Force Yourselves to Do Good and Strive Against Your Selves: Exertion, Jihad al-Nafs, and the Human Inclination Toward Evil

Introduction

The hadith under consideration is attributed to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him and his family):

رسول اللهۖ (صلي الله عليه و آله): تكلفوا فعلالخير وجاهدوا نفوسكم عليه؛ فإن الشر مطبوع عليه الإنسان

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: '**Force yourselves to do good, and exert yourselves therein, for verily evil is something man naturally tends towards.**'

— Tanbih al-Khawatir, v. 2, p. 120

This hadith presents a comprehensive moral and spiritual program in Islam, teaching that goodness is an achievement rather than a given, that doing good requires takalluf (conscious, deliberate, sometimes arduous exertion), that the inner self (nafs) must be struggled against through jihad al-nafs (the greater jihad), and that human nature contains an inclination toward evil, making continuous effort, self-discipline, and reliance on divine guidance necessary.

Part 1: "Exert Yourselves in Doing Good" — Takallafu Fi'l al-Khayr

Linguistic and Ethical Sense of Takallafu

The first phrase, تكلفوا فعل الخير (takallafu fi'l al-khayr), is translated as "exert yourselves in doing good." The imperative تكلفوا (takallafu) comes from the root ك ل ف (k-l-f), which is connected to كلفة (kulfah) — discomfort, hardship, or burden — and to التكليف (al-taklif), the imposition of duty and responsibility. The word therefore carries meanings such as: to exert oneself; to take pains; to undertake with difficulty; to make a conscious effort; to take something upon oneself; to bear a burden or difficulty; to deliberately undertake a task.

The performing of good deeds is not always effortless or spontaneous. Goodness is not a passive state but an active pursuit. It requires intentionality, deliberate effort, and sometimes the overcoming of internal resistance such as laziness, self-interest,

or the desire for ease. This is why takallafu is distinct from تطوع (tatawwu'), which means to do something willingly and gladly without reluctance. Takallafu applies even when willingness is absent or must be cultivated through struggle.

The term at-Taklif (التكليف) signifies the imposition of duty and responsibility. It implies that an individual undertaking these duties will experience hardship in discharging them. This concept highlights that divine responsibility or entrustment is a significant weight or burden, necessitating great effort and dedication for its fulfillment.

While Taklif means "to put in hardship," clarifies that the rules of the Shari'ah are not intended to be overly burdensome. Instead, they are designed to bring ease and comfort, being well within human capacity, as indicated by the principle: "On no soul does Allah place a burden but less than its capacity." Therefore, Takallafu suggests an obligation that requires conscious effort and resolve, rather than an unbearable task.

A related concept, tatawwu' (تطوع), meaning "to do work willingly and gladly," suggests an ideal attitude towards these duties, emphasizing acceptance and the absence of reluctance, whether for obligatory or non-obligatory actions.

Meaning of Fi'l al-Khayr (Performing Good Deeds)

Fi'l al-Khayr literally means "performing good deeds" or "hastening to the best of deeds." The term khayr (good) itself carries broad meanings:

- **Root Meaning:** The fundamental meaning of khayr is "inclination."
- **Comprehensive Good:** It implies both "needlessness and prosperity." In a prayer, it encompasses "all the good of this world and all the good of the Hereafter." The good in this world is specified as "abundance in sustenance, favorable living conditions, and good character," while the good in the Hereafter refers to "Allah's (swt) pleasure and Paradise."
- **Specific Good Deeds:** Al-khayrat (good deeds) can refer specifically to the "Love for the Ahl al-Bayt," also known as Wilayah. "Good works" can also denote "believing in the Wilayat of Ameerul Momineen (asws)." Those who "do good" are considered to have affection for Ali (peace be upon him).
- **Moral and Spiritual Dimensions:** The concept of Talim of Khair'at emphasizes a life of "simplicity, sacrifice, and generosity," urging individuals to prioritize spiritual growth and use their time and resources wisely to achieve a higher purpose.
- **Divine Mercy:** Khayr is synonymous with rahmah (mercy), underscoring the Holy Prophet's role as "the mercy unto the worlds," a bringer of good and mercy to humanity.
- **Foremost in Goodness:** Sabiqum bil Khairat refers to those who are "foremost in goodness," identified as the Imams (peace be upon him).

Implications of Takallafu Fi'l al-Khayr

Taken together, "Takallafu Fi'l al-Khayr" implies that performing good deeds is a divinely imposed duty (Taklif) that demands conscious effort, dedication, and often involves a degree of hardship. It is not an automatic outcome of human nature but requires active striving.

The phrase calls for individuals to undertake acts of goodness, which encompass a wide array of actions, from cultivating good character and ensuring prosperity in this world to achieving divine pleasure in the Hereafter, and fundamentally includes love and belief in the Wilayah of the Ahl al-Bayt. Despite the potential difficulty or "burden" implied by Takallafu, these duties are within human capacity and should ideally be approached with willingness and acceptance (tatawwu'), as they are essential for moral responsibility, spiritual elevation, and achieving comprehensive good in both temporal and eternal aspects of life.

Distinction Between Compelled Effort (Takalluf) and Voluntary Extra Good (Tatawwu')

While the retrieved material does not offer an explicit technical comparison between takalluf and tatawwu', it distinguishes between duty-driven, often arduous effort and voluntary, extra acts of goodness.

Takalluf: Effort, Hardship, and Bearing the Burden of Duty

Takalluf is associated with duties that often involve sacrifice, restraint, and pushing oneself beyond comfort. This is evident in:

- **Enjoining Good and Forbidding Evil:** Described as "one of the biggest duties of all Muslims," emphasizing compulsion and responsibility.

  Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said:

  الحسن بن محمد الديلمي في)االرشاد(عن رسول هللا)صل هللا عليه وآله(اقل: قيل له: ال أنمر ابلمعروف حتى نعمل به كله وال ننهى عن المنكر حتى ننتهي عنه كله؟ فقال: ال بل مروا ابلمعروف وإن لم تعملوا به كله، وانهوا عن المنكر وان لم .تنتهوا عنه كله

  Al-Hasan bin Muhammad Al-Dailami in (Al-Irshad) from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him and his family) said: **He was asked: Should we not enjoin good until we practice all of it, and not forbid evil until we abstain from all of it? He replied: No, rather enjoin good even if you don't practice all of it, and forbid evil even if you don't abstain from all of it**.

— Wasa il al-Shia Vol. 16, Section 2, Chapter 10, Hadith 21217

رسول الله◌ (صلي الله عليه و آله): ألا وإني اجدد القول: ألا فأقيموا الصلاة، وآتوا الزكاة، وأمروا بالمعروف، وانهوا عن المنكر . ألا وإن رأس الأمر بالمعروف والنهي عن المنكر أن تنتهوا إلى قولي، وتبلغوه من لم يحضر، وتأمروه بقبوله، وتنهوه عن مخالفته ؛ فإنه أمر من الله◌ ومني

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: '**I hereby reiterate what I have said: establish the performance of the prayer, pay the alms-tax, enjoin what is good, and forbid evil. Verily the peak of enjoining what is good and forbidding evil is to heed to my words and propagate them to those who are absent; you must command them to accept [my words] and prohibit them from going against them, for they are the commands from Allah, the Exalted, and from me**.'

— al-Ihtijaj, v. 1, p. 157, no. 32

The language here signifies effort, strategic action, and bearing consequences.

- **Submission to Good:**

  Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said:

  رسول الله◌ (صلي الله عليه و آله): من أمر بمعروف فليكن أمره ذلك بمعروف

  Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: '**One who enjoins good should do so using good means**.'

  — Kanz al-'Ummal, no. 5523

  عن محمد بن أبي عمير رفعه إلى أبي عبدهللا)عليه السالم(اقل: إنما أيمر ابلمعروف وينهى عن المنكر من كانت فيه ثالث .خصال: عامل بما أيمر به، اترك لما ينهى عنه، عادل فيما أيمر، عادل فيما ينهى، رفيق فيما أيمر، رفيق فيما ينهى

  From Muhammad ibn Abi Umayr, raising it to Abu Abdullah (peace be upon him) who said: **Only one who has three qualities should enjoin good and forbid evil: one who practices what he enjoins, abandons what he forbids, is just in what he enjoins, is just in what he forbids, is gentle in what he enjoins, and is gentle in what he forbids**.

  — Wasa il al-Shia Vol. 16, Section 2, Chapter 10, Hadith 21210

  وبهذا الإسناد قال قال أبو عبد الله (عليه السلام) إنما يؤمر بالمعروف وينهى عن المنكر مؤمن فيتعظ أو جاهل فيتعلم وأما صاحب سوط أو سيف فلا.

> With this chain of narration, Abu Abdullah (peace be upon him) said, '**Verily, enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil is incumbent upon a believer so he admonishes, or upon an ingorant so he learns from it; but as for the wielder of a whip or a sword, then no**.'
>
> — Al-Kafi (Vol. 5) by Shaykh Muhammad b. Ya qub al-Kulayni, Book 1, Chapter 29, Hadith #2
>
> This implies taking good upon oneself even when it conflicts with personal comfort or social convenience, aligning with assuming a burden (kulfah) and fulfilling responsibility (taklif).

Tatawwu': Voluntary Charity and Extra Benefaction

The term tatawwu' (تطوع) means "to do work willingly and gladly," implying acceptance and the absence of reluctance. Linguistically, it means "to take on doing good willingly," and is not inherently reserved for non-obligatory deeds. However, common usage often associates tatawwu' specifically with voluntary good works, as obligatory deeds, despite being within capacity, might carry a "shade of compulsion" due to their mandatory nature.

Many hadiths on charity encourage giving as a recommended, generous extension of one's duty. While some charity is obligatory (like zakat), discussions often highlight voluntary spending and secret charity, fostering a willing, joyful disposition towards extra good.

رسول الله (صلي الله عليه و آله): أكثروا من الصدقة ترزقوا

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: '**Increase your charity and you will be provided more**.'

— Bihar al-Anwar, v. 77, p. 176, no. 10

ما نقص مال من صدقة.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **Wealth does not decrease because of (giving in) charity**.

— Man La Yahduruh al-Faqih (Vol. 4) by Shaykh Muhammad b. Ali al-Saduq, Book 1, Chapter 175, Hadith #5827

وبإسناده عن علي عليه السلام قال: قالالنبي صلى الله عليه وآله: خير مال المرء وذخائره الصدقة.

on the authority of Ali (peace be upon him), the Prophet Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said, "**The best wealth and treasure of a man is his charity**."

— Uyun akhbar al-Rida (Vol. 2) by Shaykh Muhammad b. Ali al-Saduq, Book 1, Chapter 1, Hadith #245

عن السكوني، عن أبي عبد هللا)عليه السالم(اقل: اقل رسول هللا)صل هللا عليه وآله(: تصدقوا إفن الصدقة تزيد في المال .كثرة، فتصدقوا رحمكم هللا

From Al-Sakouni, from Abu Abdullah (peace be upon him), he said: **The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him and his family) said: Give charity, for charity increases wealth abundantly, so give charity, may Allah have mercy on you**.

— Wasa il al-Shia Vol. 9, Section 8, Chapter 1, Hadith 12259

الإمام علي (عليه السلام): استنزلوا الرزق بالصدقة

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: '**Attract sustenance by giving in charity**.'

— Nahjul Balaghah, Saying 137

الإمام علي (عليه السلام): الصدقة جنة من النار

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: '**Charity acts as a shield against the fire.**'

— Wasa il al-Shi'ah, v. 6, p. 258, no. 17

These acts complement the stern commitment to duty expressed in takalluf.

Practical Implications: Striving Beyond Laziness and Self-Interest

The call to "exert yourselves in doing good" means that believers must proactively establish a consistent and resilient pattern of benefaction, rather than waiting for ideal conditions or effortless opportunities. It requires pushing against laziness, self-interest, and the desire for ease.

Goodness as an Investment, Not Loss

Ethical teachings consistently frame good deeds as an investment with substantial returns. Acts of good are tied to divine love and the removal of evil deeds. This perspective encourages believers to embrace the "burden" of good as spiritually profitable, where the benefits far outweigh the effort and hardship.

Public Responsibility and Social Dimension of Effort

Takallafu Fi'l al-Khayr extends beyond individual piety to encompass a Muslim's responsibility for society's moral health. "Public Responsibilities" include inviting others to good and forbidding evil, described as one of the "biggest duties of all Muslims." This communal dimension intensifies the sense of takalluf, as it involves confronting wrong, educating others, and safeguarding collective righteousness, thus bearing the burden of good not just for oneself, but for the wider community.

Good as an Active, Not Passive, State

"Good" (الخير, al-khayr) is something that must be actively sought, initiated, and repeated. Imam 'Ali (peace be upon him) describes good actions as a "lasting treasure and a pure yield." Goodness is linked with initiative, continuity, and sincere intention. Merely possessing good intentions is not enough; the servant must actively bear the burden of acting on them.

In Islamic teachings, goodness (al-Khayr) is viewed not as a passive state or an inherent quality that guarantees righteous behavior, but as an active, deliberate, and continuous pursuit that requires sincere intention and consistent action. This perspective is deeply rooted in the understanding that individuals must exert effort to cultivate and manifest goodness in their lives, as opposed to it being an inherited trait.

The Active Nature of Goodness (al-Khayr)

Goodness in Islam is not an inherited characteristic; prophets, for example, have had children who strayed, while righteous individuals have emerged from less devout backgrounds. Instead, goodness is acquired through "consistent good actions." It encompasses both the internal "actions of the heart," such as true belief and pure intention, and the external "actions of the body," which include worship of Allah and spending in His way. To be a "good-doer" is to "worship Allah as if you see Him, and to recognize that even if you do not see Him, He sees you," implying a constant state of awareness and engagement. The true essence of good is that which "is intended by the Face of Allah the Exalted, and worked upon what Allah the Exalted has Commanded with," underscoring its divine orientation and the necessity of practical implementation.

The Importance of Initiative in Good Deeds

Initiative is crucial in the pursuit of goodness.

الإمام علي (عليه السلام): التفكر يدعو إلى البر والعمل به

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: ‘**Thinking instigates goodness and action upon it.**’

— al-Kafi, v. 2, p. 55, no. 5

ـ محمد بن يحيى عن أحمد بن محمد عن إسماعيل بن سهل عن حماد عن ربعي قال قال أبو عبد الله (عليه السلام) قال أمير المؤمنين (صلى الله عليه وآله) إن التفكر يدعو إلى البر والعمل به.

Muhammad ibn Yahya has narrated from Ahmad ibn Muhammad from Isma’il ibn Sahl from Hammad from Rib’ I who has said the following: “Abu ‘Abd Allah (peace be upon him) has said that Amir al-Muminin (Ali ibn abu Talib) (peace be upon him) has said, ‘**Thinking leads to virtue and to acting virtuously**.’”

— Al-Kafi (Vol. 2) by Shaykh Muhammad b. Ya qub al-Kulayni, Book 1, Chapter 28, Hadith #5

الإمام علي (عليه السلام): ثمرة العلم العمل به

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: ‘**The fruit of knowledge is action in accordance with it**.’

— Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 4624

عن ربعي اقل: اقل أبو عبدهللا)عليه السالم(: التفكر يدعو إلى البر والعمل به.

From Rib'i who said: Abu Abdullah (peace be upon him) said: **Contemplation leads to righteousness and acting upon it**.

— Wasa il al-Shia Vol. 15, Section 2, Chapter 5, Hadith 20262

This highlights that good deeds begin with conscious thought and must be followed by prompt action. Believers are encouraged to rush to undertake good actions before you become preoccupied with other things. This urgency is mirrored in the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him and his family) statement that

رسول الله (صلي الله عليه و آله) : إن اللهَ يحب من الخير ما يعجل

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: ‘**Verily Allah loves those good actions which are hastened towards.**’

— al-Kafi, v. 2, p. 142, no. 4

عن أبي جعفر)عليه السالم(اقل: اقل رسول هللا)صل هللا عليه وآله وسلم(: إن هللا يحب من الخير ما يعجل .

From Abu Ja'far (peace be upon him) who said: **The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him and his family) said: Indeed Allah loves good deeds that are hastened**.

— Wasa il al-Shia Vol. 1, Section 2, Chapter 27, Hadith 277

Opportunities to do good, such as one's youth, health, wealth, and life, should be proactively utilized before they diminish, as these opportunities may not always be available.

الإمام علي (عليه السلام): اجتناب السيئات أولى من اكتساب الحسنات

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: '**Refraining from committing evil deeds is better than performing good deeds**.'

— Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 1522

وقال (عليه السلام): فاعل الخير خير منه، وفاعل الشر شر منه.

Amir al-Muminin, peace be upon him, said: **The doer of good is better than the good itself, and the doer of evil is worse than the evil itself**.

— Nahj al-Balagha by al-Sharif al-Radi, Book 3, Chapter 32, Hadith #42

This suggests that the effort to initiate good is often less burdensome than it might appear.

The Necessity of Continuity in Goodness

Consistency and continuity are vital for cultivating goodness.

رسول الله (صلي الله عليه و آله) : كل عمل منقطع عن صاحبه إذا مات إلا المرابط في سبيل الله ، فإنه ينمى له عمله ويجرى عليه رزقه إلى يوم القيامة

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: '**Every action will be separated from its owner upon death, except the one who maintained his post for the sake of Allah, since it will be increased and rewarded to him until the Day of Resurrection**.'

— Kanz al-Ummal, no. 10611

الإمام علي (عليه السلام): المداومة المداومة ! فإن الله لم يجعل لعمل المؤمنين غاية إلا الموت

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: '**Act continuously, act continuously! For verily Allah has not decreed any end to the believer's actions except death**.'

— Mustadrak al-Wasa il, v. 1, p. 130, no. 177

واقل)عليه السالم(: من عمل من المسلمين عن ميت عمال صالحا أضعف هللا له أجرح ونفع . هللا به الميت

He (peace be upon him) said: "**Whoever among the Muslims performs a good deed on behalf of a deceased person, Allah multiplies their reward and benefits the deceased through it.**"

— Wasa il al-Shia Vol. 2, Section 7, Chapter 28, Hadith 2601

This indicates that good deeds should be a lifelong endeavor.

The Importance Of Quality Over Quantity

رسول الله (صلي الله عليه و آله): أفضل العمل أدومه وإن قل

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: '**The best of deeds is that which is most regular, even if be something small**.'

— Tanbih al-Khawatir, v. 1, p. 63

عن أبي جعفر)عليه السالم(اقل: مامن شئ أحب إلى هللا عز وجل من عمل يداوم عليه وإن قل.

From Abu Ja'far (peace be upon him) who said: **Nothing is more beloved to Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, than a deed that is maintained consistently even if it is small**.

— Wasa il al-Shia Vol. 1, Section 2, Chapter 21, Hadith 222

واقل)عليه السالم(: قليل مدوم عليه خير من كثير مملول منه.

He (peace be upon him) said: **A small amount done consistently is better than a large amount that becomes wearisome**.

— Wasa il al-Shia Vol. 1, Section 2, Chapter 28, Hadith 295

لا يقل عمل مع تقوى و كيف يقل ما يتقبل

Imam As-Sajjad (peace be upon him) said:

A deed accompanied with sincerity and piety is not small, although it may look small. How is it possible for a deed favored by God to be small!?

— 1. Tuhaful Uqul, page 201

The little that one performs continuously is weightier than the great amount that one performs odiously. This principle is further elaborated by Imam al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) in his interpretation of Quran 67:2, which speaks of Allah trying "who among you is best in good deeds."

بالسند المتصل إلى الشيخ الثقة الجليل محمد بن يعقوب عن علي بن إبراهيم، عن أبيه، عن القاسم بن محمد، عن المنقري، عن سفيان بن عيينة، عن أبي عبدالله عليه السلام في قول الله عز وجل: (ليبلوكم أيكم أحسن عملا.) قال: ليس يعني أكثر عملا ولكن أصوبكم عملا. وإنما الإصابة خشية الله والنية الصادقة والحسنة. ثم قال: الإبقاء على العمل حتى يخلص أشد من العمل. والعمل الخالص: الذي لا تريد أن يحمدك عليه أحد إلا الله عز وجل. والنية أفضل من العمل. ألا وإن النية هي العمل. - ثم تلا قوله عز وجل - (قل كل يعمل على شاكلته.) يعني على نيته

With my isnad reaching back to the venerable and trustworthy shaykh Muhammad ibn Ya'qub al-Kulayni (Q) from Ali ibn Ibrahim, from his father, from al-Qasim ibn Muhammad, from al-Minqari, from Sufyan ibn 'Uyaynah, from Abu 'Abd Allah (peace be upon him), who, explaining the utterance of God Almighty: **That He might try you (to see) which of you is fairest in works**. (Quran 67:2), said, "**It does not mean one of you whose deeds are more numerous but one who is more rightful in his conduct, and this rightness is nothing but the fear of God and sincerity of intention (niyyah) and fear**." Then he (peace be upon him) added**, "To persevere in an action until it becomes sincere is more difficult than (performing) the action itself, and sincerity of action lies in this that you should not desire anyone to praise you for it except God Almighty, and intention supersedes action. Lo, verily, intention is action itself." Then he recited the Quranic verse, "Say, everyone acts in accordance with his character –shakilatihi-** (Quran 17:84), **adding, "That shakilah means niyyah**."

— "Forty Hadiths" by Ayatullah Sayyid Imam Ruhallah Musawi Khomeini

Imam al-Sadiq clarified that this verse does not refer to the quantity of deeds, but rather to "the most correct ones in deeds." He explained that "Correctness comes only from overwhelming respect for Allah, true intention and goodness," and importantly, "It comes from continuity of the good deeds.

In fact, maintaining continuity until deeds reach purity is more difficult than performing the deed itself. It is the intention that forms the deed.

Sincere Intention: The Foundation of Good Deeds

Sincerity (Ikhlas) is considered the spirit and life of any deed, and it is paramount in Islamic teachings. A person's intentions are considered the motivation behind their actions, and they are rewarded accordingly.

النبي)صل هللا عليه وآله وسلم(أنه اقل: األلعمال ابلنيات.

The Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) said: **Deeds are judged by intentions**.

— Wasa il al-Shia Vol. 1, Section 2, Chapter 5, Hadith 88

رسول الله (صلي الله عليه و آله) : إذا عملت عملا فاعمل لله خالصا ؛ لأ نه لا يقبل من عباده الأعمال إلا ما كان خالصا

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: '**If you perform an action, do it sincerely for the sake of Allah because He only accepts from His servants those actions that have been performed sincerely**.'

— Bihar al-Anwar, v. 77, p. 103, no. 1

الاعمال بالنية

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **Actions depend on (are rewarded according to) intentions**

— Nahj Al-Fasahah

فمن فعل فعلا وكان بدين لم يعقد قلبه على ذلک لم يقبل الله منه عملا إلا بصدق النية... (تحف العقول ص473)

Imam Ali-un-Naqi (peace be upon him) said: **The one who performs a deed & his heart does not believe in that deed, Allah will not accept any of his practices; but that it be along with the sincerity of intention**

— Tuhaf al-Uqul P 473

اقل: وروي عنه عليه السالم اقل: إنما اأألعمال ابلنيات ولكل امرء ما نوى.

He said: And it was narrated from him, peace be upon him, that he said: **Indeed, actions are by intentions, and for every person is what he intended**.

— Wasa il al-Shia Vol. 10, Section 1, Chapter 2, Hadith 12713

Salvation Can Be Obtained By Sincerity Alone

نية المؤمن أبلغ من عمله

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **A believer's intention is more significant than his deeds**

— Nahj Al-Fasahah

الإمام علي (عليه السلام) : في الإخلاص يكون الخلاص

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: '**Salvation is found in sincerity**.'

— Tanbih al-Khawatir, v. 2, p. 118

اقل: إن هللا بكرمه وفضله يدخل العبد بصدق النية والسريرة الصالحة- في حديث- (عن أمير المؤمنين)عليهم السالم .الجنة

From Amir al-Muminin (peace be upon them) - in a hadith - he said: **Indeed Allah, through His generosity and grace, admits a servant into Paradise due to sincere intention and righteous inner thoughts. Recommendation Of Good Intention And Determination Upon It**

— Wasa il al-Shia Vol. 1, Section 2, Chapter 6, Hadith 117

.: وابإلخالص يكون الخالص- في حديث- (أبي عبد هللا)عليه السالم(، اقل: اقل أمير المؤمنين)عليه السالم

From Abu Abdullah (peace be upon him), he said: **Amir al-Muminin (peace be upon him) said - in a hadith: Through sincerity comes salvation**.

— Wasa il al-Shia Vol. 1, Section 2, Chapter 8, Hadith 124

(عن محمد بن أحمد بن هالل اقل: سألت أاب الحسن االخير)عليه السالم(عن التوبة النصوح ما : هي؟ فكتب)عليه السالم .أن يكون الباطن كالظاهر وأفضل من ذلك

From Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Hilal who said: I asked Abu al-Hasan the Last (peace be upon him) about what is sincere repentance? **He wrote (peace be upon him): It is that the inner self be like the outer self, and even better than that**.

— Wasa il al-Shia Vol. 16, Section 1, Chapter 87, Hadith 21025

This indicates the fundamental importance of sincerity for the acceptability of actions to Allah.

الإمام علي (عليه السلام) : ما أعطى الله سبحانه العبد شيئا من خير الدنيا والآخرة إلا بحسن خلقه وحسن نيته

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: '**Allah – glory be to Him - does not give His servant any good of this world or the Hereafter except as a result of his good nature and good intention**.'

— Ghurar al-Hikam,. no. 9670

عليكم بصدق الإخلاص وحسن اليقين فإنهما أفضل عبادة المقربين.

Amir al-Muminin Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: **You should espouse true ikhlas and good certainty for they are the best worship of those close to Allah**.

— Uyun al-Hikam wa al-Mawa iz by Ali bin Muhammad al-Laythi al-Wasiti, Volume 0, Page 342

الإمام علي (عليه السلام) : الإخلاص ملاك العبادة

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: '**Sincerity is the criterion for worship**.'

— Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 859

أفضل العبادة الإخلاص.

Imam Muhammad al-Jawad (peace be upon him) said: **The best of worship is ikhlas**.

— Mizan al-Hikmah by Muhammad al-Rayshahri, Volume 3, Page 1801

Sincerity implies that all actions—including friendships, enmities, giving, taking, speech, silence, and promises should all be done with the intention of pleasing Allah and should be free from any impurities. The intention for nearness to Allah (qurbah) is crucial; an action, even if outwardly beneficial, is considered pretentious and unacceptable if performed for fame, status, or praise from people, rather than for Allah's sake.

Furthermore, having great intentions, such as intending to help all people even if one can only practically help a few, is recommended and can lead to receiving the reward for the broader intention.

Translating Intentions into Actions

Good intentions must be actualized through practical deeds, accompanied by understanding and piety.

رسول اللهۖ (صلي الله عليه و آله) : الدال على الخير كفاعله

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: '**The one who guides towards good is just as its doer**.'

— Kanz al-'Ummal, no. 16052

أبي عبد هللا)عليه السالم(اقل: من هم بحسنة فلم يعملها كتبت له حسنة، إفن عملها كتبت له عشرا، ويضاعف هللا لمن يشاء إلى سبعمائة، ومن هم بسيئة فلم يعملها لم تكتب عليه حتى يعملها، إفن لم يعملها كتبت له حسنة، وإن عملها .أجل تسع ساعات، إفن اتب وندم عليها لم يكتب عليه، وإن لم يتب ولم يندم عليها كتبت عليه سيئة

Abu Abdullah (peace be upon him) said: **Whoever intends to do a good deed but does not do it, a Recommendation Of Good Intention And Determination Upon It good deed is recorded for him. If he does it, ten good deeds are recorded for him. And Allah multiplies for whom He wills up to seven hundred times [This is a reference to Quran 2:261]. Whoever intends to do a bad deed but does not do it, it is not recorded against him until he does it. If he does not do it, a good deed is recorded for him. If he does it, he is given a respite of nine hours. If he repents and regrets it, it is not recorded against him. If he does not repent and does not regret it, one bad deed is recorded against him**.

— Wasa il al-Shia Vol. 1, Section 2, Chapter 6, Hadith 112

أبي عبد هللا)عليه السالم(، اقل: إن المؤمن ليهم ابلحسنة وال يعمل بها فتكتب له حسنة، وإن هو عملها .كتبت له عشر حسنات، وإن المؤمن ليهم ابلسيئة أن يعملها فال يعملها فال تكتب عليه

From Abu Abdullah (peace be upon him), he said: **Indeed a believer intends a good deed but doesn't do it, so a good deed is recorded for him. And if he does it, ten good deeds are recorded for him. And indeed a believer intends an evil deed to do it but doesn't do it, so it is not recorded against him**.

— Wasa il al-Shia Vol. 1, Section 2, Chapter 6, Hadith 99

For actions to be deemed good in the eyes of the divine, the actions themselves must be good, but they must also be carried out in the best way and with the proper intentions. This necessitates striving for perfection in one's deeds, ensuring that prayers are performed with proper etiquette, fasting is free from invalidating actions, and pilgrimages are free from forbidden acts.

عن أبي حمزة الثمالي عن أبي جعفر)عليه السالم(اقل اقل أمير المؤمنين)عليه السالم(أال أخبركم ابلفقيه حقا؟ من لم يقنط الناس من رحمة هللا ولم يؤمنهم من عذاب هللا ولم يرخص في معاصي هللا ولم يترك .القرآن رغبة عنه إلى غيره .أال ال خير في علم ليس فيه تفهم أال ال خير في قراءة ليس فيها تدبر أال ال خير في عبادة ليس فيها تفقه

From Abu Hamza Al-Thumali, from Abu Ja'far (peace be upon him) who said: **Amir al-Muminin (peace be upon him) said: Shall I not inform you of the true faqih (*)? He who does not make people despair of Allah's mercy, does not make them feel safe from Allah's punishment, does not give them license for disobedience to Allah, and does not leave the Quran desiring something else**

instead of it. Indeed, there is no good in knowledge without understanding. Indeed, there is no good in recitation without contemplation. Indeed, there is no good in worship without comprehension. Translator: * One who has a good knowledge and understanding of the hadith (ilm). Recommendation Of Reflecting On The Meanings Of The Quran, Its Par...

— Wasa il al-Shia Vol. 6, Section 4, Chapter 3, Hadith 7661

This emphasizes that the mere performance of rituals is insufficient; rather, a profound understanding and a pious mindset are essential for genuine goodness. Practical manifestations of good intentions include treating others with kindness, assisting them in "goodness and piety," and fulfilling Allah's commands. Imam Ali (peace be upon him) likened good deeds to a profitable endeavor, stating,

الإمام علي (عليه السلام): لا تجارة كالعمل الصالح، ولا ربح كالثواب

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: '**There is no [goods for] trade like good deeds, and no profit like the [divine] reward**.'

— Bihar al-Anwar, v. 69, p. 409, no. 122

الإمام علي (عليه السلام) : عليك بالإحسان ، فإنه أفضل زراعة ، وأربح بضاعة

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: '**Good-doing is incumbent upon you, for it is the best cultivation and the most profitable commodity.**'

— Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 6112

و روي عن روح بن عبد الرحيم عن أبي عبد الله عليه السلام : في قول الله عز و جل:

رجال لا تلهيهم تجارة و لا بيع عن ذكر الله ۝ قال كانوا أصحاب تجارة فإذا حضرت الصلاة ۝ تركوا التجارة و انطلقوا إلى الصلاة و هم أعظم أجرا ممن لم يتجر.

It is narrated from Rawh ibn Abd Al-Rahim, from Abu Abdillah (peace be upon him), regarding the saying of Allah (swt), the Mighty and Exalted: Men whom neither trade nor sale distracts from the remembrance of Allah (swt). (Surah An-Nur Quran 24:37)

Imam (peace be upon him) said: **They were businessmen, but when the time for prayer arrived, they left their trade and went to perform the prayer. They are greater in reward than those who did not engage in trade**.

— Man La Yahduruh al-Faqih (Vol. 3) by Shaykh Muhammad b. Ali al-Saduq, Book 2, Chapter 3, Hadith #4

الحسين بن سعيد في كتاب)الزهد(عن عثمان بن عيسى، عن عيل بن سالم اقل: سمعت أاب : عبدهللا)عليه السالم(يقول آية في كتاب هللا مسجلة، قلت: ما هي؟ اقل:)هل جزاء االحسان إال االحسان(جرت في المؤمن والكافر، والبر والفاجر، من .صنع اليه معروف فعليه أن يكافئ به، وليست المكاافة أن يصنع كما صنع به، بل يرى مع فعله لذلك أن له الفضل المبتدأ

Al-Hussein bin Saeed in the book (Al-Zuhd) from Uthman bin Isa, from Ali bin Salim who said: I heard Abu Abdullah (peace be upon him) saying: There is a recorded verse in Allah's Book. I asked: What is it? He said: "**Is there any reward for good other than good**?" [Quran 55:60]. **This applies to the believer and the disbeliever, the righteous and the wicked. Whoever receives a good deed must repay it, and repayment is not just to do exactly as was done to him, rather he should feel while doing it that the initiator has the merit**.

— Wasa il al-Shia Vol. 16, Section 3, Chapter 7, Hadith 21614

Imam 'Ali's (peace be upon him) Perspective on Goodness

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) provided extensive guidance on the meaning and practice of goodness:

- **Definition of Goodness:** Imam Ali (peace be upon him) clarified that

  ليس الخير أن يكثر مالك وولدك ولكن الخير أن يكثر علمك ويعظم حلمك، وأن تباهي الناس بعبادة ربك، فإن أحسنت حمدت الله، وإن أسأت استغفرت الله.

  Amir al-Muminin Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: **Goodness is not in having abundant money and children, but rather, goodness is in having abundant knowledge and greater forbearance, and in taking pride before people in your worship of your Lord; and if you do well, you praise Allah, and if you commit wickedness, you seek Allah's forgiveness**.

  — Nahj al-Balagha by From the speeches of Imam Ali (peace be upon him), Volume 4, Page 21

  This emphasizes spiritual and intellectual enrichment over material accumulation. He further noted that "All of goodness is contained in those actions which remain, and in contempt for all that is transient," highlighting the enduring impact of righteous deeds.

- **Three Pillars of Goodness:** He identified three comprehensive aspects of goodness:

  الإمام علي (عليه السلام) : ثلاث هن جماع الخير : إسداء النعم ، ورعاية الذمم ، وصلة الرحم

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: '**Three things sum up all of goodness: bestowing of favours, maintaining covenants and pacts, and strengthening blood-kinship**.'

— Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 4675

- **Goodness in Character and Intention:** Imam Ali (peace be upon him) taught that

الإمام علي (عليه السلام) : ما أعطى الله سبحانه العبد شيئا من خير الدنيا والآخرة إلا بحسن خلقه وحسن نيته

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: '**Allah – glory be to Him - does not give His servant any good of this world or the Hereafter except as a result of his good nature and good intention**.'

— Ghurar al-Hikam,. no. 9670

He also outlined key characteristics of a person with good morals, including being forgiving when powerful, generous, gentle, modest, affectionate, willing to bear pain for others, sincere in friendships, honoring promises, helping the oppressed, being concerned about the deprived, respecting the rights of those who are absent, and accepting apologies.

- **Practical Advice:** Imam Ali (peace be upon him) advised to

الإمام علي (عليه السلام) : بادروا بعمل الخير قبل أن تشغلوا عنه بغيره

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: '**Rush to undertake good actions before you are preoccupied with other things**.'

— al-Khisal, p. 620, no. 10

في)نهج البالغة(عن أمير المؤمنين)عليه(السالم أنه اقل افعلوا الخير وال تحقروا منه شيئا، إفن صغيره كبير، وقليله كثير، وال يقولن أحدكم: إن أحدا أولى بفعل الخير مني فيكون وهللا كذلك، إن للخير وللشر أهال. فمهما تركتموه منهما .كفاكموه أهله

From Nahj al-Balagha, from Amir al-Muminin (peace be upon him) that he said: **Do good deeds and do not belittle any of them, for their small is great and their little is much. Let none of you say: Someone else is more worthy of doing good than me, for by Allah it will become so. Indeed, good and evil each have their people. Whatever you leave of either of them, its people will suffice you in it**.

— Wasa il al-Shia Vol. 1, Section 2, Chapter 28, Hadith 294

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) also pointed out that

الإمام علي (عليه السلام) : الخير أسهل من فعل الشر

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: ‘**A good action is easier [to do] than a bad one**.’

— Ghurar al-Hikam,. no. 1199

- **Spiritual Orientation:** He linked "All of goodness" to

الإمام علي (عليه السلام) : جماع الخير في الموالاة في الله ، والمعاداة في الله ، والمحبة في الله ، والبغض في الله

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: ‘**All of goodness is in friendship for the sake of Allah, enmity for the sake of Allah, love for the sake of Allah and hate for the sake of Allah.**’

— Ghurar al-Hikam,. no. 4781

orienting all aspects of one's life towards divine pleasure and obedience.

The Broader Concept of Ihsan

إحسان (ihsan) is a comprehensive principle. To be a "good-doer" means to worship Allah as if one sees Him, recognizing that even if unseen, He sees everything. Core elements include:

- **Holistic righteousness:** both actions of the heart and actions of the body.
- **Pleasing Allah:** performing actions pleasing to Him, including benevolent spending in ease and hardship.
- **Significance of every deed:** every small deed, when performed with piety, holds significance.
- **Purity of intention:** the "best in good deeds" is measured by correctness and purity of intention.
- **Love for the Ahl al-Bayt:** "earning good" is understood to mean showing cordiality and love for the People of the Household of the Holy Prophet and recognizing their rights.

Spiritually, good deeds bring one closer to Allah, erase past sins, lead to spiritual ascent, serve as witnesses on Judgment Day, increase reward, and contribute to collective success. Practically, believers are encouraged to use youth before old age, health before illness, wealth before poverty, and life before death. They are to

practice self-discipline, cleanliness, intention-driven actions, benevolence, forgiveness, prayer, alms, avoiding excess, and social responsibility.

Part 2: "And Strive Against Your Souls for It" — Jahidu Nufusakum 'Alayh

The Concept of Jihad al-Nafs

The second phrase, و جاهدوا نفوسكم عليه (wa jahidu nufusakum 'alayh), is translated as "and strive against your souls for it." The verb جاهدوا (jahidu) comes from the root ج ه د (j-h-d), associated with struggle or jihad. In this context, it refers to جهاد النفس (jihad al-nafs), the struggle against the self, often considered the greater jihad.

The نفس (nafs) here encompasses one's desires, ego, and inclinations that might divert a person from righteousness. The command instructs believers to constantly battle their inner urges and weaknesses to remain steadfast in doing good. The Quran reinforces this: "**And whoever strives [in jihad] only strives for [the benefit of] himself. Indeed, Allah is free from need of the worlds.**" — (Quran 29:6).

Jihad al-Nafs is the struggle or battle against one's own self, specifically against the desires, lusts, weaknesses, and evil tendencies inherent within the nafs. It is an internal, perpetual conflict that demands constant vigilance and effort. It is recognized as the "Greater Jihad" (al-jihad al-akbar) and is essential for a Muslim's spiritual development and ethical purification.

Definition of Nafs (The Self)

The term nafs (النفس) in Islam refers comprehensively to the "self" or "soul." It is a fundamental concept that encompasses various aspects of human existence:

- **The Basic Self or Soul:** Nafs can refer to the core identity or the basic self of a person, including the human soul. It is considered the Ruh (spirit) which is the cause of life and a creation of Allah.
- **The Whole Being:** In some contexts, nafs refers to the human person as a whole, encompassing both the physical body and the spiritual soul. It is described as the "truth of human existence" that continues to exist even after the body disintegrates.
- **The Seat of Desires and Impulses:** Crucially, nafs also represents the aspect of the self that harbors desires, lusts, weaknesses, flaws, and ego. It is the "carnal self" (al-nafs al-'ammarah) that tempts an individual towards realms of darkness and inspires acts of evil.

The "Greater Jihad" (Jihad al-Akbar)

The significance of jihad al-nafs is profoundly highlighted by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family).

9 - وبهذا الاسناد، قال: قال أمير المؤمنين (عليه السلام): إن رسول الله (صلى الله عليه وآله) بعث سرية، فلما رجعوا قال: مرحبا بقوم قضوا الجهاد الاصغر وبقي عليهم الجهاد الاكبر، قيل: يا رسول الله، وما الجهاد الاكبر؟ قال: جهاد النفس (1) ثم قال (صلى الله عليه وآله): أفضل الجهاد من جاهد نفسه التي بين جنبيه (2).

By this isnad. He said: Amir al-Muminin (peace be upon him) said: **The Messenger of Allah Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) sent people on an expedition. When they returned, he said: Greetings to a people who completed the minor struggle (jihad); the major struggle remains for them. It was said: O Messenger of Allah! What is the major struggle? He said: The struggle against the self. Then, he Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: The best struggle is the struggle against the self that is between his two sides**.

— Al-Amali by Shaykh Muhammad b. Ali al-Saduq, Book 1, Chapter 71, Hadith #9

This demonstrates that while fighting external enemies (jihad al-asghar, or minor jihad) is important for defending Islam, the internal struggle against one's own self is considered a higher and more arduous endeavor. The Prophet Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) also stated that

عن موسى بن إسماعيل، عن موسى بن جعفر (عليه السالم)، عن أبيه، عن آابئه، عن أمير المؤمنين (عليهم السالم) اقل: إن رسول هللا (صل هللا عليه وآله) بعث سرية فلما رجعوا اقل: مرحبا بقوم قضوا الجهاد االصغر وبقي عليهم الجهاد االكبر، قيل .اي رسول هللا وما الجهاد األكبر؟ فقال: جهاد النفس .واقل (صل هللا عليه واله): إن أفضل الجهاد من جاهد نفسه التي بين جنبيه

From Musa ibn Ismail, from Musa ibn Jafar (peace be upon him), from his father, from his forefathers, from Amir al-Muminin (peace be upon them) who said: **The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him and his family) sent a military expedition. When they returned he said: Welcome to people who have completed the lesser jihad, but the greater jihad remains for them. It was said: O Messenger of Allah, what is the greater jihad? He said: The jihad against one's self (nafs). And he (peace be upon him and his family) said: The best jihad is one's struggle against their own self that lies between their sides**.

— Wasa il al-Shia Vol. 15, Section 2, Chapter 1, Hadith 20216

This is because, in this struggle, one has to constantly battle enemies that are hosted inside one's own existence, making it much more difficult than fighting on a physical battlefield.

Its Nature as an Internal Struggle

Jihad al-nafs is a "never-ending internal war that its battle is in the heart." It involves:

- **Controlling Desires and Impulses:** It is the struggle to control one's desires and passions, ensuring they are subordinated to the command of Allah.

  Imam al-Kazim (peace be upon him) advised,

  جاهد نفسك لتردها عن هواها، فإنه وجب عليك كجهاد عدوك.

  Imam Musa al-Kadhim (peace be upon him) said: "**Perform jihad against your nafs to repel it from its hawa, for this is a duty for you like jihad against your enemy.**"

  — Tuhaf al-Uqul by Ibn Shu'ba al-Harrani, Volume 0, Page 399

- **Overcoming Weaknesses and Negative Tendencies:** This includes confronting and overcoming one's own weaknesses, flaws, negative tendencies, and ego. A true mujahid is one who struggles against their own self (nafs).
- **Purging Evil Ideas and Influences:** Jihad al-nafs means struggling against evil ideas, desires, and the powers of lust, anger, and insatiable imagination, placing all of them under the dictates of reason and faith in obedience to God's commands. It involves purging all satanic ideas and influences from one's soul.

Quranic Basis for Self-Struggle

The concept of self-development as an internal battle is rooted in the Quran itself. Allah states:

"**And whoever strives, he strives only for his own soul; most surely Allah is Self-sufficient, above (need of) the worlds**." (Quran Surah Ankabut Quran 29:6)

This verse emphasizes that the effort of struggling against oneself is ultimately for one's own benefit and spiritual advancement, not because Allah is in need of it.

Relationship with Inner Struggles and Spiritual Development

Jihad al-nafs is intrinsically linked to inner struggles and is crucial for spiritual development and maintaining a strong Islamic lifestyle:

- **Spiritual Growth and Self-Improvement:** The purpose of jihad al-nafs is to suppress base desires and cultivate piety, allowing the individual to ascend to a higher spiritual state. Through this struggle, a person can attain a higher level of spiritual awareness and closeness to God, and develop positive human attributes that are loved by God. It involves combating one's own ego and base instincts to become a better person.
- **Inner Purification and Transformation:** A human's soul is the scene of a struggle between divine power, which attracts towards goodness, and satanic power, which tempts towards evil. When divine forces are victorious, a person becomes virtuous; when satanic forces dominate, the person becomes rebellious. This struggle is necessary to transform one's shakila (disposition) from a satanic to a divine disposition. As the Quran states: "**Truly is successful the one who purifies (his soul)**." (Quran, 91:9).
- **Maintaining Purity of Intention:** Jihad al-nafs helps one to maintain the upper hand on the soul and ensure that one's intentions are pure, allowing one to stay focused on their intentions and goals.
- **Achieving Self-Control and Discipline:** To engage in this struggle, one must train their nafs to resist temptation and wait in adversity, requiring self-control, discipline, and a commitment to spiritual growth.
- **Gateway to Divine Reality:** The inner jihad is seen as the key to understanding the entire spiritual process and the path to realizing the ultimate reality. It represents the inner battle to establish equilibrium and awaken to the Divine Reality that is the source of our consciousness. Self-knowledge (Ma'rifat ul-Nafs) is considered the gateway to the non-material, metaphysical world.
- **Ultimate Goal: Reaching the Creator:** The ultimate goal of the "struggle of the self" or "Greatest Jihad" is to reach one's Creator, which requires defeating and overcoming one's own self. This is considered the "manifest victory" (al-fath al-futuh), the greatest of all victories.

The Nature of the Nafs and Its Role

The nafs refers to the human soul or self, which becomes the arena of conflict between divine inspirations and satanic whisperings. Moral elevation or descent depends on which side gains dominance. The human nafs possesses faculties, emotions, desires, and anger. It is the part of the self that interacts with the body and is often described as having both good and bad sides. The Quran (91:7-8) profoundly reveals the dual nature of the nafs: "**And [by] the soul and [by] Him who proportioned it and inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness**." This indicates that Allah has instilled within the nafs both the

inclination towards wickedness (fujur) and piety (taqwa). The powers of lust, anger, and imagination are not inherently evil but become destructive when unrestrained. Jihad al-Nafs aims to discipline them under the guidance of intellect and faith so that the soul can fulfill its purpose of approaching God.

Quranic States of the Nafs

The nafs can exist in different states, reflecting its degree of purification and control:

1. Al-Nafs al-Ammarah (The Commanding Soul/Despotic Self)

- This state describes the soul that persistently enjoins evil, as mentioned in the Quran (12:53): "**Indeed, the soul is a persistent enjoiner of evil, except those upon which my Lord has mercy**."
- It is the carnal self dominated by base desires and satanic impulses, pushing the human being toward sin unless restrained by divine grace and conscious effort. Satan whispers in this state of the soul.
- The struggle of jihad al-nafs at this stage involves subduing and transforming this commanding aspect so that it no longer dominates the person, purging the inner kingdom from satanic control and restoring it to divine obedience.

2. Al-Nafs al-Lawwamah (The Reproaching Soul/Blaming Self)

- This state refers to the conscience that blames and scolds a guilty person for their sins or crimes. The Quran mentions, "**And I swear by the reproaching soul**" (75:2).
- It represents a higher stage, where the individual has awakened enough faith and conscience to recognize wrongdoing, reproach themselves, and incline toward repentance and moral correction.
- This stage corresponds to a critical phase of jihad al-nafs in which the believer begins systematic self-accounting (muhasabah) and self-critique.

3. Al-Nafs al-Mutma'innah (The Peaceful Soul/Clear Conscience)

- This is the highest and most purified state of the nafs, characterized by tranquility, contentment, and unwavering faith. The Quran addresses such a soul: "**O reassured soul, Return to your Lord, well-pleased and pleasing [to Him]**" (89:27-28).
- This state is achieved when the soul's desires have been harmonized with divine will, eliminating constant internal conflict. Sustained combat with the self, combined with knowledge, faith, and continuous remembrance, gradually removes the "veils" blocking the heart, leading to inner peace and proximity to God.

Practical Dimensions of Jihad al-Nafs

Engaging in this struggle requires conscious and continuous effort. Several practical dimensions are:

- **Prioritizing Allah's love:** One must prioritize love of Allah and jihad for His pleasure above all else.
- **Self-control and discipline:** Training the inner self to resist temptation, wait patiently in adversity, and control desires.
- **Overcoming weaknesses:** Actively confronting desires, flaws, anger, and negative tendencies. The Prophet said,

  Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **'The one who truly wages jihad is the one who combats his self for the sake of Allah.'**

  — Kanz al-'Ummal, no. 11261

- **Cultivating piety:** Suppressing base desires to ascend to a higher spiritual state.
- **Accountability:**

  الإمام علي (عليه السلام): من حاسب نفسه سعد

  Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: '**Whoever takes account of himself prospers**.'

  — Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 7887

  الحسن بن عيل العسكري)عليهما السالم(في)تفسيره(عن آابئه، عن عيل)عليهم السالم(عن النبي)صىل هللا عليه ،وآله(اقل: أكيس الكيسين من حاسب نفسه، وعمل لما بعد الموت فقال رجل: اي أمير المؤمنين كيف يحاسب نفسه؟ اقل: إذا أصبح ثم أمسى رجع إلى نفسه، واقل: اي نفسي إن هذا يوم مضى عليك ال يعود إليك أبدا، وهللا يسألك عنه بما أفنيته، فما الذي عملت فيه أذكرت هللا أم حمدته؟ أقضيت حوائج مؤمن فيه أنفست عنه كربه؟ أحفظتيه بظهر الغيب في أهله وولده؟ أحفظتيه بعد الموت في مخلفيه، أكففت عن غيبة أخ مؤمن أعنت مسلما؟ ما الذي صنعت فيه؟ فيذكر ما كان منه، إفنذكر أنه جرى منه خير حمد هللا وكبره عىل توفيقه، وإن ذكر معصية .أو تقصيرا استغفر هللا وعزم عىل ترك معاودته

  Al-Hassan bin Ali Al-Askari (peace be upon them) in his (Tafsir) from his forefathers, from Ali (peace be upon them) from the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) said: **The wisest of the wise is the one who holds himself accountable and works for what comes after death. A man asked: O Amir Al-Muminin, how does one hold himself accountable? He replied: When he reaches evening after his morning, he returns to himself and**

says: O my soul, this day has passed and will never return, and Allah will question you about how you spent it. So what did you do in it? Did you remember Allah or praise Him? Did you fulfill a believer's need or relieve his distress? Did you protect his family and children in his absence? Did you protect his legacy after his death? Did you refrain from backbiting a believing brother? Did you help a Muslim? What did you do in it? Then he recalls what he did. If he remembers doing good, he praises Allah and glorifies Him for Obligation Of Self-Accountability Every Day, Observing It, Praising... enabling him. And if he remembers a sin or shortcoming, he seeks Allah's forgiveness and resolves not to repeat it.

— Wasa il al-Shia Vol. 16, Section 1, Chapter 96, Hadith 21081

- **Obedience to Allah:** The struggle should be exercised in the path of Islam and for the sake of God.
- **Benefits are for oneself:** Quran 29:6 emphasizes that the benefits of striving return to the striver.

Self-Control and Discipline

The most direct practical dimension is the active control and discipline of one's nafs (inner self or ego). This involves:

- **Controlling Desires and Lusts:** The primary battle is against one's desires (hawa), lusts, and attachment to worldly things, bringing them under the command of Allah.

  Imam al-Kazim (peace be upon him) advised, "**Perform jihad against your nafs to repel it from its hawa, for this is a duty for you like jihad against your enemy.**"

  This practice entails training the nafs to resist temptation and to endure adversity.

- **Breaking Bad Habits:** Practically, this means identifying and consciously breaking negative habits, replacing them with virtuous ones. This cultivates self-discipline and fosters a righteous lifestyle.
- **Deterring Vain Desires:** The "greater Jihad" is explicitly described as "deterring the soul from vain desire," which requires a consistent effort to turn away from the transient attractions of this world.

Purification of Intentions and Soul

A crucial aspect of Jihad al-Nafs involves the purification of one's inner being and intentions:

- **Maintaining Pure Intentions:** Individuals must strive to ensure that all actions are performed with pure intentions, solely for the pleasure of Allah. Prioritizing the love of Allah and Jihad for His pleasure above all else is essential, making everything else secondary. This constant vigilance helps maintain the "upper hand on the soul" and ensures the purity of one's intentions.
- **Thorough Purification:** The need to "perform a thorough purification of the soul," which includes purging "satanic ideas and influences" and nurturing divine forces. This continuous process transforms one's inner disposition (shakila) from a satanic to a divine one through consistent, conscious effort.

Combatting Negative Traits and Evil Influences

Jihad al-Nafs is a direct confrontation with the undesirable aspects of the self:

- **Struggling Against Weaknesses:** This means actively combating one's own weaknesses, negative tendencies, and flaws, such as ignorance, cowardice, oppression, tyranny, envy, and pride. The nafs is seen as an "internal enemy" against whom one must strive.
- **Resisting Evil Ideas and Passions:** The struggle specifically targets "evil ideas, desires and powers of lust, anger, and insatiable imagination," aiming to place them "under the dictates of reason and faith in obedience to God's commands."
- **Defending the Soul from Evils:** It is an obligation to defend one's soul from specific evils like "envy, jealousy, deceit, cheating, lying, and stealing" which requires vigilance against these internal temptations.

Vigilance, Self-Awareness, and Reflection

An ongoing commitment to self-observation and improvement is central to this Jihad:

- **Constant Vigilance:** Jihad al-Nafs is an "ongoing struggle that requires an individual to be vigilant and mindful of their thoughts, words, and actions" to ensure alignment with divine will.
- **Self-Awareness and Examination:** It involves recognizing one's own flaws and weaknesses and engaging in self-reflection. One must "examine one's soul and reform any shortcomings in matters of Allah's stipulations." This continuous process of self-assessment is necessary for personal growth and spiritual advancement.

- **Overcoming Personal Struggles:** The individual must consider their Nafs as an enemy, striving to "set it free from harmful thoughts, feelings, and actions" by being mindful of weaknesses and working to overcome them.

Continuous Spiritual Practices

Certain daily and ongoing spiritual acts form integral components of Jihad al-Nafs:

- **Remembrance of God (Dhikr) and Gratitude:** During this journey, one should constantly remember God and the graces bestowed by Him. At every step, expressing gratitude for Allah's help, mercy, and guidance is essential, deepening as one progresses in the struggle.
- **Daily Prayers:** The daily prayers in Islam are described as a "form of continuous jihad that punctuate human existence, requiring constant exertion of one's will and an ongoing battle against forgetfulness, dissipation, and laziness." This spiritual warfare helps maintain connection with the Divine.
- **Disciplining Towards Humility:** In contexts like Hajj, Jihad al-Nafs involves disciplining oneself towards humility and self-effacement, confronting the ego to achieve spiritual growth.
- **Making the Self Submissive:** The "greater struggle" also entails "making the self submissive through efforts." As the Quran states, "**And whoever strives, he strives only for his own soul; most surely Allah is Self-sufficient, above (need of) the worlds**." (Quran Surah Ankabut 29:6)

Part 3: "For Indeed, Humankind Is Naturally Inclined Towards Evil" — Fa-Inna al-Sharr Maṭbu'un 'Alayhi al-Insan

Meaning of 'Maṭbu'un 'Alayhi'

The final clause, فإن الشر مطبوع عليه الإنسان (fa-inna al-sharr maṭbu'un 'alayhi al-insan), is translated as "for indeed, humankind is naturally inclined towards evil." The word مطبوع عليه (maṭbu'un 'alayhi) means "innately inclined," "naturally disposed," "stamped upon," or "inherent." It suggests that within human nature there is an inherent potential or susceptibility toward evil (الشر, al-sharr). This does not imply that humanity is inherently evil, but rather that the inclination toward ease, selfishness, or wrongdoing is a natural part of the human condition that must be consciously resisted and disciplined.

The Quran alludes to man's quick inclination toward what he perceives as evil: "**And man supplicates for evil just as he supplicates for good, and ever is man hasty**." — Quran 17:11.

Humanity's Natural Inclination or Susceptibility Towards Evil

In Islamic teachings, humanity is understood to possess a complex nature, endowed with both inherent inclinations towards good and susceptibilities towards evil. This duality is central to the concept of human responsibility and spiritual struggle.

Humans are created with a predisposition for both good and evil. While their good resides in their natural disposition (fitrah), their susceptibility to evil stems from their commanding self (al-nafs al-ammarah). This commanding self is described as an entity that "enjoineth unto evil" and is considered "one's greatest enemy," continuously prompting indulgence in evil deeds and deviations, which can lead to misfortune and cruelty if left unchecked.

There are several negative traits inherent in human nature:

- **Injustice and Ignorance:** "man is unjust and ignorant."
- **Hasty Temperament:** "Mankind was created restless, faint-hearted, and impatient," and "the human being is always hasty." This hastiness often manifests as being "greatly grieved when evil afflicts them and niggardly when good befalls them, except those who pray."
- **Vices:** Humans are prone to vices such as greed, anxiety, parsimony, and love of wealth. They are also prone to despair, ingratitude, and rebelliousness.
- **Combination of Natures:** Human beings are seen as a combination of angels and beasts, possessing both wisdom and passion. If passion is followed, one's status can fall lower than a beast.

It is through this disposition towards evil that the choice to follow what is right gains value. The purification of the self (tazkiyat al-nafs) is essential for unveiling truth and understanding its nuances through struggle. The wisdom of God dictates that humans are endowed with the potential for both good and evil, alongside the freedom to choose their path.

Hadiths also describe how this inclination towards evil can manifest spiritually:

- **Darkening of the Heart:** When a person commits a sin, a black spot appears on the heart's white surface. If sins persist, this blackness increases until it covers the entire heart, at which point the individual may never return to goodness. This is aligned with the Quranic verse, "**Nay! Rather, what they used to do has become like a rust upon their hearts**" (Quran 83:14)."
- **Satanic Misguidance:** When Allah (SWT) wills bad fortune for a person, He may place a dark black spot in their heart, close its ears, and assign a Satan to mislead them. Conversely, for those Allah wants to guide, He places a point of light in their heart, opens its ears, and assigns an angel to support them.

- **Apparent Evil Inclinations:** Phrases like "their evil inclinations were manifested to them" or "their evil inclinations appeared to them" signify that these previously hidden negative traits become visible and prominent.

Despite these inclinations, Islam clarifies that "humanity is not inherently evil or sinful." The Quran states that "no bearer of burdens bears the burden of another," refuting the concept of inherited original sin. Instead, humans have an innate ability (fitra) to know and believe in their Creator and are naturally inclined towards faith and goodness. The problem arises from the "commanding self" and external influences.

The Role of al-Nafs al-Ammarah (The Commanding Self that Enjoins Evil)

The al-Nafs al-Ammarah is central to understanding human inclination toward evil. It is described as:

- **The Internal Despot:** This aspect of the soul is "habituated to command evil" and is considered "the most dangerous of all enemies." It constantly urges individuals to indulge in evil deeds, desires, passions, and lust, leading to deviations, misfortune, and cruelty if not controlled.
- **Source of Temptation:** The Quran states, "**The (carnal) soul indeed prompts (men) to evil**" (Quran 12:53). This "evil-inviting self" refers to the ego or the lower self that is prone to weaknesses and negative desires.
- **Need for Repudiation:** To attain closeness to Allah, the al-Nafs al-Ammarah must be "rejected or repudiated." Protection from its negative influence comes from "fighting against its urges with their faith in God and their determination to do only good," which strengthens one's will against satanic temptations. The ultimate goal in this struggle is the "destruction" of the al-Nafs al-Ammarah, leading to spiritual growth and the attainment of the "peaceful self" (al-Nafs al-Mutma'innah).

The human soul is inherently prone to evil, as stated, "Surely man's self is wont to command him to do evil, except such as my Lord has had mercy on," underscoring the need for divine assistance in overcoming these negative inclinations.

Mixture of Human Forces

Human beings are conceived as a blend of two opposing forces:

- **Earthly and Carnal Aspect:** This refers to the material and physical component, often termed "clay," which is associated with human weaknesses and limitations.

- **Pure, Spiritual, and Divine Aspect:** This is the "spirit of God" breathed into humanity, representing a higher, purer essence that is inherently against bloodshed, lies, corruption, and meanness.
- **Tension and Choice:** These two forces exist in tension, with divine attributes often obscured by human weaknesses. Humans are a combination of "angels and beasts," possessing both wisdom (intellect) and passion (desire). Following wisdom can elevate one's status above angels, while following passions can debase it below beasts. Allah has endowed humans with both intellect and desire, providing them with the freedom to choose between good and evil. They also have an innate ability to rationally judge between good and bad, akin to distinguishing between sensory experiences.

Innate Vices

The Islamic perspective identifies several innate vices that human nature is prone to:

- **General Propensity:** "Evil is something man naturally tends towards."
- **Specific Traits:** The Quran attributes negative traits such as injustice, foolishness, greed, anxiety, despair, ingratitude, and rebelliousness to human nature. Humans are described as prone to vices such as greed, anxiety, and parsimony, as well as love of wealth.
- **Desire for the Forbidden:**

  رسول الله (صلي الله عليه و آله) : إن ابن آدم لحريص على ما منع

  Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: '**Truly the son of Adam covets what is prohibited**.'

  — Kanz al-'Ummal, no. 44095

- **Vulnerability and Negligence:** Humanity is fragile and vulnerable, prone to ailments, harm, and death, and is often heedless and negligent of their own salvation. They are prone to fall short and do not know the reality of their actions, the outcome of their actions, and the consequences of their accomplishments.
- **Avarice:** The tendency to be greedy or excessively fond of something is considered a part of human nature.

Overcoming these vices requires an ongoing struggle against the lower self, otherwise, individuals will be driven by these negative inclinations.

Diversity of Inclinations

The diversity in human nature, leading some individuals towards goodness and others towards evil:

- **Origin in Creation:**

  ـ علي بن إبراهيم عن أبيه عن حماد بن عيسى عن ربعي بن عبد الله عن رجل عن علي بن الحسين (عليهما السلام) قال إن الله عز وجل خلق النبيين من طينة عليين قلوبهم وأبدانهم وخلق قلوب المؤمنين من تلك الطينة وجعل خلق أبدان المؤمنين من دون ذلك وخلق الكفار من طينة سجين قلوبهم وأبدانهم فخلط بين الطينتين فمن هذا يلد المؤمن الكافر ويلد الكافر المؤمن ومن هاهنا يصيب المؤمن السيئة ومن هاهنا يصيب الكافر الحسنة فقلوب المؤمنين تحن إلى ما خلقوا منه وقلوب الكافرين تحن إلى ما خلقوا منه.

  Ali ibn Ibrahim has narrated from his father from Hammad ibn ‘Isa from Rib’i ibn ‘Abd Allah from a man from Ali ibn al-Husayn (peace be upon him) who has said the following: “**Allah, the Majestic, the Glorious, created the prophets from the clay of ‘Illiyiyyn (paradise), both their bodies and souls. He made the hearts of the believers from such clay and He made their bodies from a world lower than that world. He created the unbelievers, both their bodies and souls from the clay of Sijjin (fire). He thus mixed the two clays. For this reason children of unbelievers become believers and vice versa. For this reason the believers get afflicted with evil and unbelievers receive good things. Thus, the hearts of the believers incline to that from which they are created and the hearts of the unbelievers incline to that from which they are created**.”

  — Al-Kafi (Vol. 2) by Shaykh Muhammad b. Ya qub al-Kulayni, Book 1, Chapter 1, Hadith #1

Origin of Evil

The origin of evil in human life is primarily attributed to human choices and actions, rather than an inherent, essential badness:

- **Human Accountability:** Good comes from Allah due to what He has first created and given to humans, while evil is a result of the recompense humans have earned for themselves.

  ـ علي بن إبراهيم عن أبيه عن ابن أبي عمير عن هشام بن سالم عن أبي عبد الله (عليه السلام) قال قلت فطرت الله التي فطر الناس عليها قال التوحيد.

  Ali ibn Ibrahim has narrated from his father from Ibn Abi ‘Umayr from Hisham ibn Salim from Abu ‘Abdillah (peace be upon him) who has said the following: “I asked (the Imam) about the words of Allah, ‘. . . **the invention of Allah (had a certain) nature with which He created all people.** . . .’ (Quran 30:30)

The Imam (peace be upon him) said, '**It (invention, Fitrat) refers to belief in Oneness of Allah (belief in Allah only is placed in their nature)**."'

— Al-Kafi (Vol. 2) by Shaykh Muhammad b. Ya qub al-Kulayni, Book 1, Chapter 6, Hadith #1

رسول الله◌ (صلي الله عليه و آله) : كل مولود يولد على الفطرة ، يعني على المعرفة بأن الله◌ عزوجل خالقه ، فذلك قوله : «ولئن سألتهم من خلق السماوات والأرض ليقولن الله◌»

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: '**Every newborn is born upon the origination (fitra) of Allah, meaning [born] with inner knowledge that affirms that Allah is his Creator and this is the meaning of His words, "If you ask them, 'Who created the heavens and the earth?' they will surely say, 'Allah'**."

— Al-Tawhid, p. 331, no. 9

Therefore, Allah is foremost in bestowing good deeds, while humans are foremost in committing sins. The Quran states, "**Whatever good you receive is from Allah. Whatever evil befalls you is from your own soul**."

Surah An-Nisa (Quran 4:79)

- **Root of Evil:** The deepest root of evil is identified as "polytheism," which must be "uprooted."
- **Predisposition vs. Determinism:** Humans are created with a predisposition for both good (fitrah) and evil (al-Nafs al-Ammarah). However, this disposition towards evil is not a sufficient or complete cause (al-illah al-tammah) for moral vice; it is merely an incomplete or partial cause (al-illah al-naqisah). This means that while human nature may incline towards vice (e.g., a greedy temperament), individuals possess the free will to resist these inclinations and direct their temperament towards infinite perfection.
- **Free Will and Choice:** Many vices are a direct result of an individual's free will, not solely human or individual nature. For instance, lying is a choice made by the individual. It is through the existence of this disposition towards evil that the choice to follow what is right gains value and allows for the purification of the self and the understanding of truth through struggle.
- **Relativity of Evil:** From an individual's perspective, what is "evil" might be perceived as "good" for themselves. Every individual naturally seeks their own good, which can lead them to treat others as mere tools.

In essence, Islam rejects the concept of inherited original sin, affirming that humans are born pure (fitrah) and are accountable for their own choices. They are endowed

with the capacity to distinguish between right and wrong (al-Najdayn) and are free to choose their path, with the al-Nafs al-Ammarah representing the constant internal challenge to overcome evil inclinations and strive for spiritual perfection.

Relation to Quran 17:11

The verse Quran 17:11 is understood to describe a specific aspect of humanity's hasty and sometimes negative nature:

"**And man supplicates for evil just as he supplicates for good, and man is ever hasty**."

Tafsir discussions clarify the meaning of this verse:

- **Unknowing Supplication for Evil:** Human beings may, in moments of anger, frustration, or impatience, invoke harm against themselves or others with the same earnestness with which they pray for good. If Allah were to immediately grant such prayers, they would lead to destruction, but divine mercy intervenes and does not respond to those harmful requests. People do not knowingly seek evil as evil; rather, they often pursue something that is in reality bad for them, unaware of its true nature at that time.
- **Haste as the Cause:** The continuation of the verse, "and man is ever hasty," explains why humans fall into this error. Hasty desires can lead a person to evil without recognizing it as such. They seek immediate gains without reflecting upon long-term consequences and may ask for things forbidden or harmful with the same fervor as they ask for permissible good.
- **Guidance Against Misjudgment:**

  الإمام الصادق (عليه السلام): الصراط المستقيم أميرالمؤمنين علي (عليه السلام)

  Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: **Imam al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) said, 'The straight path is the Commander of the Faithful, Ali (peace be upon him)**.'

  — Ma'ani al-Akhbar, p. 32, no. 2

  الحده نوع من الجنون لان صاحبها يندم فإن لم يندم فجنونها مستحكم

  Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said:

  Hastiness and precipitance is a kind of insanity and those having this attribute repent of their actions very soon, or (if they continue on this path) it shows that their insanity is perpetual and firmly ingrained in them

— Nahjul Balaghah

This "hasty temperament" (an aspect of maṭbu'un 'alayhi or human inclination) is a core aspect of humanity's susceptibility to evil, as it can lead to impulsive actions and an imbalance in reactions to life's circumstances, diverging from patience and gratitude.

هلاك الناس في ثلاث: الكبر والحرص والحسد، فالكبر هلاك الدين وبه لعن إبليس، والحرص عدو النفس وبه أخرج آدم من الجنة، والحسد رائد السوء ومنه قتل قابيل هابيل.

Imam Hasan al-Mujtaba (peace be upon him) said: **The perishment of people is in three: arrogance, avarice, and envy, for arrogance is the perishment of religion and by it Iblis was damned, and avarice is the enemy of the nafs and by it Adam was removed from Paradise, and envy is the guide of wickedness and from it Cain killed Abel**.

— Bihar al-Anwaar by Allamah Majlisi, Volume 75, Page 111

الخير كله أمامك، وإن الشر كله أمامك. ولن ترى الخير والشر إلا بعد الآخرة، لأن الله جل وعز جعل الخير كله في الجنة والشر كله في النار، لأنهما الباقيان.

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) said: **All good lies before you, and all evil lies before you. Yet you will not see good and evil except after the Hereafter, for Allah Azzawajal has placed all good in Paradise and all evil in Hellfire, for they are the everlasting**.

— Tuhaf al-Uqul by Ibn Shu'ba al-Harrani, Volume 0, Page 306

بحار الأنوار عن المفضل عن الإمامالصادق (عليه السلام): لا جبر ولا تفويض، ولكن أمر بين أمرين . قال: قلت: ما أمر بين أمرين ؟ قال: مثل ذلك مثل رجل رأيته على معصية فنهيته فلم ينته، فتركته ففعل تلك المعصية، فليس حيث لم يقبل منك فتركته كنت أنت الذي أمرته بالمعصية

Imam Jaffar Sadiq (peace be upon him) sai, according to what Mufadhal b. ‘Umar narrated on his authority, ‘There is neither predestination nor free will, but a stance in between them.’ [Mufadhal] asked, ‘What is the stance in between?’ He replied, ‘**It is like when you observe a man in sin and you advise him against it but he does not desist from it, so you leave him to his sin. Leaving him to sin after he has rejected your advice does not mean that you commanded him to sin**.’

— Bihar al-Anwar, v. 5, p. 17, no. 27

الإمام علي (عليه السلام): واعلموا أن مجازكم على الصراط ومزالق دحضه وأهاويل زلله وتارات أهواله

> Imam Jaffar Sadiq (peace be upon him) said: '**Verily people have betaken to their lefts and rights, whilst we and our Shi'ah have been guided to the straight path**.'
>
> — al-Kafi, v. 2, p. 246, no. 5

Distinguishing Between Inherent Evil and Susceptibility

The Islamic perspective consistently clarifies that human beings are not inherently evil or sinful in essence. The concept of "original sin" is explicitly rejected in Islam, as the Quran states, "no bearer of burdens bears the burden of another."

Instead, humans are endowed with fitrah, an innate ability and natural inclination towards faith, goodness, and recognizing their Creator. The susceptibility towards evil stems from the "commanding self" (al-nafs al-ammarah) and the influence of Shayatin. The soul may incite evil, but the individual possesses the freedom and authority to reject this invitation. If this invitation is accepted, the individual becomes accountable for the evil committed.

This understanding aligns with maṭbu'un 'alayhi being interpreted as a tendency, inclination, or stamped susceptibility rather than a metaphysical assertion that the essence of the human being is evil. The operative flaw emphasized in Quran 17:11 is ajalah (haste), which leads to misjudgment and unknowingly seeking what is harmful while perceiving it as beneficial. True supplication should therefore focus only on genuine good and nearness to Allah.

The Necessity of Jihad al-Nafs

Given this inclination, Jihad al-Nafs becomes paramount. The nafs is seen as one's greatest enemy, more hostile than any external foe. The human soul is a "scene of a struggle of two competing powers": divine power attracting toward good and satanic power tempting toward evil. Imam al-Sajjad (peace be upon him) articulated this struggle, complaining to God against the self that "continuously commands; to indulge into sinful acts and deviations, Stands up against Your wrath and punishment; and pulls me towards the path of absolute destruction."

The goal of Jihad al-Nafs is to make the commanding self submissive through efforts and greater struggle. This involves its spiritual "destruction," allowing for true spiritual growth. Success can elevate a person above the level of angels; failure can cause descent to a level lower than animals.

Purpose of Jihad al-Nafs

The primary purpose of Jihad al-Nafs is to achieve spiritual growth, self-improvement, and a higher level of awareness and closeness to Allah.

- **Spiritual Ascension:** Its aim is to suppress base desires and cultivate piety, allowing the individual to ascend to a higher spiritual state. Through this struggle, one seeks to attain "a higher level of spiritual awareness and closeness to God, and develop positive human attributes that are loved by God."
- **Purity of Intention and Soul:** It serves to purify one's intention and soul, ensuring that one's actions are in alignment with Allah's will. This involves overcoming one's own desires and weaknesses to stay focused on righteous intentions and goals.
- **Self-Control and Discipline:** The struggle fosters self-control, discipline, and self-awareness, which are crucial for living a righteous Islamic lifestyle. It is about controlling one's desires and passions to act in accordance with divine will.
- **Achieving Allah's Pleasure:** By prioritizing the love of Allah and striving for His pleasure above all else, one makes everything else secondary, thus focusing on fulfilling divine commands.
- **Overcoming Obstacles:** It is considered the means to overcome the "obstacle and barrier" that one's own self presents, enabling an individual to "reach their Creator."

Spiritual Implications of Jihad al-Nafs

The spiritual implications of Jihad al-Nafs are profound, affecting one's status in this life and the hereafter.

- **Path to Paradise:**

  الإمام علي (عليه السلام) : جهاد النفس مهر الجنة

  Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: '**Jihad of the self is the dowry for Paradise**.'

  — Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 4755

  عن شعيب العقرقوفي، عن الصادق)عليه السالم(اقل: من ملك نفسه إذا رغب وإذا رهب وإذا اشتهى وإذا غضب وإذا رضي .حرم هللا جسده عىل النار

  From Shuaib Al-Aqarqufi, from Al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) who said: **Whoever controls his self (nafs) when he desires, when he fears, when he lusts, when he is angry, and when he is pleased, Allah will forbid his body from the Fire**.

— Wasa il al-Shia Vol. 15, Section 2, Chapter 1, Hadith 20215

و روى ابن فضال عن غالب بن عثمان عن شعيب العقرقوفي عن الصادق جعفر بن محمد عليه السلام قال : من ملك نفسه إذا رغب و إذا رهب و إذا اشتهى و إذا غضب و إذا رضي حرم الله جسده على النار .

Ibn Faddal narrated from Ghalib ibn Uthman, from Shuayb Al-Aqarqufi, from Abu Abdullah Imam Jafar ibn Muhammad Al-Sadiq (peace be upon him), peace be upon him, who said: **Whoever controls himself in moments of desire, fear, craving, anger, and satisfaction, Allah (swt) will make his body forbidden to the Fire**.

— Man La Yahduruh al-Faqih (Vol. 4) by Shaykh Muhammad b. Ali al-Saduq, Book 1, Chapter 175, Hadith #5860

This signifies its immense reward and importance in attaining eternal bliss.

- **True Spiritual Growth:** True spiritual growth and self-improvement are achievable only through engaging in this constant struggle against one's own self. It is the key to understanding the entire spiritual process and realizing ultimate reality.
- **Elevation or Degradation:** Success in this struggle allows an individual to "rise above and beyond the level of angels," while failure can lead to a descent "to a level lower than the level of animals, and may even be grouped among the legions of the devil."
- **Maintaining an Islamic Lifestyle:** It is essential for maintaining a strong Islamic lifestyle, helping to "maintain the upper hand on the soul" and ensure pure intentions. It is considered one of the four pillars of Eman, alongside patience, certainty, and justice.
- **Foundation for Peace:** While encompassing different forms, the underlying purpose of Jihad in Islam, including Jihad al-Nafs, is to establish peace in this world for Allah's pleasure, leading to eternal peace in the hereafter.
- **Challenging Endeavor:** It is considered challenging because it requires individuals to "resist their whims and caprice, and to free themselves from the influence of Satan and their own desires." The inner enemies are "hosted inside his own existence," making the battle continuous and formidable.

The Effort Required to Achieve Goodness

Goodness is not inherited but acquired through consistent good actions. Humans are endowed with intellect to discern, free will to choose, and a nafs that serves as the battleground for their moral trajectory. The value of following what is right is realized precisely because of the disposition toward evil and the choice to overcome it.

Despite the nafs's inclination toward evil, Allah purifies whom He wishes. Divine guidance and assistance are crucial. The Quran serves as the ultimate source of guidance, wisdom, and light. Individuals must "**force yourselves to do good, and exert yourselves therein**"

— Tanbih al-Khawatir, vol. 2, p. 120

While faith in God is ingrained in human nature (فطرة, fitrah), external influences such as parents and society can corrupt the soul. This implies a need for conscious resistance against negative external pressures. God's wisdom in creating humans with the potential for both good and evil lies in providing value to the choice of following what is right. Through struggle and purification, humans understand the truth and actualize their potential as true human beings, servants of God, and agents of justice.

The Centrality of Human Effort and Action

Islam places significant emphasis on human effort and action in the pursuit of goodness and the attainment of goals.

- **Acquired, Not Inherited:** Goodness is not inherited but comes through consistent good actions. Examples provided include prophets who had children who were not good, and good people who had bad children, highlighting that individual choices and efforts are paramount.
- **Reward and Punishment:** Individuals are believed to be rewarded or punished based on their actions, with their destiny being determined by their operations. The Holy Quran emphasizes this, stating, "there is nothing for man but what he would try to do."
- **Necessity for Spiritual Growth:** Salvation and spiritual perfection are not achieved without human effort. Every human is potentially ready to receive realities through their efforts, and the success of discovering truths depends on the amount of effort made. This "sincere struggle of individuals to utilize their latent talents and abilities" is what leads to ultimate contentment and felicity.
- **Interplay with Divine Will:** While hard work and effort are necessary, they are not solely sufficient to guarantee success; the ultimate outcome stems from a higher power. Human effort and Allah's guidance are interconnected; humans must strive, but Allah ultimately guides and bestows success. As an example, humans must work to earn a livelihood, but Allah provides sustenance.

The Role of Nafs (The Self)

The nafs is a critical component of human nature, serving as the battleground for one's moral trajectory.

- **Dual Inclinations:** Human beings are created with dual inclinations: towards taqwa (God-consciousness, piety) and fujoor (immorality, transgression). The nafs embodies these two competing powers within the human soul.
- **Internal Struggle:** The nafs is considered a person's most dangerous enemy because its evil inclinations reside within the soul itself. This necessitates Jihad al-Nafs (struggle against the self) to combat "evil ideas, desires and powers of lust, anger, and insatiable imagination."
- **Intellect vs. Desire:** A central human struggle is the inherent tension between aql (intellect) and nafs (the lower self or carnal desires). When individuals succumb to their desires and feel self-sufficient, believing they no longer need divine guidance, they fall into tughyan (transgression) and rebellion against their Creator.
- **Innate Tendencies:** Traits like avarice, or the tendency to be greedy or excessively fond of something, are considered a part of human nature (nafs).

The Significance of Free Will

Islam affirms human free will, though it exists within the overarching framework of divine power.

- **Choice and Accountability:** Human beings have the faculty of good and evil and are free to choose their actions. Their status with Allah depends on the choices they make. Humans are questioned about their deeds, whereas Allah is not questioned about what He does.
- **Between Compulsion and Total Freedom:** The Islamic perspective holds that there is no compulsion, but also no total freedom. Instead, it is a matter "between the two," meaning that while humans have free will, their choices and actions are also subject to God's will and power.
- **Divine and Human Will:** The divine will and human will do not negate or collide with each other; they coexist. Humans have freedom of will while still being under the divine will. A hadith states:

  محمد بن أبي عبد الله وغيره عن سهل بن زياد عن أحمد بن محمد بن أبي نصر قال قلت لابي الحسن الرضا (عليه السلام) إن بعض أصحابنا يقول بالجبر وبعضهم يقول بالاستطاعة قال فقال لي اكتب بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم قال علي بن الحسين قال الله عز وجل يا ابن آدم بمشيئتي كنت أنت الذي تشاء وبقوتي أديت إلي فرائضي وبنعمتي قويت على معصيتي جعلتك سميعا بصيرا ما أصابك من حسنة فمن الله وما أصابك من سيئة فمن نفسك وذلك أني أولى بحسناتك منك وأنت أولى بسيئاتك مني وذلك أني لا أسأل عما أفعل وهم يسألون قد نظمت لك كل شيء تريد.

Muhammad ibn abu ‘Abd Allah and others have narrated from Sahl ibn Ziyad from Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn abu Nasr who said the following:\\r\ “Once I asked abu al-Hassan al-Rida (peace be upon him), ‘**Certain persons of our people believe in compulsion and others believe in people’s capabilities. The Imam said, ‘Write down, “In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful, (Imam) Ali ibn al-Husayn (peace be upon him), has said that Allah, the Most Majestic has said, ‘O son of Adam, through My will it is you who wish. With My power you fulfill your obligations to Me. With My bounties you become strong to sin. I made you to hear and see. Whatever good you receive is from Allah. Whatever evil befalls you is from your own soul. It is because I have more credit in your good deeds than you do and you are more responsible for your bad deeds than I am. It is because I am not questioned about what I do and they are the ones who are questioned about their deeds. I have organized for you all things that you want.**’”

— Al-Kafi (Vol. 1) by Shaykh Muhammad b. Ya qub al-Kulayni, Book 3, Chapter 30, Hadith #12

حدثنا أبي، ومحمد بن الحسن بن أحمد بن الوليد رضي الله عنهما، قالا: حدثنا سعد بن عبد الله، عن أحمد بن محمد بن عيسى، عن أحمد بن محمد بن أبي نصر البزنطي، عن أبي الحسن الرضا عليه السلام قال: قلت له: إن أصحابنا بعضهم يقولون بالجبر وبعضهم بالاستطاعة، فقال لي: أكتب قال الله تبارك وتعالى: يا ابن آدم بمشيتي كنت أنت الذي تشاء لنفسك ما تشاء، وبقوتي أديت إلي فرائضي وبنعمتي قويت على معصيتي، جعلتك سميعا بصيرا قويا، ما أصابك من حسنة فمن الله، وما أصابك من سيئة فمن نفسك، وذلك أنا أولى بحسناتك منك وأنت أولى بسيئاتك مني، وذلك أني لا أسأل عما أفعل وهم يسألون، قد نظمت لك كل شئ تريد .

My father and Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn Ahmad ibn al-Walid (may Allah be pleased with them) both said: Sa`d ibn `Abd Allah said, on the authority of Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn `Isa, on the authority of Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Abu Nasr al-Bazanfi that Abu al-Hasan al-Rida (peace be upon him) said: I asked him, “Some of our scholars believe in determinism [jabr], while others believe in ability [istita`ah].” Therefore, he (peace be upon him) replied to me, Write down: **Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, said: O son of Adam! Your will is subject to My Will. You fulfill your obligations through My Power, and through My Bounty you have the strength to disobey me. I have made you seeing, hearing, and strong. Whatever good reaches you is from Allah, and whatever evil reaches you is from your own self. So I am worthier of your goods deeds than yourself, and you are worthier of your bad deeds than I am. This is why I will not be asked about what I do, while you will be asked about what you did. I have made systematic for you everything you wish**.

— Al-Tawhid by Shaykh Muhammad b. Ali al-Saduq, Book 2, Chapter 55, Hadith #6

The Guiding Light of Fitrah (Human Nature)

Fitrah represents the inherent natural state and divine compass embedded within every human being, orienting the soul towards Allah and goodness.

- **Innate Disposition:** Fitrah refers to the innate nature or disposition that God has given to humans, a "natural state... characterized by a tendency towards piety and goodness." It is an inherent part of the human nafs, deeply ingrained and unchangeable, guiding individuals towards justice, selflessness, courage, and patience.
- **Recognition of Truth:** Fitrah is a "built-in system that enables individuals to recognize basic right and wrong, such as injustice being wrong and justice being good." It can also lead to the recognition of a Lord and Creator worthy of worship. Every person is born with this natural state, and external influences or personal choices may cause individuals to stray from this path.
- **Harmony with Divine Law:** Divine Law (Sharia) is seen as being in harmony with human nature (fitrah), serving as a guiding framework that aligns with humanity's innate goodness and upright instincts.
- **Lifelong Task:** Humanity's innate nature is to love Allah, and the lifelong task is to cultivate and nurture this divine seed, moving from potential to actualization. Fitrah can flourish through the acquisition of knowledge and the use of reason, guided by the teachings of the prophets.
- **Fitrah vs. Tabi'a:** The difference between fitrah from tabi'a (is more fluid, self-serving, and often impatient physical nature). While tabi'a is driven by immediate reward and fear, fitrah is motivated by pure love and surrender to the Divine, seeking "permanent and eternal fulfillment."

The Interplay with Divine Guidance

Divine guidance is indispensable in the journey towards goodness.

- **Intellect's Need for Light:** While aql (intellect) serves as a divine light, it is akin to vision that requires external light to perceive clearly. Divine revelation and prophetic guidance illuminate the path for the intellect, without which aql alone is insufficient and susceptible to error.
- **Allah's Assistance:** Individuals can obtain good ethical traits through both theoretical and practical means, seeking advice from ethical teachers. However, ultimately, it is Allah who purifies people, requiring individuals to ask for His help. Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) stated that when Allah

favors a servant, He gathers for him the inclination, capacity, and permission to do good.
- **Seeking Guidance:** Guidance is from Allah, according to His law, which includes the person's willingness to seek it. It is through conscious decisions and embracing divine guidance that individuals actualize their potential to be servants of God and agents of justice.

The Structured Program for Inner Striving

1. Reflection (Tafakkur)

Daily contemplation of one's duties toward God, acknowledging His creation, sustenance, and blessings.

In Islam, Tafakkur (تفكر), often translated as reflection or contemplation, is a highly valued and essential spiritual practice. It is not merely superficial thought but a deep, insightful engagement with creation, divine revelations, and one's own existence, aimed at achieving a profound understanding of life's purpose and drawing closer to God.

Meaning of Tafakkur

Tafakkur is defined as the attempt by the insight – the "eye of the heart" (basirat) – to comprehend the ultimate purpose and aim of life. This purpose is identified as the attainment of utmost perfection and absolute happiness, which is achieved through theoretical and practical perfection. It is a process of deep thinking, meditating, and considering the mysteries of the universe and the fleeting nature of worldly things. The term Tafakkur is derived from the Arabic root word Fa-ka-ra–Yaf-ku-ru, meaning "to think deeply."

Significance and Value in Islamic Teachings

Tafakkur holds immense significance in Islam, being strongly applauded and considered a praiseworthy act:

- **Superior Form of Worship ('Ibadah):** According to various traditions, an hour of Tafakkur is considered better than the ibadah (worship) of a year, seven years, or even seventy years.

  عن معمر بن خالد اقل: سمعت أاب الحسن الرضا)عليه السالم(يقول: ليس العبادة كثرة الصالة والصوم إنما العبادة التفكر .في أمر هللا عز وجل

  From Ma'mar ibn Khallad who said: I heard Abu al-Hasan al-Rida (peace be upon him) saying: **Worship is not about praying and fasting much, rather**

worship is contemplation about the command of Allah, the Mighty and Majestic.

— Wasa il al-Shia Vol. 15, Section 2, Chapter 5, Hadith 20261

عن يونس بن عبد الرحمن، عن أبي عبدهللا)عليه السالم(اقل: كان أكثر عبادة أبي ذر . رحمه هللا التفكر واالعتبار

From Yunus bin Abdul Rahman, from Abu Abdullah (peace be upon him) who said: **The most frequent worship of Abu Dharr, may Allah have mercy on him, was contemplation and taking lessons**.

— Wasa il al-Shia Vol. 15, Section 2, Chapter 5, Hadith 20264

محمد بن إدريس في آخر)السرائر(نقال من كتاب أبي عبدهللا السياري، صاحب موسى والرضا)عليهما السالم(اقل: سمعته .يقول: ليس العبادة كثرة الصيام والصالة، وإنما العبادة الفكر في هللا تعالى

Muhammad bin Idris in the end of (Al-Sarair), quoting from the book of Abu Abdullah Al-Sayyari, companion of Musa and Al-Ridha (peace be upon them) said: I heard him say: **Worship is not abundant fasting and prayer, rather worship is contemplation about Allah the Exalted**.

— Wasa il al-Shia Vol. 15, Section 2, Chapter 5, Hadith 20265

عن أحمد بن محمد بن أبي نصر، عن بعض رجاله، عن أبي عبدهللا)عليه السالم(اقل: أفضل العبادة إدمان التفكر في هللا .وفي قدرته

From Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Nasr, from some of his men, from Abu Abdullah (peace be upon him) who said: **The best worship is continuous/persistent (*) contemplation about Allah and His power**.
Translator: * The word "idman" relates to continuity, persistence, or maintaining something consistently. In this specific context, where it's discussing reflection/contemplation about Allah and His power, "idman" indicates the constant, habitual, and consistent practice of such contemplation.

— Wasa il al-Shia Vol. 15, Section 2, Chapter 5, Hadith 20260

أفضل العبادة إدمان التفكر في الله وفي قدرته.

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) said: **The best of worship is addiction to the contemplation of Allah and His ability**.

— al-Kafi by Shaykh al-Kulayni, Volume 2, Page 55

It is regarded as the spirit in the body of ibadah; without it, ibadah is akin to a dead body.

الإمام علي (عليه السلام): لا خير في عبادة ليس فيها تفقه

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: '**Worship without understanding is no good**.'

— Tuhaf al-'Uqul, no. 204

الإمام زين العابدين (عليه السلام): لا عبادة إلا بالتفقه

Imam Zain-ul-Abideen (peace be upon him) said: '**There is no point to worship unless performed with understanding**.'

— Tuhaf al-'Uqul, no. 280

- **Understanding God's Greatness:** Reflection on the handiwork of God is considered an act of worship. It helps individuals to believe in and love God, recognize His power and ordainment, and deepen their understanding of His greatness.

عن بريد العجيل اقل: اقل أبو عبدهللا)عليه السالم(: خرج رسول هللا)صل هللا عليه وآله(عىل أصحابه فقال: ما جمعكم؟ .اقلوا: اجتمعنا نذكر ربنا ونتفكر في عظمته، اقل: لن تدركوا التفكر في عظمته

From Burayd Al-Ijli who said: Abu Abdullah (peace be upon him) said: **The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him and his family) came out to his companions and said: What has gathered you? They said: We gathered to remember our Lord and reflect upon His greatness. He said: You will never comprehend reflection upon His greatness**.

— Wasa il al-Shia Vol. 16, Section 2, Chapter 23, Hadith 21338

- **Knowledge and Understanding:** Tafakkur increases one's knowledge and understanding, enabling individuals to find new ways of conducting their lives and benefiting from the experiences of wise people. It is crucial for acquiring true Ma'arifah (cognition).
- **Guidance from Quran and Hadith:** Reflection on the Quran and Hadith is highly encouraged. The Quran states its revelation is "**Thus Allah makes clear to you the verses [of revelation] that you might give thought**." (Quran 2:219) and encourages people to use their intellect (Aql) to understand its signs, proofs, evidence, revelations, and teachings.

" ألا لا خير فى علم ليس فيه تفهم، ألا لا خير فى قرائة ليس فيها تدبر، ألا لا خير فى عبادة ليس فيها تفكر"

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said:

Be aware! Knowledge without thinking has no profit!

Be aware! Recitation of the Qur'an without reflection is of little use!

Be aware! Worship lacking reflection has no effect!

— 1. Al-Kafi, Volume One, Page 36 and Tuhaful Uqul, Maani Al-Akhbar, page 226; Bihar Al-Anwar Volume 2, page 48-49, Aalamu Addeen, page 100, Mishkat Al-Anwar 137-138, Muniat Almureed 162.

- **Protection from Downfall:** Neglecting Tafakkur can lead to downfall, destruction, shame, and disgrace, as it prevents individuals from understanding the true meaning of the Quran and living according to its teachings, leading to blind adherence to rituals.
- **Purpose of Life:** Tafakkur helps individuals understand their purpose in life by reflecting on divine revelations and the sending of prophets for humanity's guidance.
- **Inner Reform:** It is crucial for examining one's actions, recognizing mistakes, and seeking forgiveness, contributing to personal reform and a stronger connection to God.

Relationship with Tadabbur and Tadhakkur

While both Tafakkur and Tadabbur refer to reflection and contemplation, they have distinct connotations:

- **Tadabbur:** This term implies a deeper, more nuanced understanding, considering the origin and consequences of a matter. It literally means to take one thing after another or to ponder on one verse repeatedly to unlock hidden meanings. It is rooted in Dubur (rear part), suggesting a look behind or beyond the obvious.
- **Tafakkur:** This is a more general term for deep thinking and meditation.

Despite their differences, both concepts aim to promote a deeper understanding, particularly of the Quran, moving beyond mere recitation to grasp its interior (Batin) and exterior (Zahir) aspects.

Tafakkur also has a sequential relationship with Tadhakkur (remembrance):

- **Tadhakkur:** This is the result of Tafakkur. Tafakkur is described as the "search for the Beloved," while Tadhakkur is the "attainment of the Beloved." The strength and perfection of remembrance (tadhakkur) are dependent on the strength and perfection of contemplation (tafakkur).

Methods and Objects of Tafakkur

Several methods and areas of Tafakkur can aid in one's spiritual journey:

1. **Reflection on God's Creations:** Pondering the beautiful creations of God and their benefits helps one to believe in and love Him.
2. **Reflection on Divine Rewards:** Contemplating the rewards promised by God for performing ibadah motivates one to fulfill their duties.
3. **Reflection on Divine Punishments:** Pondering the punishments informed by God instills fear of Him and encourages abstaining from sins.
4. **Self-Reflection:** Reflecting on one's own enslavement to desires and committing sins leads to shame and seeking forgiveness.
5. **Reflection on Divine Revelations:** Meditating on God's revelations and the prophets sent for guidance helps understand one's purpose in life.

In essence, Tafakkur in Islam is an active, continuous, and profound intellectual and spiritual exercise, inviting individuals to righteousness and action, leading to a deeper connection with the Divine and personal spiritual growth.

2. Will and Resolve (Azm)

Firm resolve, described as the essence of humanity and basic requirement for achieving liberation from the domination of evil desires.

Azm (fortitude, determination, firm resolve) in Islam signifies a deep and unwavering commitment, considered essential for humanity's spiritual journey and for triumphing over evil desires.

Meaning of Azm (Firm Resolve)

Azm refers to a state of strong determination, fortitude, and resolute decision-making. It is described as the very essence of humanity and a fundamental requirement for individuals to achieve freedom from the dominance of evil desires. This resolve lays the foundation for a good life, reflecting a steadfast commitment to principles and a clear direction in one's actions. Imam Ali (peace be upon him) emphasized its critical nature, stating that "There is no good in determination without a firm resolution."

In the context of the prophets, azm means they firmly upheld the initial covenant made with God and never wavered from it. The title "Ulul Azm" (owners of firm resolve) is specifically given to prophets who demonstrated exceptional determination.

Importance for Humanity

Azm is crucial for human spiritual development and attaining righteousness:

- **Essence of Humanity:** Firm resolve is identified as the essence of humanity, distinguishing individuals by their capacity for moral strength and steadfastness.
- **Overcoming Obstacles:** Islam encourages azm to mobilize a person's inner drive, enabling them to become a positive being who can overcome challenges and remain steadfast. This cultivates determination, courage, and an invaluable spiritual power.
- **Foundation of a Good Life:** The will and resolve inherent in azm are synonymous with establishing a virtuous life.
- **Intellect Over Desire:** A key aspect of human excellence is when one's intellect (aql) prevails over their desires (nafs). This dominance is a sign of azm and elevates a person to a status superior to angels. Conversely, succumbing to desires makes one worse than animals.
- **Pursuit of Divine Pleasure:** A firm Iman (faith) in God, which is rooted in azm, makes the opinions and desires of others irrelevant when pursuing divine pleasure.
- **Attaining Truth and Righteousness:** The path to truth and righteousness is characterized by submission to reason and Divine Law, a path that requires firm resolve. Every step away from desire and towards reason illuminates one's inner being and unveils deeper realities.

Role in Overcoming Evil Desires

Azm plays a pivotal role in controlling and overcoming evil desires, which are seen as a significant challenge to spiritual growth:

- **Freedom from Domination:** Firm resolve is a basic requirement to free oneself from the control of evil desires.
- **Submission to Faith:** True submission (Islam) necessitates following religious teachings, especially when they conflict with personal desires. Prioritizing desires over faith indicates a lack of genuine submission.
- **Self-Control and Moderation:** Islam emphasizes self-control and moderation, particularly regarding appetites and desires. The Quran and the teachings of the Prophet and Imams underscore the importance of dominating passions for spiritual growth and closeness to God.

- **Struggle Against the Self (Nafs):** The struggle between intellect (aql) and the lower self (nafs) is central to human existence. Succumbing to desires leads to transgression and rebellion against the Creator.

  رسول الله (صلي الله عليه و آله) : بالمجاهدة يغلب سوء العادة

  Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: '**Through constant self-struggle are bad habits overcome**.'

  — Tanbih al-Khawatir, v. 2, p. 119

  Imam Ali (peace be upon him) advised:

  الإمام علي (عليه السلام) : جاهد شهوتك وغالب غضبك وخالف سوء عادتك ، تزك نفسك ، ويكمل عقلك ، وتستكمل ثواب ربك

  Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: '**Struggle against your lower desires, overcome your anger, oppose your bad habits, purify your self, perfect your intellect, and bring to completion the reward that is with your Lord**.'

  — Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 4760

  الإمام علي (عليه السلام) : جاهد شهوتك وغالب غضبك وخالف سوء عادتك ، تزك نفسك ، ويكمل عقلك ، وتستكمل ثواب ربك

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  — Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 4760

  الإمام علي (عليه السلام) : أفضل الجهاد جهاد النفس عن الهوى ، وفطامها عن لذات الدنيا

  Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: '**The best jihad is combatting one's self against its desires, and weaning it from the pleasures of this world**.'

  — Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 3232

  محمد بن عيل بن الحسين اقل: اقل)عليه السالم(: جاهد هواك كما تجاهد عدوك.

  Muhammad bin Ali bin Al-Hussein said (peace be upon him): **Fight against your desires as you fight against your enemy**.

  — Wasa il al-Shia Vol. 15, Section 2, Chapter 32, Hadith 20513

- **Prioritizing Allah's Will:** Giving preference to Allah's wishes over personal desires is a proof of humanity and a sign of being a servant of Allah.
- **Abandoning Desire for Future Reward:** Praised is the one who abandons current desires for a future, unseen reward, as desires can lead to prolonged sorrow. The Quran warns: "**do not follow [your own] desire, as it will lead you astray from the way of Allah**." (Quran 38:26)
- **Patience Against Sin:** Azm manifests as patience and steadfastness in resisting sinful desires and behaviors, standing firm against corruption and never surrendering to ambitions that defy divine principles.

Ulul Azm Prophets

The title "Ulul Azm" (owners of the firm resolve) refers to five specific messengers known for their strong determination. They were given this title because they:

- Firmly upheld the covenant they made with God.
- Testified to the oath regarding Prophet Muhammad (saw), his Successors (peace be upon him), and al-Mahdi (atfs) with unwavering resolve, recognizing their true status.
- Were Prophets whose shari'ah (divine law) abrogated previous shari'ahs, bringing a new and complete law.
- Were sent to both jinn and mankind.

Qualities of Azm for Believers

For believers, azm is characterized by:

- **Patience (Sabr) and Fear of Allah (Taqwa):** These are considered matters of firm resolve. Taqwa is defined as the ability to control one's soul and disobey one's desires.
- **Firm Theological Belief (Aqida):** Strengthening one's aqida through unwavering conviction in Allah, His existence, wisdom, prophets, and the Day of Judgment, forms the bedrock for moral fortitude and spiritual progress.
- **Prioritizing the Hereafter:** This involves living with a conscious awareness of death, preparing for the afterlife through consistent actions (performing wajib and avoiding haram), and cultivating a heart that truly desires to be with God.
- **Steadfastness:** Remaining steadfast in one's duties and resisting worldly distractions is a proof of willpower.

Strengthening Azm

Strengthening willpower and firm resolve requires continuous training and hard work, not just wishing. Practical methods include:

- **Daily Repentance and Commitment:** Beginning each day with sincere repentance to Allah and a commitment to only do what pleases Him.
- **Careful Decision-Making:** Before any decision, reflecting on whether it benefits one in this life and the afterlife. If it pleases Allah, proceed; otherwise, abandon it, regardless of personal inclination.
- **Spiritual Practices:** Fasting; Night Prayer (Salat Al-Layl or Namaz e Shab); Performing Wudhu in cold weather; Performing Fajr Prayer on time; Engaging in any good deed that goes against one's desires, solely for Allah's sake.
- **Strengthening Aqida:** Delving into inquiries about God's will and purpose strengthens theological foundations.
- **Supplication:** Seeking Allah's help through prayers, such as Du'a Kumail, which includes the supplication: "QAWWI ALA KHIDMATIKA JAWARIHI WASHDOD ALAL AZEEMATI JAWANIHI" (Strengthen my limbs for Your service and fortify my resolve).
- **Self-Reflection and Regret:** Feeling regret for past misdeeds and wasted time, then initiating a struggle against satanic tendencies and evil traits, seeking God's help to bless one with hope, sincerity, and strength to rise above material pleasures.

Relationship Between Divine Will and Human Will

In Islamic teachings, the relationship between divine will and human will is understood as "Amr bainal Amrain" (a matter between the two extremes) – neither absolute compulsion nor complete free will.

- **Coexistence and Dependence:** The divine will and human will do not negate or collide; they coexist. Humans possess free will, yet this freedom is always subsumed under the divine will. Human will is not independent but dependent on Allah's will. Allah's will is the ultimate source of all existence and action, and human desires and wishes are subject to it.

  ـ محمد بن يحيى عن أحمد بن محمد بن أبي نصر قال قال أبو الحسن الرضا (عليه السلام) قال الله يا ابن آدم بمشيئتي كنت أنت الذي تشاء لنفسك ما تشاء وبقوتي أديت فرائضي وبنعمتي قويت على معصيتي جعلتك سميعا بصيرا قويا ما أصابك من حسنة فمن الله وما أصابك من سيئة فمن نفسك وذاك أني أولى بحسناتك منك وأنت أولى بسيئاتك مني وذاك أنني لا أسأل عما أفعل وهم يسألون.

  It is narrated from Muhammad ibn Yahya from Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Abu Nasr who has that Imam Abul Hassan al-Rida has said the following: "**Allah said, 'O son of Adam through My wish you came into existence and it is you who wish for yourself whatever you wish. Through My power you fulfill your obligations and through My bounties you receive strength to disobey Me. I made you to hear and see and be strong. Whatever good you receive is from Allah and whatever evil afflicts you is**

from your own self. It is because I deserve credit in your good deeds and you are held accountable for your bad deeds. This is because I am not asked what I do but they are held accountable for what they do."

— Al-Kafi (Vol. 1) by Shaykh Muhammad b. Ya qub al-Kulayni, Book 3, Chapter 26, Hadith #6

- **Allah's Will as Creation:** Allah's will is His act of creating things without deliberation, intention, or psychological processes typical of human will. It is simply His command "Be," and it is.
- **Human Responsibility:** While human will is dependent on Allah, humans are given the freedom to choose between right and wrong. This freedom is a test of faith and character, and individuals are held accountable for their actions. Allah is just; He does not compel people to sin nor does He leave them without guidance.
- **Balance of Choice and Divine Discretion:** Humans are given discretion by God, but the responsibility for deeds lies with them. Neither can humans become needless of divine discretions, nor can God be held responsible for human choices. This balance allows humans to choose their path and be answerable to Allah. The choice to be good or bad stems from an individual's state of mind, their life aims, and the outcome of the conflict between intellect and excessive desires. The innate human instinct (Fitrah) guides towards good, but individuals can choose to go against it.
- **Belief in Tawhid:** A true understanding of God's Unity (Tawhid) involves realizing that human will is an extension of God's Will alone, which does not lead to determinism but emphasizes God's ultimate role in all aspects of life.

3. Self-Examination and Criticism (Muhasabah)

Daily evaluation of one's actions and intentions, remembering the Hereafter.

In Islamic teachings, self-examination and criticism are central to spiritual development, referred to as Muhasaba (self-accounting) and Nafs al-Lawwamah (the self-reproaching spirit). These practices involve a continuous, rigorous assessment of one's deeds, intentions, and character against divine standards.

The Concept of Self-Examination and Criticism (Muhasaba and Nafs al-Lawwamah)

- **Meaning and Definition:** Self-judgment (Muhasaba) is the daily practice of calling oneself to account for both good deeds and wrongdoings. It is an internal audit where an individual critically assesses their behavior in light of Islamic principles. If acts of obedience outweigh acts of disobedience, one should thank God for success. Conversely, if disobedience is more prevalent,

one must discipline themselves through reproach and criticism, acknowledging their irregularities and deviations from God's path. This self-reproach is embodied in the Nafs al-Lawwamah, the conscience that recognizes and regrets wrongdoing, acting as a crucial aspect of the human soul guiding towards moral improvement.

- **Importance and Significance:** Self-scrutiny is profoundly emphasized in Islam, considered essential for personal reform and spiritual growth.

الإمام علي (عليه السلام): اعلموا عباداللهۖ أن عليكم رصدا من أنفسكم، وعيونا من جوارحكم ، وحفاظ صدق يحفظون أعمالكم ، وعدد أنفاسكم ، لا تستركم منهم ظلمة ليل داج، ولا يكنكم منهم باب ذو رتاج

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said**, 'Know O servants of Allah that your own selves monitor you, and your limbs are a watchful eye over you. The truthful guardian angels record your deeds as well as the number of your breaths. Neither can the dark gloomy night conceal you from view, nor can you hide behind a bolted door.'**

— Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 157

highlighting that our actions and even our own bodies bear witness against us. This self-monitoring is fundamental for reforming one's inner self, which is seen as the foundation for a stronger connection to God and a more peaceful life.

حماد بن عيسى عن إبراهيم بن عمر عن أبي عبد الله عليه السلام قال ليس منا من لم يحاسب نفسه في كل يوم فان عمل خيرا (حسنا) استزاد الله منه وحمد الله عليه وان عمل شرا استغفر الله منه وتاب إليه.

Hammad ibn ʿIsa narrated from Ibrahim ibn ʿUmar, from Abu ʿAbdillah (peace be upon him) who said, "**One who does not hold himself to account every day is not from us. [Every believer should take account of his actions daily and] if he has done a good deed, he should seek more of it from Allah and praise Allah for it, and if he has done an evil deed, he should seek forgiveness from Allah for it and turn penitently to Him**."

— Kitab al-Zuhd by Husayn b. Saʿid al-Ahwazi, Book 2, Chapter 12, Hadith #19

الإمام الكاظم (عليه السلام): ليس منا من لم يحاسب نفسه في كل يوم ، فإن عمل حسنا استزاد اللهۖ ، وإن عمل سيئا استغفر اللهۖ منه وتاب إليه

Imam Musa Kazim (peace be upon him) said: '**The one who does not take account of himself every single day is not one of us. And when he performs a good deed, he should ask Allah to enable him to do more,**

> **and when he commits an evil deed, he must seek Allah’s forgiveness and repent for it**.’
>
> — al-Kafi, v. 2, p. 453, no. 2

Self-examination, evaluation, and criticism are considered key methods for self-improvement. Through this daily process, individuals can identify and shed evil habits and desires, acquire nobler human character, and improve their actions. This practice also helps save one from conceit and pride, fostering humility and continuous progress towards spiritual perfection, a stage referred to in Islam as 'Mutma'innah' (the soul at rest and satisfaction by the grace of Allah). The ability to recognize and correct one's own faults through self-reflection and thinking is vital for self-knowledge, which Imam Ali (peace be upon him) described as "one of the most profitable assets of a person," leading to an improvement in one's affairs.

Daily Practice of Self-Examination

The practice of Muhasaba is a continuous and deliberate effort to hold oneself accountable throughout the day, often culminating in a dedicated reflective session at the end of each day.

Methodology and Steps:

It is recommended to take account of one's actions throughout the day. This involves:

- **Identification:** Identifying both good deeds and any mistakes or sins committed.
- **Gratitude:** Expressing gratitude to Allah for successes in good deeds and seeking His guidance for future actions.
- **Repentance and Forgiveness:** Seeking forgiveness from Allah for any wrongdoing. Imam al-Kadhim (peace be upon him) advised reflecting on actions, asking for Allah's forgiveness, and seeking to increase good deeds.
- **Self-Criticism:** Critically assessing one's own soul (nafs) for any shortcomings, such as laziness, wastefulness, or other moral slips. This self-reproach must lead to a firm resolve to amend faults immediately and to repent sincerely.
- **Commitment to Improvement:** Making a conscious effort to improve, recognizing that committing sin diminishes the noble essence of humanity.

Examples from the Prophet and the Imams:

رسول الله (صلي الله عليه و آله) : حاسبوا أنفسكم قبل أن تحاسبوا ، وزنوها قبل أن توزنوا، وتجهزوا للعرض الأكبر

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: '**Take account of your selves before you are held to account, and evaluate them before you are held for evaluation, and prepare yourselves for the Greatest Exposure**.'

— Bihar al-Anwar, v. 70, p. 73, no. 26

حق على كل مسلم يعرفنا أن يعرض عمله في كل يوم وليلة على نفسه فيكون محاسب نفسه، فإن رأى حسنة استزاد منها، وإن رأى سيئة استغفر منها لئلا يخزى يوم القيامة.

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) said: **It is a haqq upon every Muslim who cognizes us to present his work to himself each day and night, thus being a judge of himself, and if he sees a hasanah, he should seek increase from it; and if he sees a sayyi'ah, he should seek forgiveness from it, lest he be disgraced on the Day of Resurrection**.

— Tuhaf al-Uqul by Ibn Shu'ba al-Harrani, Volume 0, Page 301

These teachings underscore the necessity of a rigorous, detailed, and consistent daily self-assessment to ensure spiritual growth and preparedness for the ultimate judgment.

Connection to Remembering the Hereafter

The practice of self-examination and criticism is profoundly intertwined with the remembrance of the Hereafter, which serves as a powerful motivator and the ultimate context for all human actions.

- **Motivation for Righteousness:** Remembering God Almighty and the Hereafter is crucial for staying focused on eternal goals. It helps individuals utilize worldly resources for the enrichment of their eternal life, rather than becoming enslaved by temporal allurements. Reflection on daily actions with the Hereafter in mind prompts individuals to evaluate their behavior, make amends for wrongdoings, and motivates them to lead a more righteous life. The belief in the Day of Resurrection as the day of reward is a fundamental pillar of faith, without which faith and piety cannot fully bear fruit.
- **Accountability and Judgment:** The understanding that the Hereafter is the place where all secrets will be exposed drives the daily evaluation of oneself. This remembrance of ultimate accountability—death, resurrection, reckoning, the scales of justice, and the call to account in the hands of the Lord of the worlds—serves as a constant reminder of the consequences of one's actions in the afterlife. It is essential to take account of oneself and prepare for the afterlife, as this self-reflection and preparation can ease the process of being presented before God, from whom nothing is hidden. As Imam Ali (peace be upon him) advised,

الإمام علي (عليه السلام): اجعل من نفسك على نفسك رقيبا، واجعل لآخرتك من دنياك نصيبا

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: '**Appoint your own self as a scrutinizer over yourself, and use this world to reserve your share in the Hereafter**.'

— Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 2429

This perspective fosters humility and submission, as one is always conscious of Allah's presence and the impending judgment, thereby guiding behavior towards good deeds and preventing contamination with sins.

4. Self-Conditioning (Musharata)

Translating resolve and self-evaluation into concrete commitments, such as abandoning specific sins or consistently performing obligatory acts.

In Islamic teachings, self-conditioning, also referred to as stipulation, is a foundational practice for spiritual development and moral purification. It entails a conscious and unwavering commitment to aligning one's actions and intentions with divine commands.

Meaning of Self-Conditioning

Self-conditioning or stipulation means binding oneself with the resolution not to do anything against God's commands. It is a deliberate commitment a believer makes to themselves to adhere strictly to Allah's instructions and prohibitions. This practice is considered an essential prerequisite for any seeker of truth who is engaged in the spiritual battle (jihad al-nafs) against their own lower self and desires.

Importance of Self-Conditioning

Self-conditioning holds significant importance in Islamic spirituality for several reasons:

- **Foundation for Spiritual Growth:** It cultivates self-awareness and discipline, which are crucial for progress on the spiritual path. Without this internal commitment, consistent adherence to religious duties and avoidance of sins become challenging.
- **Combating the Self (Nafs):** It is a vital tool for those battling with their own self by helping to build the necessary self-discipline and accountability to overcome internal weaknesses and desires.

- **Protection from Satan:** The process of self-conditioning involves actively resisting the guile of Satan and evil thoughts. Believers are encouraged to "curse, and drive away the devil and evil thoughts from within the depths of your heart and the domain of your mind," which is facilitated by a firm resolution to obey Allah.
- **Self-Control:** It is a means to "control one's self by the rein and hold it with its bridle, thereby preventing it from disobedience towards Allah and leading it towards obedience to Allah." This self-control is further aided by abstaining from sins and vices, which makes it easier to habituate oneself to obedience and service to a higher power.
- **Preparation for Accountability:** By consistently binding oneself to God's commands, an individual prepares for the inevitable self-judgment, where one calls oneself to account daily for good deeds and wrongdoings.

Practical Application of Self-Conditioning

The practical application of self-conditioning, as advised by scholars like al-Khomeini (RA), involves a daily routine centered on introspection and evaluation:

1. **Daily Resolution:** Begin the day with a firm internal resolution (stipulation) not to commit any acts against God's commands throughout the day. This sets the mental and spiritual tone for the hours ahead.
2. **Continuous Self-Monitoring (Muraqabah):** Throughout the day, remain conscious of this resolution, monitoring one's thoughts, words, and actions to ensure they align with the commitment made. This involves an ongoing internal struggle to resist temptations and fulfill obligations.
3. **Nightly Self-Examination (Muhasabah):** At night, specifically before sleeping, dedicate time for introspection and inner deliberation. This is a crucial period to evaluate the deeds of the entire day.
    - **Review Deeds:** Honestly assess whether one has been faithful to the commitments made to Allah, "to whom everybody is accountable."
    - **Gratitude for Success:** If one finds themselves successful in their intentions and deeds, they should "be thankful to Him that He has made you successful."
    - **Reproach and Repentance for Failures:** If shortcomings or acts of disobedience are identified, one must "discipline oneself by reproach and criticism for the irregularity and going astray from the courses of the obedience to God." This is the time for sincere repentance and a renewed intention to avoid such mistakes in the future.
    - **Combating Evil Thoughts:** Actively "curse, and drive away the devil and evil thoughts from within the depths of your heart and the domain of your mind," especially when Shaytan attempts to magnify the difficulty of the spiritual task.

By consistently practicing self-conditioning, individuals can cultivate inner purity, strengthen their connection to God, and refine their character, enabling them to fulfill their purpose as believers.

5. Guarding Against Evil Intentions

Constantly focusing on intentions, recognizing any thought of violating divine guidance as a satanic suggestion to be resisted.

Islamic teachings provide comprehensive guidance on how to guard against evil intentions and resist satanic suggestions, which are seen as a constant threat to a believer's spiritual path.

Understanding Satan's Nature and Methods

Satan (Shaytan) is identified as an insidious enemy of humanity, whose primary role is to divert individuals from the straight path and make wrong actions appear appealing. His methods are diverse and cunning:

- **Whispers (Waswasa):** Satan instills evil thoughts, doubts, and temptations into the hearts and minds of both humans and jinn. This can be direct or through the influence of human beings with "satanic characteristics" who promote temptations and objections.
- **Making Vice Appealing:** Satan beautifies sins and vices, making them seem charming and easy, thereby enticing individuals into entanglement. He capitalizes on human desires and passions, which he uses as his traps.
- **Creating Doubts and Discouragement:** He can whisper suggestions to demotivate individuals from good deeds or, conversely, inflate their ego with pride and a sense of accomplishment in acts of piety.
- **Inciting Discord:** Satan actively works to introduce discord and dissension among people, striving to untie the bonds of unity that religion establishes.
- **Exploiting Weaknesses:** He seeks out those with weaker faith, much like microbes seek weak bodies, to exert his influence.

Satan's instigation often intertwines with the heart's inclinations and desires, making prohibited actions seem pleasing. He has sworn to waylay humanity from Allah's Straight Path, coming from all directions

[Satan] said, "**Because You have put me in error, I will surely sit in wait for them on Your straight path.**

Then I will come to them from before them and from behind them and on their right and on their left, and You will not find most of them grateful [to You]."

(Quran 7:16-17).

Recognizing Satanic Suggestions

A crucial step in guarding against evil is to identify when an idea or thought originates from Satan. The fundamental criterion is its alignment with divine commands:

- **Contradiction of Sharia:** Any suggestion that contradicts the Sharia (Islamic law) or leads to actions prohibited by God is unequivocally a satanic instigation. A believer must remain alert to this distinction.
- **Violation of Divine Commands:** If an idea involves violating God's commands, it should be recognized as a tactic by Satan and his allies to deter one from righteous resolutions.
- **Angel vs. Satanic Promptings:** Amir al-Muminin (peace be upon him) explained that there are two types of promptings: an angel's prompting, which leads to tenderness and understanding, and Satan's prompting, which leads to negligence and hardness.

Core Principle: Seeking Refuge in Allah

The most fundamental and frequently advised protection against Satan's influence is to seek refuge in Allah (God). The Quran repeatedly advises this, stating that Allah is "the Hearing, the Knowing." This act acknowledges one's vulnerability and God's supreme power and protection.

Specific Phrases and Supplications:

- " **So when you recite the Qur'an, [first] seek refuge in Allah from Satan, the expelled [from His mercy].**" (Quran 16:98)
- "**My Lord, I seek refuge in You from the incitements of the devils**." (Quran 23:97)
- "**And I seek refuge in You, my Lord, lest they be present with me**." (Quran 23:98)
- "**I seek refuge in the Lord of mankind, The Sovereign of mankind, the God of men, From the evil of the retreating whisperer -Who whispers [evil] into the breasts of mankind** -." (Quran 114:1-5)
- For protection from insinuations and inspirations,

  الإمام علي (عليه السلام): أحمد الله وأستعينه على مداحر الشيطان ومزاجره (مزاحره) ، والاعتصام من حبائله ومخاتله

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: '**I praise Allah and seek His aid against the acts that led to Satan's banishment and his eviction, and [I seek] His protection from his snares and his deceitful ways**.'

— Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 151

الحسن بن عيل العسكري في تفسيره اقل: أما قوله الذي ندبك هللا إليه وأمرك به عند قراءة القرآن أعوذ ابهلل السميع العليم من الشيطان الرجيم افن أمير المؤمنين)عليه السالم(اقل إن قوله: أعوذ ابهلل أي أمتنع (:ابهلل)إلى أن اقل واالستعاذة هي ما قد أمر هللا به عباده عند قراءتهم القرآن بقوله: وإذا قرأت القرآن افستعذ ابهلل من الشيطان الرجيم ومن أتدب أبدب هللا أداه إلى الفالح الدائم ثم ذكر حديثا طويال عن رسول هللا .صل هللا عليه وآله يقول فيه إن أردت أن ال يصيبك شرهم وال يبدأك .مكروههم فقل إذا أصبحت أعوذ ابهلل من الشيطان الرجيم افن هللا يعيذك من شرهم

Al-Hasan bin Ali al-Askari said in his exegesis: **As for His saying which Allah has encouraged you to do and commanded you with when reading the Quran, "I seek refuge with Allah, the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing, from the accursed Satan," Amir al-Muminin (peace be upon him) said that the statement "I seek refuge with Allah" means "I protect myself with Allah" (until he said:) And seeking refuge is what Allah has commanded His servants to do when they recite the Quran, by His saying: "When you recite the Quran, seek refuge with Allah from the accursed Satan." And whoever adopts the etiquette of Allah, it will lead him to eternal success. Then he mentioned a long hadith from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him and his family) in which he says: If you want their evil not to afflict you and their harm not to reach you, then say when you wake up in the morning: "I seek refuge with Allah from the accursed Satan," for Allah will protect you from their evil**.

— Wasa il al-Shia Vol. 6, Section 4, Chapter 14, Hadith 7719

عن معاوية بن عمار عن الصادق)عليه السالم(في االستعاذة اقل: أعوذ ابهلل السميع العليم من الشيطان .الرجيم. أقول: وتقدم ما يدل عىل ذلك وأيتي ما يدل عليه في قراءة القرآن

From Mu'awiya bin Ammar from Al-Sadiq peace be upon him regarding seeking refuge, he said: "**I seek refuge in Allah, the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing, from the accursed Satan." Recommendation Of Seeking Protection (From Satan) At The Beginning** ...

— Wasa il al-Shia Vol. 6, Section 3, Chapter 57, Hadith 7548

أبو علي الأشعري عن محمد بن سالم عن أحمد بن النضر عن عمرو بن شمر عن جابر عن أبي جعفر (عليه السلام) قال قال رسول الله (صلى الله عليه وآله) من قال بسم الله

الرحمن الرحيم لا حول و لا قوة إلا بالله العلي العظيم ثلاث مرات كفاه الله عز و جل تسعة و تسعين نوعا من أنواع البلاء أيسرهن الخنق.

Abu Ali Al-Ashary, from Muhammad Bin saalim, from Ahmad Bin Al-Nazar, from Amro Bin Shimr, from Jabir, who has said: Abu Ja'far (asws) has narrated that Rasool Allah (saww) said: '**The one who says: ' بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم لا حول و لا قوة إلا بالله العلي العظيم' 'There is no Power and no Mighty except by Allah (azwj) the High, the Magnificent', three times, Allah (azwj) Mighty and Majestic would Suffice for him for ninety nine types of affliction, the least of which is choking (suffocation)**'.

— Al-Kafi (Vol. 8) by Shaykh Muhammad b. Ya qub al-Kulayni, Book 1, Chapter 89, Hadith #1

Practical Applications and Spiritual Practices

1. **Constant Remembrance of Allah (Dhikr):** Keeping oneself busy with the remembrance of Allah (dhikr), reciting the Holy Quran, and engaging in supplications (e.g., Ziyarat al-Jami'a al-Kabira, Ziyarat Ashura, Hadith al-Kisa', Ayat al-Kursi, and astaghfirullah). " **Indeed, those who fear Allah - when an impulse touches them from Satan, they remember [Him] and at once they have insight**." (Quran 7:201) (tazakkara) and remember Allah, thus seeing the right path. Turning away from the remembrance of God can lead to being paired with a Satan.
2. **Sincere Intention (Niyyah) and Self-Watchfulness:** Maintain a pure and sincere intention (niyyah) in all actions, especially worship, solely for the pleasure of Allah. Be vigilant against Satan's whispers that seek to corrupt intentions (e.g., pride in good deeds, discouragement). Quickly change and remove any impure intentions. Abu Abdullah (peace be upon him) advised to hasten towards good intentions and maintaining ties, as two devils on one's right and left try to prevent it.
3. **Good Deeds and Devotional Program:** Engage in good deeds such as frequent prayers (including supererogatory acts like Salat al-Fajr and Tahajjud), charity, fasting, and seeking God's forgiveness. These acts are said to weaken Satan (fasting darkens his face, charity breaks his back, seeking forgiveness severs his jugular vein). Develop a consistent devotional program: commit in the morning not to sin, be watchful throughout the day, and evaluate deeds before sleeping at night.
4. **Self-Evaluation and Accountability:** Engage in nightly self-examination, evaluating the day's deeds to see if one has been faithful to God's commands. If faithful, express gratitude. If there are lapses, sincerely ask God's forgiveness and resolve to be more careful, trusting in His mercy. This consistent exercise helps habituate piety and diminish the pains of struggle over time. Imam Al-Kadhim (peace be upon him) stated:

ليس منا من لم يحاسب نفسه كل يوم

One who does not perform self-examination everyday is not among us

— Sayings of the Imams, volume one, page 214

5. **Seeking Pious Company:** Associate with good company, pious relatives, and friends who remind one of Allah and the purpose of creation. Attend Islamic lectures and seek advice from upright scholars.
6. **Patience and Repelling Evil with Good:** Believers are encouraged to repel evil with good, maintain patience, and seek refuge in Allah from Satan's provocations. Patience in tragedy and contentment with Allah's decrees are also vital. Imam Sadeq (peace be upon him) listed five characteristics that protect from the devil: true intentions, frequent prayers, patience in tragedy, satisfaction with Allah's decrees, and behaving towards others as one would like them to behave towards oneself.
7. **Contemplating the Hereafter:** Deliberate about the consequences of following the devil's advice and the future that such obedience holds. This contemplation helps discern the right path and liberates one from satanic temptations.
8. **Marriage:** For youth, considering marriage is advised as a means to protect oneself from misguidance and indecency, as the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) stated:

   من تزوج أحرز نصف دينه فليتق الله في النصف الآخر.

   Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **Whoever marries safegaurds half his religion, so let him practice taqwa of Allah in the other half**.

   — al-Kafi by Shaykh al-Kulayni, Volume 5, Page 329

9. **Specific Physical Acts:** Washing the head with lote-tree leaves, cleansing teeth with a siwak stick, eating pomegranates, drinking rainwater in April, and observing fasting on three days each month.

Ultimately, guarding against evil intentions and satanic suggestions is a continuous, lifelong struggle (jihad al-nafs) that requires constant vigilance, sincere devotion, and unwavering reliance on Allah's guidance and protection.

6. Remembrance of God (Dhikr)

Constant remembrance of God and His graces, keeping the heart oriented toward Him.

In Islamic teachings, dhikr (ذكر), or the remembrance of God, is a profound and multifaceted concept that extends far beyond mere verbal recitation. It encompasses a continuous state of consciousness, reflection, and practical application of divine principles in a believer's life.

Meaning of Dhikr

Dhikr fundamentally means to remember or invoke the divine. It is the opposite of "inattention" (al ghaflah) and "forgetfulness" (an nisyan), signifying a conscious awareness of one's faith and Lord. This remembrance can be expressed in various ways:

- **Deep Consciousness:** Dhikr is a deeper consciousness of Allah's omnipresence in every action, a state akin to offering salat (prayer) as if one sees Allah, or at least, knowing that Allah sees them. It means to remember Allah in all aspects of life, including one's thoughts, actions, and movements, maintaining a constant state of awareness.
- **Remembering Divine Favors:** Dhikra specifically refers to remembering after being reminded, signifying the believer's remembrance of God and His pre-existent favors and blessings.
- **Knowledge and Guidance:** In various contexts, dhikr is understood to mean "knowledge," particularly in hadiths. It can also refer to the Holy Quran itself, or even the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) and his purified Household (Ahlul Bayt), who are considered the "people of Dhikr" and sources of guidance and knowledge. As Imam Abu Abdullah (peace be upon him) stated regarding "**And indeed, it is a remembrance for you and your people, and you [all] are going to be questioned.**" Surah Az-Zukhruf (Quran 43:44),

  ـ عدة من أصحابنا عن أحمد بن محمد عن الحسين بن سعيد عن النضر بن سويد عن عاصم بن حميد عن أبي بصير عن أبي عبد الله (عليه السلام) في قول الله عز وجل وإنه لذكر لك ولقومك وسوف تسئلون فرسول الله (صلى الله عليه وآله) الذكر وأهل بيته (عليهم السلام) المسئولون وهم أهل الذكر.

  A number of our people has narrated from Ahmad ibn Muhammad from al-Husayn ibn Sa‘id from al-Nadr ibn Suwayd from ‘Asim ibn Hamid from abu Basir from Imam abu ‘Abdallah (peace be upon him) who has said the following about the words of Allah, the Most Holy, the Most High. “**It is a Dhikr for you and for your people and you all will be asked questions.’ (Quran 43:44) The Messenger of Allah is the Dhikr (reminder of Allah) and members of his family (peace be upon him) are the ones who will be asked questions and they are the people of Dhikr**.”

— Al-Kafi (Vol. 1) by Shaykh Muhammad b. Ya qub al-Kulayni, Book 4, Chapter 20, Hadith #4

Forms of Dhikr

Dhikr is categorized into three primary forms, emphasizing its comprehensive nature:

1. **Verbal Dhikr (Dhikr of the Tongue):** This involves the explicit mention or recitation of names of God, sacred phrases, or Quranic formulas, such as "Subhanallah" (Glory be to Allah), "Alhamdulillah" (Praise belongs to Allah), "La ilaha illa Allah" (There is no god but God), or specific supplications. Most Muslims recite such formulas a set number of times after obligatory ritual prayers.
2. **Spiritual Dhikr (Dhikr of the Heart):** This is the internal remembrance of Allah, a silent yet profound awareness of His presence, attributes, and omniscience within one's heart. It is a continuous process of recalling and reflecting on Allah.
3. **Practical Dhikr (Dhikr through Actions):** This is the manifestation of dhikr in one's conduct. It means remembering Allah's commandments and prohibitions in all aspects of life, striving for obedience, and refraining from unlawful acts due to the fear of God. When a person is about to perform a forbidden act, falling into the remembrance of Allah (SwT) and refraining from that act is a clear example of practical dhikr.

Significance of Dhikr

The significance of dhikr in Islam is immense, as it is considered a vital aspect of a believer's spiritual life and a fundamental bridge to building a relationship with God.

Fulfilling Divine Obligation and Seeking Nearness

- Dhikr is one of the most important duties of each human being. Allah commands His servants to remember Him frequently. The Holy Quran states, "**Oh ye who believe! Remember God-Almighty with much Remembrance**." (Quran, 33:41).
- It is considered a way to fulfill one's obligation to Allah and brings blessings and goodness. The merit of each worship depends upon the degree of attention paid by the worshiper, and dhikr is the soul behind all the worships.
- Dhikr causes the existential and theomorphic dimensions of a human being to flourish and blossom, lifting the wayfarer towards the Nearness of the Lord.

Spiritual Well-being and Inner Peace

- Remembering God calms hearts, obviates depression and doubts, and provides spiritual tranquility. The remembrance of Allah brings calmness and relaxation.
- It is an internal reminder of Allah's constant presence and assistance, helping to rekindle remembrance, particularly when doubt or confusion arises.

Protection from Sin and Satanic Influence

- Remembering Allah acts as a hindrance between a person and unlawful deeds. It can prevent sins and, if remembered with a peaceful, awakened heart, enlightened eyes, hearing ears, and an obedient soul, can even ensure a person against all sins.
- It helps to keep control and avoid the influence of Shaytan (Satan). The ultimate purpose of dhikr is to ensure Allah is present in all aspects of a person's life, keeping promises and punishments, and rewards and chastisements in mind, thereby keeping away from sinning and rebellion.

Unlimited Virtue and Rewards

- Unlike many other acts of worship that have specific limits, dhikr has no set limit. Imam Abu Abdullah (peace be upon him) said,

  عن ابن القداح، عن أبي عبد هللا)عليه السالم(اقل: ما من شئ إال وله حد ينتهي إليه إال الذكر فليس له حد ينتهي إليه، فرض .هللا عز وجل الفرائض، فمن أداهن فهو حدهن وشهر رمضان فمن صامه فهو حده، والحج فمن حج فهو حده، إال الذكر، افن هللا عز وجل لم يرض منه ابلقليل ولم يجعل (له حد ينتهي إليه، ثم تال:)اي أيها الذين آمنوا اذكروا هللا ذكرا كثير وسبحوه بكرة وأصيال فقال: لم يجعل هللا له حدا ينتهي إليه، اقل: وكان أبي كثير الذكر، لقد كنت أمشي معه وإنه ليذكر هللا، وآكل معه الطعام وإنه ليذكر هللا، ولقد كان يحدث القوم وما يشغله ذلك عن ذكر هللا، وكنت أرى لسانه الزاق بحنكه يقول: ال إله إال هللا وكان - إلى أن اقل- يجمعنا فيأمران ابلذكر حتى تطلع الشمس واقل رسول هللا)صلى هللا عليه وآله(: أال أخبركم بخير أعمالكم أرفعها في درجاتكم، وأزكاها عند مليككم، وخير لكم من ،الدينار والدرهم، وخير لكم من أن تلقوا عدوكم فتقتلوهم ويقتلوكم؟ فقالوا: بىل، فقال: ذكر هللا كثيرا ثم اقل: جاء رجل إلى النبي)صلى هللا عليه وآله(فقال: من خير أهل المسجد؟ فقال: أكثرهم هلل عز وجل ذكرا. واقل رسول هللا)صلى هللا عليه وآله(: من أعطي لساان ذاكرا فقد أعطي خير الدنيا واآلخرة. واقل في قوله تعالى:)وال تمنن تستكثر(اقل .ال تستكثر ما عملت من خير هلل

  Ibn Al-Qaddah narrated from Abu Abdullah (peace be upon him) who said: **Everything has a limit where it ends except remembrance [of Allah], for it has no limit where it ends. Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, has prescribed the obligations, and whoever fulfills them has reached their limit. And the month of Ramadan, whoever fasts it fulfills its requirement, and the Hajj, whoever performs it fulfills its requirement, except for remembrance (dhikr), for Allah, the Mighty and Sublime, is not satisfied**

with a little of it and has not set a limit for it to reach. Then he recited: "O you who have believed, remember Allah with much remembrance and exalt Him morning and evening." [Quran, 33:41-42] He said: "Allah has not set a limit for it that one should stop at." He added: "My father used to remember Allah abundantly. I would walk with him while he was remembering Allah, and eat with him while he was remembering Allah. When he would talk to people, it would not distract him from remembering Allah. I would see his tongue stuck to his palate saying: 'La ilaha illa Allah' (There is no deity worthy of worship except Allah). He would gather us and instruct us to engage in remembrance until sunrise..." And the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him and his family) said: Shall I not inform you of the best of your deeds, the highest in your ranks, the purest with your Master, better for you than spending gold and silver, and better for you than meeting your enemy and killing them while they kill you? They said: Yes. He said: Remembering Allah frequently. Then he said: A man came to the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) and asked, "Who are the best people in the mosque?" He replied, "Those who remember Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, the most." And the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him and his family) said: "Whoever has been given a tongue that remembers [Allah] has been given the best of this world and the Hereafter." And regarding the words of the Almighty: "And do not confer favor to acquire more" [Quran, 74:6], he said: "Do not consider what good deeds you have done for Allah to be too much."

— Wasa il al-Shia Vol. 7, Section 3, Chapter 5, Hadith 8986

حدثنا أبي - رحمه الله - قال: حدثنا سعد بن عبد الله، قال: حدثنا أحمد بن محمد بن عيسى، عن محمد بن إسماعيل بن بزيع، عن منصور بن يونس، عن جليس لأبي حمزة، عن أبي حمزة قال: قلت لأبي جعفر عليه السلام: قول الله تعالى

We were told by my father, may Allah grant him mercy, that he said: We were told by Sa’d bin Abdullah, that he said: We were told by Ahmad bin Muhammed bin ‘Isa, from Muhammed bin Isma’il bin Bazee’, from Mansur bin Yunus, from an attendant at Abu Hamza, from Abu Hamza, that he said: I said to Abu Ja’far, peace be upon him: **The saying of Allah, Exalted is He: «Everything is to perish, except for His Face» (Quran 28:88) He said: Everything is to perish and His Face will remain. Indeed, Allah, Exalted and Glorious is He, is Greater than being characterized with a face, however, its meaning is: Everything is to perish, except for His religion and the face from which He is approached**.

— Ma ani al- Akhbar by Shaykh Muhammad b. Ali al-Saduq, Book 1, Chapter 13, Hadith #1

عن ابن القداح، عن أبي عبد هللا)عليه السالم(اقل: ما من شئ إال وله حد ينتهي إليه إال الذكر فليس له حد ينتهي إليه، فرض .هللا عز وجل الفرائض، فمن أداهن فهو حدهن وشهر رمضان فمن صامه فهو حده، والحج فمن حج فهو حده، إال الذكر، افن هللا عز وجل لم يرض منه ابلقليل ولم يجعل (له حد ينتهي إليه، ثم تال:)اي أيها الذين آمنوا اذكروا هللا ذكرا كثير وسبحوه بكرة وأصيال فقال: لم يجعل هللا له حدا ينتهي إليه، اقل: وكان أبي كثير الذكر، لقد كنت أمشي معه وإنه ليذكر هللا، وآكل معه الطعام وإنه ليذكر هللا، ولقد كان يحدث القوم وما يشغله ذلك عن ذكر هللا، وكنت أرى لسانه الزاق بحنكه يقول: ال إله إال هللا وكان - إلى أن اقل- يجمعنا فيأمران ابلذكر حتى تطلع الشمس واقل رسول هللا)صل هللا عليه وآله(: أال أخبركم بخير أعمالكم أرفعها في درجاتكم، وأزكاها عند مليككم، وخير لكم من ،الدينار والدرهم، وخير لكم من أن تلقوا عدوكم فتقتلوهم ويقتلوكم؟ فقالوا: بىل، فقال: ذكر هللا كثيرا ثم اقل: جاء رجل إلى النبي)صل هللا عليه وآله(فقال: من خير أهل المسجد؟ فقال: أكثرهم هلل عز وجل ذكرا. واقل رسول هللا)صل هللا عليه وآله(: من أعطي لساان ذاكرا فقد أعطي خير الدنيا واآلخرة. واقل في قوله تعالى:)وال تمنن تستكثر(اقل .ال تستكثر ما عملت من خير هلل

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74:6], he said: "Do not consider what good deeds you have done for Allah to be too much."

— Wasa il al-Shia Vol. 7, Section 3, Chapter 5, Hadith 8986

- The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him and his family) emphasized its immense reward, stating that

عن عبد هللا بن ميمون القداح، عن جعفر، عن أبيه اقل: اقل النبي)عليه السالم(ألصحابه: أال أخبركم بخير أعمالكم وأزكاها :عند مليككم وأرفعها في درجاتكم، وخير لكم من الدينار والدرهم وخير لكم من أن تلقوا عدوكم فتقتلوهم ويقتلوكم؟ اقلوا .بىل، اي رسول هللا، اقل: ذكر هللا كثيرا

From Abdullah bin Maymun al-Qaddah, from Ja'far, from his father who said: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said to his companions: **Shall I not inform you of the best of your deeds, the purest with your Master, the highest in your ranks, better for you than gold and silver, and better for you than meeting your enemy and killing them while they kill you?** They said: Yes, O Messenger of Allah. He said: **Remembering Allah frequently**.

— Wasa il al-Shia Vol. 7, Section 3, Chapter 5, Hadith 8992

أحمد بن فهد في)عدة الداعي(عن رسول هللا)صىل هللا عليه وآله(اقل: اعلموا أن خير أعمالكم)عند مليككم(وأزكاها .وأرفعها في درجاتكم وخير ما طلعت عليه الشمس ذكر هللا سبحانه وتعالى، إفنه أخبر عن نفسه اقل: أان جليس من ذكرني

Ahmad ibn Fahd in (Uddat al-Da'i) narrated from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him and his family) who said: **Know that the best of your deeds before your Lord, the purest of them, the highest in your ranks, and better than anything upon which the sun rises, is the remembrance of Allah, Glory be to Him and Exalted is He, for He has informed about Himself saying: I am the companion of whoever remembers Me**.

— Wasa il al-Shia Vol. 7, Section 3, Chapter 10, Hadith 9012

Who are the Best of the Companions of Prophet (peace be upon him and his family):

عن ابن عباس اقل: قيل اي رسول هللا أي الجلساء خير اقل: من تذكركم هللا رؤيته، ويزيد في علمكم منطقه، ويرغبكم في .اآلخرة عمله

From Ibn Abbas who said: It was said, "**O Messenger of Allah, which companions are best?" He said: "The one whose sight reminds you of Allah, whose speech increases your knowledge, and whose actions make you desire the hereafter**."

— Wasa il al-Shia Vol. 12, Section 1, Chapter 11, Hadith 15544

Angels Pass By Circles Of Dhikr, And Allah Forgives Those Remembering Him:

اقل: وروى الحسن بن أبي الحسن الديلمي في كتابه، عن النبي صل هللا عليه وآله، أن المالئكة يمرون عل حلق الذكر :- إلى أن اقل- فيقومون عل رؤوسهم، ويبكون لبكائهم، ويؤمنون عل دعائهم فيقول هللا سبحانه لهم. وأشهدكم أني قد غفرت لهم، وآمنتهم مما يخافون، فيقولون. ربنا إن فالان " كان فيهم وإنه لم .يذكرك، فيقول. قد غفرت له بمجالسته لهم، إفن الذاكرين من ال يشقى بهم جليسهم أقول كثيرا " ما يستعمل الذكر بمعنى العلم في األلحاديث، وأيتي ما يدل عل المقصود في العشرة

Al-Hasan bin Abi Al-Hasan Al-Dailami narrated in his book, from the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family): **The angels pass by the circles of remembrance (dhikr), and they stand over their heads, weep when they weep, and say "Aameen" to their supplications... until he said: Allah, the Glorified, says to them: "I make you witnesses that I have forgiven them and granted them security from what they fear." They say: "Our Lord, among them was so-and-so who did not remember You." He says: "I have forgiven him due to his sitting with them, for those who remember Me are such that their companions do not become wretched.**" I say: Often the word "dhikr" (remembrance) is used with the meaning of knowledge in hadiths, and what indicates the intended meaning will come in the tenth [section].

— Wasa il al-Shia Vol. 7, Section 3, Chapter 50, Hadith 9200

Manifestation of Obedience and Accountability

- The true meaning of dhikr is to remember Allah (SwT) in one's steps, movements, and actions, endlessly being in a state of remembrance. The outcome is obedience to the Lord and adherence to the path of intellect and faith.
- It entails fulfilling divine responsibilities related to commanded and prohibited actions and purifying one's life by gracing the soul with the Celestial Illumination of Allah (SwT).
- Dhikr involves remembering Allah through the heart, which often begins with the tongue.

Broader Interpretations and Connections

- Dhikr is mentioned in the context of prayer (salat), as in the verse, " **Indeed, I am Allah. There is no deity except Me, so worship Me and establish prayer for My remembrance**." (Quran 20:14). This indicates that prayer itself is a means of remembering and worshipping God.

- In some interpretations, dhikr refers to the Holy Quran, highlighting its role as a source of guidance and reminder.
- It is essential for beneficial actions, thoughts, and speech. Not every glance, silence, or speech is beneficial if it does not involve consideration, contemplation, or remembrance.

Ultimate Goal of Dhikr

The ultimate goal of dhikr is to cultivate a constant state of awareness and mindfulness of Allah's presence at all times. This entails living a life where Allah is present in all aspects, with His celestial illumination encompassing one's entire being. It is about thinking and reasoning with this divine illumination and diligently practicing all of His commandments. Through this constant remembrance, a believer strives for self-awareness, leading to the knowledge of Allah and attaining a higher spiritual station of His nearness.

The Four Types of Jihad

The four types of jihad: Jihad al-Nafs (against the self), Jihad al-Shaytan (against Satan), Jihad al-Kuffar (against disbelievers), and Jihad al-Munafiqin (against hypocrites). Jihad al-Nafs is the foundational struggle that underpins success in all other forms.

Conclusion

The hadith "Force yourselves to do good and strive against your own selves for it, for indeed evil is naturally imprinted upon man" — Tanbih al-Khawatir, vol. 2, p. 120 — presents a comprehensive moral and spiritual program. It teaches that:

- Goodness is an achievement, not a given.
- Doing good requires تكلف (takalluf): conscious, deliberate, sometimes arduous exertion.
- The inner self (نفس, nafs) must be struggled against through جهاد النفس (jihad al-nafs), the greater jihad.
- Human nature contains an inclination toward evil, making continuous effort, self-discipline, and reliance on divine guidance necessary.
- Practical steps include promptness in good, self-training, social responsibility, reflection, resolve, self-examination, self-conditioning, guarding intentions, and remembrance of God.

In essence, the hadith calls believers to an active, disciplined, and persistent pursuit of virtue, recognizing that moral and spiritual excellence is attained through effort, struggle, and God's assistance.

The hadith, "**Force yourselves to do good, and exert yourselves therein, for verily evil is something man naturally tends towards**," lays the foundation for a profound understanding of moral and spiritual development in Islam. It emphasizes that goodness is not a passive state but an active, continuous struggle (jihad) against one's inner inclinations. This struggle is essential because the human self (nafs) is naturally prone to sin and commands evil.

Core Teachings Derived from the Hadith

1. **The Innate Tendency Towards Evil:** The hadith explicitly states that "evil is something man naturally tends towards." This acknowledges a fundamental aspect of human nature: without conscious effort and discipline, individuals may easily succumb to their lower desires and vices. The human self (nafs) is described as an entity that "enjoineth unto evil" and can lead to misfortune if not kept in check.
2. **Goodness Requires Force and Exertion:** Given the natural inclination towards evil, achieving goodness necessitates deliberate "force" and "exertion." It is not about waiting for goodness to manifest naturally, but actively compelling oneself towards it. Imam Ali (peace be upon him) further reinforces this by saying,

   And compel themselves to good virtues.

   الإمام علي (عليه السلام): أكره نفسك على الفضائل ، فإن الرذائل أنت مطبوع عليها

   Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: '**Compel yourself to good virtues, for verily vices are something you have a natural tendency for**.'

   — Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 2477

   This means consciously choosing virtuous actions even when they feel difficult or unnatural at first. The best deeds are those that one forces oneself to do.

3. **The "Greater Struggle" (Jihad al-Nafs):** The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) described the struggle against one's own self (nafs) as the "greater struggle" (Jihad al-Akbar), distinguishing it from external battles. This internal battle is against the self that is inclined towards evil, requiring constant effort to overcome its negative tendencies. It is the path to disciplining the soul and acquiring noble morals, rooted in knowledge of God.

Practical Steps for Moral and Spiritual Development

Based on this hadith and related teachings, several practical steps emerge for cultivating goodness and refining the self:

1. **Conscious Compulsion and Habituation:**
    - **Initial Force:** Begin by compelling oneself to perform good deeds and adopt virtues, even when there is resistance from within. This aligns with Imam Ali's advice: "Force your self to perform good moral deeds, because the wickedness has been incorporated in your inner essence."
    - **Continuous Observance:** Through repeated performance of good and relevant deeds, and their continuous observance, these actions become etched on the psyche. Habits gradually form, becoming a second nature. As the Prophet (SAW) said, "**Through constant self-struggle are bad habits overcome**."
    - **Making Obedience Easier:** Compelling the soul to abandon acts of disobedience will make it easier to lead it towards acts of obedience and worship.
2. **Struggling Against the Nafs (Self-Discipline):**
    - **Denying Immoral Demands:** Do not offer positive responses to the demands of immoral and obscene deeds. Gradually, by consistently denying these urges, their roots can be dried off completely.
    - **Strengthening Virtuous Characteristics:** Simultaneously, identify the virtuous characteristic opposite to a particular vice and actively strengthen it. Impose tasks upon the self that align with this virtue, so that it becomes a habit and temperament, thereby cutting off the roots of wicked deeds. For example, if prone to anger, practice forbearance.
    - **Overcoming Desires and Habits:** Strive against lower desires, overcome anger, and oppose bad habits. This process also involves purifying the self and perfecting the intellect.
3. **Constant Self-Reflection and Intention Monitoring:**
    - **Guarding Intentions:** Constantly concentrate on intentions. If an idea to violate divine commands arises, recognize it as an instigation from Satan and his allies. Seek God's protection and banish such evil thoughts.
    - **Daily Accountability:** At the end of each day, engage in self-examination and evaluation of deeds. Be thankful to God for faithfulness and seek forgiveness for any lapses. This practice cultivates self-awareness and moral character.
    - **Seeking Divine Assistance:** Acknowledge the need for divine help, as "man's self is wont to command him to do evil, except such as my Lord has had mercy on." Calling on God for help in fighting one's own self is crucial for spiritual success.
4. **Enjoining Good and Forbidding Evil (Amr bil Ma'ruf wa Nahy anil Munkar):**
    - **Personal Responsibility:** Muslims have a responsibility to actively work against evil and injustice. The Messenger of Allah said,

من رأى منكم منكرا فليغيره بيده فان لم يستطع فبلسانه فان لم يستطع فبقلبه وذلک اضعف الايمان. (مسند احمد ابن حنبل ج3 ص49)

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said:
Whoever of you observes an evil (in society) must change it (object over it) physically with his hand so if he does not have the power of it then he must object over it by his tongue & if he does not have the strength of that, he must object upon it in his heart. (He must not remain indifferent to it) And this is the lowest status of faith

— Masnad Ahmed Bin Hanbal, Vol. 3, P 49

- **Community Impact:** Enjoining good and forbidding evil is a compulsory duty that helps establish other divine duties, secures the rights of the wronged, and opposes tyrants. Neglecting this duty can lead to affliction and unheeded prayers.
- **Leading by Example:** While one should bid to good even though you do not abide with it yourself, and forbid evil even though you do not avoid it in its entirety, the ultimate goal is personal adherence to what one preaches.

5. **Connecting with Divine Guidance:**
    - **The Quran as Guide:** Allah has sent down a guiding Book that explains good and evil. Individuals should adopt the course of good and turn away from evil to remain rightly guided.
    - **Knowledge of God (Ma'rifat Allah):** The path to disciplining the soul and acquiring noble morals is based on knowledge of God, which is guaranteed to be productive and leads to the attainment of all perfections.
    - **Purpose of Creation:** The ultimate purpose of human creation is to attain perfection and a blissful life in the hereafter through servitude and worship of God, which includes adorning oneself with virtues.

In essence, moral and spiritual development is a dynamic, lifelong process of conscious effort, self-discipline, and reliance on God. It involves recognizing the self's inclination towards evil and actively training it towards goodness, transforming difficult acts of virtue into cherished habits.

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- Quran 6:164 / 17:15 / 35:18 / 39:7 — "No bearer of burdens bears the burden of another."
- Quran 31:25 and parallel verses — "If you ask them, 'Who created the heavens and the earth?' they will surely say, 'Allah'."
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