctness of the doctrine which we have embraced. It will suffice us. Allah praises a group of Companions in the Holy Qur'an as follows:*

وَالَّذِينَ تَبَوَّءُوا الدَّارَ وَالْإِيمَانَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ يُحِبُّونَ مَنْ هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَا يَجِدُونَ فِي صُدُورِهِمْ حَاجَةً مِمَّا أُوتُوا وَيُؤْثِرُونَ  
عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ وَمَنْ يُوقِ شَحْنًا نَفْسِهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

*And [it is also for] those who before them had homes [in Medina] and had adopted the faith [before the Emigrants], love those who emigrate from Mecca to them and in their hearts they feel no need for the booties granted*



*to Emigrants though they live in dire poverty, but give Emigrants preference over themselves. And those who are delivered from covetousness, such are they who shall find deliverance. (Surah al-Hashr 59:9).*

“And in another place the Holy Qur'an says:

وَيُطْعَمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَىٰ حَيْثُ مِسْكِينًا وَتَيْمًا وَأَسِيرًا

*And they give food out of love for Him to the poor and the orphan and the captive. (Surah al-Insan or al-Dahr, 76:8).*

When they reached this point of their argument, a person sitting on the outskirts of the assembly who was listening to their argument, said, “What I have understood so far is that you do not believe in what you say. You make these remarks as a pretext to make people take no interest in their own property so that they would give it to you, to use it instead of them. As a matter of fact, until now no-one has seen you refrain from a delicious meal.”

The Imam (‘a) said, “Leave these arguments for the time being. There is no use of them.”

Then he (‘a) turned to them and said, “First, tell me whether you can distinguish between the explicit and the ambiguous, and between abrogating and the abrogated of the Qur'an, since you are quoting the Qur'an.”

“Whoever has gone astray among the Islamic community, it was because of this very fact, for they have resorted to the Qur'an without having an exact knowledge of it.”

They said, “Of course, we have some information in this regard, but we do not know it perfectly.”

The Imam (‘a), “This is your misfortune. The Prophetic Traditions are the same as the Qur'anic verses. They need perfect knowledge and understanding. In regards to the Qur'anic verses which you have cited, they do not denote the prohibition of the usage of Divine bounties. These verses are related to forgiveness, generosity, self-sacrifice and giving priority to others, praising a certain group of people in a certain period of time; while, if they had not done so, they would not have committed any sin. Allah had not commanded them to do so, nor certainly prohibited them from doing so at that time. They kept themselves in straitened circumstances for the sake of duty and donated their wealth to others. Indeed, Allah will remunerate them. Thus, these verses are not confirmation of your argument, so that you blame people and prevent them from making use of their own property and wealth which Almighty Allah has bestowed upon them.

In those days they made such denotations, but later on a perfect and complete command was revealed by Allah determining the limits of that. It is obvious that this command abrogates their action and that we must conform with the latter command and not the former.

In order to enhance the attitude of the believers, through His particular beneficence, Allah forbade people to keep themselves and their families in straitened circumstances and to donate what they possess. For there are the weak, the young, and the feeble elderly among families who do not have the ability to tolerate these conditions. If I were due to donate a loaf of bread, which is at my disposal, as charity, my family, whom I am responsible for, would perish. Thus, the Messenger of Allah (S) said, “Whoever owns a number of dates, some loaves of bread, or few dinars and considers donating

them, he has to first donate to his parents, then to his wife and his children, then to his relatives and brothers in Islam, and finally to donate them as charity.”

Charities come as the last case. When the Messenger of Allah (S) heard that a man of Ansar passed away, leaving his young children behind, and donated his scanty property in the way of Allah, he (S) said, “If I had been informed of this, I would not have let him be buried in the Muslim cemetery. He left his children to become obliged to stretch out their hands before others.”

My father, Imam Baqir (‘a), narrated to me a tradition from the Holy Prophet (S) saying, “For payment of the alms, you must start with your family; priority is given to the near relations.”

In addition to these cases, the Qur'anic text prescribes your way of life and way of thinking where it says:

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا أَنْفَقُوا لَمْ يُسْرِفُوا وَلَمْ يَقْتُرُوا وَكَانَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ قَوَامًا

**“And those who when they spend, are neither extravagant nor niggardly, and are stationed between the two (extremes).” (Surah al-Furqan, 25:67)**

There are many verses in Holy Qur'an forbidding both extravagance and excess charity in the same manner; prohibiting avarice and the stinginess. For this, the Holy Qur'an assigned a moderate way and offered a middle stage. It has not ordered man to grant others whatever he owns and remain empty-handed, then pray to Allah to give him his daily bread. Allah never accepts such a prayer.

The Holy Prophet (S) said, “Allah does not grant the prayer of following groups:

- a.) One who asks Allah to harm his parents.
- b.) One who lends money, without a witness or without obtaining a receipt or written document, and the debtor has already spent his money; then he prays to Allah to help him. It is obvious that his prayer is not acceptable, for he has transgressed by his own hand by lending money without obtaining written evidence or a witness.
- c.) One who asks Allah to ward off his wife's evil. Since, the alternative is before him, that is to say, he can annul the marriage contract by divorce if he has really come to a detrimental juncture.
- d.) One who is sitting at home with arms folded, asking Allah for his daily bread. Allah says to such an ignorant and greedy person, “My creation! Have I not given you the ability to move? Am I not the One who has endowed you with sound limbs, and have I not equipped you with the hands, feet, eyes, ears and knowledge so that you can move, see, hear and reflect? There is a purpose to the creation of all these things. The way to show appreciation of blessings, is to make use of them. I have signified all the means by which you can do your utmost to set out in quest of your daily bread. Obey My orders relating to your activity and effort, and do not be a burden on others. In fact, if you comply with My will, I will grant you plenty of sustenance. However, if for certain reasons, your life had not improved, and you had done your best and performed your duties, then you would be excused.
- e.) One upon whom Allah has bestowed a considerable wealth and property. but has wasted it on unnecessary donations and then prays, “O

*Allah! give me my daily bread!" In reply Allah says, "Did I not grant you plenty? Why did you not take the middle way? Did I not order you to be moderate in your donations, and prohibit you from excess charity?"*

f.) One who calls upon Allah to break off family relations and asks Him something in this regard (or one who has already broken relations with family and wants to offer prayers for a problem).

Allah mentions in the Holy Qur'an the method of donation to His Prophet in particular because the following event occurred. The Holy Prophet (S) had an amount of gold with him, and he wanted to make use of it by distributing it to the poor and was not interested in keeping it even for a night. Thus, he (S) donated the total amount of gold amongst the needy the same day.

The next day, in the early morning, a needy person came to him (S) and forcefully demanded of the Holy Prophet (S) to help him and give him something. Since the Prophet (S) had nothing to give him, he became very upset and annoyed. Thus, the following Qur'anic verse was revealed in this connection and cleared up the matter.

وَلَا تَجْعَلْ يَدَكَ مَغْلُولَةً إِلَىٰ عُنُقِكَ وَلَا تَبْسُطْهَا كُلَّ الْبَسْطِ فَتَقْعُدَ مَلُومًا مَّحْسُورًا

***"And do not make your hand to be shackled to your neck nor stretch it to the utmost (limit) of its stretching, so that you should sit down blamed, empty-handed." (Surah al-Isra', 17:29)***

Later traditions reported from the Holy Prophet (S) supported this verse from the Qur'an. It is quite obvious that the disciples of the Qur'an and its followers believe in Qur'anic verses.

At the moment of his death, Abu Bakr was asked to make his will regarding his property. He said, *"One fifth of my wealth may be distributed amongst the poor and the remainder for my heirs."* He added, *"One fifth of my wealth is not little."* Abu Bakr made out a will of one fifth of his property, while an ill man has the duty on his death bed to make out a will of one third of his wealth. If he knew that it would be better to make use of his whole share, he would change his will to be one third.

Salman and Abu Dharr were known for their knowledge and piety. Their habits and attitude were like those whom I have described. Salman used to set aside his expenses of one year upon receiving his yearly share from the Muslim public treasury so that he could survive. They told him, *"Having such self-restraint and piety, are you still thinking of saving for one year? You may die today or tomorrow and not reach the end of the year."*

He replied, *"Hopefully I will not die. Why are you assuming the certainty of my death? It may not be the case. Either way, I have some expenses and some needs. O you ignorant people, you have neglected this point. Once a person does not have access to enough income, he would fail to obey Allah and become misled and his zeal and faith will become weak. However, as soon as he gets the necessary means, he will become calm."*

Regarding Abu Dharr, he had a few camels and sheep and would drink their milk. While having a guest or tending to the needy, he ate the meat of cattle and used to distribute all of its meat amongst the needy and kept a portion for himself.

*Who was more ascetic than they? The Holy Prophet (S) has said words in their favour that you all know. They never wasted their property. They did not*

*choose the way you are suggesting today, that is, that people would dispense whatever they own, and get themselves and their family in trouble.*

*I recounted to you this tradition narrated through chains from my father and grandfathers all the way up to the Messenger of Allah (S) saying, "The strangest attitudes which a believer attains are as follows: when his body is cut to pieces with shears, he will experience bliss and prosperity; and if offered all the property of the East and West, he will still become prosperous and fortunate."*

Therefore, the contentment of a believer is not contingent on his being poor and indigent, but rather, it emanates from the spirit of his faith and belief. Whatever his situation, may it be poverty and empty-handedness or wealth, he knows his duties in all states and can fulfil them properly. As a matter of fact, the strangest state for a believer is to accept that all events in his life, weaknesses and problems are prosperity and felicity for him.

I do not know whether what I have mentioned today, is sufficient or I have to add more.

For your information, at the dawn of Islam, when Muslims were quite few in number, the law of Jihad (Holy Islamic war) required one Muslim against ten infidels. If they did not obey the command, it was considered a sin, violation and an offense for them. Afterwards, as a consequence of their fortunes improving by Allah's Mercy and Compassion, this law was abrogated and altered, that is to say, one Muslim against two infidels and not more.

I would like to put forward a question to you regarding judicial law and Islamic courts. Supposing one of you is sued in a court of law in connection with the financial support of your wife, and the judge passes a sentence regarding the payment of the support by you, then what will you do? Are you going to bring a pretext that you are an ascetic and have refrained from the worldly life? Is this pretext plausible? In your opinion, the sentence passed by the judge in respect to the support of your wife is in conformity with justice and fairness, or on the contrary, it is unjust and unfair? If you claim that the judgement is unjust, you have surely told a lie and have also unjustly treated the whole Islamic community with this outrageous defamation. If you say that the sentence passed by the judge is invalid, your excuse will be null and void. Thus, you should admit that your path and conduct is incorrect.

Here is another case. In some circumstances, Muslims donate charity, either obligatory or not, like zakat (statutory Islamic levy on specified items to be used for the welfare of Muslims) or kaffarah (expiation or fine). Now supposing that everyone become ascetic in conformity with your wish, and renounce the worldly life and its necessities, then what will be the course of expiatory donations and the obligatory alms-giving? What about the different kinds of obligatory zakat, such as gold, silver, sheep, camels, cows, dates, raisins, etc? Is it not so that these alms are supposed to make a change in the conditions of the poor and would give them a better life? This case indicates that the purpose and goal of religion is nothing more than attaining improvement in life and to utilize all means available for a good and prosperous life.

However, if the final purpose of religion was poverty, and the ultimate aim of religious education was confined to make human beings turn their faces away from this world, and live in poverty, indigence and misery, the poor would have attained these sublime objectives and they should not be helped either, for they would already have attained bliss and would be awash with propriety.

In fact, if it is as you claim, it is not advisable to preserve and save something, but rather to donate whatever we have gained. There would remain no question of zakat. It would become clear that you had embraced a way of life that is extremely unpleasant and dangerous, leading people to an erroneous doctrine. The path you are following and inviting others towards is ignorance of the Holy Qur'an as well as the Prophetic traditions. These traditions are not such as to raise doubts, but on contrary, the Holy Qur'an supports them and gives them authenticity.

You reject the authentic traditions of the Holy Prophet (S) when they do not comply with your school of thought. Therefore, this is another ignorance. You are not applying the correct meanings of the verses in the Holy Qur'an and their practical, beautiful and subtle points. You do not understand the difference between the abrogative and the abrogated, and the explicit and the ambiguous. You cannot distinguish between what is permitted and what is forbidden.

What is your opinion about the incident of Sulayman ('a), the son of Dawud ('a), who asked Allah to bestow on him sovereignty such that no-one would possess after him?

قَالَ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَهَبْ لِي مُلْكًا لَا يَنْبَغِي لِأَحَدٍ مِنْ بَعْدِي إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ

***“He said: ‘My Lord! Forgive me and grant me a dominion such as shall not be fit anyone after me, verily You are the Bounteous (without measure).” (Surah Sad, 38:35)***

Allah granted him a vast kingdom. Of course, Sulayman ('a) did not wish for anything illegal. Neither Allah in the Holy Qur'an nor any other believer would blame Sulayman ('a) for wishing for such a kingdom in the world. Likewise, with Prophet Dawud ('a) who had lived before Sulayman ('a). Then the incident of Yusuf ('a) who asked of the King:

قَالَ اجْعَلْنِي عَلَى خَزَائِنِ الْأَرْضِ إِنِّي حَفِيظٌ عَلَيْهِنَّ

***“He (Yusuf) said: ‘Set me over the storehouses of the land. Verily I am a knowing guardian’.” (Surah Yusuf, 12:55)***

His position reached to such a level that he was entrusted with the affairs of the Egyptian regency all the way to the borders of Yemen. Famine spread, and people were affected by the scarcity, and they rushed to him from neighbouring regions, buying provisions from him and returning home. It is obvious that Yusuf ('a) did not aspire to an unjust act nor did Allah in the Qur'an blame him for that.

Such is the incident of Zul-Qarnain, a servant of Allah who loved Allah, as did Allah love him. The wealth of the world was at his disposal. He became the ruler of the East and West. *“O my community! Refrain from this unjust way and devote yourselves to observing true Islamic rules. Do not violate that which Allah has commanded or forbidden. Do not implement commands*

*devised by yourselves. Do not interfere in questions with which you are not acquainted. Inquire and put forward those questions about knowledge to the ones who are well-versed about it. Pay utmost attention to know the difference between the abrogative and abrogating, the explicit and ambiguous, and the legal and illicit. This would be better and easier for you, so as to be far from ignorance. Turn away from ignorance, for its followers are many, in contrast to those of knowledge. Allah says, "A learned is superior to a specialist."*<sup>2</sup>

## Notes

1. In the beginning of the second century after Hijrah, a group emerged from the heart of Islam who called themselves Sufis (ascetics). They had a particular way of life and invited others to follow them, pretending that this was the way of religion. This group asserted that one should refrain from comforts of this world. The pious should not wear good garments, nor eat delicious food, nor live in luxurious dwellings. Seeing people making use of these bounties, they blamed and despised them, calling them 'people of the world' (materialistic), and said they were far from Allah. The critic of Imam Sadiq (as) revived this point of view. This ideology, which had precedent elsewhere, already existed in Greece, India, and more or less all over the world. It also appeared among Muslims.

It conferred a religious context to it and continued in subsequent generations, creating a strange influence. We can say of this school of thought, which gave birth to a particular ideology among Muslims that its direct effect was the degradation of the principles of life, and the neglect of daily affairs, as well as the deterioration and backwardness of Islamic countries. The infiltration of this philosophy had not only affected the social classes, who officially named their members 'Sufis', but its spread, under the banner of asceticism, piety and anachronism, spread somewhat into other social classes and Islamic religious groups which were and still are anti-Sufi. However, not all who were called Sufis followed this way of thinking.

No doubt, this school of thought should be considered a social disease, a dangerous one which leads to the mental paralysis of society. Thus, it is necessary to campaign for its elimination. Unfortunately, none of the campaigns which were and are being called for under this banner are actually combatting against this disease, that is, they are not actually against this way of thinking. The problem is that they are campaigning against names, words, individuals, and at times for worldly gain. Sometimes, those who oppose Sufism, suffer from the same disease, and they are themselves enablers of its propagation.

Due to their ignorance and misunderstanding, they attacked an array of subtle and sublime thoughts, which are masterpieces of humanity that few have the ability to appreciate. Combat against the Sufism should assume the form of a campaign against this disease and this mode of thought. As the context of the Imam Al-Sadiq's (as) tradition states, it is essential to oppose it, whenever or whatever union it may belong to, and by whatever name it may adopt. In any case, the Imam's (as) statement in this narration is the most complete statement which refutes this way of thinking, which is unfortunately widely propagated. This complete statement is recorded and kept in the Books of Islamic traditions.

2. Tuhaf ul-Uqul, p. 348 - 354 and Al-Kafi, v. 5, p. 65 - 71 (Chapter: Al-Maishah).



## Story 16: Ali ('A) And Assem

After the end of the Battle of Jamal,<sup>1</sup> Ali ('a) arrived in Basra. During his stay, he went to visit one of his companions named Ala ibn Zaid Haressi. This man owned a grand and luxurious home with every imaginable comfort.

Ali ('a), after passing his gaze on such a large and magnificent home, said, *"What is the use of such a large dwelling in this world while you are in more need of a vast one in the hereafter? If you wish to make use of it as a means to attain a spacious dwelling in the hereafter, you must welcome and entertain guests, be friendly with your relatives, clarify the rights of Muslims, take advantage to vitalize and show the rights of others and neglect your personal greedy monopoly and individuality in its use."*

Ala said, *"O Commander of the Faithful, I want to complain to you about my brother Assem."*<sup>2</sup>

Imam Ali ('a) said, *"What is the complaint?"*

Ala replied, *"He has started to live the life of a recluse, dressed himself in rags, isolated himself from this world, and deserted everything and everyone."*

Imam Ali ('a) said, *"Bring him to me."*

Assem was brought before the Imam ('a). Ali ('a) turned his face towards him and said, *"O enemy of your own life! The devil has stolen your senses. Why don't you have sympathy for your wife and children? Do you believe that Allah, who made the pure blessings of life lawful for you, will be displeased with you if you benefit from them? You are smaller than that before Allah."*

Assem replied, *"O Commander of the Faithful, you are also like me, imposing hardship on yourself. You do not cover your body with soft clothes, nor eat delicious meals. Therefore, I am doing the same as you, and I am following the same path which you have chosen."*

Ali ('a) said, *"You are mistaken. There is a difference between you and me. I shoulder the responsibility of Leadership and Government, but you do not. The duties of a Leader and Governor is different. Allah has made it incumbent on just leaders to take the weakest social classes of people as an example for their own personal lives and to live in the same manner, as the most needy, so that poverty and indigence does not leave an impression on them. Therefore, I have certain responsibilities and you have your responsibilities."*<sup>3</sup>

### Notes

1. The battle of Jamal took place in the vicinity of Basra between Imam Ali (as), the Commander of the Faithful, on one side, and Aishah, Talhah and Zubair on the other. It was named the battle of Jamal because Aishah directed her army while riding a camel (Jamal). After the appointment of Imam Ali (as) to the Caliphate, and upon observing his equitable conduct by not conceding extra privileges to the aristocrats, Aishah, Talhah and Zubair launched a military attack against the Imam (as). The battle resulted in a decisive victory for Imam Ali (as) over them.

2. Narrated by Ibn Abi al-Hadid in his interpretation of Nahj al-Balaghah, v. 3, p. 19.

3. Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon 208.

### Story 17: The Needy And The Wealthy

As was his custom, the Prophet (S) was sitting in his place amongst his companions. They formed a circle around him (S) appearing as if the Prophet (S) was the bezel of a ring between them.

Suddenly, a Muslim, a poor man dressed in rags, entered through the door. According to Islamic tradition, regardless of a person's status, anyone who enters an assembly should sit wherever he finds an empty place, not considering whether the place is suitable for his social status. Therefore, the man looked around, found a vacant place, and sat there.

Incidentally he sat next to a wealthy man. The rich man gathered the edges of his clothes and shifted onto another side away from him. The Holy Prophet (S) observed the behaviour of the wealthy man.

He (S) turned towards him and said, *"Are you afraid that some of his poverty would pass on to you?"*

*"No, O Messenger of Allah."*

*"Did you fear that some of your wealth might pass on to him?"*

*"No, O Messenger of Allah."*

*"Perhaps, you feared that your garments would become dirty?"*

*"No, O Messenger of Allah."*

*"Then why did you draw yourself aside and shift away from him?"*

*"I confess that I committed an error and made a mistake. Now, in order to compensate for my error and to expiate my sin, I am ready to grant half of my wealth to this Muslim brother towards whom I have shown disrespect."*

The man in rags replied, *"But I am not ready to accept this offer."*

The companions asked, *"Why?"*

The man said, *"I fear that I may also become arrogant and mistreat one of my Muslim brothers in the same way that this man did towards me today."*<sup>1</sup>

#### Note

1. Usul al-Kafi, v. 2, p. 260. (Chapter, Virtue of the Poor Muslims).



## Story 18: The Merchant And The Passerby

A man with an attractive personality, who was tall, broad-shouldered, big-boned, with a sunburnt face and a scar on the corner of his eye, which was a testimony to his presence on the battlefield, passed through the market of Kufah with firm and assured steps.

On the other side, a merchant was sitting in his shop. In order to entertain his friends and make them laugh, threw a handful of garbage at the passerby. Without so much as a wrinkle of his brow, the passerby paid no attention and continued on his way with firm and assured steps.

As he went a few steps ahead, one of the merchant's friends in the market said to him, *"Did you recognize the passerby, the person whom you have insulted?"*

*"No, I did not recognize him! He was a passerby like thousands of others who pass before us every day."*

*"How strange! You did not recognize him? The passerby was Malik al-Ashtar al-Nakhai the famous Commander-in-Chief!"*

*"What! That man was Malik al-Ashtar? The same Malik who makes the heart of a lion paralyzed with fear and whose name strikes fear in the heart of his enemies?"*

*"Yes, that was Malik!"*

*"Woe betides me! What have I done? Surely, he will issue an order to punish and chastise me severely. I will run to him and throw myself at his feet and beg him to excuse me for my blunder."*

He began to run after Malik al-Ashtar and followed him. Seeing him turn towards the Mosque, he also entered the Mosque and saw him performing prayers. He waited until Malik completed his prayers, then he introducing himself in a pleading and supplicating tone. He said, *"I am the one who made a blunder and was impudent towards you."*

Malik said in reply, *"As for me, I swear by Allah, I did not come to the Mosque for you. I see that you are a misbehaving, ignorant, illiterate and misguided person and that you harass others for no reason. Thus, I felt you deserve my compassion and I came here to pray for you, asking Allah to show you the straight path. I had no other intention than this and not what you presumed about me."*<sup>1</sup>

### Note

1. Safinat ul-Bihar, (Ilem Shatara).

### Story 19: Ghazali And The Thieves

Ghazali, the renowned Muslim scholar, was originally from Tus, a town near Mashhad. In those days, around the fifth century after Hijrah, Nishabur was the center and capital of that district and was considered an academic center of learning. Students wishing to acquire knowledge in that district travelled to Nishabur. Ghazali also travelled to Nishabur and Gurgan.

He pursued his studies enthusiastically there and acquired knowledge from his professors and scholars for many years. In order not to forget any points of erudition, or to lose the fruits picked by his own hands, he always took notes of the lectures and made them into pamphlets. He treasured these notes, which were the results of his hard work over many years, as dearly as he treasured his own life.

Years later, after completing his studies, he decided to return to his native land. He packed up all his notes, tied them into a bundle and set forth in the company of a caravan towards his home. Suddenly, the caravan came up against a band of thieves. They held up the caravan and robbed whatever property they could find. Eventually it was Ghazali's turn for his property.

As they laid their hands on his bundle of notes, Ghazali began lamenting and pleading and said, *"Take whatever I have, but please leave this bundle for me!"*

The thieves thought certainly there must be something very precious inside the bundle. They untied it and found nothing but a handful of written papers. They asked, *"What are these and of what use are they?"*

Ghazali said, *"Whatever they may be, they would be of no use to you, but they are of great use to me."*

The thieves said, *"But of what use are they to you?"*

Ghazali said, *"These are the fruits of my hard labour over many years of study. If you take them away from me, my knowledge will perish and all the years of my struggles in the way of knowledge will have been in vain."*

The thieves said, *"Well then your knowledge lies amongst these papers, doesn't it?"*

Ghazali said, *"Yes."*

The thieves said, *"Knowledge which is in a bundle and vulnerable to theft is no knowledge at all. You should re-evaluate your life."*

This simple remark shook Ghazali to the depths of his vigilant soul. He realised that, until that day, he was no better than a parrot, jotting down on paper all that he had heard from his professors. After that day, he thought of doing his utmost to train his mind through reflection, to contemplate more, to research and enjoin useful subjects in his mind.

Ghazali said, *"The best advice I have ever received, which became the model for my intellectual life, came from a highway thief."<sup>1</sup>*

#### Note

1. Ghazali Nameh, p. 116.

## Story 20: Ibn Sina And Ibn Maskuyeh

Abu Ali ibn Sina was not even twenty years old when he was able to master the sciences of his time. He was ranked among the highest in theology, natural sciences, mathematics and religious studies. He attended the course of Ibn Maskuyeh, a renowned scholar of the time.

With utmost arrogance, he threw a walnut in front of Ibn Maskuyeh and said, *“Determine its surface.”*

Ibn Maskuyeh placed a few pamphlets before Ibn Sina related to ethics and education from the book ‘Taharat ul-A'raq’ and said, *“First of all, reform your conduct before I determine the surface of the walnut. You are in more need of ethical amendment than I am to determine the surface of this walnut.”*

Abu Ali, on hearing this remark, felt ashamed and disgraced. These words were of great use to him throughout the rest of his life.<sup>1</sup>

### Note

1. History of Rational Sciences in Islam, p. 211.

### Story 21: An Ascetic's Advice

The summer heat had become intense. The sun's hot rays beat down on the city of Madinah, and the gardens and farms around it. In such harsh weather, a man named Muhammad ibn Monkadar, who identified himself as an ascetic, a pious person and an anchorite (recluse), arrived in Madinah. He cast his eyes over a corpulent man who had obviously come out to visit and inspect his farms at that time. Because of his heaviness and fatigue, he was treading slowly with the help of a few people by his side, certainly his friends and relatives.

He thought, *"Who is this man, in this hot weather during the day, leading a busy worldly life?"* He approached the person and to his surprise, it was Muhammad ibn Ali ibn al-Husayn (Imam Baqir) ('a). He thought: 'Why does this noble man indulge in the life of this world? I must advise him and dissuade him from this!'

He came forward and greeted the Imam ('a). Imam Baqir ('a), out of breath and sweating, returned his greetings. He said, *"Is it suitable for such an honourable person like you to come out at this hour of the day, in such hot weather, in order to indulge in the life of this world, particularly, with your heaviness which certainly makes you suffer much? Who has knowledge of their death? Who knows when he will die? Death might overcome you right now, may Allah protect you! If death overtakes you in such a condition, what would be your destiny? It is not worthy of you to be after the life this world, endure so much pain, and suffer with this heavy body in this heat! No! No! It is not worthy of you!"*

Imam Baqir ('a), removing his hands from his men's' shoulders, leaned against the wall and said, *"If death overtakes me now, I will leave this world while I am performing my duties and worshipping Allah. Regarding my work, it is just like obedience and submission to Allah. You have imagined that worship is confined to invocation, prayers and supplication. I have to live and support my family. If I do not work or endure pain, I will have to extend my hand towards you or people like you to help me out. I am working for my livelihood so that I may not be in need of anyone else. I should be afraid of death if I have committed sins and violated and disobeyed Divine Commandments, but not in such a state of obedience to the Commandments of Allah the Almighty who has ordered me not to be a burden to others, but rather, to gain my own daily bread."*

*The ascetic said, "I have made a big mistake! I thought that I would give advice to guide others, but now, I have come to understand that I have been mistaken and that I was following a wrong path and was in need of advice myself."*<sup>1</sup>

#### Note

1. Bihar ul-Anwar, v. 11, p. 82.

## Story 22: At The Feast Of The Caliph

Al-Mutawakkil, a tyrannical and ruthless Caliph of the Abbasid dynasty, was fearful of the attention people were paying to Imam Al-Hadi ('a). He worried that people were reluctant to obey his orders. Moreover, some backbiters told him that Ali ibn Muhammad (Imam Al-Hadi) ('a) might secretly harbour a plan to overthrow him. It was possible that they might find weapons in his home, or at least some letters which indicated his plan. For this reason, one night, while everyone was fast asleep, Al-Mutawakkil secretly sent a number of his thugs and relatives to the Imam's ('a) house in order to inspect his residence and to summon him to the palace. Al-Mutawakkil took this decision while he was holding a feast and was busy drinking wine.

His agents broke into the Imam's ('a) house and crudely called out for him. They saw the Imam ('a) had rolled up all his carpets, and was sitting all alone in his room on sand and pebbles, absorbed in supplication and prayers, and addressing the Essence of the Creator. They rushed from room to room, but could not find what they were after. Thus, empty-handed, they were compelled to take the Imam ('a) to the palace of Al-Mutawakkil.

When the Imam ('a) arrived, Al-Mutawakkil was sitting at the throne of the banquet table busy drinking wine. He ordered his men to make the Imam ('a) sit beside him. The Imam ('a) sat down. Al-Mutawakkil offered him ('a) the glass of wine which was in his hand. The Imam ('a) refused it and said, *"I swear by Allah that wine has never penetrated my flesh and blood till now! Exempt me from this!"*

Al-Mutawakkil agreed, then said, *"Then recite poems in honour of our banquet with elegant and delightful lyrical verses."*

The Imam ('a) replied, *"I am not a poet nor do I recite poetry. I know only a few poems of the deceased."*

Al-Mutawakkil said, *"It is unavoidable, you must surely recite a poem."*

Then Imam ('a) began reciting the poems whose verses were as follows:

*"Guarded and surrounded by armed men, they rested upon the high summits of castles*

*Yet none of them were able to stop death and to protect themselves from the decay of passing time*

*From the castles of these high summits and the heart of those solid and firm ramparts*

*They were pulled down deep into the abyss of the grave*

*How ill-fated they were to descend into the abyss*

*Whereas the herald's voice cried: 'Where did the jewelry, the crowns, the extravagance, the glory and the magnificence depart to?'*

*So did those epicures (gluttons) who always escaped from people's sight with a manner full of pride and haughtiness, hidden behind multi-coloured curtains.*

*The tomb finally disgraced them; those pampered figures became a field of worms crawling in them in the end*

*For a long time, they ate, drank and swallowed whatever they found; but those who had spent their lives consuming everything, today became the nourishment of the earth and the insects of soil!"*

The Imam's ('a) voice, with its peculiar timbre and intonation, penetrated into the depth of the spirit of all at the banquet, as well as Al-Mutawakkil himself. The poem came to an end. The fumes of wine evaporated from the drunkards' minds. Al-Mutawakkil smashed his glass of wine violently on the ground, while tears were streaming down from his eyes like raindrops. Thus, for a short time, the banquet was disrupted and the light of reality shone onto a heart full of cruelty, the dust of arrogance and thoughtlessness.<sup>1</sup>

**Note**

1. Bihar ul-Anwar, v. 2, p. 149, The attitude of Imam Hadi ('a).

## Story 23: Festival Prayer

Ma'mun, the Abbasid Caliph, who was intelligent and shrewd, was still in Marw (a part of Khurasan) after defeating and killing his brother, Muhammad Amin. The vast territories of Caliphate at the time were brought under his influence, giving him total domination. He wrote a letter to Imam Al-Ridha' ('a) in Madinah and summoned him to Marw. Imam Al-Ridha' ('a) asked to be excused from going to Marw and gave certain reasons, but Ma'mun did not give up. He started writing letters one after the other until it became clear to the Imam ('a) that the Caliph would not stand down.

Imam Al-Ridha' ('a) started out on his journey; he left Madinah and arrived in Marw. Ma'mun proposed to him to put him in charge of the affairs of the Caliphate. Realizing the character of Ma'mun, and knowing that this was a purely a political ploy, the Imam ('a) utterly refused Ma'mun's proposition. This affair continued for two months; on one hand, insistence from Ma'mun, and on the other, abstention and rejection from the Imam ('a).

Finally, realizing that his proposal would not be accepted, Ma'mun proposed to make the Imam ('a) his successor and appoint him as the Crown Prince. The Imam ('a) accepted this proposal under the condition that the position would be merely ceremonial and he would not have any responsibilities, nor intervene in any government affairs. Ma'mun agreed to this. Ma'mun made people swear allegiance to this and sent letters to different cities, issuing an order to coin and preach in the Imam's ('a) name.

The day of the Festival (Eid ul-Qurban, Eid ul-Adha, Festival of Sacrifice) arrived. Ma'mun sent a message to the Imam ('a) and appealed to him to lead the Eid prayer and pray with the people so that they would be reassured. The Imam ('a) sent a message stating that it had been agreed that he would not be involved with any official affairs, so he sent his regrets. Ma'mun sent a message in reply, *"It is advisable for you to say the Eid prayers so that the question of the status of the Crown Prince would be confirmed."* He insisted so much that the Imam ('a) finally said, *"It would better if you exempt me from this duty, but if I have to go for the Eid prayers, I will perform this Divine Command as the Messenger of Allah (S) and Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a) performed it."* Ma'mun said in reply, *"You have full authority. Do as you wish."*

The next morning, on the day of Eid, the army commanders, nobles and dignitaries, dressed in elegant clothes, mounted on adorned horses, and, in conformity with the customs of the Caliphs, attended the Imam's ('a) home to take part in the Eid prayer. People from different walks of life prepared themselves, awaiting the glorious entourage of the Crown Prince so as to join the procession and to proceed towards the public place of prayer. A large number of men and women went up on their roofs so that they could view the glory and magnificence of the procession of the Imam ('a). All were waiting for the Imam ('a); for the moment when his door would open and the imperial procession would begin.

However, according to the agreement made between his eminence Imam Al-Ridha' ('a) and Ma'mun, the Imam ('a) would take part in the Eid prayer on the condition that he ('a) would perform the prayer in the same manner as the Messenger of Allah (S) and the Imam Ali ('a) did, and not as the Caliphs did.

Early in the morning, the Imam ('a) performed the spiritual ablution (ghusl), dressed in a white turban whose edges lay on his chest on one side, and between his shoulders on the other. He was bare-footed and had rolled up the edge of his garment and told his friends and relatives to do the same. He took a walking stick, fixed a ferrule (metal cap) on its end, and he emerged from the house, with his friends and relatives.

In accordance with the Islamic tradition in those days, he proclaimed in a loud voice, "Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar (Allah is Great)." The multitudes recited with him the same words (zikr), proclaiming in such harmony, earnestness and emotion that one would have thought these words were coming from the heavens, the earth and everywhere in between. The Imam ('a) stopped for a while in front of the door of his house, reciting in a loud voice this supplication:

الله اكبر، الله اكبر، الله اكبر على ما هداانا، الله اكبر على ما رزقنا من بهيمه الانعم،  
الحمد لله على ما بادلانا

The crowd in unison repeated this oration in a loud voice and in harmony. This impassioned their senses and they cried bitterly and shed tears.

The commanders of army and the officers in uniform, riding on their horses, boots on their feet, imagined that the Crown Prince would appear in accordance with the Monarchic protocol, dressed in luxurious clothes and riding a horse. When they saw the Imam ('a) barefoot, in modest attire and with full attention towards Allah, they raised their voice and recited the oration of Allahu Akbar with such a degree of emotion, inundated with tears that they dismounted from their horses and took off their boots without any hesitation and joined the Imam ('a) in his procession.

In a rush to take off their boots, whoever found a knife started cutting the bootlaces and not to delay to undo that deemed himself luckier than others.

No sooner did the news spread among the public, then the whole city of Marw was filled with wailing, lamentation, sensation, emotion and indictment. Imam Al-Ridha' ('a) made a salute after taking ten steps, proclaiming the greatness of Allah (Allahu Akbar) four times while the crowd joined him in a loud voice with lamentation and emotion. Joy and a manifestation of sense and reality had aroused peoples' senses which made them so excited that all the artificial glories and material symbols they had expected disappeared from their thoughts. The crowd in unison moved towards the public place of prayer with fervour and enthusiasm.

The news reached Ma'mun. His advisers told him, "*If this situation carries on any longer, and Imam Ali ibn Musa al-Al-Ridha' ('a) reaches the public place of prayer, there will be danger of a revolt.*" Ma'mun became scared of this situation and began trembling. He sent a message promptly to the Imam ('a) requesting him to come back, saying that he feared the Imam ('a) might be injured or disturbed. The Imam ('a) asked for his shoes and his clothes. Putting them on, he returned to Ma'mun and said, "*I told you before not to insist and to excuse me from this act!*"<sup>1</sup>

### Note

1. Bihar ul-Anwar, v. 12, p. 39. (Attitudes of Imam Al-Ridha' ('a)).





### Story 24: Listening To A Mother's Prayer

One night, he listened to the words of his mother while she was standing and facing the Ka'bah (Qibla) in a corner of the room. He watched his mother praying to Allah; prostrating, bowing, standing and sitting on that Friday night. He was still a child. He watched and heard his mother, as she prayed for all Muslims, men and women alike, mentioning them by name and beseeching Almighty Allah for their prosperity, felicity, and blessing. He was carefully listening to her to see whether or not she would ask Allah for something for herself.

That night Imam Hasan ('a) stayed awake until the morning, never losing sight of his mother, Fatimah ('a). He was wondering how his mother prays for herself and what favours she would ask of Almighty Allah. The dawn succeeded the night with his mother praying and supplicating for others, but Imam Hasan ('a) did not hear her say a single word about herself.

In the morning he ('a) asked his mother, *"Mother, last night I listened to your prayers, and throughout your prayers you prayed for others and you did not pray for even a single thing for yourself?"* The affectionate mother said in reply, *"My beloved son, first your neighbour then yourself (your own house)."*<sup>1</sup>

#### Note

1. Bihar ul-Anwar, v. 10, p. 25.

## Story 25: In The Presence Of The Judge

Once a plaintiff lodged a complaint before Umar ibn al-Khattab, the powerful Caliph of the time. Both parties of the litigation, the plaintiff and the defendant, must appear before the court and present their case. The one against whom the complaint was lodged was the Commander of the Faithful, Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a). Summoning both parties, Umar sat on the judge's bench.

According to Islamic law, both parties should stand next to each other and the principle of equality before the court should be respected. Accordingly, the Caliph called out to the plaintiff by name and beckoned him to stand before the judge. Then he turned to Ali ('a) and said, "*O Abul Hasan, place yourself next to the plaintiff.*"

On hearing these words Ali ('a) became angry and it was reflected in his face. The Caliph said, "*O Ali, do you not want to stand next to your opponent?*"

Ali ('a) said, "No, the reason for my anger is not that I should stand next to my opponent. The reason for my anger is that you have not respected the norms of justice; for you have called me respectfully by my nickname, 'Abul Hasan', but you called the other person by his given name. That is the reason I was unhappy."<sup>1</sup>

### Note

1. Bihar ul-Anwar, v. 10, p. 25.

### Story 26: In The Land Of Mina

The pilgrims who had gone for Hajj assembled in the land of Mina. Imam Al-Sadiq ('a) and his companions were resting for a while, eating some grapes which were before them. A beggar appeared and asked for aid. The Imam ('a) picked up a few grapes and offered it to him. The beggar refused and said, *"Give me money!"*

The Imam ('a) said, *"Excuse me. I do not have any money."* The beggar was disappointed and left. After taking a few steps, the beggar regretted his decision and asked him for the grapes.

The Imam ('a) replied, *"I'm sorry."*, and he ('a) did not give him any grapes.

Shortly thereafter another beggar appeared, asking for aid. The Imam ('a) took a cluster of grapes and offered it to him. The beggar accepted it and said, *"Praise be to the Lord of the all the Worlds, who granted me sustenance."* The Imam ('a), on hearing these words, asked him to wait and gave him two handful of grapes. The beggar praised Allah a second time. The Imam ('a) again told him, *"Wait. Do not leave."*

Then he ('a) turned towards one of his companions and asked him, *"How much money do you have with you?"* The man searched his pockets and found about 20 Dirhams. He gave it to the beggar by order of the Imam ('a). For the third time the beggar thanked Allah and said, *"Praise is due only to Allah. O Allah, thou art the Bestower of bounties and there is no partner for thee."*

The Imam ('a), after hearing these words, took off his garment and gave it to the beggar. This time the beggar switched and uttered some thankful words to the Imam ('a), but the Imam ('a) did not give him anything more, and the beggar left.

His companions said, *"We concluded that if the beggar had continued thanking and praising Allah in the same way as before, the Imam ('a) would have assisted him more, but since he had started thanking and praising the Imam ('a) himself, the help was stopped and granted no more."*<sup>1</sup>

#### Note

1. Bihar ul-Anwar, v, 11, p. 116. (Attitudes of Imam Al-Sadiq ('a)).

## Story 27: The Weight-Lifters

A few young Muslim men were busy competing in weight-lifting. There was a heavy rock in that area and being able to move it, was considered a gauge of a person's strength and manhood. Meanwhile the Holy Prophet (S) passed by and asked, *"What are you doing?"*

They replied, *"We are competing to see which of us is strongest."*

The Holy Prophet (S) said, *"Do you want me to pick the strongest among you?"*

The youths said, *"Of course! What would be better than the Messenger of Allah (S) being the judge of our competition and awarding the prize of honour?"*

The onlookers and members of the assembly were anxiously waiting to see whom the Messenger of Allah (S) would choose. The participants began imagining the Messenger of Allah (S) would take their hand and introduce them as champion.

The Holy Prophet (S) said, *"The strongest of all is the one who, if something pleases him, or he becomes attached to it, this attachment will not deviate him from carrying out justice and humanity, nor pollute him with vices; and the one who, if he becomes annoyed and a wave of rage overcomes his soul, he will maintain self-control and never utter anything but the truth, nor would he say a lie or insult others; and the one who, if he gains power and influence, and all obstacles are removed from before him, he will not go beyond the measures to which he is obligated."*<sup>1</sup>

### Note

1. Wasa'il, v. 2, p. 469.

### Story 28: A Newly Converted Muslim

Two neighbours, a Muslim and a Christian, would, from time to time, exchange views about Islam. The Muslim, who was a religious and devout person, described Islam in such a way that the Christian neighbour was attracted to the faith and finally embraced it.

Night fell and it was nearing dawn when the Christian who had newly converted to Islam heard somebody knocking at his door.

Surprised, he asked, *"Who is it?"*

A voice from behind the door said, *"It is me, so-and-so"*, introducing himself. He was the same Muslim neighbour who had converted him to Islam.

*"What do you want at this hour of night?"*

*"Quickly perform your ablution and put on your clothes, so that we would go to the mosque for prayers!"*

For the first time in his life, the new convert performed ablutions and followed his Muslim friend to the Mosque. It was close enough to the break of dawn that they engaged in the mid-night prayers. They prayed until dawn, then came time for the morning prayer. They prayed the morning prayers and were busy in supplication and benediction until the day light became perfectly clear. As the new Muslim moved to return home, his friend said, *"Where are you going?"*

*"I want to go home. Since we have performed our morning prayer, we have nothing else to do."*

*"Wait for a while and recite the benediction prayers till the sun rises."*

*"Alright."*

The newly converted Muslim sat down and recited the supplications until the sun rose. As he stood up to leave, his friend gave him the Holy Qur'an and said, *"For the time being, occupy yourself by reciting the Qur'an until the sun rises a little higher. I also advise you to fast today. You do not know how much reward and virtue there is in fasting!"*

It was almost noon. He said, *"Wait, it is nearing noon. Let's perform the noon-prayer in the Mosque."*

They then performed the noon-prayer. Then he said, *"Wait a while until we can pray the afternoon prayer. It would be better to perform it at the proper time."*

After performing the afternoon prayer, the Muslim said, *"It is almost evening now."* He kept him waiting till the evening prayer. After the prayer the new Muslim convert started to leave to break his fast.

His Muslim friend said: *"There is only one more prayer remaining, that is night (Isha) prayer."*

Only one hour had passed since the night had fallen. He waited until the time of the night prayer. Then they performed that prayer too. The new Muslim stood up and left.

The second night, at the same time of dawn, he heard again the knock at the door.

He asked, *"Who is it?"*

*"I am so-and-so, your neighbour. Quickly do your ablution and put on your clothes so that we can go together to the mosque."*

The new Muslim said, *“As I came back home from the Mosque last night, I resign from your religion. Go away and find another person who is out of work so that he may spend all of his time at the Mosque. I am a poor man with a wife and children. I must work in order to gain a living.”*

Relating this story to his companions, Imam Jafar Al-Sadiq (‘a) said, *“The strict and devout man, in this manner after converting that poor person to Islam, had repelled him from Islam too. Taking into consideration the fact that you should compromise with people, it must be borne in mind that you must judge people by their strength and capacity and behave accordingly to attract them to religion, and not make them run away from it. Don’t you know the policy of Umayyads is based on violence, oppression and strictness? Whereas our conduct relies upon gentleness, moderation, brotherhood and the conquest of hearts.”*<sup>1</sup>

### **Note**

1. Wasail, v. 2, p. 494 (Tradition No. 3 and 9).

### Story 29: At The Dinner Table Of The Caliph

Sharik ibn Abdullah al-Nakhai, a renowned Islamic jurisprudent of the second century Hijrah, was well known for his knowledge and piety. Mahdi ibn al-Mansur, the Abbasid Caliph, was anxious to entrust the seat of Chief Justice to him, but in order to distance himself from the forces of oppression, Sharik ibn Abdullah did not consent to accept this responsibility. The Caliph also wished to appoint him as a tutor for his sons so that he would teach them the science of Prophetic traditions. Sharik rejected this proposal too, content with his own freedom and needs.

One day the Caliph summoned him and said, *“Today you have to accept one of these three proposals: the seat of Chief Justice, tutorship of my sons, or sitting down and having a meal with me at my dinner table.”*

Sharik thought for a moment and said, *“Now that I am being compelled, of these three proposals, the third option is obviously the easiest.”*

The Caliph ordered the cook to prepare the most delicious food for Sharik. They made a sumptuous dish from bone marrow mixed with sugar and honey, and laid it at the table. Sharik, who had never tasted nor seen such food before in his life, ate it wholeheartedly till he was full.

The butler whispered in the Caliph’s ear, *“I swear by Allah, this man will never see salvation.”*

Soon after this event, they saw Sharik becoming both the tutor of the Caliph's sons and accepting the seat of Chief Justice. A pension was also allocated to him from the public treasury.

One day he was speaking to the official responsible for the disbursement of salaries. He said to Sharik, *“You have not sold us any wheat, why do you plead for money?”*

Sharik said in reply, *“I sold you something more valuable than wheat. That is, I sold my faith.”*<sup>1</sup>

#### Note

1. Murouj al-Zahab al-Mansur. v. 2. (Halat-e Mahdi al-Abbasi).



### Story 30: The Complaint Of A Neighbour

A peasant came to the Holy Messenger (S) who harboured a grievance against his neighbour, saying that his neighbour kept pestering him and deprived him of rest. The Holy Prophet (S) said, *“Be patient, and don't create trouble for your neighbour! He may change his behaviour.”*

After some time, the man came again and repeated his complaint. The Holy Prophet (S) said to him, *“Be patient!”* It was not long before the man appeared for the third time and said, *“O Messenger of Allah (S) my neighbour did not abandon his behaviour and has greatly disturbed me and my family.”*

This time, the Holy Prophet (S) said, *“Next Friday, take out all of your furniture and household belongings and leave them in front of your house where people pass. They will ask you why you have scattered your household belongings in the street. Tell them it is because of a bad neighbour, then lay your complaint before everyone.”*

The plaintiff did as he was told. Imagining that the Prophet (S) would just tell the man to be patient forever, the harmful neighbour ignored him, until that point. When it is a question of opposing oppression and defending one's rights, Islam does not have any respect for the transgressor. As a result, when he understood the seriousness of the matter, he apologized profusely, implored his neighbour, and requested him to return his possessions to his house. At the same time, he pledged not to cause any more trouble for his neighbours.<sup>1</sup>

#### Note

1. Usul al-Kafi, v. 2, p. 668 (The Neighbour's Rights).

### Story 31: The Date Palm

Samarah ibn Jandab owned a date palm tree in one of the Ansar's gardens (Ansar: helpers of the Prophet). The Ansar's dwelling was located in the garden where his wife and children were living. Samarah frequently visited the Ansar's garden in order to inspect his date palm or to pick the dates. It was obvious that, according to Islamic law, he had the 'right' to visit the garden to look after his palm tree. However, whenever he wanted to enter the garden, he did so without prior notice, while prying on the owner and his family.

The owner of the garden requested him not to enter the garden without prior permission, but he refused. Thus, the owner was obliged to complain about this matter to the Holy Prophet (S) and said, *"This man comes to us without warning. Ask him not to enter the garden in an unlawful way. He must inform us before entering so that my family can protect their privacy from his prying eyes."*

The Holy Prophet (S) summoned Samarah and said, *"So-and-so complained about you saying that you enter his garden without warning and you see his family in a state that he does not like. From now on, take prior permission and do not enter their home without informing them."*

Samarah refused. The Prophet (S) said, *"Then sell the palm tree."* Samarah refused again. The Holy Prophet (S) doubled the price, and then increased the price more and more, but Samarah persisted in refusing. At last, the Holy Prophet (S) said, *"If you sell it, you will have a tree in heaven."* Samarah still did not give up and remained stubborn in his position of not disposing of the tree, and not taking permission of the owner before entering the garden.

Then the Holy Prophet (S) said, *"You are a harmful and rigid person. In Islam there is no place for prejudice nor obstinacy."*

The Holy Prophet (S) turned towards the Ansari man and said, *"Go uproot the date palm and throw it before Samarah!"* He did as the Holy Prophet (S) had ordered. The Holy Prophet (S) looked at Samarah and said, *"Now go and plant your tree wherever you like."<sup>1</sup>*

#### Note

1. Wasa'il, v. 3, p. 329 (Tradition No. 1, 3 and 4).

### Story 32: In Umm Salamah's Home

One night, the Holy Prophet (S) stayed at Umm Salamah's home. It was midnight. Umm Salamah woke up and noticed that the Holy Prophet (S) was not in his bed. She was worried about what had happened to him. Her instinctive jealousy made her investigate. She got up and began to search for the Prophet (S).

She found the Holy Prophet (S) standing in a dark corner, raising his hands towards the sky, shedding tears and saying, *"My Allah! The blessings that you have granted me, do not take them from me. My God, do not let the enemy and the envious accuse me. My Lord, do not let me return to evils from which you have saved me! My Allah, do not leave me alone for as much as the twinkling of an eye."*

Hearing these words spoken in such a state made Umm Salamah shudder. She went and sat in a corner and started crying. Her cries were so bitter and loud that the Holy Prophet (S) came over and asked her, *"Why are you crying?"*

She said, *"Why should I not cry? You, who have such a high rank and position with Allah, are afraid of Him to such an extent that you ask Him not to leave you alone for a single moment! So, woe to me and others like me!"*

The Holy Prophet (S) said, *"How could I be certain and not fear my own fate? Yunus, the prophet, was awarded a moment of his life for himself and what might befall him."*<sup>1</sup>

#### Note

1. Bihar, v. 6 (Chapter: His ethical virtues, conduct and tradition).

### Story 33: The Black Market

The family of Imam Al-Sadiq (‘a) was steadily growing, as were their expenses. The Imam (‘a) decided to invest some capital in order to increase his income and thus meet his family’s expenses. He gathered an amount of one thousand Dinars and told his servant Mussadif to take the money and prepare for a journey to Egypt in order to do business there.

With that money, Mussadif purchased the type of goods usually exported to Egypt. He joined a caravan of traders who were taking the same type of merchandise to Egypt and set out with them. When the caravan was near Egypt, they met another caravan of traders who were leaving Egypt. They enquired about the state of business in Egypt and discovered that the merchandise which Mussadif and his companions had, were not available in Egypt, and thus was in great demand.

The merchants, upon hearing this good news, decided to sell their goods at no less than one hundred percent profit. When they arrived in Egypt, the situation was as they had been informed. As previously agreed, they created a black market by initially not selling the goods. They then doubled the price and sold the goods.

Mussadif returned to Madinah with a net profit of one thousand Dinars. He joyfully went to Imam Al-Sadiq (‘a) and put before him two bags, each containing one thousand Dinars.

Imam Al-Sadiq (‘a) asked, *“What is this?”*

He said, *“One of the two bags is the capital which you gave me, and the other is the net profit which has been gained, which is equal to the capital.”*

The Imam (‘a) said, *“The profit is too high. Tell me how did you gain so much profit?”*

The servant said, *“When we came to understand that the goods were scarce there, we pledged not to sell our goods at anything less than hundred percent profit, and that is what we did!”*

Imam Al-Sadiq (‘a), *“Glory be to Allah! Did you do such a thing? Did you plot in order to create a black market among Muslims? Did you collude to sell the goods at a profit equal to the capital? No, no! I do not want any part of a business with such a gain!”*

The Imam (‘a) picked up one of the bags and said, *“This is my capital.”* He left the other bag and said, *“I will have nothing to do with the other one.”*

Then he (‘a) added, *“O Mussadif! To do battle is easier than to do business lawfully.”*<sup>1</sup>

#### Note

1. Bihar ul-Anwar, v. 11, p. 121.

### Story 34: The Late-Comer Of The Caravan

In the dark of night, from a great distance, they heard a voice of a young man screaming. He was pleading for help. His weak and scrawny camel had remained behind the caravan and lagged far behind. Finally, completely exhausted, he stretched out and slept. He tried to move his camel again, but it was in vain. Standing helplessly beside the camel, he called for help.

The Holy Prophet (S) usually travelled at the back of the caravan, so that anyone who was weak or helpless and became separated from the caravan, would not remain alone.

He (S) heard the call of the young man and, as he approached him, he asked, *"Who are you?"*

*"I am Jabir."*

*"Why were you left alone and wandering in the desert?"*

*"O Messenger of Allah (S), the reason was that my camel became exhausted."*

*"Do you have a walking stick?"*

*"Yes."*

*"Give it to me."*

The Holy Prophet (S) took the stick and used it to move the camel forward and make it kneel. He (S) then made his hands into the shape of a stirrup and told Jabir to mount his camel. Jabir mounted the camel and then they made their way back together, as Jabir's camel moved faster.

Throughout the way the Holy Prophet (S) did not cease to show kindness towards Jabir. Jabir had counted and found that the Holy Prophet (S) had prayed twenty-five times for the forgiveness of his sins.

On the way, the Holy Prophet (S) asked Jabir, *"How many children remain from your father, Abdullah?"*

*"Seven girls and a boy, myself."*

*"Has your father left any debts?"*

*"Yes."*

*"Well, when you return to Madinah, make an arrangement with your creditors, and at the time of the date harvest, call on me."*

*"Alright."*

*"Are you married?"*

*"Yes."*

*"To whom?"*

*"To Mrs so-and-so, daughter of so-and-so, one of the widows of Madinah."*

*"Why didn't you marry to a young girl of your own age?"*

*"O Messenger of Allah (S), having so many young and inexperienced sisters, I didn't want to marry a young and inexperienced woman. I preferred to choose a mature woman."*

*"You chose well. How much did you pay for this camel?"*

*"Five ounces of gold."*

*"I will purchase it from you at the same price. When you arrive in Madinah, come and collect the money from me."*

The journey came to an end and they arrived in Madinah. Jabir brought his camel to the Holy Prophet (S). The Holy Prophet (S) ordered Bilal to give

Jabir five ounces of gold for his camel, and in addition three more ounces so that he may pay off his father Abdullah's debts. He then returned his camel to him.

The Prophet (S) asked Jabir, *"Did you made a contract with the creditors?"*

Jabir said, *"No, O Messenger of Allah (S)."*

*"What your father has left you, is it enough to pay his debts?"*

*"No, O Messenger of Allah"*

*"Then, call on me at the time of the date harvest."*

The time of the harvest arrived. He called on the Messenger of Allah (S). The Holy Prophet (S) then settled all of his debts and left enough for Jabir's family to live on.<sup>1</sup>

### **Note**

1. Bihar, v. 6, (Chapter: Makaram Akhlaq).

### Story 35: The Shoelace

Imam Al-Sadiq (‘a), accompanied by some friends, visited one of his relatives to offer him their condolences. On the way, his shoelace was torn in such a manner that his shoe was no longer held to his foot. The Imam (‘a) took off his shoes, held them in his hand and began to walk barefoot.

Abdullah ibn Abi Ya’fur, one of his close companions quickly took off his own shoes, untied the laces and offered it to the Imam (‘a) so that he could use them while he walked barefoot.

Upset and determined, the Imam (‘a) did not accept. Turning away from Abdullah he (‘a) said, *“If someone has a problem, they should be the one to endure it. There is no sense, if an incident occurs, to one person that another suffers for his pain.”*<sup>1</sup>

#### Note

1. Bihar ul-Anwar, v. 11, p. 117.

### Story 36: Hisham And Farazdaq

Although Hisham ibn Abdul Malik held the position of Crown Prince at the time (the first decade of the second century of Hijrah), when the Umayyad government had reached the zenith of its power, after the ritual circumambulation of the Ka'bah, he tried his best to reach the Black Stone and touch it. The other pilgrims were all dressed in their plain garments, all uttering the same supplications to Allah, and performing the Hajj rituals.

They were engrossed in the fulfillment of their rituals and did not think about the worldly personality of Hisham or his social position. The individuals, who accompanied him from Syria, to enhance his honour and prestige, appeared insignificant before the spiritual majesty and grandeur of the performance of the Hajj pilgrimage.

In accordance with the rites of pilgrimage, Hisham tried his best to reach the Black Stone and touch it, but he could not due to the sheer multitude and density of the crowd. He was obliged to return. He was given a chair to sit on, and the chair was placed in a high position so that he could watch over the crowd. The Syrians accompanying him, stood around him, and watched the crowd with him.

At this moment, a man appeared with a pious face. He was dressed in plain garments like the other pilgrims. The marks of worship and submission to Allah were visible on his face. He went directly to circumambulate the Ka'bah and made his way towards the Black Stone, firmly but gently. On seeing him, the crowd abated and made way for him, and he was able to approach the Black Stone without any difficulty.

Having witnessed earlier that the Crown Prince did not succeed in approaching the Black Stone in spite of his status, the Syrians were astonished, their eyes dazzled.

One of them asked Hisham, *"Who is this person?"*

Although Hisham knew perfectly well that he was Ali ibn al-Husayn Zain ul-Abidin ('a), he pretended not to recognize him and said, *"I do not know him."*

Fearing Hisham's blood-soaked sword, who would dare admit to knowing him?

Meanwhile, Hammam ibn Ghalib, a renowned and skilled Arabian poet (known as Farazdaq), who should have respected the position of Hisham more than anyone else, to protect his own career and particular art, was so struck by his conscience that he immediately said, *"But I do know him!"*

He did not settle for a plain introduction. Standing on a high step, he improvised an eloquent poem which is counted among the masterpieces of Arabic literature, for such words could only be composed when the spirit of a poet flows like the waves of the sea.

Among the verses of his poem were:

*"This person is one whom the rocks of the earth know well,  
as does the Haram of the Ka'bah and its surroundings,  
The land of the Ka'bah and the land outside the Ka'bah knows him,  
He is the son of the best servants of Allah,  
the purest of the pure, the virtuous, the pious and the prominent,  
That you say you do not know him, will cause him no harm*



*and there is no question of prejudice,  
Supposing you do not know him yourself,  
but what of the Arabs and non-Arab communities who all know him?"*

Hisham, on hearing this candid poem, was filled with rage, and immediately ordered Farazdaq to be deprived of funds from the public treasury and to be imprisoned in Assfan (a place between Makkah and Madinah).

Farazdaq cared little about these orders. Due to his courage in expressing his convictions, he did not mind the loss of salary nor imprisonment. He did not stop criticizing and satirizing Hisham with his delightful poems, even when in prison.

Ali ibn al-Husayn ('a) sent a sum of money to him in prison, as his revenue had been cut off, but Farazdaq refused it and said, *"I recited that poem based on my faith and only for the sake of Allah, so I do not wish to receive any money in return."*

Ali ibn al-Husayn ('a) sent the money a second time to Farazdaq, along with the following message, *"Allah is aware of your intentions. May He reward you on the same terms as your intentions. If you accept this help, it will not detract your reward from Allah."*

Then he ('a) made a pact with Farazdaq to accept this help and Farazdaq accepted it.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Note**

1. Bihar, v. 11, p. 36.

### Story 37: Bizanti

Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Nasr Bizanti, who was counted among the scholars and the learned of his time, came to believe in the Imam (‘a), after exchanging numerous correspondences with him (‘a). One day he asked the Imam (‘a), *“I wish to come to your house and benefit from your presence. Would there be any problem with my coming and going from the point of view of government?”*

One evening, Imam Al-Ridha’ (‘a) sent him his personal messenger and invited him to come to his house. The evening passed, and they engaged in the discussion of scientific matters until midnight. Bizanti was repeatedly asking questions in matters in which he found difficulty and the Imam (‘a) provided the answers. Bizanti felt proud to have the opportunity of being with the Imam (‘a) for such a long time and was very happy.

The night passed and it was time to sleep. The Imam (‘a) called his servant and said, *“Bring my personal cot in which I sleep every night, and prepare it for Bizanti.”* This kindness and compassion appealed to Bizanti and his joy soared like an eagle. He thought that no one was more fortunate than him in the entire world.

The Imam (‘a) had sent his personal messenger to escort him, and had spent the whole night answering his questions. In addition to all this, the Imam (‘a) had allowed him to sleep in his bed. Thus, who could be more fortunate than him in the whole world? Bizanti was busy enjoying sweet delicacies, imagining the entire world was at his feet.

Suddenly Imam Al-Ridha’ (‘a), leaning on his hands, stood up and addressed him, which interrupted his train of thought, and said, *“O Ahmad. Whatever you experienced this evening is not a reason for you to show pride over others. Once Sa’sat ibn Suhan, a great companion of Ali ibn Abi Talib (‘a), became ill. Imam Ali (‘a) went to visit him and showed him much affection and kindness, stroking his hands gently on Sa’sah’s forehead; but when Imam Ali (‘a) was about to stand up and leave, the Imam (‘a) addressed him and said, “Do not take this act as a source of pride and consider yourself to be above others. Whatever I have done, it was my duty and responsibility. These things are of no meaning or value to you.”<sup>1</sup>*

#### Note

1. Bihar, v. 12, p. 14.

### Story 38: 'Aqil, A Guest Of Ali ('a)

In the days of the Caliphate of his brother, Ali ('a), Aqil arrived as a guest at his house in Kufah. Ali ('a) signaled to his eldest son, Hasan ibn Ali ('a), to present some garments to his uncle. Imam Hasan ('a) offered a robe and a cloak to his uncle from his own personal property. Night fell and the weather was warm. Ali ('a) and Aqil sat on the roof of the Government House and were busy talking until it was time for dinner.

Considering himself as a guest of the Caliph, Aqil naturally expected a lavish meal, but contrary to his expectations, it was a very simple and plain one.

He was surprised and said, *"Is this all the food you have?"*

Ali ('a) said, *"Is it not a blessing from Allah? I praise the Almighty Allah wholeheartedly for all these Divine gifts."*

Aqil said, *"I should tell you my needs quickly and be on my way. I am in debt. Issue an order to wipe out my debt immediately. Help your brother as much as you can so that I do not disturb you any longer and can return to my house."*

*"How much is your debt?"*

*"One hundred thousand Dirhams!"*

*"Oh, one hundred thousand! That is a huge amount! I am sorry, brother, I don't have enough money to pay off your debt, but wait until the time comes for the disbursement of stipends. I shall deduct my personal share and give it to you so that I will fulfil my duties as your brother. If my family did not have their own expenses, I would have given you my own personal share."*

*"What? I have to wait until the salaries are paid? The public treasury and the revenue of the state is at your disposal and you still ask me to wait until the time of disbursement, and then you will give me only from your personal share? You can withdraw any amount you want from the public treasury. So why are you making me wait until then? Besides, how much is your share from the public treasury? Supposing you give me your whole share, how far will it relieve me of my problem?"*

*"I am surprised at your proposal, whether there is money in the public treasury or not! That is none of my business, and we both are equal to any other fellow Muslim. It is true you are my brother and I must help you from my own personal money as much as possible, but not from the public treasury."*

The discussion continued and Aqil insisted obstinately that Ali ('a) should give him money from the public treasury so that he could look after his personal affairs. The place where they sat had a view of the market of Kufah, and the cash boxes of merchants were visible from there.

While Aqil was persistently pleading, Ali ('a) said, *"If you reject my proposal and insist upon your request, I have another proposition for you. If you accept it, you can pay off your debts and have plenty of money left."*

*"What should I do?"*

*"Down over there are the cash boxes. As soon as the market is closed and everyone has left, go down and break open the boxes and take as much as you wish."*

*"Whose boxes are they?"*

*“They belong to the merchants of this market. They keep their money in them.”*

*“How strange! Are you suggesting to me to break into peoples’ boxes and take the money of those poor people who have earned it with their hard labour, while they left it there and went home, trusting its safekeeping with Allah?”*

*“Then how could you suggest to me to open the box of the public treasury for you? To whom does it belong? This also belongs to the people who are asleep in their houses. Now I have another suggestion for you. If you like, you can accept this proposal.”*

*“What is that?”*

*“When you are ready, take your sword, and I will mine. In the vicinity of Kufah, there is the old city of Hirah where the great merchants and the wealthy live. We will go together there and in the dark of the night we will ambush one of them, and bring home with us enormous wealth.”*

*“Dear brother! I have not come here to steal, as you are suggesting. I say, order your official to pay me the money from the public treasury which is at your disposal so that I can wipe out my debts.”*

*“Is it not better to steal the property of one person than to steal from millions of Muslims? That is to say, to steal the property of all Muslims? You consider taking the property of one individual by force, using a sword, as theft. What about usurping the property of all innocent people? You think that theft is confined to attacking someone and taking their property by force? This baseless type of theft is the same as you are suggesting to me at present.”<sup>1</sup>*

### **Note**

1. Bihar ul-Anwar, v. 9, p. 613.

### Story 39: A Dreadful Dream

The dream he had, plunged him deep into fear. Every moment, terrifying interpretations appeared in his mind. Worried, he came to see Imam Al-Sadiq ('a) and said, *"Last night I had a dream. It seemed to be a wooden ghost, or perhaps a wooden man mounted on a wooden horse, holding a sword in his hand and waving it in the air. This terrible dream made me extremely frightened, and I would like you to interpret the meaning of my dream."*

The Imam ('a) said in reply, *"There is an honest person who possesses property, and you, by some means or another, want to extort it from him. Fear Allah who has created you and shall make you die! Fear Him and give up your evil decision!"*

*"You are truly a learned man and you are the one who has extracted knowledge from its source. I admit that I had such an intention in my mind. One of my neighbours owns a farm. He is in need of money and has decided to sell it. Presently he has no other buyer except me. Since a few days now, I have been planning to snatch this farm from him for a very cheap price, taking advantage of his need of money."*<sup>1</sup>

#### Note

1. Wasa'il, v. 2, p. 582.

### Story 40: At The Shelter Of Banu Sa'dah

It was a wet and humid night. Taking advantage of the dark and the deserted roads, Imam Al-Sadiq ('a) left his house, without informing his relatives, and proceeded towards the shelter of Banu Sa'dah. By chance, Mua'la ibn Khanis, one of his close companions who was in charge of the Imam's ('a) family affairs, saw the Imam ('a) leaving.

In order not to leave the Imam ('a) alone in the dark, he thought to follow him quietly. Staying a few steps distance behind him, he followed the Imam ('a) closely enough that he could see his figure in the dark.

He was following the Imam ('a) very cautiously, when he suddenly noticed that something dropped from the Imam's ('a) shoulder and scattered on the ground. He heard the Imam ('a) saying in a low voice, *"O Allah, return it to me."*

Meanwhile, Mua'la came forward and greeted him.

Imam Al-Sadiq ('a) recognized Mua'la by his voice and said, *"Is it you Mua'la?"*

*"Yes, it's me, Mua'la."*

After answering the Imam ('a), he was curious to find out what had scattered on the ground. He saw a few loaves of bread. The Imam ('a) asked him to gather the loaves of bread and give it to him. Mua'la slowly gathered the loaves of bread and handed them to the Imam ('a). It was a heavy sack of bread which an individual could barely carry over his shoulder.

Mua'la said, *"If you permit me, I will carry it for you."*

The Imam ('a) said, *"No, it is not necessary. For this work I am more obliged to carry it myself than you."*

The Imam ('a) put the sack on his shoulder, and both of them headed towards the shelter of Banu Sa'dah. In the shelter, there were people who were poor and frail. They were all homeless. While they were all fast asleep, the Imam ('a) laid the loaves of bread, one by one or two by two, under their garments and did not leave a single person without bread. Then he ('a) returned home.

Mua'la said, *"These people for whom you brought the bread, are they Shi'a? Do they believe in your leadership (Imamate)?"*

The Imam replied, *"No, they have no belief in the Imamate. If they had, I would have given them more credit."<sup>1</sup>*

#### Note

1. Bihar ul-Anwar v. 11, p. 110. Wasa'il, v. 2, p. 49.

### Story 41: Salutation Of Jews

A'ishah, the Holy Prophet's (S) wife, was with the Holy Prophet (S), when a Jew entered. Instead of saying 'As-Salamun Alaykum' (peace be unto you), he said, "*As-Sam Alaykum*" (death be unto you).

It wasn't long before another Jew arrived. He also greeted the Prophet (S) in the same way, "*As-Sam Alaykum*", instead of 'As-Salamun Alaykum'. It became clear that this was not an accident, rather it was intentional in order to verbally abuse the Holy Prophet (S).

A'ishah was enraged by these remarks and shouted out at them, "*Death be upon you all! and...*"

The Holy Prophet (S) said, "*O A'ishah, do not utter such abusive words. If these words were embodied into shapes, they would appear very ugly. When gentleness, moderation and patience are applied to anything, they beautify it. On the other hand, if anything is deprived of these attributes, its beauty would become obscured. Thus, why did you become furious and agitated?*"

A'ishah said, "*O Messenger of Allah, did you not see how insolently these people are saying such words instead of 'Salam'?*"

"*Yes, I did, but in reply I said, 'Alaykum' (upon you) and it seemed sufficient for them.*"<sup>1</sup>

#### Note

1. Wasa'il, v. 2, p. 212.

### Story 42: A Letter To Abu Dharr

Abu Dharr received a letter from a distant region. He opened it and read its contents. In this letter, someone had sought from Abu Dharr some general advice. He knew well how the Holy Prophet (S) favoured Abu Dharr, and had taught him knowledge and wisdom with his noble and wise words.

Abu Dharr replied with just a short sentence, *“The one you love the most, over anyone else, don’t do evil or show enmity to him.”* He sealed the letter and sent it back to him.

As the man read the reply, he could not understand the contents of the letter. He wondered what it meant and what Abu Dharr was trying to say by, *“The one you love the most, over anyone else, don’t do evil or show enmity to him?”* What could this mean?

It was obvious that one would never do evil to the one he loves the most or harm his beloved. He not only does evil, but sacrifices his soul and property as well.

On the other hand, he thought, ‘One should not neglect the words of the esteemed author of the letter, for it is Abu Dharr. He is at present the ‘Luqman’ of the Muslim community, and has wise judgement. I have no other alternative but to ask him to explain what he means in detail.’

So, he wrote back to Abu Dharr and asked him to enlighten him in this regard.

Abu Dharr wrote in reply, *“What I meant by the most beloved person to you is you, yourself. I did not mean any other person. You love yourself more than anyone else. So, I admonished you not to be an enemy to the one you love the most, meaning you should not be an enemy to yourself. Don’t you know when a man commits a sin, he directly injures himself?”*<sup>1</sup>

#### Note

1. Irshad, Daylami.



### Story 43: Unfixed Wages

One day, Sulayman ibn Ja'far al-Ja'fari and Imam Al-Ridha' ('a) left together for work. The sun was setting and Sulayman wanted to return home. Ali ibn Musa Al-Ridha' ('a) said to him, *"Come to my home and stay with us tonight."* He accepted the Imam's ('a) offer and went to his ('a) house.

The Imam ('a) saw his servant busy planting flowers in the garden. Meanwhile, the Imam's ('a) eyes were fixed upon a stranger among them who was also busy planting flowers.

The Imam ('a) inquired, *"Who is he?"*

The servants replied, *"We have hired him to help us today."*

The Imam ('a) said, *"Alright, how much are his wages?"*

*"We will give him something at the end of the day to satisfy him."*

Imam Al-Ridha's ('a) face appeared angry and he turned towards them in order to lash them with a whip. Sulayman ibn Ja'far came forward and said, *"Why do you upset yourself?"*

The Imam ('a) replied, *"I have warned them several times not to hire any labourer before setting his wages. First of all, determine the wages of the worker and then let him work. After the work is done, if you set the wage of his labour, you may also give him something extra. When he finds that you have given him something more, he will surely be grateful and will come to like you. In addition, the attachment between you will become stronger. Even if you just give him the wages that you have agreed upon, he will not be displeased with you. However, if the wages are not set and, after completion of the work, you pay him more than what you pay others, he will not think that you have done him a favour; rather he will think that you have not given him enough."*<sup>1</sup>

#### Note

1. Bihar ul-Anwar, v. 12, p. 31.

### Story 44: A Believer Or A Free Man

The sound of music and songs coming from the house was so loud that it could be heard on the street by passersby, leaving nothing to the imagination as to what was going on inside; perhaps all manner of lewd entertainment and goblets of wine being passed around.

A maid who had been sweeping the house came out to throw the garbage on the pile in the corner. At the same time, a man passed by the house, whose face bore witness of his prayers, who had been practicing his religious duties for many years. His forehead bore the mark of lengthy prostrations before Allah.

He asked the maid, *"Is the owner of this house a slave or a free man?"*

She replied, *"A free man."*

*"It is obvious that he is a free man. If he was a believer, he would have feared his Lord, the Almighty, and would have never held such a party."*

This exchange made the girl hesitate for a long while outside the house. When she returned inside, her master asked, *"What kept you so long outside?"*

She related the event and said, *"A passerby of such an appearance asked me these questions and I replied to him in this way."*

On hearing this event, he went into a deep thought for a while, particularly over the words, 'If he was a slave, he would have feared his Lord.' These words pierced like an arrow through his heart. He stood up suddenly. Without putting on his shoes, he started running barefoot after the man who spoke those words. He ran until he caught up with the man. He was none other than the seventh Imam, Musa ibn Ja'far ('a). He came forward, took the hand of the Imam ('a) and begged him for forgiveness, and by his grace he was forgiven.

In recognition of the glory of the day when he had repented bare-footed, from that day forward he never wore shoes again. His name was Bushr ibn Haress ibn Abdul Rahman Marwazi, but after this incident he earned the nickname 'al-Haffi' (the barefoot).<sup>1</sup>

#### Note

1. Al-Kuna wa al-Alqab, Muhaddith al-Qummi, v. 2. under the chapter al-Haffi, p. 153.

## Story 45: At Miqat

Once while on a Hajj pilgrimage to Makkah, Malik ibn Anas,<sup>1</sup> the famous Islamic jurisprudent of Madinah, was travelling with Imam Al-Sadiq (‘a). They arrived at the Miqat, where pilgrims must don the garments of pilgrimage and invoke the well-known supplication to Allah, ‘Labbaik Allahumma Labbaik’ (Here I am O Allah, at Thy service). As was their custom, the pilgrims proclaimed the supplication.

Malik ibn Annas noticed that the Imam (‘a) was in a peculiar state. As he was about to say the same supplication, he was touched by emotion, his voice choked, and he almost lost control of himself, as if he was about to fall to the ground.

Malik ibn Annas came near him and said, “*O descendant of the Holy Prophet (S), there is no choice, you must recite this supplication at any cost!*”

The Imam (‘a) said, “*O son of Abi Amar! How can I dare say ‘Labbaik’? It means: O my God, I assent in all situations to dispatch all of your duties and I am ready to accept the invitation and act accordingly. I am always ready to obey your orders. So, with what assurance could I act impudently towards my God and present myself as a servant, ready to obey Him? If I get a reply ‘La Labbaika’, what would I do then?’*”<sup>2</sup>

### Notes

1. Malik ibn Annas ibn Malik ibn Amar is one of the four well known Imams of Sunni Muslims. The renowned school of Maliki is named after him. He was Abu Hanifa’s contemporary. Shafi’i was Malik’s disciple, and Ahmad ibn Hanbal was Shafi’i’s disciple.

The school of jurisprudence of Malik was the counterpart to that of Abu Hanifa, for the latter often relied upon personal opinion and deduction, contrary to that of Malik, which was based more often on tradition and hadith.

In any case, according to Ibn Khalkan’s narration ‘Wafiyat ul-Ayan’ (v.3, p. 286), Malik, while on his death bed, was crying bitterly. He was afraid that he had passed judicial decrees based on his personal opinion in certain circumstances. He was crying, “I wish I had not given a decree according to my personal opinion. I am pleased to be lashed with whips for each of those individual opinions to be rid of the burden of these sins.”

Among Malik’s admirable qualities, was his belief in loyalty to Muhammad ibn Abdullah Mahaz, who was martyred for his refusal to pay allegiance to Banu Abbas, for the latter’s reign was mainly founded on violence. Malik did not decline to express his own opinion, nor did he fear the cruelty of the Banu Abbas dynasty. Thus, he was severely lashed with whips by the order of Ja’far ibn Sulayman Abbasi, the uncle of Saffah and Mansur, which actually increased people’s respect towards him, and enhanced his reputation and popularity among people. (Wafiat ul-Ayan, v. 3, p. 285).

Since Malik was in Madinah, he often went to see Imam Al-Sadiq (as) and was of those who narrated the prophetic traditions from the Imam (as). According to the narration of Bihar (v. 11, p. 109) from the books Kisal, Alal ul-Shara’ya, and Amali of Saduq. When Malik was in the presence of Imam Al-Sadiq (as), the Imam (as) expressed his gratitude towards him, sometimes telling him, “I like you” and Malik was very pleased with the Imam’s (as) sympathy towards him.

Malik, according to the book ‘Al-Imam al-Sadiq’ (p. 3), narrates these words, “For some time I used to visit Imam Al-Sadiq (as). I always noticed him praying, fasting or reciting the Holy Qur’an. No eyes witnessed, nor ears heard, nor hearts imagined a scholar more erudite than Ja’far ibn Muhammad in knowledge, piety and worship.”

Malik says of Imam Al-Sadiq (as) in Bihar, “He was counted among the great in piety, virtue, fear of Allah and knowledge of Prophetic traditions. He was sociable and hospitable, and his audience was always full of grace. Whenever he heard the name of the Holy Prophet (S), his face turned pale.”

2. Bihar ul-Anwar v. 11, p. 109.



### Story 46: The Burden Of The Palm Tree

As was his habit, Ali ibn Abi Talib (‘a) left his house and made his way towards the desert and gardens where he used to work. He (‘a) was carrying a bundle with him.

A man asked him, “*O Ali! what are you carrying?*”

Ali (‘a) said, “*God willing, a palm tree.*”

He said, “*A palm tree?*”

The man’s surprise vanished when he and the others saw the date stones which Ali (‘a) had carried to plant that day, in the hope of seeing them grow to become sturdy date palms, and to multiply and form a palm grove.<sup>1</sup>

#### Note

1. Wasa’il, v. 2, p. 531 and Bihar, v. 9, p. 599.

### Story 47: The Sweat Of Labour

Imam Al-Kazim ('a) was busy working and ploughing the land which was his personal property. His hard labour had made sweat trickle down all over his body.

Ali ibn Abi Hamza Batani was passing by and said, *"May I be your ransom, why don't you entrust this work to others?"*

*"Why should I entrust it to others? There have been persons better than me doing this kind of labour."*

*"Who, for example?"*

*"The Messenger of Allah (S), the Commander of the Faithful ('a), my father, as well as all my forefathers. Ploughing and cultivating the land is one of the acts of the Holy Prophet (S), his successors, and the worthy servants of Allah."*<sup>1</sup>

#### Note

1. Bihar ul-Anwar, v. 11, p. 266 and Wasa'il, v. 2, p. 531.

## Story 48: The End Of The Friendship

Perhaps no one thought that this friendship would ever end, and these two friends, who were always seen together, would part from one other. Each one of them was known to people by the name of his friend, rather than by his own name. Whenever people wanted to talk about either of them, instead of using their actual name, they called them 'the friend of so and so'.

He had been known by the name of his friend, Imam Al-Sadiq ('a). One day, as usual, he was with the Imam ('a). They entered together in the cobblers' market. No-one would have expected that their friendship would be permanently severed by the time they had left the market!

He accompanied the Imam ('a), as usual, as they entered the market that day. His black servant was also with him, walking behind him. In the middle of the market, he suddenly turned around, but could not find his servant. After taking a few more steps, he turned around again, but still could not see him. For the third time, he turned back and looked again, but there was no trace of his servant, who had been busy looking around and lagging behind. For the fourth time, he turned and finally caught sight of the servant. Becoming indignant, he said, *"You son of a ....! Where were you?"*

Just as these abusive words came out of his mouth, Imam Al-Sadiq ('a) in amazement raised his hand, and slapped his forehead firmly and said, *"Glory be to Allah, why did you insult his mother? Why did you accuse his mother of an immodest act? I thought you were a man of piety and were God-fearing. It has become apparent to me that you have no piety nor virtue."*

He said, *"O descendant of the Holy Prophet (S), this servant is originally from Sind, and so is his mother. You know better that they are not Muslims, so the servant's mother was not a Muslim either. If she were a Muslim, I would not have abused her."*

*"Let his mother be a non-Muslim. Every race and religion has its own laws and traditions in marriage. If they act according to their religious laws, then no fornication has been committed, and their children are not illegitimate."* After this statement, the Imam ('a) said, *"From now on, stay away from me!"*

After this incident, no one saw Imam Al-Sadiq ('a) walk with him until death overcame one of them and separated them from each other.<sup>1</sup>

### Note

1. Kafi. v. 2, p. 324 and Wasa'il, v. 2, p. 477.

### Story 49: An Insult

Abdullah Ibn Muqaffa', the renowned Iranian scholar and writer, was in the Governor of Basrah's residence, who at the time was Sufian Ibn Mu'awiyah. Meanwhile his servant was holding the reins of his master's horse, waiting for Ibn Muqaffa' to come out, mount his horse and return home. He waited a long time but Ibn Muqaffa' did not come out. Everyone else who had gone to see the governor had come and gone, but there was no sign of Ibn Muqaffa'.

The servant became worried and started to enquire about his master, looking for him here and there, and questioning whoever he saw. They either expressed their ignorance, after taking a look at him and his horse, or shrugged their shoulders and left him without uttering a word.

Time passed. The servant, anxious and disappointed, rushed over to Isa and Sulayman, the sons of Ali ibn Abdullah ibn Abbas, the uncle of the powerful Caliph of the time, Mansur Dawaniqui, and related to them what had happened, because Ibn Muqaffa' was their scribe and secretary.

Since Abdullah ibn Muqaffa' was a learned person, a competent writer and a skillful translator, Isa and Sulayman were close to him and protected him. Ibn Muqaffa' was, in turn, dependent on their support. He was, by nature, impudent and foul-mouthed. He carelessly made sarcastic remarks to others in his statements.

The support given to him by Isa and Sulayman, who were the uncles of the Caliph, the top rulers of the Caliphate, had encouraged him to be more brazen and insolent. Isa and Sulayman inquired about Ibn Muqaffa' from Sufian ibn Mu'awiyah. He absolutely denied any knowledge of his whereabouts and said, "*Ibn Muqaffa' has not come to my house.*"

Since he had been seen entering the governor's residence in broad daylight, and eye-witnesses testified to this, there was no way to deny it. It was not a minor matter, but a homicide, and of a famous learned personality such as Ibn Muqaffa' no less! The two opponents were the governor of Basrah on the one hand, and the two uncles of the Caliph in Baghdad on the other.

The case was taken to the court of the Caliph in Baghdad. Both opposing sides produced their eyewitnesses, and all other well-informed observers were called upon in the presence of Mansur. The case was litigated and the evidence was put forth. After the testimonies had been presented, Mansur said to his uncles, "*There is nothing preventing me from putting him (Sufian) to death immediately, just for being accused of Ibn Muqaffa's murder. However, if Ibn Muqaffa' was still alive, and entered safe and sound through this door (the Caliph pointed at the door behind him), which of you two should I execute to avenge Sufian?*"

Isa and Sulayman were mystified. They thought that perhaps Ibn Muqaffa' might still be alive and Sufian had sent him safe and sound to the Caliph. Thus, they were compelled to withdraw their litigation and return home. Time passed, and since no one had any news or had seen any trace of Ibn Muqaffa', little by little, his remembrance began to fade in their memories.

After some time, when everything had calmed down, it became known that Ibn Muqaffa' had often made sarcastic remarks about Sufian ibn Mu'awiyah, and had once abused his mother. Thus, Sufian had been looking for an



opportunity to take revenge. However, fearing Isa and Sulayman, the two uncles of the Caliph, he did not dare to take any action until the day that the following events occurred.

It had been agreed that a safe conduct report would be written for Abdullah ibn Ali, another uncle of Mansur, and Mansur would approve it. Abdullah ibn Ali requested Ibn Muqaffa', the scribe of his brothers, to draft the safe conduct report. Among the remarks written in the report were insulting and abusive comments about Mansur, the bloodthirsty Abbasid Caliph.

When Mansur received the draft, he became very annoyed, lost his temper and asked, "*Who has drafted this letter?*" He was told, "*Ibn Muqaffa'.*" Mansur experienced the same feelings against him that Sufian ibn Mu'awiyah, the governor of Basrah, had experienced earlier.

Then Mansur confidentially wrote a letter to Sufian, asking him to punish Ibn Muqaffa'. Sufian had been waiting for such an opportune moment, until the day when Ibn Muqaffa' went to Sufian's residence for a request, leaving his servant and horse outside. When he arrived, Sufian with a number of his servants and hangmen were sitting in a room where there was a furnace blazing.

As Sufian's eyes fell upon Ibn Muqaffa', he remembered all the derisive remarks that he had made up to then. His mind and soul boiled over in rage like the furnace in front of him. He turned towards him and said, "*Do you remember the day you abused my mother? Now it is time for revenge.*" His pleas for mercy were not accepted and in the same place, he caused Ibn Muqaffa' to pass away in the worst possible manner.<sup>1</sup>

### Note

1. The explanation of Ibn Abi al-Hadid on Nahj al-Balaghah. v. 4. p. 389.

### Story 50: The Sharp Tongue

In the middle of the third century of Hijrah, Ali ibn Abbas, better known as Ibn al-Rumi, the famous poet, satirist and eulogist of the Abbasid era, was sitting in a meeting organised by Qasim ibn Ubaydullah, the minister of al-Mu'atazid, the Abbasid Caliph. He was always proud of his prowess in logic and eloquence, as well as his incisive language.

Qasim ibn Ubaydullah always dreaded Ibn al-Rumi's sharp tongue, but he did not express his anger or displeasure. On the contrary, he behaved in such a manner that, despite all Ibn Al-Rumi's bad intentions, evil thoughts, precautions, and taking everything as a bad omen, Qasim did not refrain from consorting with him.

Qasim then secretly issued an order to put poison into Ibn al-Rumi's food. After eating it, he realised what had happened and stood up quickly and took leave from Qasim.

Qasim asked, *"Where are you going?"*

*"I am going to where you have sent me."*

*"Then, convey my regards to my parents."*

*"But, I am not going to hell."*

Ibn al-Rumi went back to his house and began treating himself, but the treatment was to no avail. He finally succumbed to his own caustic words.<sup>1</sup>

#### Note

1. Tatimmat Al-Muntaha Fi Waqayi' Ayyam Al-Khulafa, Muhaddith al-Qummi, v. 2, p. 400 and The History of Ibn Khalkan, v. 3, p. 44.

## Story 51: Two Partners

Purity, sincerity and honest collaboration between Hisham ibn al-Hakam and Abdullah ibn Yazid Abazi had earned everyone's admiration in Kufah. They became a good example of two good partners and two honest intimate colleagues. They owned a trade shop together, storing and selling articles of a haberdashery. As long as they lived, they never quarreled, nor did they have any differences between them. What made the matter more noteworthy among people was the fact that these two personalities, from the point of view of religious belief, were situated in two quite opposite poles.

Hisham was among the famous Shi'ite scholars and orators, as well as a close companion of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) and he believed in the Imamate (Leadership) of the Holy Prophet's (S) household.

As for Abdullah ibn Yazid, he was an Abazide<sup>1</sup> scholar. As far as their beliefs were concerned, these two men were quite opposite to each other, but they were able to prevent religious prejudice from interfering in other aspects of their lives. They did their utmost to bring dignity to their collaboration, and they were able to carry out their commercial and business dealings with success.

The most surprising fact which frequently occurred was that the Shi'as, Hisham's students, came to his shop in order to receive answers to their questions on the principles of Shi'ism, and Abdullah did not seem embarrassed when hearing remarks opposing his own religious doctrine.

And so, it was for the Abazides, who came to receive their own religious teachings, quite often the opposite, to the Shi'a school of thought, in front of Hisham and he was not annoyed with Abdullah at all.

Once Abdullah asked Hisham, *"You know me very well. We are intimate friends and partners. I would like you to take me as your son-in-law and give your daughter Fatimah to me in marriage."*

Hisham said only one sentence in reply to Abdullah, *"Fatimah is a believer."*

On hearing this reply, Abdullah did not utter a word, nor did he make this request again. Even this event did not break their friendship. Their collaboration in business continued its course. Only death succeeded in ending their friendship and distancing one from the other.<sup>2</sup>

### Notes

1. The 'Abazides' form one of the six branches of Seceders (Khawarij). As we know the Seceders appeared for the first time in the battle of Siffin. In the beginning, they were Imam Ali's (as) companions and then rose in rebellion and revolted against the Imam (as). On one hand, this group practiced religion in keeping with Islamic law, while on the other hand, they were ignorant and fanatical. They were considered to be the most dangerous Muslim community and they always rebelled against the government of the time.

The Seceders (Khawarij) formed an alliance against both Imam Ali (as) and Usman. They considered other Muslims who did not agree with their beliefs to be infidels and polytheists. According to them, marriages made outside their own community with any other Muslims were considered unlawful and they did not bequeath to them. They essentially believed that it was lawful to shed their blood and usurp their property. However, the Abazide sect was more moderate than the other Seceder sects; recognizing marriage to other Muslims, accepting their testimony, and respecting their life and property. The Leader of the Abazides was a man called Abdullah ibn Abaz, who rose in rebellion at the end of Ummayyad dynasty.

Reference 'Al-Milal wa al-Nihal' v. 1, p. 172-212.

2. Muruj al-Zahab, Masudi, v. 2, p. 174.

## Story 52: Prohibition Of The Drunkard

By order of the Caliph Mansur, the safe of the public treasury was unlocked, and everyone was paid a share of it. Shaqrani was among those who had come to take his share. Since no one knew him, he could not find any means to receive a share for himself. Owing to the fact that one of his forefathers was a slave freed by the Holy Prophet (S), Shaqrani had naturally inherited his emancipation from them and was nicknamed ‘the emancipated slave of the Messenger of Allah.’

This had brought about an honour for him and an affiliation with the Holy Prophet (S). From this point of view, Shaqrani credited himself to be a member of the Holy Prophet’s (S) household. Anxiously looking for an acquaintance or a means to obtain his share of the public treasury, Shaqrani saw Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a). He approached him and presented his problem.

It was not long before the Imam (‘a) brought a share for him and handed it to Shaqrani. He (‘a) said in a very kind tone, *“A good action is good, no matter who may do it; but, for you, it will be much better and more graceful, due to your relationship with us, as you are known to be a member of the Prophet’s (S) family. Likewise, a bad action is bad, no matter who may do it; but it will be uglier and more detestable from you, for the same reason.”*

Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) said these words and then left him. By hearing this statement, Shaqrani understood that the Imam (‘a) was aware that he secretly drank wine. Although the Imam (‘a) knew that he was a drunkard, he did him a favour by drawing his attention to his vice in a gentle manner, and made him feel ashamed privately, laying blame on himself.<sup>1</sup>

### Note

1. Al-Anwar al-Bahiyah, Muhaddith al-Qummi, p. 76.

### Story 53: The Garment Of The Caliph

Once Umar ibn Abdul Aziz was on the pulpit (minbar) delivering a speech during his era of the Caliphate. While he was delivering the speech, the people sitting at the foot of the pulpit observed him, from time to time, clutching his garment and shaking it. These movements of his hand surprised his audience. They wondered why the Caliph was doing this during his speech.

The assembly came to an end, and after enquiring into the details, it turned out that the Caliph owned only one garment, in order to save the money of the Muslim public treasury and compensate for the excesses of his predecessors who had squandered the public treasury. Since he had just washed the garment and did not have another, he was obliged to wear it, and he shook it in order for it to dry more quickly.<sup>1</sup>

#### Note

1. Preface of the translated text of the book “Niya’ish” by Alexis Carrell.

### Story 54: The Young Man Full Of Certainty

The Holy Prophet (S) was performing his morning prayer in the Mosque with the public. The day became bright and it became easy to recognize the faces of the people present. Suddenly, the Holy Prophet's (S) eyes were fixed on a young man who seemed distressed. His head was swinging to and from over his shoulders, and he was continually moving from one side to the other. The Prophet (S) glanced at his face, and saw it turning pale. His eyes were sunk into its sockets, and his limbs had become thin.

The Prophet (S) asked, *"In what condition are you?"*

*"I am in the condition of certainty, O Messenger of Allah!"*

*"Every certainty has signs which prove their authenticity. What are the signs of your certainty?"*

*"Mine is nothing but the sign which has made me double over with pain, and has taken away the sleep from my eyes, and completes the days with thirst. I have turned my back from all aspects of this worldly life and have headed towards the hereafter, as if I see the Divine Throne on the Day of Judgment, and I view the people in Heaven in a blessed state, as well as the people in Hell in severe chastisement. It is as if the sound of the flames of Hell is ringing in my ears at this very moment."*

The Holy Prophet (S) turned his face towards the others and said, *"He is a servant of God whose heart has been illuminated by the light of belief."*

Then he (S) turned towards the young man and said, *"Preserve this good state for yourself."*

The young man asked, *"O Messenger of Allah, pray to Allah that He may grant me martyrdom in the Holy War."*

So, the Holy Prophet (S) prayed for him. It was not long before a Holy War took place and the young man participated in it. The tenth person martyred in that war was none other than that young man.<sup>1</sup>

#### Note

1. Al-Kafi, v. 2, p. 53 (Chapter: Haqiqat ul-Iman wa al-Yaqin).

### Story 55: The Migrants In Abyssinia

Year by year, month by month, the number of Muslims gradually grew in Makkah. The pressures and the hardships imposed on them by the Makkans did not make the converts to Islam forgo their consciences, and the Makkans were unable to stem the tide of people, both men and women, coming to Islam.

The ever-increasing advances, as well as the absence of despair, and the care and attention Muslims paid towards Islam, meant that they would never renounce their religion. This increased the anger of Quraysh, and it concerned them to such an extent that they intensified their torture and persecution of Muslims.

The Muslims were in a precarious position, but remained patient. To temporarily alleviate the oppression from Quraysh, the Holy Prophet (S) proposed to the Muslims to leave Makkah and migrate to Abyssinia. He (S) said, *“Since the present ruler of Abyssinia is a righteous and just man, you can live in his territory for some time, until the Almighty Allah provides you with relief.”*

A great number of Muslims migrated to Abyssinia. They lived there in peace, comfort, and perfect liberty, performing their religious duties, which they were unable to do freely in Makkah at all.

As soon as Quraysh came to know of the Muslims departure to Abyssinia and their peaceful lives there, they feared that Abyssinia might become a new center for Muslims. They discussed the matter amongst themselves and devised a plan to bring the Muslims back to Makkah and subjugate them as before. They selected among themselves two persons well-known for their cunning and deceit and sent them bearing a multitude of gifts for Negus, the King of Abyssinia. They had also brought many other gifts for Negus’ relatives, the nobility of Abyssinia, and for anyone who had influence upon the King.

After their arrival in Abyssinia, they had both been instructed to meet the leaders and Negus’ relatives in advance and offer them gifts, and say the following words, *“A group of our ignorant and naive young men have recently derided our religion as well as yours. At present they are in your country. Our elders and chiefs have sent us to you so that we could earnestly request you to expel them from your country and return them to us. When the matter is brought before Negus, we ask of you to support our case.”*

The Quraysh deputies met the nobility, and presented each one with a gift and took a pledge to support their case before the King. They also went before Negus, presented him their valuable gifts, and put forward their request.

In accordance with their earlier agreement, all the members of the court and the audience who were seated around the Royal throne, were in favour of the envoys of Quraysh, and suggested to the King to issue a decree to promptly expel the Muslims and to return them to the envoys.

Negus did not accept this point of view, and said, *“These people have taken refuge in my country from their own land for a reason. It cannot be just to judge by default and to issue a decree to expel them without proper investigation or consideration of their case. It is essential that I summon them and listen to their statements, and after that, I will decide what to do.”*



When Negus uttered these words, the Quraysh envoys' faces turned pale and their hearts began to throb. They feared that Negus would meet the Muslims face to face. They preferred that Muslims to stay in Abyssinia, rather than meet Negus.

Whatever this new religion offers, is it not its words and eloquence? Whoever becomes attracted to it, is it not a series of words which Muhammad (S) says have been revealed from Allah? Is there not a captivating attraction to these words? Who knows what could happen if the Muslims come and repeat these words by heart in this assembly, and make the same impression on them that they did on the people of Makkah? What to do? It is too late? Negus has already given orders to bring the group before him, who had taken refuge in Abyssinia.

The Muslims were quite aware of the Quraysh envoys' arrival in Abyssinia, their offer of gifts, their meeting with the dignitaries and members of Negus' court, and the purpose of their arrival. They were undoubtedly quite afraid that the envoys' plan might work, and that they would be compelled to return to Makkah.

As they received Negus' summons to his palace, they realised the imminent danger of the situation. They gathered together and agreed on what to say in the assembly. Unanimously, they were of the opinion not to say anything but the truth; to first explain their lives during the Age of Ignorance (Jahiliyah), and then explain the reality and rules of Islam, as well as the spirit of Islamic teachings; nothing should be hidden and nothing should be said that was contrary to the truth. They arrived at the assembly with this decision and intention.

On the other hand, since it was a matter of discussion about a new religion, Negus ordered a number of his officials and clergymen, who were Christians, to attend the assembly. A number of bishops participated in this event, each one having a Holy book before him. The authorities, ministers and clergymen, sat at their designated places. The Royal protocol, coupled with the religious personalities, gave the assembly a majestic and unique distinction.

As for Negus, he sat in the seat of honour, and the other dignitaries each took their seats in accordance with their rank. The audience could not help but be in awe of the grandeur of the function.

Negus personally took over the responsibility of their interrogation. He asked, *"What is this new religion of yours which does not resemble your previous religion, nor that of ours?"*

The Muslims entrusted Ja'far ibn Abi Talib, the elder brother of the Commander of the Faithful, Ali ('a), to be their spokesman. As was agreed, he would answer questions and provide explanations.

Ja'far replied, *"We were ignorant people, worshipping idols. We did not shun eating dead bodies. We committed adultery. We cut off relations with our kindred. We did evil acts against our neighbours. The strongest amongst us oppressed the weakest. We had spent a long time in this manner until Allah raised a Prophet among us.*

*We know his ancestry and his pure past. He invited us to monotheism and the worship of One God, prohibiting us from worshipping idols, stone and wood. He also ordered us to return things entrusted to us by others. To always*

*tell the truth; to strengthen kinship, and to have respect for our neighbours and others. He prohibited us from committing fornication, giving false witness, usurpation of orphans' property and imputing evil deeds to chaste women.*

*He ordered us not to associate anything with Allah nor to abandon prayer, alms-giving, and fasting. We have believed and attested to this, and we have obeyed the commandments that I have mentioned.*

*However, our people have behaved cruelly with us; ordered us to reject these commandments and return to the same ways in which we were before. They also ordered us to revert to idolatry and to those vices in which we indulged. Since we disobeyed them, they tortured us and subjected us to persecution. This was the reason that we took refuge in your country. We hope that we will be safe here."*

As the words of Ja'far reached them, Negus asked him, *"Do you know any of the words by heart which your Prophet said were revealed to him, coming from the other world?"*

Ja'far said, *"Yes."*

Negus said, *"Recite some!"*

Keeping in mind that the members of the assembly, as well as the King, were Christians, and the fact that the bishops had the Holy Bible before them and the whole assembly resonated with the Christian sentiments, Ja'far began reciting firmly and calmly the Chapter of Maryam, relating the story Maryam, Isa, Yahya and Zakaria. The verses with their short phrases and their endings that rhymed generated a particular harmony.

By reciting these verses, Ja'far wanted to convey the moderate and just logic of the Holy Qur'an regarding Isa and Maryam and make them understand that the Qur'an, while sanctifying Isa and Maryam, distances them from the Sanctuary of Divinity.

The assembly was in an extraordinary state. Tears rolled down their cheeks. Negus said, *"By God, the verity of what Isa said is the same. These words have emanated from one and the same source."*

Then he turned to the Quraysh envoys and said, *"Leave, and mind your own business!"*

Then he returned their gifts to them. Afterwards, Negus officially became a Muslim and passed away in the ninth year of Hijrah. The Holy Prophet (S) performed his funeral prayers from a far distance.<sup>1</sup>

### Note

1. Sirat ibn Hisham, v. 1, p. 321.

### Story 56: The Worker And The Sun

Imam Al-Sadiq (‘a), dressed in a coarse working garment with a spade in his hand, was busy labouring in his orchard. He had been working so hard that sweat covered his entire body, from head to foot.

Abu Amr Shaybani passed by and saw the Imam (‘a) in a state of fatigue and pain. He thought, *“If he has taken a spade and is doing hard labour alone, perhaps he may not have found anyone else to do it, and has been obliged to do the work himself.”*

He asked the Imam (‘a), *“Give me the spade so that I can do the work for you.”*

The Imam (‘a) replied, *“No, I truly appreciate the person who endeavors to toil and suffer in the sun to gain his own sustenance.”*<sup>1</sup>

#### Note

1. Bihar ul-Anwar, v. 11, p. 120.

### Story 57: The New Neighbour

A man from the Ansars (Helpers of the Prophet Muhammad) bought a new house in a neighbourhood of Madinah and moved into it. He discovered that he had a problematic neighbour.

He came to the Holy Prophet (S) and said, *“I have purchased a house in such and such a quarter, among such and such a tribe, and moved into it. Unfortunately, my nearest neighbour is a useless person. Not only that, he is also ill-mannered towards me. I am not safe around him; and I am not sure what danger he may bring to us.”*

The Holy Prophet (S) entrusted four persons, namely Ali (‘a), Salman, Abu Dharr, and another named Miqdad. He (S) conveyed loudly the following message to the men and women in the Mosque, *“The one whose neighbours fear his persecution has no faith.”* This announcement was repeated three times.

Then the Holy Prophet (S) pointed in four directions with his hand and said, *“From each side of your house you are surrounded by up to forty houses. One should count them as neighbours.”*<sup>1</sup>

#### Note

1. Al-Kafi , v. 2, p. 666. (Chapter: Haqq al-Javar).

## Story 58: The Last Words

As soon as Umm Hamideh, the mother of Imam Kazim (‘a), saw Abu Basir, who had come to express his condolences to her on the demise of her eminent husband, Imam Al-Sadiq (‘a), her tears began trickling down her face. Abu Basir also wept for some time. When she stopped weeping, she said to Abu Basir, *“You were not present at the time of the Imam’s (‘a) death. A strange event occurred.”*

Abu Basir asked, *“What was it?”*

She replied, “It was during the last moments of the Imam’s (‘a) life, as he was taking his last breaths, his eyes were closed. Then suddenly, the Imam (‘a) opened his eyes and said, “Call all of my family members to come near me now! It was surprising that the Imam (‘a) had issued such an order at this crucial time, and we tried our utmost to gather all of them together.

No one remained of the Imam’s (‘a) family members and relatives, but all were present. All of us were waiting to see what the Imam (‘a) would say or do in this critical moment. When the Imam (‘a) saw them present and ready, he addressed the assembly and said, ‘Our intercession will not avail those who take prayer lightly.’ “<sup>1</sup>

### Note

1. Bihar ul-Anwar, v. 11 , p. 105.

### Story 59: Nasibah

Nasibah or Nusaybah, also called Umm Ammarah, after her son Ammarah, or daughter of Ka'b, had a scar on her shoulder which was still visible and was a reminder of a serious wound and a reflection of her past. For the younger girls and women, who had not lived in the era of the Messenger of God (S), whenever they happened to see the scar on her shoulder, they asked her with extreme curiosity about the tragic incident which had resulted in her wound. They longed to hear about the exciting adventure of Nasibah in the battle of Uhud from her own lips.

Nasibah never thought that she would fight, shoulder to shoulder in the battle of Uhud with her husband and two sons, defending the Holy Prophet (S). She had a water bag on her shoulder to provide water for the wounded. She also had bandages made of cloth to dress the wounds of the injured. She was not expecting to do anything else that day.

At the outbreak of the battle, the Muslims had imposed a major defeat on the enemy, though they were few in number, ineffective and lacked sufficient ammunition. The enemy took flight and deserted the battlefield.

However, it did not last, due to the negligence of some of the sentries' detachment at the Aynayin Hills. The enemy launched a surprise attack from the rear, the tables were turned, and a great number of Muslims were dispersed far from the Holy Prophet (S).

When Nasibah was confronted with this situation, she put the water bag down and picked up a sword and began fighting. At times she used a sword and at times a bow and arrow. She picked up a shield left by a man who had fled and made use of it. Suddenly she became aware of an enemy soldier shouting, *"Where is Muhammad? Where is Muhammad? Show him to me!"*

She advanced towards him rapidly and inflicted a few blows on him. Since he was doubly armoured, the sword thrusts had little effect on him. However, when he struck back, the enemy soldier inflicted such a heavy blow on Nasibah's unprotected shoulder that it required treatment for a year. Seeing the blood gushing from her shoulder, the Holy Prophet (S) called one of her sons and said, *"Dress your mother's wound immediately!"* He dressed the wound and she began fighting again.

At that moment, she saw that one of her sons had been injured. She dressed his wounds with the cloth bandages which she had brought with her. The Holy Prophet (S) enjoyed seeing this woman's courage, and he smiled. After dressing her son's wounds, she said, *"My son! Move quickly and prepare to fight!"* No sooner did the words pass her lips, then the Holy Prophet (S) pointed out a man to Nasibah and said, *"This is the one who injured your son."*

Nasibah assaulted him like a lioness and struck her sword on his leg. He fell to the ground. The Holy Prophet (S) said, *"Well done! You have taken your revenge. Thank Allah Who granted you victory and appeased your desire!"*

A number of Muslims were martyred; others were wounded. Nasibah herself sustained many injuries, and was at death's door. After the battle of Uhud, to ensure safety from the enemy, the Holy Prophet (S) ordered the army to immediately march towards Hamra ul-Assad. Despite being in a critical

state, Nasibah wanted to accompany them, but the severity of her wounds prevented her from doing so.

On their return from Hamra ul-Assad, the Holy Prophet (S), before entering his house, sent someone to inquire about Nasibah 's health. Being informed of her well-being, the Holy Prophet (S) was pleased.<sup>1</sup>

**Note**

1. Ibn Abi al-Hadid, v. 3, p. 568.

### Story 60: Request Of The Messiah

Isa ('a) said to his apostles, *"I have a request for you. If you promise to do it, I will tell you what it is."*

The apostles said in reply, *"We submit to you and we will obey your orders!"*

Isa ('a) stood up and began to wash the feet of each one of his apostles. The apostles felt deeply troubled by this, since they had pledged to submit to him, but they yielded to his wishes.

After Isa ('a) finished washing their feet, the apostles said, *"You are our master. It is our duty to wash your feet, not for you to wash ours!"*

Isa ('a) said, *"I did it so that you would know that the one who deserves to serve people is the one who is the most learned and dignified amongst you. I did it to show you my humility and to teach you the lesson of modesty, so that you would perform your duties in a humble manner and serve people when you will be in charge of people's instruction and guidance after me. Wisdom grows in the bosom of humility, not of haughtiness, just as plants grow in soft earth rather than hard earth."*<sup>1</sup>

#### Note

1. Al-Wasa'il, v. 2, p. 457.



## Story 61: Gathering Firewood In The Desert

During one of their journeys, the Holy Prophet (S) accompanied by his companions arrived at a barren and arid area. They were in need of firewood.

The Prophet (S) said, *"Gather some firewood."*

The Companions replied, *"O Messenger of Allah (S)! Look how barren this area is! One cannot find a single piece of wood here."*

He (S) said, *"Whatever there is, everyone must gather as much wood as possible."*

The Companions departed towards the desert. They were looking around attentively to find any twigs. If they found a small piece, they would pick it up. Everyone gathered as much wood as they could find and brought it with them. When all of them piled up what they had gathered, it became a great quantity of firewood.

Then the Holy Prophet (S) said, *"Minor sins are just like these small pieces of wood. At first sight, they seem to be nothing, but everything has a searcher and a follower in the same way that you have searched and searched until you gathered and piled up a large quantity of wood. Your sins are also gathered and recorded until the day that you will realize that these minor sins, which were nothing in your sight, became a giant stack."*<sup>1</sup>

### Note

1. Al-Wasa'il. v. 2. p. 462.

### Story 62: Liquor At The Dinner Table

Once Mansur Dawaniqi summoned Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a), under different pretexts, from Madinah to Iraq in order to keep a closer eye on him ('a). He prevented the Imam from returning to Hijaz for quite a long period of time.

On one of these occasions, when the Imam ('a) was in Iraq, one of the army commanders of Mansur had his son circumcised. He invited a great number of people for the occasion and hosted an elaborate banquet.

All the nobles and prominent members of society were present. Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) was also invited to the banquet. The dinner table was laid. The guests sat down at the table and began eating.

Meanwhile one of the guests asked for water. Instead of water, a glass of liquor was handed to him. Immediately, the Imam ('a) rose from his place while eating and left the banquet. They tried to bring the Imam ('a) back, but he ('a) refused to return.

He cited that the Holy Prophet (S) had said, *"Whoever sits at a table where liquor is served, the curse of Allah shall descend upon him."*<sup>1</sup>

#### Note

1. Bihar ul-Anwar, v. 21, p. 115.

### Story 63: Listening To The Qur'an

Ibn Masud was one of the transcribers of the Divine Revelation. He was among those who inscribed with painstaking care all that was revealed of the Holy Qur'an, registering everything he heard, while omitting nothing.

One day, the Holy Prophet (S) told him, *"Recite some verses of the Holy Qur'an so that I can listen to it."*

Ibn Masud opened his own compilation of the Holy Qur'an, and came across the chapter of 'The Women'. He began to recite it. The Holy Prophet (S) was listening to his recitation attentively until he reached verse 41: *"How would it be, then, when we were to bring from every nation a witness and bring you, O Muhammad, as a witness against these people?"*

Just as Ibn Masud recited this verse, the Prophet's (S) eyes were filled with tears and he (S) said, *"That is enough for the time being."*<sup>1</sup>

#### Note

1. Kuhl Al-Basar Fi Sirat Sayyid Al-Bashar, Muhaddith al-Qummi, p. 79.

### Story 64: The Man Renowned By The Public

For some time, a man's name was frequently mentioned among the common people. He had become renowned for his sanctity, piety and religiosity. Everywhere in public they were talking about his greatness and generosity. In the presence of Imam Al-Sadiq ('a) the name of that man was frequently mentioned, as was his affection towards ordinary folk, and their devotion to him. Imam Al-Sadiq ('a) thought to evaluate his personality from afar to see why he has so affected the masses.

Unbeknownst to the man, one day the Imam ('a) went looking for him and saw his friends, who were all of the lower classes, gathered around him. Without showing himself, the Imam ('a) witnessed the scene. The first thing that caught the Imam's ('a) attention was his demagogic manner and expression.

The man then parted from the people and made his way in another direction. The Imam ('a) began to follow him secretly in order to see where he was going, what he was doing, and what actions he carried out that made him so interesting and favoured by others?

It was not long before the man stopped at a bakery. To the Imam's ('a) astonishment, the man took advantage of the baker's inattention and snatched two loaves of bread, hiding them under his garment, and then set out on his way. The Imam ('a) initially thought he might have purchased the bread and had already paid for it or would pay for it later on; but he ('a) thought if such was the case, why did he take the bread and then leave when he saw the poor baker avert his eyes from him?

Still the Imam ('a) kept following him, reflecting upon the incident of bakery. Again, the man stopped in front of a fruit seller and lingered for a while. As soon as he saw the fruit seller avert his eyes, he took two pomegranates, hid them under his garment and left.

The Imam's ('a) surprise reached its peak when he noticed that the man went to an ill person and gave him the bread and the pomegranate and then parted.

At this time, the Imam ('a) walked a little faster and caught up with him and asked, *"Today I have witnessed a strange incident involving you."* Imam Al-Sadiq ('a) recounted the incident and asked him to explain.

He set his eyes upon the Imam's ('a) face and said, *"I guess you are Ja'far ibn Muhammad."*

*"You are absolutely right. Yes, I am."*

*"You are certainly a descendant of the Holy Prophet (S). You have nobility in your kinship. But it is a pity that you are so ignorant."*

*"What ignorance have you seen on my part?"*

*"The question you have just asked me indicates the highest level of ignorance. It seems you cannot comprehend a simple calculation in religion. You do not know that God says in the Holy Qur'an:*

*مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ عَشْرُ أَثْمَالِهَا وَمَنْ جَاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا يُجْزَى إِلَّا مِثْلَهَا وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ*

*"Whoever brings a good (deed), he shall have ten times its like, and whoever brings vice, he shall not be recompensed but with its like, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly." (Surah Al-An'am, 6:160).*

*“According to this calculation, the two loaves of bread which I have stolen are counted as two sins, and two pomegranates that I have stolen make two other sins. Together that makes four sins. On the other hand, by giving the two loaves of bread and the two pomegranates in the way of Allah, I have for each of them received the equivalent of ten good deeds, which makes a total of forty good deeds. Hence, a very simple calculation makes the result of this question quite clear. If four is deducted from forty that leaves thirty-six good deeds written to my credit. That is what you are incapable of comprehending; this simple calculation!”*

The Imam (‘a) replied, “May Allah grant you death. You ignorant person. You are calculating a delusion. Did not you hear the Qur’anic verse that says:

وَأْتَلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ ابْنَيْ آدَمَ بِالْحَقِّ إِذْ قَرَّبَا قُرْبَانًا فَتُقْبِلُ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمَا وَلَمْ يُتَقَبَّلْ مِنَ الْآخَرِ قَالَ لَأَقْتُلَنَّكَ قَالَ إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ  
اللَّهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ

***“(O’ Prophet!) Recite to them the truth of the story of the two sons of Adam when they offered each a sacrifice, hut it was accepted from one of them and was not accepted from the other, (The one) said: ‘I shall certainly slay you,’ (The other) said: ‘verily Allah accepts only from the pious ones.’” (Surah al-Maidah, 5:27).***

Suffice it to say that this simple statement would illustrate your error. By your own confession, you have committed four sins. By giving the property of others as charity, not only you have not done a good deed, but you have also committed a sin for each of them. Therefore, four other sins are added to your first four sins, make a total of eight sins, and not even a single good deed for you.”

The man’s eyes were fixed with surprise on the Imam’s (‘a) face. Once the Imam (‘a) had given him this explanation, he left.

When Imam Al-Sadiq (‘a) narrated this event to his companions, he said, “Such ignorant interpretations and detestable justifications in religious affairs lead certain people astray and lead to others being misled too.”<sup>1</sup>

### Note

1. Al-Wasa’il, v. 2, p. 57.

### Story 65: The Words Which Made Abu Talib Strong

Not concerning himself with the consequences, the Holy Prophet (S) resisted against Quraysh and continued on his path with a clear mind towards his purpose and with firm endurance. He continued humiliating and offending their idols, considering the idolators to be feeble-minded, and he accused their ancestors of aberration and misconduct. The heads of the Quraysh could not tolerate these provocations and raised the case with his uncle Abu Talib, asking him either to personally keep his nephew under control or to let Quraysh confront him directly.

Abu Talib tried to calm down Quraysh in a conciliatory manner, but the situation gradually worsened and became intolerable for them. Muhammad (S) was the common talk of every household. Whenever two people met, they started discussing him restlessly, mentioning his words and conduct pertaining to the joining of followers to his religion, either individually or in groups. Thus, it did not bode well for them to wait. They all agreed on trying to stem this looming disaster at any cost. They decided to talk to Abu Talib once again about this matter, but this time, more serious and determined.

The Chiefs and leaders of Quraysh came to Abu Talib and said, *“We asked you to put a stop to your nephew, but you did not pay us any heed. Because of your seniority and the high esteem we have for you, we did not disturb him before raising the case with you. However, we cannot tolerate any longer that he abuses our gods, mocks us, and considers our ancestors astray and ignorant. Therefore, we are here to give an ultimatum. If you do not stop your nephew, we will not respect you, nor take your seniority into consideration any longer, and we will fight against you as well as your nephew until one of the groups is wiped out.”*

*This alarming ultimatum made Abu Talib very concerned. He had never seen before such brusque words from Quraysh. It showed that Abu Talib could not endure resisting or fighting Quraysh. If the situation was to become dangerous, he and his nephew along with his family would be destroyed. He therefore sent somebody to the Messenger of Allah (S), conveyed their message to him and said, “Now that the situation has reached this point, keep quiet, for we both are in danger.”*

The Holy Prophet (S) saw that the ultimatum had left a strong impression on Abu Talib. In reply, the Prophet (S) uttered a sentence which made Abu Talib forget all the words of Quraysh forever. He (S) said, *“Dear Uncle, I am pleased to say that, even if they place the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left hand so that I might desist from propagating my faith and pursuing my goal, I would never give up until Allah’s religion is revealed or lay down my life for its sake.”*

His eyes filled with tears, the Holy Prophet (S) made this statement and stood up to leave.

He (S) had not taken but a few steps before his uncle called him (S) to return and said, *“By Allah! I will not withdraw my support for you until my last breath!”*<sup>1</sup>

#### Note

1. Sirah Ibn Hisham, v. 1. p. 265.



### Story 66: A Middle-Aged Student

Sakaki was an ironsmith and craftsman. He had fashioned an elegant inkstand with such a delicate lock that it was only worthy of Kings. He anticipated ample appreciation and encouragement for his work. Thus, he offered the inkstand to the King with high hopes and desires. In the beginning, as was expected, the King was impressed with it; but later on, an event occurred which completely changed Sakaki's mind, as well as his way of life.

While the king was busy looking at his handicraft, and Sakaki was immersed in the realm of fancy, an erudite man's arrival (a literary person or a jurisprudent) was reported. As soon as he arrived, the King was so occupied with his entertainment and hospitality that he completely forgot about Sakaki. Witnessing this scene, it provoked a profound mixture of feelings in Sakaki's soul. He realized that his work was not appreciated and encouraged as it should have been. However, Sakaki's ambitious spirit was not one which could easily calm down. Then what could he do?

He thought to do the same as others before him had done, to follow the same path others had taken, to pursue books and learning and rediscover his lost dreams. Although it was not an easy job for an older man, whose youth had passed him by, to become schoolmates with younger students and to start from the basics, there was no alternative before him. After all, whenever a fish is taken out of water, it is still fresh.

Furthermore, what added to his difficulties was that he found no interest in studies in the beginning. Perhaps the reason for his stagnation in education and literature was that he had spent many years of his life working in arts and handicrafts. However, neither his advanced age nor the decline in capacity could deter him from the decision which he had made.

He began studying very hard until one day an incident took place. The teacher was teaching him Shafi'i jurisprudence. He taught: 'The teacher's belief is that the skin of a dog becomes pure after tanning.'

Sakaki repeated these words over and over to himself to help him pass the course, but while reciting it during his exams, he instead said: 'A dog's belief is that the teacher's skin becomes pure after tanning.'

The others burst into laughter and it confirmed to them that this middle-aged man who was interested in studying in his old age was capable of nothing.

Sakaki could no longer stay at that school or in that town, so he left for the desert. The vast world became too tight for him. By chance he reached the foot of a mountain where he saw the little drops of water falling from the top of the mountain down on a rock forming a hole in the hard stone with its constant dripping. He reflected for a while and a thought crossed his mind. He thought: 'My heart may be inept, but it is not harder than this stone. It is impossible for steadfastness and perseverance to be in vain.' So he returned and engaged in the pursuit of knowledge until his talent blossomed and his ability shone. In the end, he became a renowned scholar in literature.<sup>1</sup>

#### Note

1. Ruzat ul-Janat, p. 747.



## Story 67: The Botanist

The teachers at the school of Carl von Linné (or Carl Linnaeus) were in agreement that they were disappointed in his performance and advised his father, who was a priest, not to expect his son to advance much in his studies, for they found him neither intelligent nor talented. They thought that it would be better for his father to find a manual job suitable for his son and let him pursue that instead.

However, despite all their troubles and setbacks, von Linné's parents sent him to university to study medicine. Lacking in financial means, they paid only a small portion of the fees for his studies. Were it not for the compassion and aid of a benefactor, whom von Linné had become acquainted with on the University campus, poverty would have had the upper hand on him.

Contrary to his parents' wishes, von Linné was not interested in the field in which he was studying. Rather, he was interested in the field of botany. He had been interested in plants since his childhood, inheriting this aptitude from his father. His father's garden was overflowing with beautiful plants. Since his childhood his mother used to give him a flower as a way to calm him down whenever he was upset or crying.

During his studies at Medical School, he came across a work written by a French botanist. He set his heart on the contemplation of the mysteries of plants. In those days, one of the questions which drew the attention of the scholars of botany was the correct method of classification of plants and vegetables. Von Linné succeeded in innovating a particular method, using binomial nomenclature, as the basis of classification of the plants, which was well received.

The work which he had published on the subject provided him with the opportunity to apply for a position at the University in this field. He displayed his talent at the same university where he was engaged in studies. However, he was unable to obtain the position due to the envy of some of his contemporaries.

Von Linné became intoxicated with his success. It was the first time in his life that he had tasted the pleasure of success and therefore did not give any importance to failing to attain the University position. He organized a scientific mission and prepared for a long journey in order to carry out a study of nature. Among the necessities for his journey, he had taken a suitcase, a few undergarments, a magnifying glass, and a few papers. He then set out on foot, all alone.

He covered a distance of seven thousand kilometers. Facing extraordinary difficulties, he returned with a great quantity of knowledge and data for analysis. In 1735, three years after that event, he moved to Hamburg. He had found that in Sweden, his home country, he had not managed to obtain steady work.

On visiting one of the museums in Hamburg, he was shown one of their treasures by the director. It was supposedly a snake with seven heads. The heads were not only similar to that of a snake, but they bore resemblance to that of a weasel too. However, von Linné soon discovered that it was a fake and made his observation public. The local mayor became enraged with the visitor and ordered his expulsion.

Von Linné continued on his journey. On the way, he completed his thesis on medicine and managed to publish his own work in the city Leiden under the title 'System of Nature'. This work earned him good standing.

A rich citizen in Amsterdam asked him to oversee his exquisite and unparalleled gardens. By accepting this position, he succeeded in becoming financially stable and getting the opportunity to rest that he needed. Owing to his beneficent supporter, von Linné was able to visit France and devote himself to the collection of different species of plants in the forests of Meudon.

In the end, he became homesick and yearned for his motherland. He returned to Sweden, but this time, his home country came to appreciate his true value and gave the man, who had been once been dismissed by his school supervisors as unqualified, the acclaim which his genius, perseverance and iron will deserved.<sup>1</sup>

### **Note**

1. The History of Science by P. Rousseau, p. 382 and 383.

## Story 68: The Eloquent Orator

Demosthenes was a renowned politician and great orator of ancient Greece. His birthday coincided with that of the death of Aristotle in the same year. He was able to deliver speeches from a very young age, at beginning of his adolescence. However, he was not interested in becoming a good orator or a teacher of ethics, nor in making political and social speeches during important events, nor in becoming a great defense attorney. Rather he wanted to bring legal action against his father's executioners, and his own tutors, who had usurped a considerable amount of wealth which was his rightful inheritance.

He devoted himself to this work for some time, but gained nothing of his father's property. Nevertheless, he became an expert in oration and decided to make speeches in public assemblies. In the beginning his eloquence was not well received. The flaws in his speeches, either in its natural aspects, relating to his voice, accent, and consistency of his breathing, or in its technical aspects, regarding composition and expression, became evident. However, with the encouragement and exhortation of his friends, he put an end to all his flaws with a valiant effort.

Sitting in his cellar, all alone, he began practicing his discourse. In order to improve his pronunciation, he put sand in his mouth and began reciting poems aloud. To improve his breathing, he ran up a hill or recited long poems in one breath. He gave speeches before a mirror so as to observe his facial expressions and to develop his articulation and bearing. He trained hard until he became one of the greatest orators of his time in the entire world.<sup>1</sup>

### Note

1. Ayen Sakhbouri, v. 2, p. 5-6.

### Story 69: The Fruit Of The Visit To Taif

Both the Holy Prophet's (S) uncle, Abu Talib, and his (S) wife, Khadijah, passed away within a few days of each other. Thus, the Prophet (S) lost two of his best supporters and protectors. Abu Talib, supported him in public and was his closest associate, and Khadijah, was his source of comfort at home.

The demise of Abu Talib was a threat to the Holy Prophet (S) to the extent that it allowed Quraysh to persecute him more. A few days after Abu Talib's death, as the Prophet (S) was passing through an alley, they emptied a container of garbage on his head. He (S) returned home full of dust and soil. The youngest of his daughters, Fatimah ('a), ran to him and washed the dust off her father's head. Seeing his dearest daughter shedding tears, the Holy Prophet (S) said, *"My sweet daughter, do not weep or worry, your father is not alone. Allah is his protector."*

After this incident, he (S) left Makkah alone and moved to Taif where he would spread the Message of Allah to the tribe of Saqif, situated to the south of Makkah. Taif was well known for its pleasant climate and abundant wealth. It was also a common place for the rich of Makkah to visit, at the time. Leading a comfortable life, the people of Taif had no differences with the Makkans.

The people of this city had the same mentality as those who lived in the vicinity of the Ka'bah. The Holy Prophet (S) knew this well, but he (S) was not one who despaired or pondered too long over difficulties. Rather, he (S) was ready to face the most challenging problems in order to conquer a man's heart or to attract a suitable person.

On entering Taif, the Holy Prophet (S) heard the same words which he had heard from the inhabitants of Makkah.

One man said, *"Did Allah did not find anyone else on this earth to convey his message but you?"*

Another said, *"I would have stolen the cover of the Ka'bah if you were the Messenger of Allah."*

A third said, *"I will not at any cost have a discussion with you" ....and so on.*

They disagreed with his call to Islam, but they also feared that some might listen to him. They encouraged a group of children, who were hooligans and rascals, to expel him from Taif. They persecuted the Holy Prophet (S) by insulting him and throwing stones at him. Wounded, the Holy Prophet (S) took refuge in a garden outside Taif with much difficulty.

This garden belonged to Atbah and Shaybah, two wealthy Chiefs of Quraysh. They were both present in the garden when this incident happened, and they witnessed it all from a distance and were quite pleased about it. The children of Taif returned. The Holy Prophet (S) sat under the shade of vine leaves far from Atbah and Shaybah.

He (S) was alone, all alone with Allah. He raised his humble face towards Almighty Allah and prayed, *"O Allah, I present before you my complaint about my weakness, my helplessness, and about the mockery and derision to which I have been subjected. O most Merciful of all the Merciful, you are the Lord of the oppressed. You are my Allah. To whom are You leaving me? To the strangers who will ill treat me? Or to my enemy who has an upper hand*

*on me? O Allah, if whatever has befallen me is not because of Your wrath nor because I am unworthy, I shall not fear. The dominion of Your security and prosperity is broad enough for me. I seek refuge in the Light of Your Essence which illuminates darkness and straightens out the affairs of the Hereafter; that neither Your wrath nor Your chastisement may descend upon me. Because of You, I am pleased with what befalls me. There is no change, no power and no transformation that takes place, but by You and from You.”*

Being happy watching the defeat of the Holy Prophet (S), Atbah and Shaybah, in accordance with tribal ties and customs, sent their Christian servant, Adas, to offer a plate of grapes to the man sitting under the vine leaves and then to quickly return.

Adas brought the grapes, put it before the Holy Prophet (S) and said, “*Eat this!*”

The Holy Prophet (S) stretched out his hand and picked a few grapes, but before putting the grapes in his mouth, he uttered ‘Bismillah-e-Rahman-e-Rahim’ (In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate). Adas had never heard such words before in his entire life.

Fixing a profound gaze on the Holy Prophet’s (S) face, he said, “*These words are not ordinary words of conversation among the people of this region. What are these words?*”

The Holy Prophet (S) asked Adas, “*Where are you from and what is your religion?*”

“*I am originally from Nainawa, and I am a Christian.*”

“*From Nainawa? The city of the virtuous servant of Allah, Yunus ibn Mata?*”

“*How strange! You live here, among these people and you know the name of Yunus ibn Mata? Even when I lived in Nainawa, there were hardly ten people who knew his father’s name Mata?*”

The Holy Prophet (S) said, “*Yunus is my brother. He was a Prophet of Allah, and I too am a Messenger of Allah!*”

As Atbah and Shaybah saw Adas standing and talking to the Prophet (S), their hearts sank. They feared nothing more than people talking to the Holy Prophet (S).

Suddenly they noticed Adas falling to his knees before the Prophet (S) and kissing his hands, head and feet.

One said to the other, “*Have you seen how quickly he managed to corrupt the poor servant?*”<sup>1</sup>

### **Note**

1. Sira’i ibn Hisham, v. 1, p. 419-421.

### Story 70: Abu Is'haq, The Sabian

Abu Is'haq Sabi is considered to be among the most learned people and famous writers of the fourth century after Hijrah. He was at the court of both the Abbasid Caliphs and Izu Dullah Bakhtiar (of the descendants of Buyeh) for some time.

Abu Is'haq was a follower of the Sabian religion. The Sabians were monotheist, but they did not believe in Prophethood. Izu Dullah tried to convince Abu Is'haq to embrace Islam, but did not succeed.

Nevertheless, in the month of Ramazan, Abu Is'haq used to fast out of respect to Muslims. He knew many verses of the Holy Qur'an by heart, which he frequently quoted in his letters and writings. He was an erudite man, a writer, a man of letters, and a poet, as well as a great friend of Sayid al-Sharif al-Radi (the compiler of Nahj al-Balaghah), who was also a scholar and literary man of genius.

Abu Is'haq passed away in the year 384 after Hijrah. Sayid al-Sharif al-Radi composed a eulogy for his funeral of which the following are three couplets:

*"Did you see what personage had been carried on the sticks of his coffin?  
And how the light of the assembly had been distinguished?"*

*Down broke a mountain; had it fallen in the sea, the sea's surface would  
have been agitated and foamed.*

*I was not of the belief the soil would embrace you; the earth would entomb  
the great mountains."*

Afterwards, certain narrow-minded people reproached Sayid al-Radi and denounced him, claiming that it was not advisable for such a man like him, who was a descendant of the Holy Prophet (S), to recite a eulogy and to express sorrow for a Sabian who had refused to embrace Islam.

Sayid al-Radi said in reply, *"I recited the eulogy for his knowledge and talent. It was his knowledge and pre-eminence which I had praised."*<sup>1</sup>

#### Note

1. Wafayat al-A'yan, Ibn Khalakan, v. 1, p. 36 and Al-Kuna wa al-Alqab, Muhaddith al-Qummi, v. 2, p. 365 under the title of "Al-Sabi".

## Story 71: In Quest Of Truth

His passion for truth and his search for the root of certitude did not allow Unwan al-Basri to rest. He covered a great distance to reach Madinah, which was a center for the spread of Islam and for the meeting of Islamic jurisprudents and narrators of Prophetic traditions.

He became an assistant to Malik ibn Anas, the famous narrator of traditions and jurisprudent of Madinah. As was their custom, the traditions of Prophet (S) were narrated and transcribed in his presence. Unwan al-Basri, along with the other students of Malik, devoted himself to the narration, transmission, and recording of the traditions, as well as the memorization of their references, that is, the names of transmitters of the traditions, so that he might quench his inner thirst.

In those days, Imam Al-Sadiq ('a) was not in Madinah, and, when he came back, after some time, Unwan al-Basri decided to serve as a student and apprentice to the Imam ('a), just as he had done with Malik. In order to fan the flames of his passion, the Imam ('a) rejected his proposal to be his apprentice and one day said to him, *"I am a busy man. I have supplications (zikr) and invocations to recite day and night. Do not take up my time and do not bother me! Go back to Malik's course and assist him as you had done before!"*

The following day, Unwan al-Basri left his house, went directly to the Shrine of the Holy Prophet (S), performed two rakats of prayer, putting his trust in Allah, and said, *"O God! O You the Owner of all hearts, I beseech You to soften Ja'far ibn Muhammad's heart towards me, and make me meet his approval, and benefit from his knowledge, so that I may find Your straight path."*

The following day, he left his house again, went directly to the Shrine of the Holy Prophet (S), performed two rakats of prayer, putting his trust in Allah, and said, *"O God! O You the Owner of all hearts, I beseech You to soften Ja'far ibn Muhammad's heart towards me, and make me meet his approval, and benefit from his knowledge, so that I may find Your straight path."*

After the prayer and supplication, he returned to his house without going anywhere else. He began to feel his affection towards Imam Al-Sadiq ('a) increase with each passing hour. This made him suffer more from his own loneliness, and this made him feel like a prisoner in his own home. He did not leave his home except to perform his prayers. There was no alternative before him.

On the one hand, the Imam ('a) had officially told him not to bother him anymore, and on the other, his love and hope were so impassioned that he was no longer desirous of anything else other than him. His suffering and affliction increased further. He was completely exhausted and was not able to wait patiently anymore.

Dressing himself, putting on his shoes, he went to the Imam's ('a) house. A servant came out, opened the door and asked, *"What do you want?"*

He said, *"Nothing, I only want to pay my respects to the Imam ('a)."*  
*"The Imam is busy performing his prayers."*

It did not take long before the same servant came back and said, *“Come in please!”*

Unwan entered the house, and as he saw the Imam (‘a), he greeted him.

The Imam (‘a) replied to his greeting with an extra ‘du’a’ and asked him, *“What is your nickname?”*

*“Abdullah!”*

*“May Allah preserve you this nickname, and bestow upon you His blessing.”*

On hearing this supplication, he felt overjoyed. He thought that this would suffice him, even if he did not benefit anything else from this meeting.

Then the Imam (‘a) asked, *“What do you want? What is the problem?”*

*“I have beseeched Allah to soften your heart towards me, so that I might benefit from your knowledge. I wish that He would answer my prayer.”*

*“O Abu Abdullah, the knowledge of Allah and the light of certitude is acquired not by knocking at this or that door, nor by going to this man or that one. No-one can give you this light. This knowledge is not acquired in a class, but rather it is a light that, whenever Allah wants to guide someone, illuminates one’s heart. If you aspire to such a light and knowledge, then look for true submission to Him deep in your own soul. Find it within yourself, search for knowledge through your deeds and beseech your God. He Himself will inspire it in your heart.”<sup>1</sup>*

### Note

1. Al-Kuna wa al-Alqab, Muhaddith al-Qummi, v. 2, under the title “Al-Basri” and Bihar, v. 1, p. 224, tradition no. 17.



## Story 72: In Quest Of Certitude

In the vast realm of the Seljuk empire, the Baghdad and Nishabur academies were like two shining stars. Seekers of knowledge and clarity increasingly rushed to one of these two great universities. The director of education in the Nishabur Academy was Abu al-Ma'ali Imam al-Haramayn from the years 450-478 Hijrah.

Hundreds of young earnest students came to his center of religious education in order to gain knowledge in writing and memorization of Hadith. Among Imam al-Haramayn's disciples, there were three who showed a natural gift, attracted everyone's attention and acquired good reputations. They were, Muhammad Ghazali Tusi, Kiarasi, and Ahmad ibn Muhammad Khawafi.

In regards to these three students, Imam al-Haramayn's praises passed by word of mouth, saying: 'Ghazali is a surging sea, Kiarasi is a ferocious lion and Khawafi is a blazing fire.' Of these three, Muhammad Ghazali appeared to be the most eminent and most qualified. This was the reason he became the hope of the Nishabur academy at the time.

Imam al-Haramayn passed away in 478 Hijrah. Ghazali, who had no equal at the time, decided to offer his services to Khajah Nizam ul-Mulk Tusi, the learned Seljuk minister, as an assistant to the assembly of scholars and men of letters. He also enjoyed debates and defeated all his contemporaries. Meanwhile, the seat of the director of the Baghdad Academy had become vacant, waiting for a suitable professor who could assume its position. There was no doubt that there was no-one more capable than this talented young man who had originally come from Khurasan.

In the year 484 of Hijrah, Ghazali arrived in Baghdad with pomp and dignity. He took the position of director of the Academy, which was the highest scientific and spiritual position at the time. He was considered the greatest scholar, as well as the highest religious authority. He was involved in important daily political affairs. Al-Muqtader Billah, the ruling Caliph, and after him al-Mustazhir Billah, showed him great respect.

Also, the great Seljuk King, Malik Shah, and his powerful erudite minister, Khaja Nizam ul-Mulk Tusi had shown great affection towards him and held him in high esteem. Ghazali had reached the zenith of his accomplishments. There was no rank remaining that he had not achieved. While he reigned in his scientific and spiritual supremacy, others envied him. In his inner soul a flame had been lit. It burned throughout his life and burnt entirely the harvest of his existence, as well as his rank and glory.

During his studies, Ghazali began to feel deeply within himself a mysterious sentiment which sought quietude, certitude and self-assurance, but his overwhelming craving for popularity, reputation and honour did not give this feeling a chance to grow. As he reached the zenith of his worldly progress and he began to be satiated, his curiosity and his search for truth started to grow.

He felt that his arguments and reasoning which had defeated others, did not satisfy his own soul or quench his thirst any more. He came to realize that all of his teaching, studying, reasoning and discussion was not sufficient, but

rather embarking on a spiritual journey, and striving for virtuous purification and piety were more important.

He thought: just as intoxication does not result from the name of drink, nor satiety from the name of bread, nor cure from illness from the name of medicine, then quietude, certitude and self-assurance do not arise from debate and discussion about truth and prosperity. Truth requires that one becomes authentic and that is incompatible with the love of glory, fame and honour.

A strange conflict appeared within him. It was a pain no one was aware of, except himself and his God. This inner conflict lasted for six months and intensified to such extent that it deprived him of sleep and appetite. He stopped speaking. He was not able to teach any longer or to debate. He felt ill and developed a digestive disorder. Physicians examined him and diagnosed a psychopathy. All known remedies were attempted, until no more options existed. He had no saviour but Allah and the truth. He pleaded to Allah to give him succour and cure him of this conflict.

It was not an easy matter. On the one hand, this mysterious feeling became more and more conspicuous, and, on the other hand, it seemed very difficult for him to renounce all of the glory, respect and popularity. Finally, he reached a point where all his ambitions disappeared from his mind. He decided to renounce all his glory and rank. Fearing people's reaction, he did not mention anything about his decision.

He left Baghdad for Makkah under the pretext of going for pilgrimage, but when he had travelled a little outside the city limits of Baghdad, and after asking his farewell escort to return, he deviated off the road and headed towards Syria and Bayt ul-Muqadas. In order to travel unrecognized, and to not be disturbed while he was on his inner spiritual journey, he dressed himself in the guise of dervish.

He proceeded towards the horizon, in the company of his own soul, until he found what he was searching for, certitude and inner peace. This period of meditation, solitude and asceticism lasted ten years.<sup>1</sup>

### Note

1. The History of Ibn Khalkan, v. 5, p. 351 and Ghazali Nameh.

## Story 73: A Thirsty Man With A Water Bag On His Shoulder

It was the end of summer and the heat was intense. The inhabitants of Madinah were overwhelmed with drought and inflation. The high cost of living made the inhabitants of Madinah restless. When the season for the date harvest arrived, people began to relax a little. On hearing the alarming news of the threat of the Romans from the north-east against the Muslims, the Holy Prophet (S) issued an order for the army to mobilize.

The people, having passed through a period of famine, were longing to enjoy the fresh dates. So, it was not easy for them to give up the fruits after the drought and give up the shade for the oppressive heat, and take the long path from Madinah to Syria. The condition was entirely favourable for conspiracy and sabotage by traitors.

However, neither the heat, nor the consequence of drought, nor the sabotage of traitors was able to hinder the mobilization of the army, composed of thirty thousand soldiers, to confront the anticipated attack by the Romans.

They made their way towards the desert, with the sun beating down on their heads. They had neither sufficient provisions nor an adequate cavalry. The dangers of the lack of food, supplies and the severity of heat was no less than that of the enemy.

Certain people of weak faith had a change of heart on the way. A man named Ka'b ibn Malik suddenly turned back and returned towards Madinah.

The Holy Prophet (S) was informed of this by his companions, "*O Messenger of Allah! Ka'b ibn Malik is turning back!*"

"*Let him go*", said the Prophet (S). "*If there is any good in him, Allah shall soon return him to you, and if not, you will be rid of his evil!*"

It was not long before the companions again reported, "*O Messenger of Allah! Mirrarat ibn Rabi is going back too!*"

The Holy Prophet (S) said, "*Let him go. If there is any good in him, Allah shall turn him back towards us, and if not, you will be rid of his evil!*"

Again, it was not long before the companions said, "*O Messenger of Allah! Hillal ibn Umayh is going back too!*"

The Holy Prophet (S) repeated the same words about him that he (S) had done for the other two.

In the meantime, Abu Dharr's camel that had been accompanying the caravan stopped. Despite his best efforts, he was not able to rejoin the caravan. The companions noticed that Abu Dharr was lagging behind and the Holy Prophet (S) was informed about him too, "*O Messenger of Allah! Abu Dharr is also returning.*"

The Holy Prophet (S) replied very calmly, "*Leave him be. If there is any good in him, Allah will rejoin him with you; otherwise, you will be rid of his evil!*"

Abu Dharr did his utmost to move his camel in order to rejoin the caravan, but was unable to do so. He dismounted from the camel, carried his luggage on his shoulders and trudged forward. He was harshly struck with the sun's heat, panting from thirst, but he chose to forget about himself and had only one aim in mind, to reach the Holy Prophet (S) and rejoin the companions.

As he went forward, he saw a cloud in the sky which hinted at rain. He changed direction and swerved towards a rock which stored a little rain water. Abu Dharr tasted a little bit of water, but abstained from drinking all, for he thought it would be better to take the water with him and give it to the Holy Prophet (S).

Perhaps the Prophet (S) might be thirsty and have nothing to drink. Pouring the water in a sac he had with him, he carried it on his shoulder with his own belongings and began walking on the rough earth, with parched lips, until he saw from afar the rest of the Muslim army. His heart started beating with joy and he sped up towards the army.

On the other hand, when the Muslims saw somebody approaching, they said, *“O Messenger of Allah! It seems that someone is approaching.”*

The Prophet (S) said, *“I hope it is Abu Dharr.”* As he came nearer, a man shouted, *“By Allah! It is him! It is Abu Dharr!”*

The Holy Prophet (S), *“May Allah bless Abu Dharr who will live alone, and will die alone and will be resurrected alone.”*

Then the Holy Prophet (S) welcomed Abu Dharr, took the load off his shoulders and put them on the ground. Dying of thirst, Abu Dharr fell to the ground, exhausted.

The Holy Prophet (S) asked, *“May someone bring water for Abu Dharr? He is very thirsty.”*

Abu Dharr said, *“I have water with me.”*

*“You had water with you and you did not drink it?”*

*“Yes, may my father and mother be sacrificed for you, I passed by a rock in which I saw fresh water. As I began to taste a little of it, I thought, “I should not drink it until my beloved, the Messenger of Allah (S), drinks it first.”<sup>1</sup>*

### Note

1. Abu Dharr Al-Ghifari, written by Abdul Hamid 'Joudat ul-sahar' translated by Ali Shariati.

## Story 74: A Kind Reprisal

After twenty-one years of his despotic rule, Abdul Malik ibn Marwan died in the year 86 after Hijrah. His son, Walid, succeeded his father. In order to appease public discontent, Walid decided to implement amendments to the system of government, trade, and the management of public affairs.

He especially wanted to attract the support of the inhabitants of Madinah, which was considered to be one of the two Holy Centers of Islam, as well as the city of the Holy Prophet's (S) descendants and companions, in addition to the scholars of Islamic jurisprudence and prophetic traditions.

That is why Walid dismissed Hisham ibn Isma'il Makhzumi, Abdul Malik's father-in-law, the ex-governor of Madinah, who had tyrannized people, thus they always wished for his removal from the office of governor.

Hisham ibn Isma'il had subjected the citizens of Madinah to severe oppression and had offended people a great extent. He had lashed Said ibn Mussayib, the famous narrator of prophetic traditions and a well-respected person in Madinah with sixty lashes; then had him dressed in a coarse garment, and mounted him on a camel which paraded him round the city of Madinah.

With regard to the household of Imam Ali ('a), particularly the most eminent of them, Imam Ali ibn al-Husayn Zainul Abidin ('a), was treated worse than others.

Walid discharged Hisham and appointed in his place his young cousin, Umar ibn Abdul Aziz, as the governor of Madinah. Umar ibn Abdul Aziz had a good reputation among people for his justice and good-will. In order to alleviate people's suffering, Umar ordered that Hisham ibn Isma'il be taken in front of Marwan ibn Hakam's house, and anyone who had suffered any hardship from Hisham, or had heard of his evil behaviour, was invited to go there and take their revenge.

The people came in crowds, showering abuse on Hisham ibn Isma'il and greeting him with a stream of curses. As for Hisham, he was more afraid of Ali ibn al-Husayn ('a) and Imam Ali's ('a) descendants, than anyone else. He thought that the revenge for all the oppression, insults and abuses with regards to his eminent father and ancestors, would not be less than death.

On the other hand, the Imam ('a) said to Imam Ali's ('a) descendants, *"It is not our nature to kick someone when they are down, and to take revenge on an enemy after he becomes weak. On the contrary, our morality is to help and comfort those who are weak."*

Accompanied by all Imam Ali's ('a) descendants, the Imam ('a) came towards Hisham ibn Isma'il. Hisham's face turned completely pale. He thought that the moment of his death had arrived. However, contrary to his expectations, the Imam ('a), as is customary for Muslims when they greet each other, said, *"As-salamu Alaykum"*, shook his hand and added compassionately, *"If I can be of any help to you, I am ready to do so."* After this incident, the inhabitants of Madinah stopped cursing him for his evil deeds.<sup>1</sup>

### Note

1. Bihar ul-Anwar, v. 11, p. 17 and 27. Al-Imam al-Sadiq ('a), v. 1, p. 111, Al-Imam Zainul Abidin translated by H. Wujdani, p. 92.



## Story 75: The Stranger

With a water bag on her shoulder, gasping for breath, a poor woman met a stranger who took the water bag from her and carried it on his shoulder. The woman's innocent children, with their eyes fixed on the door, awaited their mother's arrival. The door opened, the children saw a stranger with the water bag on his shoulder enter the house, along with their mother.

The stranger placed the water bag on the ground and asked the woman, *"It seems you do not have a man to help you and that you fetch water by yourself. Why are you so melancholy?"*

*"My husband was a soldier. Ali sent him to the battlefield where he was killed. Now I am all alone with these small children."*

The stranger said no more, bowing down his head and bidding farewell to her, he left. For the rest of the day, he was not able to stop thinking of the woman and her children. Night fell, but he could hardly sleep. Early the next morning, he took a basket, put some meat, flour and dates in it, went straight to the woman's house and knocked at the door.

*"Who is it?"*

*"I am the man who carried the water bag for you yesterday. I have brought some food for the children."*

*"May Allah be pleased with you and judge between us and Ali ibn Abi Talib!"*

The door opened and the stranger went in and said, *"I wish to do some good deeds, if you permit me. I will either knead the flour and bake bread or look after the children."*

*"Very well, but I know better how to knead flour and bake bread, so it would be better if you take care of the children until I finish cooking."*

She started kneading the flour. The man immediately roasted some meat which he had brought with him and started feeding the children. He put the meat and dates in each one's mouth and said, *"My son, forgive Ali ibn Abi Talib if he has failed in his duty towards you."*

When the flour was ready, she called the man, *"O servant of Allah, could you start the fire in the furnace?"*

The man went and started the fire in the furnace. When the flames of fire rose, he brought his face close to the fire and said, *"Taste the heat of the fire, for such is the chastisement of those who failed in their duty towards orphans and widows."*

At this moment, a neighbour arrived, and, recognizing the stranger, she said to the widow, *"Woe betides you! Don't you recognize this man who is helping you? He is Amirul Mu'minin (Commander of the Faithful) Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a)! The woman came forward and said, "A thousand shames on me! I beg your forgiveness."*

The Imam ('a) said, *"O it is I who must beg you to forgive me, for I have failed in my duty towards you!"*<sup>1</sup>

### Note

1. Bihar ul-Anwar, v. 7, Chapter 103, p. 597.

## Lexicon Of Proper Names And Arabic Terms

**Abdul Malik ibn Marwan:** Umayyad Caliph, son of Marwan ibn Hakam who reigned from 65 to 86 Hijrah.

**Abu Ali ibn Sina:** Avicenna, Iranian physician, writer, philosopher (980-1037).

**Abu Bakr:** First of four caliphs who are called 'the rightly guided caliphs'.

**Abu Dharr:** A close companion of the Prophet (S).

**Abu Hanifa:** Theologian, jurisprudent, born in Kufah (696-767). The Hanafi School refers to him.

**Abu Talib:** Uncle of the Holy Prophet (S), Imam Ali's ('a) father, died three years before Hijrah.

**Ahlul Bayt:** 'The people of house', the Prophet's family.

**Ahmad ibn Hanbal:** Theologian, jurisprudent (780-855). Hanbali school refers to him.

**A'ishah:** The Holy Prophet's (S) wife, the daughter of Abu Bakr.

**Ali ibn Abi Talib:** First Imam, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law; the first who embraced Islam after the Prophet; the fourth Caliph of those who were named 'the rightly guided caliphs'; martyred in 40 Hijrah at Kufah Mosque.

**Ali ibn ul-Husayn Zainul Abidin:** The fourth Imam (37-95 H).

**Al-Muatazid:** Abbasid Caliph.

**Amir ul-Mu'minin:** 'Commander of the Faithful'; title attributed to Imam Ali ('a) (and at times given to the other Caliphs).

**Ansar:** 'The Helpers'; the inhabitants of Madinah who helped the Holy Prophet (S) ever since the emigration from Makkah to Madinah.

**Asr:** The afternoon; The Asr prayer is the third of five daily prayers.

**Baqir:** Title of the fifth Imam Muhammad ibn Ali ('a).

**Bilal:** A black slave emancipated by the Holy Prophet (S). He was one of the first Muslims and the first Mu'azin (the one who calls to prayer).

**Dawud:** Prophet David.

**Demosthenes:** The greatest Athenian orator. His political speeches are largely taken up with the cause of Greek liberty against the pretensions of Philip II of Macedon, whom he attacked in the Philippi. (384-322 BC)

**Du'a:** Prayer, supplication

**Eid:** Festival of Islamic calendar

**Ibn Ishaq:** Son of Isaac

**Fatimah:** The Holy Prophet's (S) daughter from Khadijah; wife of Imam Ali ('a); mother of Imam Hasan and Husayn ('a)

**Fatwa:** Religious decree passed by Islamic jurisprudent.

**Ghazali:** One of the greatest Islamic scholars, originally from Tus in Iran (1058-1111 H).

**Ghusl:** Major ritual bathing.

**Hadi:** 'The Guide'; title of Imam Ali al-Naqi, the tenth Imam.

**Hadith:** The traditions of the Prophet and Imams.

**Haram:** Sanctuary (in this context, the Sanctuary of Makkah).

**Hasan:** The second Imam, son of Ali ('a) and Fatimah ('a).

**Hisham ibn Abdul Malik:** Umayyad Caliph, died in 125 H.



**Hijaz:** Region of Arabia, along the Red sea where Makkah and Madinah are situated.

**Husayn ibn Ali:** The third Imam, son of Ali (‘a) and Fatimah (‘a).

**Ihram:** State of ritual consecration; pilgrim’s garment.

**Isa:** Prophet Jesus Christ, son of Mary.

**Isha:** Evening; the prayer of Isha is the last prayer of five daily prayers.

**Imam:** Leader, guide, custodian

**Jabir:** Close companion of the prophet.

**Ja’far ibn Muhammad:** The sixth Imam; title: al-Sadiq (83-148 H).

**Jahiliyah:** Ignorance; this term refers to the social culture of pre-Islamic Arabia, the period of paganism.

**Jihad:** Holy struggle; war in the way of Allah.

**Ka’bah:** The House of Allah; situated in Makkah; called ‘Baytullah al-Haram’; constructed by Prophet Ibrahim (‘a).

**Kaffarah:** Religious expiation.

**Katib:** Scribe

**Kazim:** Title of Musa ibn Ja’far, the seventh Imam (128-183 H).

**Khadijah:** The wife of the Holy Prophet (S); the first woman to accept Islam; died three years before Hijrah.

**Luqman:** A sage whose name is mentioned in the Holy Qur’an; chapter 32 is named after him.

**Madinat ul-Nabi:** The Prophet’s city, Madinah.

**Maghrib:** Dusk; the prayer of Maghrib is the fourth of five daily prayers.

**Mahdi ibn Mansur:** Abbasid Caliph; father of Harun al-Rashid (158-169 H).

**Malik ibn Anas:** Theologian, jurist (714-798 CE); Maliki school refers to him.

**Malik Ashtar Nakhai:** Close companion of Imam Ali (‘a); well-known for his courage; he was poisoned on the way to Egypt by Mu’awiyah.

**Ma’mun:** Abbasid Caliph who reigned from 198-218 H.

**Mansur Dawaniqi:** Abbasid Caliph; reigned from 136-158 H.

**Maryam:** Mary, mother of Jesus Christ (‘a).

**Mina:** Valley near Makkah; pilgrims have to perform certain rites of the pilgrimage in the plain of Mina.

**Minbar:** Pulpit; mosque pulpit.

**Miqdad:** A companion of the Holy Prophet (S).

**Mu’awiyah:** A bloodthirsty Umayyad Caliph; founder of the Umayyad dynasty; he waged war against the fourth Caliph, Ali (‘a), and poisoned Imam Hasan (‘a); his son is responsible for the massacre of Karbala.

**Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Husayn:** The fifth Imam; his title is ‘al-Baqir’ (57-114 H).

**Al-Mutawakkil:** Abbasid Caliph; he reigned from 233-247 H.

**Negus:** Also called Najashi; King of Abyssinia at the time of the Holy Prophet (S).

**Nahrawan:** Battle provoked by the Khawarij (Seceders) in 38 H against Imam Ali (‘a).

**Naynawa:** Nineveh, located east of the Tigris, opposite Mosul.

**Naishabur:** City in north-east of Iran, 120 km from Mashhad.

**Qibla:** The direction faced in prayer, towards Makkah.

**Quraysh:** Aristocratic tribe in Makkah to which the Holy Prophet (S) belonged; the violently opposed the Holy Prophet (S) and persecuted his companions.

**Rak'at:** Bowing; part of the sequence of prayer.

**Rastan:** Plural of 'rast' which means true, right, verity, just, but also loyal, veracious.

**Al-Ridha':** Title of Musa ibn Ja'far, the eighth Imam.

**Salman:** One of the closest companions of the Holy Prophet (S) called Salman Al-Farsi (The Persian) because of his origin.

**Shafi'i:** Theologian jurisprudent (767-820CE) to whom the school of Shafi'i refers.

**Siffin:** Battle imposed on Imam Ali ('a) by Mu'awiyah; occurred in the frontier between Iraq and Syria; lasted one and half years.

**Sulayman:** Prophet Solomon ('a), son of Prophet David ('a).

**Talhah:** Companion of the Prophet who revolted against Imam Ali ('a).

**Ta'qib:** Zikr or du'a (supplications) following the prayer.

**Uhud:** Battle between Muslims and pagans of Makkah; occurred in the 3rd Hijrah.

**Umar ibn Abdul Aziz:** Umayyad Caliph, who reigned from 99-101 H.

**Umar ibn Khattab:** Second Caliph of 'the rightly guided Caliphs'.

**Uthman:** Third Caliph of 'the rightly guided Caliphs'.

**Umm Salamah:** One of the wives of the Holy Prophet (S).

**Wuqyeh:** A measure equal to 213 grams

**Wajeb:** Religious obligation

**Walid:** Umayyad Caliph; son of Abdul Malik ibn Marwan.

**Wudhu':** Ritual ablution done before performing the daily prayers.

**Yahya:** John (the Baptist)

**Yunus ibn Mata:** Prophet Jonah ('a), Hebrew Prophet.

**Yusuf:** Prophet Joseph ('a), son of Prophet Jacob ('a).

**Zakat:** Alms tax, almsgiving, poor-due

**Zakaria:** Prophet Zachariah, Hebrew prophet (6 BC).

**Zain ul-Abidin:** Title of the fourth Imam.

**Zikr:** Liturgical glorification of Allah.

**Zubair:** Companion of the Holy Prophet (S); he revolted against Imam Ali ('a) with Talhah and A'ishah and imposed the battle of Jamal on him ('a).

**Zuhr:** Noon, mid-day; the prayer of zuhr is the second prayer of the five daily prayers.

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