



ALI 241: Akhlāq of the Ahlul Bayt عليهم السلام

Session 1: JCC;

Tuesday - 26 Shawwal 1434/
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Sūrah al-Yusuf, 12: 53 - 57

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ * وَمَا أُبْرِيءُ نَفْسِي ۖ إِنَّ النَّفْسَ
لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ إِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ رَبِّي ۖ إِنَّ رَبِّي غَفُورٌ
رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٥٣﴾ وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ ائْتُونِي بِهِ أَسْتَخْلِصُهُ
لِنَفْسِي ۖ فَلَمَّا كَلَّمَهُ قَالَ إِنَّكَ الْيَوْمَ لَدَيْنَا مَكِينٌ
أَمِينٌ ﴿٥٤﴾ قَالَ اجْعَلْنِي عَلَىٰ خَزَائِنِ الْأَرْضِ ۗ إِنِّي
حَفِيظٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٥٥﴾ وَكَذَلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوسُفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ
يَتَّبِعُوا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ يَشَاءُ ۖ نُصِيبُ بِرَحْمَتِنَا مَنْ نَشَاءُ ۗ وَلَا
نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾ وَلَا أَجْرَ الْآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ
آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾

Translation 12: 53 - 57

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. And I do not acquit myself. Indeed, the soul is a persistent enjoiner of evil, except those upon which my Lord has mercy. Indeed, my Lord is Forgiving and Merciful.” (53) And the king said, “Bring him to me; I will appoint him exclusively for myself.” And when he spoke to him, he said, “Indeed, you are today established [in position] and trusted.” (54) [Yusuf] said, “Appoint me over the storehouses of the land. Indeed, I will be a knowing guardian.” (55) And thus We established Yusuf in the land to settle therein wherever he willed. We touch with Our mercy whom We will, and We do not allow to be lost the reward of those who do good. (56) And the reward of the Hereafter is better for those who believed and were fearing Allah. (57)

A story on exalted morals

Anas ibn Malik, who was the servant of the Holy Prophet (s) of Islam narrates: ‘I used to prepare milk for the Prophet to break his fast with. One night he was home late. Thinking that he had been a guest at somebody’s house and thus had broken his fast there, I drank the milk. Before long he returned home. I asked his companions if he had broken his fast and they said that he had not.

‘When the Holy Prophet of Islam was informed of the matter, he made no remark about it and behaved as if he were not hungry at all and went without supper with a cheerful face. The next day he also fasted’ (*A Glance at the Life of the Holy Prophet of Islam*)

Pre-course questions

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

- What is definition of akhlāq?
- What is the function of akhlāq?
- Why is it necessary to study akhlāq?
- Why study the akhlāq of the Ahlul Bayt (a)?
- Do you know any story from the Ahlul Bayt that talks of good moral.

Description of human *nafs* (soul/self)

Nafsul Ammarah - The despotic soul which leads one to commit evil and vicious acts. If it is not controlled by faith and reason, it results in man's sudden fall.

Nafsul Lawwamah - The reproaching soul. This self or ego is active when a guilty person blames and scolds himself. In this case, he tends to seek repentance and is apologetic for the sin or crime which he has committed.

Nafsul Mutmainnah - The peaceful soul which is found in only the prophets, and those truly trained by them. Once they find themselves surrounded by unbridled passion and ignorance, they seek the help of Allah to be extricated from it. They owe everything to Allah who loves them very much.

Meaning & source of Akhlaq

The word *akhlaq* is the plural of *khulq* which means disposition. “Disposition” is that faculty (*malakah*) of the soul which is the source of all those activities that man performs spontaneously without thinking about them. *Malakah* is a property of the soul which comes into existence through exercise and repetitive practice and is not easily destroyed. A particular disposition may appear due to:

- 1. Natural and physical make up due to genes, etc.
- 2. Habits formed by repetition of acts
- 3. Practice and conscious effort: if continued long enough will eventually; e.g. certain sport activities
- 4. Influence of the environment

Ability to change our akhlaq

- Man can control his lust, anger and other emotions and desires, and channel them to edify himself and propel himself along the path of perfection and wisdom.
- When we speak of man's capacity to bring about changes in his dispositions, it means one should avoid going to either extremes in regard to them, and maintain a condition of balance and moderation so that they may perform their functions properly.
- Just as the seed of a date grows into a fruitful tree through proper care, or a wild horse is trained to serve his master, or a dog is trained to be the lifelong friend and a help to man, so also can man attain perfection and wisdom through self-discipline and intelligent perseverance.
- Dispositions which are caused by the mental faculties such as intelligence, memory, mental agility, etc. are not alterable

Function of *'Ilm al-Akhlaq*

Human perfection has many levels. The greater the amount of self-discipline and effort on the part of the individual, the higher the level of perfection that he would attain. In other words, he stands between two extreme points, the lowest of which is below the level of beasts and the highest of which surpasses even the high station of angels. The human movement between these two extremes is discussed by *'ilm al-akhlaq* or the science of ethics. It is the goal of ethics to raise and guide man from the lowest animal state to that exalted position superior to that of the angels. So science of Akhlaq is considered to be the most exalted and valuable of sciences

Objective in following Akhlaq

Moral virtues bring eternal happiness, while moral corruption leads to everlasting wretchedness. We need to purge and purify of all evil traits of character and adorn our souls with all forms of ethical and moral virtues. Without cleaning of all evil habits, it would be impossible to nourish & develop moral virtues. The human soul is like a mirror. If we wish to see something beautiful reflected in a mirror, we must first cleanse the mirror, so that dust and dirt do not disfigure the reflection. Any attempt to obey God's commands would be fruitful and successful only when one has purified himself of evil habits and tendencies; otherwise, it would be like putting on jewels on a dirty and unwashed body. When one is completely rid of all evil habits of thought, speech and action, then the soul is ready to receive the unlimited grace of God. Such reception is the ultimate reason for which man was created. We need to develop the necessary receptivity to benefit from Divine Grace.

Makarimul Akhlaq – seeking the best

O Allah, bless Muhammad and his Household,
cause my faith to reach the most perfect faith,
make my certainty the most excellent certainty,
and take my intention to the best of intentions
and my works to the best of works!

(Refer to vv. Q.16:96, 16:97 & 18:7)

O Allah:

complete my intention through Your gentleness,
rectify my certainty through what is with You, and
set right what is corrupt in me through Your power!

(*Sahifa Sajjadiyyah*, Du‘a No. 20)