



# ALI 308: Developing Baṣīrah

Academy for Learning Islam  
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The class will begin shortly – Maghrib  
Salāh time in Toronto.

# Plan for the session

- Nature of Baṣīrah
  - Etymology
  - Differences between similar concepts
- Value and Necessity for Baṣīrah
  - Emphasis and contextualization
- Sources of Baṣīrah (internal and external activators)
- Factors stimulating and inhibiting Baṣīrah
- Results of possessing Baṣīrah

# Case study 1 – Siffeen

- Imam Ali (as) in the battle – nearing victory – Malik al-Ashtar closing in on Mu‘awiyah – ‘Amr al-‘Aas plots = raise ‘Qur’an’ on spears
- Result:
  - A large group of Imam’s army halt in their tracks
  - Demand a ceasefire and Malik al-Ashtar’s immediate retreat
  - Give in to arbitration – the group later forms ‘Khawarij’ – call out ‘No judgement except for Allah’ – later martyr Amīrul Mu'minīn
- Question:
  - What caused this and what went wrong?
  - How could this situation have been avoided?

# Başīrah [بصيرة] - etymology

- Baṣr (ب ص ر) - has two main infinitives:

1) (بَصَرَ) Baṣar refers to:

- i. The eye or *sight* (which is the power within the eye)
- ii. The internal/spiritual capacity to perceive - *insight*

Plural: Abṣar (أَبْصَار)

2) (بَصِيرَةَ) Baṣīrah refers mainly to:

- i. The capacity of the heart to perceive deeper concepts and truths – *insight*  
(hardly used for seeing without inner perception)

Plural: Baṣāir (بَصَائِر)

NB.

- General meanings for the term Baṣīrah include *knowledge, spiritual insight, nur (inner light), wisdom, cognition...* but there is an emphasis in all interpretations on *knowing* and *recognition* as evident from its root which also refers to *sight* – an important tool in acquiring knowledge.
- Baṣīrah must not be used interchangeably with Knowledge (*‘Ilm*) since not every person possessing knowledgeable necessarily has insight.

# Başīrah «بصيرة» – analyzing the context

## The Holy Qur'an

Başīrah and its root-related words are mentioned **148** times in the Holy Qur'an, while the word Başīrah itself appears **twice** and its plural form Basāir **thrice**.

### 1) Insight – basis of Prophetic invitation

قُلْ هَذِهِ سَبِيلِي أَدْعُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ عَلَى بَصِيرَةٍ أَنَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِي وَ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَ مَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

Say, " This is my way. I summon to Allah with insight I and he who follows me. Immaculate is Allah, and I am not one of the polytheists." (Yusuf:108)

### 2) Insight - precise self-knowledge

بَلِ الْإِنْسَانُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ بَصِيرَةٌ | وَ لَوْ أَلْقَى مَعَاذِيرُهُ

Rather man is a witness to himself, though he offers his excuses. (Al-Qiyamah:14-15)

### 3) Insights – channels and proofs towards Divine guidance and eternal felicity

قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بَصَائِرُ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَمَنْ أَبْصَرَ فَلِنَفْسِهِ وَ مَنْ عَمِيَ فَعَلَيْهَا وَ مَا أَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِحَفِيظٍ

Say, " Certainly insights have come to you from your Lord. So whoever sees, it is to the benefit of his own soul, and whoever remains blind, it is to its detriment, and I am not a keeper over you."

(Al-An'aam:104)

## Other related contexts:

4) Penetrating vision in this world – key to sight in the Hereafter (Taha:125)

قَالَ رَبِّ لِمَ حَشَرْتَنِي أَعْمَىٰ وَقَدْ كُنْتُ بَصِيرًا

5) Inequality between the Seer and the Blind (Anaam:50)

قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَىٰ وَالْبَصِيرُ

6) Real blindness = lack of insight (al-Hajj:46)

فَإِنَّهَا لَا تَعْمَى الْأَبْصَارُ وَلَكِن تَعْمَى الْقُلُوبُ الَّتِي فِي الصُّدُورِ

### • The Ahadith

#### – Sayings

- Prophet Muhammad (S):

«ما من عبد إلا و في وجهه عينان يبصر بهما أمر الدنيا، و عينان في قلبه يبصر بهما أمر الآخرة، فإذا أراد بعد خيرا فتح عينيه اللتين في قلبه: فأبصر بهما ما وعده بالغيب، فأمن بالغيب على الغيب»

[There isn't a servant except that he has in his head two eyes through which he perceives the affairs of the lower world and two eyes in his heart through which he perceives the affairs of the world Hereafter, **so if (the Almighty) wills for goodness for a servant, He opens his two eyes which are in his heart**, so he perceives what He had promised him through the hidden, thus believing in the hidden using the hidden (eyes).] – Kanzul Ummal (v2/p42/h3043)

## – Duas

### \*Morning dua

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ بِحَقِّ مُحَمَّدٍ وَ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ عَلَيْكَ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَ اجْعَلِ النُّورَ فِي  
بَصْرِي وَ **البصيرة** فِي دِينِي وَ اليقين فِي قَلْبِي وَ الإخلاصَ فِي عَمَلِي وَ السَّلَامَةَ فِي نَفْسِي وَ  
السَّعَةَ فِي رِزْقِي وَ الشُّكْرَ لَكَ أَبَدًا مَا أَبْقَيْتَنِي

### \*Dua Abi Hamza ath-Thimali

اللَّهُمَّ أَعْطِنِي **بصيرة** فِي دِينِكَ وَ فَهْمًا فِي حُكْمِكَ

### \*Dua Tawba (Sahifa Sajjadiyyah)

اللَّهُمَّ وَ ثَبَّتْ فِي طَاعَتِكَ نَبِيِّي، وَ أَحْكَمْ فِي عِبَادَتِكَ **بصيرتي**، وَ وَفَّقْنِي مِنَ الْأَعْمَالِ لِمَا تَغْسِلُ  
بِهِ دَنَسَ الْخَطَايَا عَنِّي، وَ تَوَفَّنِي عَلَى مِلَّتِكَ وَ مِلَّةِ نَبِيِّكَ: مُحَمَّدٍ - عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ - إِذَا تَوَفَّيْتَنِي.

NB

- Acquiring Baṣīrah requires persistent supplication
- Supplicate for deep insightful knowledge of religion and servitude (path towards God)
- Knowledge in Islam – not information – rather is a state of being which is achieved through practicing what is known

## – Ziyarah

- Hadhrat Abul Fadhl al-Abbas

وَ أَنْكَ مَضَيْتَ عَلَى بَصِيرَةٍ مِنْ أَمْرِكَ مُقْتَدِيَا بِالصَّالِحِينَ وَ مُتَّبِعَا لِلنَّبِيِّينَ

- Hadhrat Muslim bin Aqeel

وَ أَنْكَ مَضَيْتَ عَلَى بَصِيرَةٍ مِنْ أَمْرِكَ مُقْتَدِيَا بِالصَّالِحِينَ وَ مُتَّبِعَا لِلنَّبِيِّينَ

[فَجَمَعَ اللَّهُ بَيْنَنَا وَ بَيْنَكَ وَ بَيْنَ رَسُولِهِ وَ أَوْلِيَائِهِ فِي مَنَازِلِ الْمُحِبِّينَ فَإِنَّهُ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ]



# Case study 2 – H. Abul Fadhl al-Abbas

- What made Abal Fadhl al-Abbas the backbone of Imam Husayn (as)?
- Imam as-Sadiq (as):

كان عمنا العباس بن علي **نافذ البصيرة** صلب الإيمان، جاهد مع أبي عبد الله الحسين عليه السلام و أبلى بلاء حسنا، و مضى شهيدا

Two inner qualities: Piercing insight, solid faith

Two outer actions: Struggle in the path of the Imam of his time, showed strength and courage

NB

- Baṣīrah has an inner (theoretical) and an outer (practical) component
- Inside: deep rooted faith and insight required
- Outside: committed action to the values

# Value of Baṣīrah

- Hear the agony of Imam Ali (as)!

..صَاحِبِكُمْ يُطِيعُ اللَّهَ وَ أَنْتُمْ تَعْصُونَهِ وَ صَاحِبُ أَهْلِ الشَّامِ يَعِصِي اللَّهَ وَ هُمْ يُطِيعُونَهُ  
لَوَدِدْتُ وَ اللَّهَ أَنَّ مُعَاوِيَةَ صَارَفَنِي بِكُمْ صَرَفَ الدِّينَارِ بِالدِّرْهِمِ فَأَخَذَ مِنِّي عَشْرَةَ مِنْكُمْ وَ  
أَعْطَانِي رَجُلًا مِنْهُمْ

يَا أَهْلَ الْكُوفَةِ مَنِيتُ مِنْكُمْ بِثَلَاثٍ وَ اثْنَتَيْنِ:

صُمٌّ ذُؤُ أَسْمَاعٍ وَ بُكْمٌ ذُؤُ كَلَامٍ وَ عُمِيٌّ ذُؤُ أَبْصَارٍ  
لَا أَحْرَارُ صِدْقٍ عِنْدَ اللَّقَاءِ وَ لَا إِخْوَانُ ثِقَةٍ عِنْدَ الْبَلَاءِ...

[...you are deaf in spite of having ears, dumb in spite of speaking, and blind in spite of having eyes. You are neither true supporters in combat nor dependable brothers in distress...]

(Nahjul Balaghah: Sermon 96/97)

Let's reflect: Where are we compared to the Kufans? Isn't it likely the Imam of our Time (aj) is agonized similarly by our actions?

# Necessity for Baṣīrah

## 1. Fulfill the goal of creation (إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ)

Allah (jj) is al-Baseer (the all-Seeing) and the more Baṣīrah we attain, we approach His Qurb and viceversa

## 2. Proximity to the beloved ones of Allah (jj) (Imam al-Ridha (as))

أَنَّ اللَّهَ جَلَّ جَلَالُهُ حَصَّ رُسُلَهُ بِمَكَارِمِ الْأَخْلَاقِ فَاْمْتَحِنُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ... ذَكَرَهَا عَشْرَةَ الْيَقِينِ وَ الْقَنَاعَةَ وَ الْبَصِيرَةَ وَ الشُّكْرَ وَ الْحِلْمَ...

## 3. Be successful in this world and the Hereafter

Imam al-Kadhim (as) in a hadith refers to four types of people, in which the fourth group has the quality of Baṣīrah leading them to be the best of their era and the most intellectually sound.

ذِي بَصِيرَةٍ عَالِمٍ عَارِفٍ بِطَرِيقِ الْحَقِّ... فَهُوَ أَمْثَلُ أَهْلِ زَمَانِهِ وَ أَوْجَهُهُمْ عَقْلًا

## 4. Prepare for the Imam's (aj) return

When the Imam will reappear, those with Baṣīrah will carry their swords (forces) on them i.e. back their actions with their insight.. (Nahjul Balaghah: Sermon 150)

حَمَلُوا بَصَائِرَهُمْ عَلَى أَسْيَافِهِمْ...

# *Sources of Baṣīrah*

- Baṣīrah is a human characteristic that has both; an internal source and external activators.

- Internal source:

- **FITRAH** (Innate God-given conscience) –

- ash-Shams:7-8 فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا وَ نَفْسٍ وَ مَا سَوَّاهَا

[by the soul and Him who fashioned it and inspired it with discernment between its virtues and vices]

- al-Balad:10 وَ هَدَيْنَاهُ النَّجْدَيْنِ

[and shown him the two paths of good and evil]

## – External activators:

### I. *Guidance for humanity*

- **THE HOLY QUR'AN** (The Divine Word – connection with Him)

- Muhammad:23–24 أَفَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا

[They are the ones whom Allah has cursed, so He made them deaf, and blinded their sight. Do they not contemplate the Qur'an, or are there locks on the hearts]

- Imam as-Sadiq (as): *بصيرة من العمى*، و في كتاب الله نجاة من الردى،

- **AL-ISLAM** (Theoretical and practical guidelines)

- Imam Ali (as) responding to someone's question on Islam:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَبَارَكَ وَ تَعَالَى شَرَعَ الْإِسْلَامَ وَ سَهَّلَ شَرَائِعَهُ لِمَنْ وَرَدَهُ ... وَ *بصيرة لمن عزم*

### II. *Success from the Almighty*

- **TAWFIQ** (Achieving success through Divine assistance)

- Hud:88 [and my success lies only with Allah] وَ مَا تَوْفِيقِي إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

- Imam Ali (as) in praising the Almighty: وَ أَعْطَانَا *البصيرة* بَعْدَ الْعَمَى

# *Factors stimulating Baṣīrah*

- Practical attitude/conduct
  - **Mental and intellectual** (strengthening the mind – connecting the effects to the Cause – developing a Divine worldview)
    - Tafakkur (contemplation)
    - Ta’aqul (intellection)
    - Ta’allum (learning/seeking knowledge)
    - ‘I’tibār (taking lessons/admonition)

رَحِمَ اللَّهُ امْرَأً تَفَكَّرَ فَاغْتَبَرَ وَاعْتَبَرَ فَأَبْصَرَ

[Imam Ali (as): May Allah (jj) have mercy on the person who contemplates thus receives admonition and when receives admonition increases in his insight]

Q? – How many times a day or week do we ponder over our own actions? the actions of our family? the way our community works? the society and the world around us?

How about now seeking and acquiring knowledge to better the situation?

How about delving into the past and present, take lessons and prepare for the future?

– **Spiritual** (connecting with the Almighty and strengthening the bond)

- Taqwā (self-control and protection through God-consciousness)  
(al-Anfāl: 29 يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِن تَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَجْعَل لَّكُمْ فُرْقَانًا )
- 'Ikhlās (sincerity in action)  
(Imam Ali (as): عِنْدَ تَحَقُّقِ الْإِخْلَاصِ تَسْتَنِيرُ الْبَصَائِرَ )
- Dhikr (constant remembrance of Allāh (jj))  
(al-'A' rāf: 201 إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طَعْفٌ مِّنَ الشَّيْطَانِ تَذَكَّرُوا فَإِذَا هُمْ مُبْصِرُونَ )
- Du'ā' (supplication/invocation)  
(Imam Ali (as): وَ أَنْزِرْ أَبْصَارَ قُلُوبِنَا بِضِيَاءِ نَظَرِهَا إِلَيْكَ حَتَّى تَحْرِقَ أَبْصَارَ الْقُلُوبِ حُجُبَ النُّورِ )
- Zuhd (cutting away from worldly attachments)  
(Imam Ali (as): ازْهَدْ فِي الدُّنْيَا يَبْصِرَكَ اللَّهُ عَوْرَاتِهَا )

– **Others:**

- Qabūl an-Nus'h (Accepting other's sincere and constructive advice)
- Istiqbāl al-Umūr (looking forward to affairs – foresight)
- Jū' (hunger – through Islamically sanctioned methods – fasting)

Q? What is the state of our spiritual wellbeing? How well do we receive advice from others?

# *Factors inhibiting Baṣīrah*

- Practical attitude/conduct
  - **Distractions from the True Goal and being directionless**
    - ‘Ittibā’ al-Hawā (following vain desires)
    - Raghbah fi ad-Dunyā (endearment towards the worldly life)
    - ‘Amal (possessing false hopes – baseless ambitions)
    - Love and hatred (based on falsehood - valueless)
  - **Being spiritually static and motionless**
    - Ghaflah (being heedless - of the Truth/Reality)
    - Tark al-‘Amal bi al-‘Ilm (forgoing practice while possessing knowledge)
    - Lajāj (obstinacy and stubbornness)



# *Results of possessing Baṣīrah*

- ‘Ilm (True knowledge/Conviction) as opposed to Shak (Doubt)
- ‘Īmān (Belief and firm faith) as opposed to Dhalālah (Misguidance)
- ‘I’tibār (Acquiring admonition)
- Ru’yah ‘Uyūb an-Nafs (Seeing own’s faults)
- Others:
  - Hazm (Prudence)
  - Fiṭnah (Sharpness - not sedition!)
  - Fi’l al-Khayr (performance of good deeds)
  - Ṣalāḥ al-Asrār (virtuousness of the inner being)
  - Salāmah (reaching the path of safety)
  - Shajā’ah (Courage)

# Q&A – clarifications