



Tehran University of Medical Sciences, International Campus
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An excerpt from the words of Amir al-Mu'minin, peace be upon him, in Nahj al-Balagha, translated by the late Muhammad Dashti.

Nahjal balagha's content and eloquence have been named "Akh Al-Qur'an" (Brother of the Qur'an). Some Arab writers have praised the eloquence of Nahjal-Balgha.

This book is divided into three parts: sermons, letters and aphorisms. The Imam in many sermons has invited the people to follow the divine orders and leave taboos, and in the part of the letters addressed to the governors, he ordered them to respect the rights of the people.

Many translations of this book are available in Persian, among which one can Seyed Jafar Shahidi, Alineqi Fayza al-Salem, Javad Fazel, Mohammad Taghi Jafari, Seyed Mohammad Mahdi Jafari, Hossein Ali

Montazeri, Hossein Ansarian, Mohammad Dashti, Mostafa Zamani, Aliasghar Faqih pointed out from Nahjalbolgha.

Praise be to God, who cannot be praised by the speaker enough and the enumerators are unable to count his blessings, and the strivers, no matter how hard they try, cannot pay the right of his blessings as he deserves.

God, whose far-flung thoughts cannot be understood, and even the most clever and smartest people can't reach the depth of his wisdom, Glory and might.

His attributes are neither limited nor ultimate, and the description of his majesty and beauty cannot be found That does not fit in time and does not accept duration .He Creates the creatures with his power and spreads the rain-making winds to give the good news of the rain of His mercy and to the rocks of the mountains, and with his mercy prevents its earth from shaking.

The basis of religion is knowing God, and the perfection of knowing him is acknowledging his existence, and the perfection of acknowledging his existence is knowing him as one and only, and the perfection of believing in his oneness is worshiping him Far from any doubt and mixture, and worshiping him should be free from any doubt and mixture, when from his essence, every attribute is negated, because every attribute is a proof that he is different from what he is described as, and every description is a proof that he is different from his attributes.

God has always existed and is beautiful without any defects of creation. It exists, not as a human who is created from nothing ;He is with everything, but not in a way that he is close and sitting next to them ;he is different from everything, but not as if he is far from them. He does all things, but not with movements and tools. He was a seer of his creations, even when his creation did not yet wear the garment of existence.

He is alone because he has never had a companion whose absence would cause anxiety. He initiated creation most initially and commenced it originally, without undergoing reflection, without making use of any experiment, without innovating any movement, and without experiencing any aspiration of mind. He allotted all things their times, put together their variations gave them their properties, and determined their features knowing them before creating them, realizing fully their limits and confines and appreciating their propensities and intricacies. The creation accomplished everything in its appointed time and created a compromise between different natures and gave each thing a special instinct and nature and made each instinct and nature special to a person, before making them wear the garment of creation on it. He was aware and was surrounded by its beginning and completion, and he knew the nature of every nature and the twists and turns of every work.

Then, When Almighty created the openings of atmosphere, expanse of firmament and strata of winds, He flowed into it water whose waves

were stormy and whose surges leapt one over the other. He loaded it on dashing wind and breaking typhoons, ordered them to shed it back (as rain), gave the wind control over the vigor of the rain, and acquainted it with its limitations. The wind blew under it while water flowed furiously over it.

Then Almighty created forth wind and made its movement sterile, perpetuated its position, intensified its motion and spread it far and wide. Then He ordered the wind to raise up deep waters and to intensify the waves of the oceans. So the wind churned it like the churning of curd and pushed it fiercely into the firmament throwing its front position on the rear and the stationary on the flowing till its level was raised and the surface was full of foam.

Then Almighty raised the foam on to the open wind and vast firmament and made there-from the seven skies and made the lower one as a stationary surge and the upper one as protective ceiling and a high edifice without any pole to support it or Then He decorated them with stars and the light of meteors and hung in it the shining sun and effulgent moon under the revolving sky, moving ceiling and rotating firmament. Then He created the openings between high skies and filled them with all classes of His angels. Some of them are in prostration and do not kneel up. Others in kneeling position and do not stand up. Some of them are in array and do not leave their position. Others are extolling Allah and do not get tired. The sleep of the eye or the slip of with, or languor

of the body or the effect of forgetfulness does not affect them. Among them are those who work as trusted bearers of His message, those who serve as speaking tongues for His prophets and those who carry to and fro His orders and injunctions. Among them are the protectors of His creatures and guards of the doors of the gardens of Paradise.

Among them are those also whose steps are fixed on earth but their necks are protruding into the skies, their limbs are getting out on all sides, their shoulders are in accord with the columns of the Divine Throne, their eyes are downcast before it, they have spread down their wings under it and they have rendered between themselves and all else curtains of honor and screens of power.

They do not think of their Creator through image, do not impute to Him attributes of the created, do not confine Him within abodes and do not point at Him through illustrations.

I praise Allah seeking completion of His Blessing, submitting to His Glory and expecting safety from committing His sins. I invoke His help being in need of His Sufficiency (of protection). He whom He guides does not go astray; He with whom He is hostile gets no protection. He whom He supports does not remain needy. Praise is most weighty of all that is weighed and the most valuable of all that is treasured.

I stand witness that there is no god but Allah the One. He has no like. My testimony has been tested in its frankness, and its essence is our belief. We shall cling to it forever till we live and shall store it for facing

the tribulations that overtake us because it is the foundation stone of Belief (*iman*) and the first step towards good actions and Divine pleasure. It is the means to keep Satan away.

I also stand witness that Muhammad (S) is His slave and His Prophet. Allah sent him with the illustrious religion, effective emblem, written Book,¹ effulgent light, sparkling gleam and decisive injunction in order to dispel doubts, present clear proofs, administer warning through signs and to warn of punishments. At that time people had fallen in vices whereby the rope of religion had been broken, the pillars of belief had been shaken, principles had been sacrilege, system had become topsy turvy, openings were narrow, passage was dark, guidance was unknown and darkness prevailed Allah was being disobeyed, Satan was given support and Belief had been forsaken. As a result the pillars of religion fell down, its traces could not be discerned, its passages had been destroyed and its streets had fallen into decay. People obeyed Satan and treaded his paths. They sought water from his watering places. Through them Satan's emblems got flying and his standard was raised in vices which trampled the people under their hoofs, and treaded upon them with their feet. The vices stood on their toes (in full stature) and the people immersed in them were strayed, perplexed, ignorant and seduced as though in a good house² with bad neighbors. Instead of sleep they had wakefulness and for antimony they had tears in the eyes. They were

in a land where the learned were in bridle (keeping their mouths shut) while the ignorant were honored.

Indeed, death is quickly searching for you, those who resist in battle, and those who run away, none of them can be saved from the clutches of death, and indeed, the most honorable deaths are to be killed in the way of God. I swear by the one in whose hand is the life of Abu Talib's son, a thousand blows of the sword are easier for me than dying on a bed of rest, against God.

O creatures of Allah! I advise you to have fear of Allah which is the provision (for the next world) and with it is (your) return. The provision would take you (to your destination) and the return would be successful. The best one who is able to make people listen has called towards it and the best listener has listened to it. So the caller has proclaimed and the listener has listened and preserved.

O creations of Allah! Certainly fear of Allah has saved the lovers of Allah from unlawful items and gave His dread to their hearts till their nights are passed in wakefulness and their noons in thirst. So they achieve comfort through trouble and copious watering through thirst. They regarded death to be near and therefore hastened towards (good) actions. They rejected their desires and so they kept death in their sight. In the darkness, you found your way to our guidance, and you reached the peak of honor and glory, and you reached the dawn of guidance from the dark night of misguidance. Be deaf, the ear that does not hear the

loud call of truth; He who does not hear the loud bang, how will he know the soft song. The stronger the heart that is constantly trembling with the fear of God.

I was always waiting for your treachery and I saw in your face the signs of being deceived. You were behind the veil of religion, and it was the veil of religion that hid you from me. But the sincerity of my intention lifted the curtain from your face and showed me your true face. I stood on the path of truth to guide you, while the paths of misguidance were stretched in every direction and you were wandering and lost in every way. You were thirsty and no matter how much you dug the ground, you could not reach any water.

Today I have opened up this silenced tongue, may it tell you the truth. Let the thought of someone who goes against me be overthrown in the abyss of neglect, which I have not doubted since the day I saw the truth. If Musa (pbuh) was afraid, he was not be afraid of his own life, but he was afraid of the domination of the ignorant and misguided. Today, one of us and you is standing on the path of truth and one is on the path of falsehood.

Now then, Allah the Glorified, the Sublime, created (the things of) creation. He created them without any need for their obedience or being safe from their sinning, because the sin of anyone who sins does not harm Him nor does the obedience of anyone who obeys Him benefit

Him. He has distributed among them their livelihood, and has assigned them their positions in the world.

The signs of a pious person are that you see him like this: he is strong in religiosity, gentle and far-sighted, has faith full of certainty, is greedy in acquiring knowledge, and has tolerant knowledge. He is moderate in wealth, humble in worship, dignified in poverty, tolerant in hardships, seeking solutions, happy on the path of guidance and avoiding greed. He does

good deeds and is fearful, day to night. He delivers with gratitude, and brings the night to the day with the remembrance of God, he sleeps at night but is afraid, and wakes up happy, fear so that he will not be neglected, and happiness for the grace and mercy that has reached him.

They remain in the time of trials as though they remain in comfort. If there had not been fixed periods (of life) ordained for each, their spirits would not have remained in their bodies even for the twinkling of an eye because of (their) eagerness for the reward and fear of chastisement. The greatness of the Creator is seated in their heart, and, so, everything else appears small in their eyes. Thus to them Paradise is as though they see it and are enjoying its favors. To them, Hell is also as if they see it and are suffering punishment in it.

Their hearts are grieved, others are protected from their evils, their bodies are thin, their needs are scanty, and their souls are chaste. They endured (hardship) for a short while, and in consequence they secured

comfort for a long time. It is a beneficial transaction that Allah made easy for them. The world aimed at them, but they did not aim at it. It captured them, but they freed themselves from it by a ransom.

They are not satisfied with their meagre good acts, and do not regard their major acts as great. They always blame themselves and are afraid of their deeds. When anyone of them is spoken of highly, he says: "I know myself better than others, and my Lord knows me better than I know. O Allah, do not deal with me according to what they say, and make me better than they think of me and forgive me (those shortcomings) which they do not know."

Certainly nothing is viler than evil except its punishment and nothing is better than good except its reward. In this world everything that is heard is better than what is seen, while of everything of the next world that is seen is better than what is heard. So you should satisfy yourself by hearing rather than seeing and by the news of the unknown. You should know that what is little in this world but much in the next is better than what is much in this world but little in the next. In how many cases little is profitable while much causes loss.

Certainly that which you have been commanded to do is wider than what you have been refrained from, and what has been made lawful for you is more than what has been prohibited. Then give up what is less for what is much, and what is limited for what is vast. Allah has guaranteed your livelihood and has commanded you to

act. Therefore, the pursuit of that which has been guaranteed to you should not get preference over that whose performance has been enjoined upon you.

But by Allah, most certainly the position is that doubt has overtaken and certainty has been shattered and it seems as if what has been guaranteed to you is obligatory on you and what was made obligatory on you has been taken away from you. So, hasten towards (good) actions and dread the suddenness of death, because the return of age cannot be hoped for, as the return of livelihood can be hoped for. Whatever is missed from livelihood today may be hoped tomorrow with increase, but whatever is lost from the age yesterday, its return cannot be expected today. Hope can be only for that which is to come, while about that which is passed there is only disappointment. So "fear Allah as He ought to be feared and do not die until you are (true) Muslim." (Qur'an , 3:102) One of the Imam's sermons, which is known as the Qasea sermon. In this sermon, Iblis, who was arrogant and did not prostrate to Adam, was strongly condemned, and it is stated that Iblis was the first person to express bigotry and arrogance.

Praise be to Allah who wears the apparel of Honor and Dignity and has chosen them for Himself instead of for His creation. He has made them inaccessible and unlawful for others. He has selected them for His own great self, and has hurled a curse on him who contests with Him concerning them.

Then He put His angels on trial concerning these attributes in order to distinguish those who are modest from those who are vain. Therefore, Allah, who is aware of whatever is hidden in the hearts and whatever lies behind the unseen said:

"Verily I am about to create man from clay," And when I have completed and have Breathed into him of My spirit, then fall ye prostrating in obeisance unto him. And did fall prostrating in obeisance the angels all together, Save Iblis;... (Qur'an. 38:71-74)

His vanity stood in his way. Consequently, he felt proud over Adam by virtue of his creation and boasted over him on account of his origin. Thus, this enemy of Allah is the leader of those who boast, and the forerunner of the vain. It is he who laid the foundation of factionalism, quarreled with Allah about the robe of greatness, put on the dress of haughtiness and took off the covering of humility. Do you not see how Allah made him low on account of his vanity and humiliated him for his feigning to be high? He discarded him in this world and provided for him burning fire in the next world.

If Allah had wanted to create Adam from a light whose glare would have dazzled the eyes, whose handsomeness would have amazed the wits and whose fragrance would have caught the breath, He could have done so; and if He had done so, people would have bowed to him in humility and the trial of the angels through him would have become easier. But Allah,

the Glorified, tries His creatures by means of those things whose real nature they do not know in order to distinguish (good and bad) for them through the trial, and to remove vanity from them and keep them and keep them aloof from pride and self-admiration.

You should take a lesson from what Allah did with Satan; namely He nullified his great acts and extensive efforts on account of the vanity of one moment, although Satan had worshipped Allah for six thousand years - whether by the reckoning of this world or of the next world is not known. Who now can remain safe from Allah after Satan by committing a similar disobedience? None at all.

Allah, the Glorified, cannot let a human being enter Paradise if he does the same thing for which Allah turned out from it an angel. His command for the inhabitants in the sky and of the earth is the same. There is no friendship between Allah and any individual out of His creation so as to give him license for an undesirable thing which He has held unlawful for all the worlds.

Therefore, you should fear lest the enemy of Allah (Satan) infects you with his disease, or 'leads you astray through his call, or marches on you with his horsemen and footmen', (ref. 17:64) because, by my life, he has put the menacing arrow in the bow for you, has stretched the bow strongly, and has aimed at you from a nearby position, and He (Satan) said:

***"My Lord! Because Thou hast left me to stray, certainly will I adorn unto them the path of error, and certainly will I cause them all to go astray."* (Qur'an, 15:39)**

Although he (Satan) had said so only by guessing about the unknown future and by wrong conjecturing, yet the sons of vanity, the brothers of haughtiness and the horsemen of pride and intolerance proved him to be true, so much so that when disobedient persons from among you bowed before him, and his greed about you gained strength; and what was a hidden secret turned into a clear fact, he spread his full control over you and marched with his forces towards you.

Then they pushed you into the hollows of disgrace, threw you into the whirlpools of slaughter, and trampled you, wounding you by striking your eyes with spears, cutting your throats, tearing your nostrils, breaking your limbs and taking you in ropes of control towards the fire already prepared. In this way he became more harmful to your religion and a greater kindler of flames (of mischief) about your worldly matters than the enemies against whom you showed open opposition and against whom you marched your forces.

You should therefore spend all your force against him, and all your efforts against him, because, by Allah, he boasted over your (i.e., Adam's) origin, questioned your position and spoke lightly of your lineage. He advanced on you with his army, and brought his footmen towards your path. They are chasing you from every place, and they are

hitting you at every finger joint. You are not able to defend by any means, nor can you repulse them by any determination. You are in the thick of disgrace, the ring of straightness, the field of death and the way of distress.

You should therefore put out the fires of haughtiness and the flames of intolerance that are hidden in your hearts. This vanity can exist in a Muslim only by the machinations of Satan, his haughtiness, mischief and whisperings. Make up your mind to have humility over your heads, to trample self-pride under your feet and to cast off vanity from your necks. Adopt humility as the weapon between you and your enemy, Satan and his forces. He certainly has, from every people, fighters, helpers, footmen and horsemen. Do not be like him who feigned superiority over the son of his own mother without any distinction given to him by Allah except the feeling of envy which his feeling of greatness created in him and the fire of anger that vanity kindled in his heart. Satan blew into his nose his own vanity, after which Allah gave him remorse and made him responsible for the sins of all killers up to the Day of judgement.

Beware! You strove hard in revolting and created mischief on the earth in open opposition to Allah and in challenging the believers over fighting. (You should fear) Allah! Allah! in feeling proud of your vanity and boasting over ignorance, because this is the root of enmity and the design of Satan wherewith he has been deceiving past people and

bygone ages, with the result that they fell into the gloom of his ignorance and the hollows of his misguidance, submitting to his driving and accepting his leadership. In this matter the hearts of all the people were similar, and centuries passed by, one after the other, in just the same way, and there was vanity with which chests were tightened.

Beware! Beware of obeying your leaders and elders who felt proud of their achievements and boasted about their lineage. They hurled the (liability for) things on Allah and quarrelled with Allah in what He did with them, contesting His decree and disputing His favours. Certainly, they are the main foundation of obstinacy, the chief pillars of mischief and the swords of pre-Islamic boasting over forefathers. Therefore, fear Allah, do not become antagonistic to His favours on you, nor jealous of His bounty over you 1 and do not obey the claimants (of Islam) whose dirty water you drink along with your clean one, whose ailments you mix with your healthiness and whose wrongs you allow to enter into your rightful matters.

They are the foundation of vice and the linings of disobedience. Satan has made them carriers of misguidance and the soldiers with whom he attacks men. They are interpreters through whom he speaks in order to steal away your wits, enter into your eyes and blow into your ears. In this way he makes you the victim of his arrows, the treading ground of his footsteps and source of strength for his hands.

Take instruction from how Allah's wrath, violence, chastisement and punishment fell upon the arrogant nations before you. Take admonition from the resting places of their cheeks and their bodies, and seek Allah's protection from the dangers of pride, as you seek His protection from calamities. Certainly, if Allah were to allow anyone to indulge in pride He would have allowed it to his selected prophets and vicegerents.

But Allah, the Sublime, disliked vanity for them and liked humbleness for them. Therefore, they laid their cheeks on the ground, smeared their faces with dust, bent themselves down for the believers and remained humble people. Allah tried them with hunger, afflicted them with difficulty, tested them with fear, and upset them with troubles.

Therefore, do not regard wealth and progeny the criterion for Allah's pleasure and displeasure, as you are not aware of the chances of mischief and trials during richness and power as Allah, the Glorified, the Sublime, has said:

What! Think they that what We aid them with of wealth and children, We are hastening unto them the good things? Nay!

They (only) perceive not. (Qur'an, 23:55-56)

Certainly, Allah the Glorified, tries His creatures who are vain about themselves through His beloved persons who are humble in their eyes.

When Musa son of 'Imran went to Pharaoh along with his brother Harun (Aaron) wearing (coarse) shirts of wool and holding sticks in their hands, they guaranteed him retention of his country and continuity of his

honour if he submitted; but he said: "Do you not wonder at these two men guaranteeing me the continuity of my honour and the retention of my country although you see their poverty and lowliness. Otherwise, why do they not have gold bangles on their wrists?" He said so feeling proud of his gold and collected possessions, and considering wool and its cloth as nothing.

When Allah, the Glorified, deputed His prophets, if He had wished to open for them treasures and mines of gold and (surround them with) planted gardens and to collect around them birds of the skies and beasts of the earth, He could have done so. If He had done so then there would have been no trial, nor recompense and no tidings (about the affairs of the next world).

Those who accepted (His message) could not be given the recompense falling due after trial and the believers could not deserve the reward for good acts, and all these words would not have retained their meanings. But Allah, the Glorified, makes His Prophets firm in their determination and gives them weakness of appearance as seen from the eyes, along with contentment that fills the hearts and eyes resulting from care-freeness, and with want that pains the eyes and ears.

If the prophets possessed authority that could not be assaulted, or honour that could not be damaged or domain towards which the necks of people would turn and the saddles of mounts could be set, it would have been very easy for people to seek lessons and quite difficult to feel vanity.

They would have then accepted belief out of fear felt by them or inclination attracting them, and the intention of them all would have been the same, although their actions would have been different.

Therefore, Allah, the Glorified decided that people should follow His prophets, acknowledge His books, remain humble before His face, obey His command and accept His obedience with sincerity in which there should not be an iota of anything else; and as the trial and tribulation would be stiffer the reward and recompense too should be larger.

Do you not see that Allah, the Glorified, has tried all the people among those who came before, beginning with Adam, upto the last ones in this world with stones which yield neither benefit nor harm, which neither see nor hear. He made those stones into His sacred house which He made a standby for the people. He placed it in the most rugged stony part of the earth and on a highland with least soil thereon, among the most narrow valleys between rough mountains, soft sandy plains, springs of scanty water and scattered habitants, where neither camels nor horses nor cows and sheep can prosper.

Then He commanded Adam and his sons to turn their attention towards it. In this way it became the centre of their journey in seeking pastures and the rendezvous for meeting of their carrier-beasts, so that human spirits hasten towards it from distant waterless deserts, deep and low lying valleys and scattered islands in the seas. They shake

their shoulders in humbleness, recite the slogan of having reached His audience, march with swift feet, and have dishevelled hair and dusted faces. They throw their pieces of cloth on their backs, they have marred the beauty of their faces by leaving the hair uncut as a matter of great test, severe tribulation, open trial, and extreme refining. Allah has made it a means to His mercy and an approach to His Paradise.

If Allah, the Glorified, had placed His sacred House and His great signs among plantations, streams, soft and level plains, plenty of trees, an abundance of fruits, a thick population, close habitats, golden wheat, lush gardens, green land, watered plains, thriving orchards and crowded streets, the amount of recompense would have decreased because of the lightness of the trial. If the foundation on which the House is borne and the stones with which it has been raised had been of green emerald and red rubies, and there had been brightness and effulgence, then this would have lessened the action of doubts in the breasts, would have dismissed the effect of Satan's activity from the hearts, and would have stopped the surging of misgivings in people. But Allah tries His creatures by means of different troubles, wants them to render worship through hardships and involves them in distresses, all in order to extract out vanity from their hearts, to settle down humbleness in their spirits and to make all

this an open door for His favors and an easy means for His forgiveness (for their sins).

Fear) Allah! Allah! from the immediate consequence of rebellion (to accrue in this world), and the eventual consequence of weighty oppressiveness (to accrue in the next world), and from the evil result of vanity, because it is the great trap of Satan and his big deceit which enters the hearts of the people like a fatal poison. It never goes waste, nor misses anyone - neither the learned because of his knowledge, nor the destitute 3 in his rags This is the thing against which Allah has protected His creatures who are believers by means of prayers, and alms-giving, and suffering the hardship of fasting in the days in which it has been made obligatory, in order to give their limbs peacefulness, to cast fear in their eyes, to make their spirits humble, to give their hearts humility and to remove haughtiness from them.

All this is achieved through the covering of their delicate cheeks with dust in humility, prostrating their main limbs on the ground in humbleness, and retracting of their bellies so as to reach to their backs due to fasting by way of lowliness (before Allah), besides giving all sorts of products of the earth to the needy and the destitute by way of alms. Look what there is in these acts by way of curbing the appearance of pride and suppressing the traces of vanity.

I cast my glance and noticed that no one in the world, except you, feels vanity for anything without a cause which may appeal to the ignorant, or

a reason which may cling to the minds of the foolish, because you feel vanity for something for which no reason is discernible, nor any ground. As for Satan, he felt proud over Adam because of his origin and taunted at him about his creation, since he said "I am of fire while you are of clay."

In the same way the rich among the prosperous communities have been feeling vanity because of their riches, as (Allah) said: *And said they: "We are more (than you) in wealth and in children, and we shall not be chastised."* (Qur'an, 34:35)

In case you cannot avoid vanity, your vanity should be for good qualities, praiseworthy acts, and admirable matters with which the dignified and noble chiefs of the Arab families distinguished themselves, as attractive manners, high thinking, respectable position and good performances. You too should show vanity in praiseworthy habits like the protection of the neighbor, the fulfilment of agreements, obedience to the virtuous, opposition to the haughty, extending generosity to others, abstention from rebellion, keeping aloof from blood-shed, doing justice to people, suppressing anger and avoiding trouble on the earth. You should also fear what calamities befell peoples before you on account of their evil deeds and detestable actions. Remember, during good or bad circumstances, what happened to them, and be cautious that you do not become like them.

After you have thought over both the conditions of these people, attach yourself to everything with which their position became honourable, on account of which enemies remained away from them through which safety spread over them, by reason of which riches bowed before them and as a result of which distinction connected itself with their rope.

These things were abstention from division, sticking to unity, calling each other to it and advising each other about it. You avoid everything which broke their backbone and weakened their power, such as malice in the heart, hatred in the chest, turning away (from each other's help) and withholding the hand from one another's assistance.

Think about the condition of people from among the believers who passed before you. What distresses and trials they were in! Were they not the most over-burdened among all the people and in the most straitened circumstances in the whole world? The Pharaohs took them as slaves. They inflicted on them the worst punishments and bitter sufferings. They continuously remained in this state of ruinous disgrace and severe subjugation. They found no method for escape and no way for protection. Till when Allah, the Glorified, noticed that they were enduring troubles in His love and bearing distresses out of fear for Him, He provided escape from the distress of trials. So, He changed their disgrace into honour and fear into safety. Consequently, they became ruling kings and conspicuous leaders and Allah's favours over them reached limits to which their own wishes had not reached.

Look, how they were when their groups were united, their views were unanimous, their hearts were moderate, their hands used to help one another, their swords were intended for assisting one another, their eyes were sharp and their aims were the same. Did they not become masters of the corners of the earth and rulers over the neck of all the worlds?

Thereafter, also see what happened to them towards the end when division overtook them, unity became fractured, and differences arose between their words and their hearts. They divided into various groups and were scattered fighting among themselves. Then Allah took away from them the apparel of His honour and deprived them of the prosperity produced by His favours. Only their stories have remained among you for the guidance of those who may learn the lesson from them.

You should take a lesson from the fate of the progeny of Ismael, the children of Isaac and the children of Israel. How similar are their affairs and how akin are their examples. In connection with the details of their division and disunity, think of the days when Kisras of Persia and the Caesars of Rome had become their masters. 4 They turned them out from the pastures of their lands, the rivers of Iraq and the fertility of the world, towards

thorny forests, the passages of (hot) winds and hardships in livelihood. In this way they turned them into just herders of camels. Their houses were the worst in the world and their places of stay were the most drought-stricken. There was not one voice towards which they could

turn for protection, nor any shade of affection on whose strength they could repose trust.

Their condition was full of distress. Their hands were scattered. Their majority was divided. They were in great anguish and under layers of ignorance. They buried their daughters alive, worshipped idols, disregarded kinship and practiced robbery.

Now, look at the various favors of Allah upon them, that He deputed towards them a prophet who got them to pledge their obedience to him and made them unite at his call. (Look) how (Allah's) bounty spread the wings of its favors over them and flowed for them streams of its blessing, and the whole community became wrapped in blissful prosperity. Consequently, they were submerged under its bounty and enjoyed its lush life. Their affairs were settled under the protection of a powerful ruler, and circumstances offered them overpowering honour, and all things became easy for them under the auspices of a strong country. They became rulers over the world and kings in the (various) parts of the earth. They became masters of those who were formerly their masters, and began issuing commands over those who used to command them. They were so strong that neither did their spears need testing nor did their weapons have any flaw.

Beware! You have shaken your hands loose from the rope of obedience, and broken the divine fort around you by (resorting to) pre-Islamic rules. Certainly, it is a great blessing of

Allah, the Glorified, on this Ummah, that He has engendered among them unity through the cord of affection in whose shade they walk and take shelter. This is a blessing whose value no one in the whole world realises, because it is more valuable than any price and higher than any wealth.

You should know that you have again reverted to the position of the Bedouin Arabs after migration (to Islam), and have become different parties after having been once united. You do not possess anything of Islam except its name, and know nothing of belief save its show. You say, "The Fire yes, but no shameful position," as

if you would throw down Islam on its face in order to defame its honour and break its pledge (for brotherhood) which Allah gave you as a sacred trust on His earth and (a source of) peace among the people. Be sure that if you incline towards anything other than Islam, the unbelievers will fight you. Then there will be neither Gabriel nor Michael, neither *muhajirun* nor *ansar* to help you, but only the clashing of swords, till Allah settles the matter for you.

Certainly, there are examples before you of Allah's wrath, punishment, days of tribulations and happenings. Therefore, do not disregard His promises, ignoring His punishment, making light His wrath and not expecting His violence, because Allah, the Glorified, did not curse the past ages except because they had left off asking others to do good acts and refraining them from bad acts. In fact Allah cursed the foolish for

committing sins and the wise because they gave up refraining others from evils. Beware! You have broken the bonds of Islam, transgressed its limits, and destroyed its commands.

Beware! Surely Allah has commanded me to fight those who revolt, or who break the pledge, or create trouble on the earth. As regards pledge-breakers, I have fought them, as regards deviators from truth, I have waged holy war against them, and as regards those who have gone out of the faith, I have put them in (serious) disgrace 5. As for Satan of the pit, 6 he too has been dealt with by me through the loud cry with which the scream of his heart and shaking of his chest was also heard.

Only a small portion of the rebels has remained. If Allah allows me one more chance over them I will annihilate them except a few remnants that may remain scattered in the suburb of the cities.

Even in my boyhood I had lowered the chest of (the famous men) of Arabia, and broken the horn points (i.e., defeated the chiefs) of the tribes of Rabi'ah and Mudar. Certainly, you know my position of close kinship and special relationship with the Prophet of Allah - peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his descendants. When I was only a child he took charge of me. He used to press me to his chest and lay me beside him in his bed, bring his body close to mine and make me smell his fragrance. He used to chew something and then feed me with it. He found no lie in my speaking, nor weakness in any act.

From the time of his weaning, Allah had put a mighty angel with him to take him along the path of high character and good behaviour through day and night, while I used to follow him like a young camel following in the footprints of its mother. Every day he would show me in the form of a banner some of his high traits and commanded me to follow it.

Every year he used to go in seclusion to the hill of Hira', where I saw him but no one else saw him. In those days Islam did not exist in any house except that of the Prophet of Allah - peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his descendants - and Khadijah, while I was the third after these two. I used to see and watch the effulgence of divine revelation and message, and breathed the scent of Prophethood.

When the revelation descended on the Prophet of Allah - peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his descendants - I heard the moan of Satan. I said, "O Prophet of Allah, what is this moan?" and he replied, "This is Satan who has lost all hope of being worshipped. O Ali, you see all that I see and you hear all that I hear, except that you are not a Prophet, but you are a vicegerent and you are surely on (the path of) virtue."

I was with him when a party of the Quraysh came to him and said to him, "O Muhammad, you have made a big claim which none of your fore-fathers or those of your family have made. We ask you one thing; if you give us an answer to it and show it to us, we will believe that you

are a prophet and a messenger, but if you cannot do it, we will know that you are a sorcerer and a liar."

The Messenger of Allah said: "What do you ask for?" They said: "Ask this tree to move for us, even with its roots, and stop before you." The Prophet said, "Verily, Allah has power over everything. If Allah does it for you, will you then believe and stand witness to the truth?" They said "Yes". Then he said, "I shall show you whatever you want, but I know that you won't bend towards virtue, and there are among you those who will be thrown into the pit, and those who will form parties (against me)." Then the Holy Prophet said: "O tree, if you do believe in Allah and the Day of Judgement, and know that I am the Prophet of Allah, come up with your roots and stand before me with the permission of Allah." By Him who deputed the Prophet with truth, the tree did remove itself with its root and came with a great humming sound and a flapping like the flapping of the wings of birds, till it stopped before the Messenger of Allah and cast its higher branches over the Prophet, while some of its branches came down onto my shoulders, and I was on the right side of the Holy Prophet.

When the people saw this they said by way of pride and vanity. "Now you order half of it to come to you and the other half of it remain (in its place)." The Holy Prophet ordered the tree to do the same. Then half of the tree advanced towards him in an amazing manner and with greater humming. It was about to touch the Prophet of Allah. Then they said,

disbelieving and revolting, "Ask this half to get back to its other half and be as it was." The Prophet ordered it and it returned. Then I said, "There is no god but Allah! O Prophet of Allah, I am the first to believe in you and to acknowledge that the tree did what it did just now with the command of Allah, the Sublime, in testimony to your Prophethood and to heighten your word". Upon this all the people shouted, "Rather a sorcerer, a liar; it is wonderful sorcery, he is very adept in it. Only a man like this (pointing to me) can stand testimony to you in your affairs."

Certainly, I belong to the group of people who care not for the reproach of anybody in matters concerning Allah. Their countenance is the countenance of the truthful and their speech is the speech of the virtuous. They are wakeful during the nights (in devotion to Allah), and over beacons (of guidance) in the day. They hold fast to the rope of the Qur'an. Revive the traditions of Allah and of His Prophet. They do not boast nor indulge in self-conceit, nor misappropriate, nor create mischief. Their hearts are in Paradise while their bodies are busy in (good) acts.

From the sermons of Imam (peace be upon him) in which he objected to the characteristics of hypocrites. We testify that Muhammad, may God bless him and grant him peace, is his servant and messenger we praise

Allah for the succor He has given us in carrying out His obedience and in preventing us from disobedience, and we ask Him to complete His favors (to us) and to make us hold on to His rope. We stand witness that Muhammad is His slave and His Messenger. He entered every hardship in search of Allah's pleasure and endured for its sake every grief. His near relations changed themselves for him and those who were remote from him (in relationship) united against him.

The Arabs let loose the reins (of their horses to quicken their march) against him, and struck the bellies of their carriers to (rouse them) in fighting against him, so much so that enemies came to his threshold from the remotest places and most distant areas.

They eulogise each other and expect reward from each other. When they ask something they insist on it, if they reprove (any one) they disgrace (him), and if they pass verdict they commit excess. They have adopted for every truth a wrong way, for every erect thing a bender, for every living being a killer, for every (closed) door a key and for every night a lamp. They covet, but with despair, in order to maintain with it their markets, and to popularize their handsome merchandise. When they speak they create doubts. When they describe they exaggerate. First they offer easy paths but (afterwards) they make them narrow. In short, they are the party of Satan and the stings of fire.

.they are Satan's Party; Beware! Verily, the party of Satan are the losers. (Qur'an, 58:19)

I advise you, O creatures of Allah, to fear Allah and I warn you of the hypocrites, because they are themselves misguided and misguide others, and they have slipped and make others slip too. They change into many colours, and adopt various ways. They support you with all sorts of supports, and lay in waiting for you at every lookout.

Their hearts are diseased while their faces are clean. They walk stealthily and tread like the approach of sickness (over the body). Their words speak of cure, but their acts are like incurable diseases. They are jealous of ease, intensify distress, and destroy hopes. Their victims are found lying down on every path, while they have means to approach every heart and they have (false) tears for every grief.

Hadith n. 42

42. Amir al-mu'minin, peace be upon him, said to one of his companions during his sickness:

May Allah make your illness a means for writing off your sins, because there is no reward for sickness but that it erases sins and makes them fall like (dried) leaves. Reward lies in saying by the tongue and doing something with the hands and feet. Certainly, Allah, the Glorified, admits into Paradise by virtue of truthfulness of intention and chastity of heart to whomsoever He wishes from among His creatures.

Hadith n. 123

123. Amir al-mu'minin, peace be upon him, said: Blessed be he who humbles himself, whose livelihood is pure, whose heart is chaste, whose

habits are virtuous, who spends his savings (in the name of Allah), who prevents his tongue from speaking nonsense, who keeps people safe from evil, who is pleased with the (Prophet's) sunnah, and who is unconnected with innovation (in religion).

When Amir al-mu'minin, peace be upon him, returned from (the battle of) Siffin and noticed the graves outside Kufah, he said: O residents of houses which give a sense of loneliness, of depopulated areas and gloomy graves. O people of the dust, O victims of strangeness, O people of loneliness and O people of desolateness! You have gone ahead and preceded us while we are following you and will meet you. The houses (you left) have been inhabited by others; the wives (you left) have been married by others; the properties have been distributed (among heirs). This is the news about those around us; what is the news about things around you?

Then Amir al-mu'minin, peace be upon him, turned to his companions and said: Beware If they were allowed to speak they would inform you that:

Verily, the best provision is fear of Allah. (Qur'an, 2:197)

Hadith n. 199

199. Amir al-mu'minin, peace be upon him, said about the crowd of people: These are the people who, when they assemble together, are overwhelming but when they disperse they cannot be recognized.

It is related that instead of this Amir al-mu'minin, peace be upon him, said: These are the people who when they assemble together cause harm but when they disperse are beneficial. It was pointed out to him: We know their harm at the time of their assembling but what is their benefit at the time of their dispersal?

Then he replied: The workers return to their work and people get benefit out of them, like the return of the mason to the building site, that of the weaver to his loom, and that of the baker to his bakery.

From the sermons of Imam Ali (pbuh), in this sermon he spoke about the glory and greatness of God

Praise be to Allah who is above all similarity to the creatures, is above the words of describers, who displays the wonders of His management for the on-lookers, is hidden from the imagination of thinkers by virtue of the greatness of His glory, has knowledge without acquiring it, adding to it or drawing it (from someone), and Who is the ordainer of all matters without reflecting or thinking. He is such that gloom does not concern Him, nor does He seek light from brightness, night does not overtake Him nor does the day pass over Him (so as to affect Him in any manner). His comprehension (of things) is not through eyes and His knowledge is not dependent on being informed.

A part of the same sermon about the Prophet Allah deputised the Prophet with light, and accorded him the highest precedence in selection. Through him Allah united those who were divided,

overpowered the powerful, overcame difficulties and levelled rugged ground, and thus removed misguidance from right and left.

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) says this about the goodness and beauty of the world:

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

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

He who is bestowed four things is not disallowed four things: he who is allowed to pray is not deprived of the response to it; he who is allowed to offer repentance is not deprived of its acceptance; he who is allowed to seek forgiveness is not deprived of forgiveness; and he who is allowed to be grateful is not deprived of furtherance of favours.

You shall have from this world only that with which you can adorn your permanent abode. Therefore, spend properly (in the right path) and do not be the treasurer of others. Know that He Who owns the treasuries of the heavens and of the earth has permitted you to pray to Him and has promised you acceptance of the prayer. He has commanded you to beg from Him in order that He may give you and to seek His mercy in order that He may have mercy on you. He has not placed anything between you and Him that may veil Him from you. He has not required you to get a mediator for you to Him, and if you err, He has not prevented you from repentance. He does not hasten with punishment. He does not taunt you for repenting, nor does He humiliate you when humiliation is more appropriate for you. He has not been harsh in accepting repentance. He does not severely question you about your sins. He does not disappoint you of His mercy. Rather He regards abstention from sin as a virtue. He counts your one sin as one while He counts your one virtue as ten.

Letter 69: To al-Harith (ibn `Abdillah, al-A`war) al-Hamdani

Adhere to the rope of the Qur'an and seek instructions from it. Regard its lawful as lawful and its unlawful as unlawful. Testify the right that has

been in the past. Take lessons for the present condition of this world from the past (condition), because it's one phase resembles the other, its end is to meet its beginning, and the whole of it is to change and depart. Regard the name of Allah as too great to mention Him, save in the matter of right. Remember death frequently and (what is to come) after death. Do not long for death except on a reliable condition.

Avoid every action which the doer likes for his own self but dislikes for the Muslims in general. Avoid every such action which is performed in secret and from which shame is felt in the open. Also avoid that action about which if the doer is questioned he himself regards it bad or offers excuses for it. Do not expose your honour to be treated as the subject of people's discussions. Do not relate to the people all that you hear, for that would amount to falsehood.

Do not contest all that the people relate to you for that would mean ignorance. Kill your anger and forgive when you have power (to punish). Show forbearance in the moment of rage, and pardon in spite of authority; the eventual end will then be in your favour. Seek good out of every favour that Allah has bestowed on you, and do not waste any favour of Allah over you. The effect of Allah's favours over you should be visible on you.

Know that the most distinguished among the believers is he who is the most forward of them in spending from himself, his family and his property, because whatever good you send forward Will remain in store

for you and the benefit of whatever you keep behind will be derived by others. Avoid the company of the person whose opinion is unsound and whose action is detestable, because a man is judged after his companion. Live in big cities because they are collective centers of the Muslims. Avoid places of neglectfulness and wickedness and places where there are paucity of supporters for the obedience of Allah. Confine your thinking to matters which are helpful to you. Do not sit in the marketing centers because they are the meeting-places of Satan, and targets of mischiefs. Frequently look at those over whom you enjoy superiority because this is a way of giving thanks.

Do not undertake a journey on Friday until you have attended the prayers, except when you are going in the way of Allah, or in an excusable matter. Obey Allah in all your affairs because Allah's obedience has precedence over all other things. Deceive your heart into worshipping, persuade it and do not force it. Engage it (in worshipping) when it is free and merry, except as regards the obligations enjoined upon you, for they should not be neglected and must be performed at the five times. Be on guard lest death comes down upon you while you have fled away from your Lord in search of worldly pleasure. Avoid the company of the wicked because vice adjoins vice. Regard Allah as great, and love His lovers. Keep off anger because it is one large army from Satan's armies; and that is an end to the matter.

The Imam's letters to Sahl bin Hanif, the governor of Medina, about the group that had joined Mu'awiyah .Now, I have come to know that certain persons from your side are stealthily going over to Mu`awiyah. Do not feel sorry for their numbers so lost to you or for their help of which you are deprived. It is enough that they have gone into misguidance and you have been relieved of them. They are running away from guidance and truth and advancing towards blindness and ignorance. They are seekers of this world and are proceeding to it and are leaping towards it. They have known justice, seen it, heard it and appreciated it. They have realized that here, to us, all men are equal in the matter of right. Therefore, they ran away to selfishness and partiality. Let them remain remote and far away.

By Allah, surely they have not gone away from oppression and joined justice. In this matter, we only desire Allah to resolve for us its hardships and to level for us its unevenness, if Allah wills; and that is an end to the matter.