

Book Al-Majālis wa'l-Musāyarāt

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In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

Praise be to Allah, who has honored us with the **walāya** (devotion and allegiance) of His **Friends**, favored us with the **Imamate of the Imams from the Household of His Prophet**, guided us by their light, shown us their paths, and bestowed upon us, through them, blessings for which we cannot possibly enumerate all that is due to us.

We praise Him with a praise that He loves and is pleased with, and which brings about an increase in His blessings upon us. And may Allah bless Muhammad, His Prophet, and the purified Imams from his Household.

To proceed:

Since we have valued and preserved the virtues, wisdom, knowledge, and gnosis that came down to us from the forefathers of our Imams—through those among our righteous brethren and the trustworthy members of our predecessors who conveyed these teachings from them to us—and since those who carried these teachings to us deserve the merit of the one who conveys them and the reward of the truthful transmitter, our desire for the reward of doing so has prompted us to transmit what we heard, what was conveyed to us, and what we related and preserved from those whom we met and with whom we lived among them—may Allah's blessings be upon them—to others among the people of our age who were absent from such knowledge.

Thus, they may transmit it from us to those who come after us, just as what we have preserved was transmitted to us by those whom we met, from those who preceded them.

We have related from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, in what the transmitters have conveyed to us from our Imams, that he said:

“May Allah have mercy upon a person who hears my words, understands them, and conveys them to one who has not heard them. For perhaps one who carries knowledge conveys it to one who has greater understanding of it; and perhaps one who carries knowledge is himself not a scholar.”

And he also said ﷺ:

“In every generation, the upright among them will carry this knowledge. They will remove from it the distortions of the ignorant, the interpretations of the extremists, and the fabrications of those who deal in falsehood.”

And from **Ja'far ibn Muhammad** ﷺ, that he said:

“May Allah have mercy upon whoever brings our cause to life.”

He was asked, “O son of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, what does bringing your cause to life mean?”

He replied:

“To remember it, spread it, and convey it to those to whom it has not yet reached.”

And it is related from him, peace be upon him, that he said to some of his Shi'a:

“Speak about us and gather in your assemblies for the remembrance of us. For whenever a group from those devoted to us gathers to remember our virtues and discusses among themselves what they have learned of our knowledge, they are surely walking through the gardens of Paradise. The angels shade them and seek forgiveness for them, and Allah, Mighty and Glorious, turns toward them with His mercy.”

For this reason, and because of many other incentives and encouragements concerning what we have mentioned and summarized, we desired to undertake what we have composed and to preserve what we intended.

Indeed, I had collected, concerning **al-Mahdi billah, al-Qa'im bi-Amr Allah, and al-Mansur billah**—may the blessings, mercy, and grace of Allah be upon them—and concerning them and their virtues, material from books whose titles would be too numerous to mention. I also composed the **Sīrat al-Mu'izz li-Dīn Allah** ﷺ, covering the period from the time when Allah, Mighty and Glorious, entrusted the Imamate to him until the present day.

I shall continue this work diligently until my life comes to an end, if Allah, the Exalted, wills. After me, those of my descendants and their descendants will continue it, with Allah granting them success, so long as His Friend's life endures and His honor and sovereignty remain. There is neither power nor strength except through Allah.

Then I saw various forms of **wisdom, knowledge, proper conduct, and gnosis** flowing forth from his speech, issuing from his words, and becoming evident through his symbolic expressions and indications. These did not follow the same course as the biographies I had compiled, nor did they fit within the chapters I had established for them, despite the wisdom, knowledge, miracles, proofs, evidences, and signs contained in those biographies.

I therefore considered it appropriate to set these matters apart in books resembling them and suited to their nature, while keeping the biographies in their own book together with material of a similar form and meaning.

I decided that in this book I would record what I heard from **al-Mu'izz** ﷺ of wisdom, benefit, knowledge, and gnosis—whether from a discussion in an assembly, at a particular place or occasion, or while accompanying him—as well as whatever was conveyed to me through an official communication, written decree, or correspondence.

I shall convey the **meaning faithfully rather than the exact wording**, without adding to it or taking anything away from it, while first making an excuse for my inability to reproduce his precise words exactly as they were spoken. For his words are a jewel that human beings cannot fashion; rather, they are from Allah, who originated His creation. Indeed, they are better than a jewel.

As **Sufyan al-Thawri** related, he once entered upon **Ja'far ibn Muhammad** ﷺ, who spoke to him with words such as Sufyan's ears had never before heard. When he heard them, he could not contain himself and said:

“By Allah, this is truly a jewel!”

Ja'far ibn Muhammad ﷺ replied:

“O Sufyan, rather, by Allah, it is better than a jewel. What is a jewel except a stone?”

Sufyan said:

“So I said: ‘Allah knows best where He places His message.’”

Thus, **Amir al-Mu'minin**—may Allah's blessings be upon him—is the descendant and scion of Ja'far, and the descendant and offspring of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. They are, as Allah, Mighty and Glorious, said:

“A progeny, one from another.”

No one can adequately reproduce their speech, and creation falls short of producing anything comparable to what comes from them.

We have also related that one of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was asked:

“Tell us exactly as you heard it from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, in his very words, without adding anything or taking anything away.”

He replied:

“You have imposed upon me a difficult task. It is sufficient for me to convey the meaning to you, while taking every possible care to reproduce his wording accurately and not intentionally altering any part of it, if Allah, the Exalted, wills.”

Part One

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

An Account of Words Spoken at a Place of Encampment

Al-Qadi al-Nu'man ibn Muhammad said:

The first words I heard from **Amir al-Mu'minin al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah**—may Allah's blessings be upon him—were on the day I arrived from the city of Tripoli. **Al-Mansur billah**—may Allah's blessings be upon him—had appointed me as its qadi and then sent me an order to come. So I came.

When I approached **al-Mansuriyya**, I encountered al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah, may Allah's blessings be upon him, as he was going out for one of the activities to which he would go, accompanied by a great procession.

I dismounted and hastened toward him to greet him, having prepared some words to say. But as soon as I drew near him, filled my eyes with the sight of him, and felt my heart filled with awe of him, I saw the majesty of the Imamate in his face.

By Allah, I did not know what to say. I could think of nothing except kissing the ground. He then gestured to me with his hand, so I kissed it. I was rendered speechless by awe and veneration of him.

He initiated the conversation with me and said:

“You have arrived in the best manner. May Allah bless you and reward you well for your own sake. News of you has reached us. Proceed in righteousness to the door of Amir al-Mu'minin.”

And he moved his mount forward.

When I appeared before **al-Mansur billah**, may Allah's blessings be upon him, he said to me, among other things:

“O Nu'man, when Allah rewards those who do good with goodness, may Allah give you, on our behalf, the finest of rewards.”

Nothing could have pleased me more than what I heard from al-Mansur and al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah on that day.

I reflected upon those words and considered them as one ought to consider and reflect upon the words of the **Friends of Allah**.

I found the statement of al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah, may Allah's blessings be upon him:

"May Allah reward you well for your own sake,"

to be an explicit, clear, evident, and familiar statement requiring no interpretation and needing no supporting proof. It is confirmed by the word of Allah, Mighty and Glorious:

"If you do good, you do good for yourselves; and if you do evil, it is against yourselves."

As for the statement of al-Mansur billah, may Allah's blessings be upon him:

"When Allah rewards those who do good with goodness, may Allah give you, on our behalf, the finest of rewards,"

its meaning is likewise sound, since those who do good do not, when performing righteous deeds, do good **to Allah**—far exalted is He above such a notion. Rather, they do good to themselves, as Allah, Mighty and Glorious, has said.

But his words:

"May Allah reward you **on our behalf**"

require interpretation and cannot stand without supporting evidence. They admit several possible meanings.

One possibility is that "on our behalf" means *from us, through us*, or something similar, since, according to the scholars of Arabic, prepositions may substitute for one another.

Allah, Mighty and Glorious, relates Pharaoh as saying:

"And I shall crucify you upon the trunks of the palm trees,"

meaning, *upon the trunks of the palm trees*.

Thus, the meaning of the supplication would be that Allah grants the reward through them, by means of them, or from them—whether in the immediate life of this world, in the final life of the Hereafter, or in both.

This is what I hope for, confident in the acceptance of the supplication. There is no power except through Allah.

Another possibility is that "on our behalf" is figurative, meaning *on account of our walāya, our love, and your sincere counsel toward us*.

Or its meaning may be:

"May Allah grant you the reward for what you undertook from the responsibilities with which we entrusted you, in which you did good to yourself,"

or something along these lines.

There is much that could be said on this matter, and there are many supporting examples. We have omitted them for the sake of brevity—not lest anyone imagine or suppose that he has a favor, merit, or blessing over the Friends of Allah for which they ought to repay him.

We have related from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, through what has been transmitted from our Imams, that he said to a man from the **Ansar**:

"Your father once did me a favor. Do you have any need?"

The man said to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ:

“Ask Allah to grant me Paradise.”

He said:

“Yes. So help me in that by performing abundant prostration.”

And he mentioned that his father had fought in an earlier campaign. He also said to more than one person:

“May Allah reward you well on behalf of His Prophet.”

We have shortened the mention of these reports.

Those people fought and gave sincere counsel. There is no doubt, disagreement, dispute, or contention that by doing so they did good **to themselves**, not to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

When some among them, out of ignorance, claimed a favor for what they had done, Allah, Mighty and Glorious, revealed:

“They regard their acceptance of Islam as a favor to you. Say: ‘Do not regard your Islam as a favor to me. Rather, Allah has bestowed a favor upon you by guiding you to faith, if you are truthful.’”

Thus, no person has a favor over Allah, Glorious and Majestic is He, nor over any of His Friends, because of any deed, word, or anything else—even if he were to be cut into pieces for it.

For whatever a person does, he does it for his own sake: he lays the foundation for his own future and seeks his own benefit.

This is especially true of one who is employed for a wage that he receives and who works in expectation of a reward that has been promised to him. His position is that of a hired worker:

If he is sincere in his work, he has fulfilled what is required of him. If he betrays his trust or cheats in it, he deserves punishment and bears the burden of sin.

Everyone who works today for our Imams, may Allah’s blessings be upon them, should understand his work in this manner.

Indeed, I once said to some of the qadis whom I had instructed as they departed for various assignments:

“The most important thing you should consider and work toward is fulfilling the covenant and discharging the trust entrusted to you, and carrying out what Amir al-Mu’minin has instructed you concerning your duties, because of what Allah and he have made incumbent upon you in this matter.

“At the very least, consider what will preserve the blessing you enjoy, and take as an example in this matter the ordinary people whom you see around you—such as blacksmiths, goldsmiths, and tailors, who have become examples of their respective crafts.

“You may see one of them entrusted with work worth a great deal of money. He carries it out for a very small and insignificant wage. No witness is required against him, nor is any security demanded from him.

“He may be poor or otherwise; he may not even be known for trustworthiness, nor be a person of knowledge or religion. Yet he fulfills his trust, delivers whatever was entrusted to him to the person who employed him, and accepts only a small wage for it.

“Nothing motivates him to do this except that he knows that if he were to withhold what was entrusted to him and deny having received it, people would speak of him and no longer

employ him. He therefore sees that the small wage he receives, one after another, is more lasting and beneficial to him.”

You will receive a share of the bounty of the **Friend of Allah** only insofar as you preserve it by safeguarding what he entrusted to you. Through this, it will remain with you, together with a good reputation among people, the hope of receiving an increase, and the reward you hope to receive from your Lord.

Whoever hears from the Friends of Allah something like what I have just mentioned should understand it in the manner I have understood it. He should not interpret it in the way taken by those whom the Scripture condemns, nor follow the interpretation whose corruption Allah has made clear.

Allah guides whoever holds firmly to the bond of His Friends toward obedience to Him and obedience to them, and toward doing what pleases Him and pleases them—in word, deed, intention, and conformity with what is correct, if Allah, the Exalted, wills.

Another Account

When **al-Mansur billah**, may Allah’s blessings be upon him, appointed me qadi over al-Mansuriyya and its surrounding territories, I accompanied him one day when he had gone out to a garden called **Lukniyya**. He stopped there, and I appeared before him.

He spoke at length about many different matters. Then he turned to one of his men and said:

“What is the story that you once told me about so-and-so?”

The man mentioned a story containing an outrageous falsehood.

Al-Mu’izz li-Din Allah, may Allah’s blessings be upon him, then looked at me and said:

“This man is well known for outrageous lying. The matter concerning him reached al-Qa’im bi-Amr Allah, peace be upon him, and he was astonished at the extent to which such behavior was possible for him and was tolerated.”

Then he said to me:

“This man, who is known for lying, gave testimony before so-and-so”—meaning one of the qadis—“concerning an acknowledgment regarding a mule.

“So that qadi sent to this man”—meaning the man whose falsehood had been reported—“to investigate his condition and inform him about the matter concerning which he was giving testimony.

“The reply he sent was: ‘As far as we are concerned, he is trustworthy **with respect to a mule.**”

Al-Mu’izz li-Din Allah, peace be upon him, smiled and said:

“And the qadi accepted his testimony! Have you ever seen anything more astonishing than this?”

When I heard this from him, peace be upon him, I remembered the principle that whoever considers the stories Allah, Mighty and Glorious, recounts in His Book concerning earlier nations to whom His messengers were sent—and who disobeyed those messengers and were destroyed by punishment—understands that, although these stories inform us of what happened to those peoples and how their affairs unfolded, they also constitute a warning

from Allah to anyone who might act as they did, and a caution that such punishment might descend upon them.

I therefore understood that, through what he had just related, al-Mu'izz, peace be upon him, was making an **allusion**: when seeking evidence from witnesses, one should not rely upon a man such as this, even if he has some position of proximity and service. There are others more deserving than him of being relied upon for the examination of testimony.

I did not treat his statement as merely a story or casual conversation without meaning or benefit. Rather, it was more appropriate to avoid such a person.

In the same way, whoever hears a statement from the Friends of Allah, peace be upon them, ought to contemplate it with true contemplation. He should not turn away from it and simply pass it by.

For in **every word** they utter there is wisdom, and beneath every expression there is a benefit for the one whom Allah guides to understand it, for whom Allah makes its meaning clear, whom He enables to comprehend it, and for whom He makes its benefit accessible.

And Allah guides whomever He wills by His grace.

An Account of a Journey with al-Mu'izz

He said:

I accompanied **al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah**, may Allah's blessings be upon him, one day. He mentioned a certain man, and I said:

"He was with us during the days of the tribulation at al-Mahdiyya."

He asked:

"And what happened to him then?"

I said:

"When the accursed Dajjal, Mukhallad, drew near us, the man came to us from the countryside with himself, his family, his children, and whatever wealth he was able to bring. He left behind a great deal, which was looted.

"Allah compensated him for this loss because he had transported food to us. When the food spoiled, he sold some of it for a great sum after having kept enough for his own sustenance and that of his family.

"Thus Allah replaced what he had lost many times over."

Al-Mu'izz, peace be upon him, said to me:

"O Nu'man, by Allah, what Allah has prepared for him of reward in his noble final abode is greater than that.

"By Allah, no believer who knew our true rank and preferred to remain with us in hardship, adversity, distress, and affliction rather than remain with our enemy in ease and prosperity endured with us at that time except that he will be with us tomorrow in Paradise.

"He will enter through our entrance and take shelter beneath our shade.

"By Allah, even if his sins were as numerous as the grains of sand, Allah would forgive him, admit him into Paradise through our intercession, and because he remained with us."

He did not merely inform me of this, peace be upon him; rather, he swore repeatedly by Allah to confirm it firmly in my mind.

I reflected upon what he had said and emphasized, peace be upon him, and I found that the **Book of Allah** supports it, the report of the Messenger confirms it, and the statement of **Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq**, peace be upon him, reinforces it.

As for the Book of Allah, there is His saying, Glorious and Mighty:

"Whoever among you takes them as allies is one of them."

And His words, relating the statement of His intimate friend **Abraham**, peace be upon him:

"Whoever follows me is truly of me."

And the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

"Salman is one of us, the People of the Household."

Salman was Persian by lineage, but he was devoted to the Household of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, so the Messenger attributed him to them and included him among them.

The Prophet ﷺ also said to one of those who addressed him:

"You are with those whom you love."

And **Ja'far ibn Muhammad**, peace be upon him, said to some of his Shi'a:

"You are from us, the People of the Household."

Therefore, whoever takes the Friends of Allah as his allies, turns toward them, and remains with them in this world—especially in times of difficulty, hardship, distress, adversity, and trial—will be with them in Paradise, through the mercy of Allah and in accordance with His justice.

Allah, Glorious is His remembrance, has said:

"And do not incline toward those who do wrong, lest the Fire touch you."

Thus, if one who merely inclines toward the enemies of Allah is admitted into the Fire, then by His justice He admits into Paradise the one who turns away from them and inclines toward His Friends.

Likewise, we have related from **Ja'far ibn Muhammad**, peace be upon him, that he said:

"Whoever safeguards the property of an orphan entrusted to him and causes it to grow, Allah will admit him into Paradise."

One who heard this asked him:

"O son of the Messenger of Allah, from where did you say this? Did it reach you from the Messenger of Allah?"

He replied:

"Is it not part of the justice of Allah that, just as He threatened with the Fire the one who consumes the property of orphans, He should admit into Paradise the one who safeguards it and causes it to grow?"

All of this supports and confirms what al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah, peace be upon him, said.

Indeed, **every statement of the Friends of Allah**, when contemplated by one whom Allah has enabled to understand it, will be found to be confirmed by the words of Allah, Glorious is His remembrance, and the words of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

An Answer to a Question Concerning a Musāyara

He said:

When al-Manṣūr billāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, appointed me as qāḍī in al-Manṣūriyya, and I resided there, whenever I stood before him to offer the salutation, I would kiss the ground before him, out of reverence for him and veneration of his rank. He repeatedly said to me, “Do not do this, O Nu‘mān.” Yet each time I continued to do it, thinking that his prohibition was not one of disapproval, since al-Mu‘izz, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, did it at that time, as did the members of the elite and all the other people, except those among the common rabble who were ignorant of his rightful status and possessed no understanding. I disliked entering into their company and being counted among them in this matter.

Then one day he went out for one of the purposes for which he would go out, and al-Mu‘izz, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, went out with him, as was customary. I kissed the ground before al-Manṣūr billāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, and he addressed me in a harsh and reproachful manner:

“I have prohibited you from this many times, yet I still do not see you desist from it!”

This left me bewildered and distressed, and I did not know what the proper course was. I therefore went to al-Mu‘izz, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, who was behind the procession. I told him what had happened between al-Manṣūr and me. He saw the traces of distress upon me, smiled at me, and said:

“Do not let what you have heard from the Commander of the Faithful, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, distress you, nor let it turn you away from what you have been doing. Persist in it, even if he were to prohibit you from it a thousand times. By Allah, what is due to him in rightful reverence and what he deserves of veneration is greater than this.”

His words, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, removed from me the distress that I had been experiencing.

I reflected upon what he had said and upon his instruction to me to refrain from obeying the Imam's command and to undertake what the Imam had prohibited. I found that many of Allah's commands and prohibitions in His Book are not intended as legally binding obligations, but operate in various ways—as discipline, guidance, testing, and trial. If I were to mention them, I would go beyond the scope of this book. Anyone who has examined even a portion of the knowledge of the Qur'an will know this.

I recalled also the excuse offered by ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ to al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī, peace and blessings of Allah be upon them, when al-Ḥusayn reproached him for going out with ‘Alī at Ṣiffīn. He said to him:

“O son of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family! By Allah, nothing caused me to do that except that my father, ‘Amr, had found fault with something I had done and complained about me to the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family. The Messenger of Allah said to me, ‘O ‘Abd Allāh, obey your father.’ Then, when my father went out with Mu‘āwiya, he called me, and I remembered the statement of the Messenger of Allah, so I answered him and obeyed him as I had been commanded.”

Al-Ḥusayn, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said to him:

“O ‘Abd Allāh, have you not heard the saying of the Mighty and Glorious One, after He commanded kindness toward parents: *‘But if they strive to make you associate with Me that of which you have no knowledge, then do not obey them’*? And the saying of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family: *‘There is no obedience to a created being in disobedience to the Creator’*; and his saying: *‘Obedience is only in what is right and proper’*?”

‘Abd Allāh's face changed, and he said:

“By Allah, O son of the Messenger of Allah, it is as though I had never heard this. Yet indeed, I heard it.”

Thus I likewise understood and recognized the meaning of what al-Mu‘izz li-Dīn Allāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, had said: since obedience is only in what is right and proper, a prohibition against what is right and proper cannot be a binding prohibition.

I understood that al-Manṣūr's command to me, together with al-Mu‘izz's instruction to disregard it and continue kissing the ground, was a matter of testing and trial—just as Allah, the Mighty and Glorious, commanded Ibrāhīm, peace be upon him, to slaughter his son Ismā‘īl, in order to test his patience and examine his obedience.

Thus I returned to doing it, as al-Mu‘izz, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, had commanded me. After that, he never reproached me for it for the remainder of his life—may Allah's blessings, mercy, and grace be upon him. Indeed, all the while, his expression of satisfaction with me continued to increase and become more firmly established. Praise belongs to Allah, for His praise is as He deserves.

We ask Allah to inspire us to give thanks and to bring the matter to completion.

On Kissing the Ground Before the Friends of Allah

When the matter we have mentioned—kissing the ground before the Friends of Allah—has arisen, it is appropriate that we mention the indignation of the ignorant concerning it, and their declaring an unbeliever the one who does it or has it done for him. They maintain that this is unbelief in Allah and prostration before one who is beneath Him.

Exalted is Allah, and may He declare His Friends far above what the unjust and ignorant say!

Among the afflictions and trials brought about by ignorance is having to undertake the task of establishing proof against people who do not understand.

Suppose they regarded this as prostration. Have they not heard Allah, the Mighty and Glorious, recount in His Book that Jacob and his sons—who were prophets—prostrated themselves before Joseph, peace be upon him, when they entered into his presence, while he too was a prophet? This was the fulfillment of his dream, when he had seen the sun, moon, and stars prostrating themselves before him.

Would these prophets, in their view, have become unbelievers by this prostration?

Yet we do not say that we prostrate before anyone besides Allah—far exalted is Allah above that! Rather, we kiss the ground out of reverence for the Friends of Allah. Prostration is something else entirely.

If these ignorant people were asked about a man who, during his prayer, kissed the ground in the position of prostration but did not place his forehead upon it in the manner of those who prostrate, would they say that this was prostration? They would not call it prostration.

So how can they claim that a person who does this without intending prostration has prostrated?

Even if, in their view, a man genuinely performed the physical act of prostration without intending prostration, he would not thereby be a person performing prostration—just as if someone refrained from eating from morning until night without intending a fast, he would not thereby be fasting.

Furthermore, they themselves kiss the hands of the Imams, peace and blessings of Allah be upon them, while they relate from some of their predecessors that kissing the hand is a prostration. At the very least, by their own reasoning it should be equivalent to a bowing (*rukūʿ*), because the person performing it lowers his head just as he does when bowing.

By their reasoning, therefore, they are bowing to them instead of to Allah. Exalted is Allah above that, and may He declare His Friends far above accepting or permitting such a thing for any of their companions.

They also relate from the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family, that when some of his Companions who had come from Abyssinia saw them prostrating themselves before their kings, one of them prostrated before the Prophet. The Prophet forbade him from doing so and said:

“If I were to command anyone to prostrate before another, I would command a woman to prostrate before her husband.”

If their report is authentic, then this is the prostration before other than Allah, because the person performing it was merely imitating the Abyssinians, who at that time were Magians to whom the religious call had not yet reached. The Messenger of Allah therefore prohibited imitating them.

Their report contains no mention of kissing the ground. Rather, it concerns the prohibition of prostration. And we have already established that kissing the ground is not prostration.

This is a matter of consensus, so far as we know: kissing the ground cannot substitute for prostration, particularly when it is done without the intention of prostration.

We do not say that the prostration of Jacob and his sons and household before Joseph was prostration before other than Allah—far exalted is Allah above that, and may He declare His Friends far above such a thing. Rather, it was a prostration of obedience and reverence toward him, and submission to his command, because of the distinction Allah had bestowed upon him and the excellence with which He had singled him out.

This is among the greatest matters concerning which the ignorant disparage us, although they are more deserving of disparagement and more worthy of being called ignorant. We have demonstrated their ignorance, if only they were capable of being guided.

Words Conveyed from Direct Observation

He said:

The Commander of the Faithful, al-Manṣūr billāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, went out for one of the purposes for which he would go out to inspect the state of affairs. He reached Ṭanbās, and al-Muʿizz, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, went out with him. I was among those who went out with them.

They came upon a valley through which rainwater flowed, supplying many fields belonging to different estates. There was a great dam there. When the Commander of the Faithful reached it and stopped, two men who were estate administrators came forward.

One of them claimed that the other had blocked the water with this dam, thereby preventing the estates under his administration from receiving the rainwater with which they had previously been irrigated.

The other claimed that doing so was his right and something he was entitled to do.

Each of them presented many arguments in support of his claim. Their voices rose, and their dispute became heated. Al-Manṣūr, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, heard all of this, but did not decide between them.

Al-Mu‘izz, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, was standing to one side on his horse. The people were some distance away, riding their mounts or standing and watching. Most of them could hear the two men's argument.

I was among those listening, and I could see no way of resolving the dispute. Whenever I thought to myself that the proof had become established for one of them, the other would introduce another argument against it.

One of the men in the procession who was standing near me said:

“Are you not hearing what has passed between these two?”

“Yes,” I replied.

“What do you make of it?”

“By Allah,” I said, “I have not arrived at the truth of the matter with sufficient certainty to make a judgment. Their case has become confused to me. You can see for yourself that the Commander of the Faithful, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, has refrained from deciding between them.

“But I will say this: if the two of them were to stand before the Amir—that is, al-Mu‘izz li-Dīn Allāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—he would resolve the matter between them.”

“How can you say that?” he asked.

I replied:

“Because I have experienced him. By Allah, whenever I have encountered a matter that was difficult for me, whose proper solution was unclear to me, and I presented it to him, he would answer me before I had even finished explaining it, or as soon as I had finished explaining it.

“He would give an answer that I could not have arrived at even after reflecting upon the matter for many days and nights. And I have no doubt that his answer is the truth, for there is no other way the matter could properly be understood.”

I then mentioned to him several examples of this, which we shall relate, together with others of the same kind, in this book, God willing.

As I was speaking to him in this way, marveling at what Allah prepared for al-Mu‘izz and guided him toward of sound judgment, we saw the two men returning from before al-Manṣūr and approaching him.

Al-Mu‘izz was closer to us than al-Manṣūr. No sooner had the two men stood before him than they returned to us, and we did not hear them say a word.

One of them came and stood between me and the man with whom I had been speaking. I saw that his face was radiant.

"What happened between you two?" I asked.

"Our argument was brought to an end," he replied. "The Amir settled the matter with a single statement, after you heard what passed between us before our master, the Commander of the Faithful."

"How did that happen?" I asked.

I looked at the man to whom I had earlier said what I did and asked him:

"Did I not tell you so?"

The man said to him:

"How did it happen?"

He replied:

"When we had remained for a long time and our discussion before our master had become prolonged, he said to us:

'Go to your master. Let him consider the matter between you.'

"So we went to him. When we stood before him and were about to speak, he said:

'Be silent! I will take care of both of you—and of myself.'

"Then he looked at my companion and said:

'Is not this valley, the water that flows through it, and the land which it irrigates, ours?'

"He said, 'Yes.'

"Then he said:

'You have disputed over this water only because each of you wants to ensure that what passes through his hands for us is maximized, is that not so?'

"He said, 'Yes.'

"Then he said:

'Tell me: if you were an administrator responsible for both properties, would you irrigate one property and leave the other without water?'

"He fell silent.

"Then he said:

'Speak, if you prefer the truth.'

"He said:

'My master, I would not do that.'

"He said:

'You have spoken truly. Whatever you would not do for yourself, do not impose upon another. Go, remove the dam, and irrigate what is under your administration. Let the other man's land receive its share as well, according to what the water gives you and gives him.'

"Thus he ruled in favor of what I had been seeking, and I departed."

The man with whom I had been speaking looked at me and said:

"It is as though, by Allah, he had revealed to you the unseen reality of this matter!"

I replied:

“That is only because of what I have experienced and learned from him, some of which I have already mentioned to you.”

I then reflected upon this remarkable judgment which Allah, the Mighty and Glorious, had inspired in him and had concealed from the Imam before him. I recalled the saying of Allah, the Mighty and Glorious:

“And David and Solomon, when they judged concerning the field, when the sheep of the people strayed into it by night, and We were witnesses to their judgment. And We gave Solomon understanding of it, and to each We gave judgment and knowledge.”

And I recalled what our transmitters have related to us from our Imams, peace and blessings of Allah be upon them: two men disputed before David the Prophet, peace be upon him, concerning sheep belonging to one of them which had entered the other's field and damaged it.

David, peace be upon him, gave one judgment concerning the matter, and then referred them to Solomon, peace be upon him, so that he might judge between them.

Solomon said:

“If the owner of the sheep deliberately sent them into the field, then he is liable for what they damaged. But if he did not deliberately send them, and they escaped without his intention or purpose, then he owes nothing.”

The term *al-‘ajmā’ jubbār* means that livestock are ‘*ajmā*’, and *jubbār* means that the damage they cause on their own is without liability—in other words, whatever animals damage by themselves is treated as without compensation.

He said:

“This applies only during the daytime, and those who own cultivated fields are responsible for protecting their fields during the day. But if the animals escape at night, their owner is liable for whatever they damage, whether he intended it or not.

“This is because owners of livestock are required to guard their animals at night and prevent them from leaving their enclosures, whereas those who own cultivated fields are not required to guard their fields at night.”

Thus Allah gave Solomon understanding of this case during the lifetime of his father, while withholding it from David, so that He might demonstrate Solomon's excellence during his father's lifetime and bring him joy through the wisdom He had placed within him.

In the same manner, al-Mu‘izz li-Dīn Allāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, understood this case during the lifetime of al-Manṣūr, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, so that He might bring al-Manṣūr joy through him, demonstrate his excellence, and reveal the wisdom Allah had inspired within him, thereby gladdening his father's heart.

Likewise, our transmitters have related to us from our Imams, peace and blessings of Allah be upon them, that an Arab tribesman came to the Mosque of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family, during the days of ‘Umar.

He said to him:

“I am a man in a state of *iḥrām*. I passed by some ostrich eggs, gathered them, cooked them, and ate them.”

‘Umar said:

"I have no knowledge concerning this. But sit here; someone who possesses knowledge of it will come."

So the man sat until the Commander of the Faithful, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, arrived.

'Umar said to the Arab:

"Ask this man."

Al-Ḥasan, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, was at that time a young boy accompanying 'Alī.

The Arab went to 'Alī, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, and said:

"I am a man in a state of *iḥrām*. I passed by ostrich eggs, gathered them, cooked them, and ate them."

'Alī said:

"Ask this one," and he pointed toward al-Ḥasan, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.

The Arab exclaimed:

"Woe to me! What have I done to you, O Companions of Muḥammad? Have you become incapable of giving an answer? Every time I ask one of you, he sends me to another!"

'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd said to him:

"Ask him, O Arab. He is from the Household of Prophethood."

So the Arab asked al-Ḥasan.

Al-Ḥasan, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said:

"O Arab, do you have camels?"

"Yes," he replied.

"Then take a number of she-camels equal to the number of eggs, and have them covered by a male camel. Those among them that become pregnant and give birth—make their offspring an offering."

The Arab said:

"You have relieved me! May Allah relieve you!"

He got up and, on his way, encountered 'Umar.

'Umar asked:

"What did he tell you?"

The Arab told him.

'Umar said:

"Go back to him and tell him: Does he not know that she-camels can miscarry?"

Al-Ḥasan, peace be upon him, replied:

"Tell the one who told you that: Does he not know that eggs can break?"

His father, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, then came to him, kissed him between the eyes, and said:

"A progeny, some of them from others. And Allah is Hearing, Knowing."

'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd said:

“The One who gave this boy understanding of this case is the One who gave Solomon ibn David, peace be upon them both, understanding of that case. And the One who caused the boy to speak with wisdom is the One who caused John [Yaḥyā] ibn Zachariah to speak with wisdom.

“By Allah, if this matter had been returned to its proper place, they would have consumed it green and fresh, from their right and their left!”

‘Umar said:

“O Ibn Mas‘ūd, are you inciting the people against us?”

Al-Ḥasan, peace be upon him, said:

“You used to give him legal opinions, but you did not guide him to us.”

This case, too, was understood by al-Ḥasan, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, in the presence of ‘Alī, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, through an inspiration from Allah, so that He might gladden his father's heart during his lifetime, just as we have described in the case of al-Mu‘izz, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.

The Arab's statement that he had cooked and eaten the eggs demonstrates that there were no chicks in them. For this reason al-Ḥasan, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, instructed him to have the male camel mate with a number of she-camels equal to the number of eggs he had taken. Whatever offspring they produced was to be offered as a sacrifice.

If none became pregnant, or only some became pregnant, then he owed only the offering corresponding to the offspring actually produced, because eggs likewise may be spoiled and fail to develop, as he, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, indicated.

Had there been chicks inside the eggs, but life had not yet developed within them, he would have been required to have the male camel mate with the she-camels until their pregnancy became evident. Whatever was subsequently born would be offered as a sacrifice.

But if life had already developed within the chicks, he would have been required to have the camels mate until they became pregnant and their embryos began to move within their wombs. Whatever was born after that would be offered, while whatever died within the wombs would not have to be replaced, because chicks likewise may die within the eggs.

Al-Mu‘izz's statement to the man—“*Whatever you would not do for yourself, do not impose upon another*”—is derived from the saying of his forefathers, peace and blessings of Allah be upon them:

“Love for people what you love for yourself.”

And:

“Your discipline of yourself is sufficiently accomplished by what you dislike in another.”

It is also related that someone asked one of them about temporary marriage (*nikāḥ al-mut‘a*). He said to him:

“Would you be content, for yourself, to marry one of your close relatives in a temporary marriage?”

The man replied:

“No, by Allah!”

He said:

“That is sufficient for you. Therefore, do not approve for another except what you approve for yourself.”

The words of the Friends of Allah are like a structure, each part strengthening the others and each bearing witness to the others, because they see by the light of Allah, draw from it, speak by His wisdom, and receive from their forefathers.

They are therefore the proofs (*ḥujaj*) of Allah, the Mighty and Glorious, upon the earth, as Allah says:

“A progeny, some of them from others.”

Part Two

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

And may Allah bless our Master Muḥammad and his family, and grant them peace.

A Conversation During a Musāyara

Al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān ibn Muḥammad said:

When al-Manṣūr billāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, appointed me as qāḍī in al-Manṣūriyya, he instructed me to sit and hear the cases of the people in the portico of his palace. He said to me:

“If it were possible for me to have you sit before me in a chamber inside my palace, that would be more pleasing to me. But since that is not possible, sit in the portico of my palace, for it is the most appropriate place in which rights may be established and judgments carried out.”

So I sat where he had instructed me.

But the situation became difficult for many of the litigants, particularly women and the weak, and those who were intimidated from entering through the door of the Commander of the Faithful's palace.

I took note of this. The matter was also brought to my attention by others. Nevertheless, I was hesitant to oppose the Commander of the Faithful, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, in what he had judged and ordered.

Then one day al-Mu‘izz li-Dīn Allāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, went out on one of his customary excursions, and I accompanied him.

He said to me:

“O Nu‘mān, how are things with your sitting in the portico?”

I was hesitant to say anything contrary to what the Commander of the Faithful had ordered, so I mentioned his statement and remained silent.

He said:

“What about the woman and the weak person, and the one whose eyes are overwhelmed with shyness? What about their having to mingle with our men and servants?”

“And what will you do if a *ḥadd* punishment or disciplinary measure becomes necessary in the case of someone? Where will you be able to carry it out there?”

“No, by Allah! That is not a place suitable for such a thing.

“It would be better, more appropriate, and preferable for you to be out in the open among the people, where the weak can reach you and bring their needs before you; where a woman can stand before you and convey her matter to you while remaining in concealment; and where you are able to carry out whatever *ḥudūd* and disciplinary measures are required.

“That arrangement is more suitable, more fitting, and better.”

I said:

“The opinion is as the Amir has judged. May Allah grant him success and guide him aright.”

This was another instance of what I understood Allah, the Mighty and Glorious, to have taught him of the correct course, and what He guided him toward in his decisive judgment. It is among the matters I mentioned in the preceding chapter.

Then, when I returned, a decree (*tawqīʿ*) from al-Manṣūr billāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, reached me, accompanied by money which he had ordered to be used for constructing a spacious place where I could sit, so that people could reach me there and be able to bring whatever matters they needed to bring before me in the proper manner.

I then understood that this had resulted from something al-Muʿizz li-Dīn Allāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, had arranged with him.

Thus I understood that when al-Manṣūr had previously said what he said to me and done what he had done, he had acted with knowledge and wisdom.

Likewise, what Allah had shown al-Muʿizz li-Dīn Allāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, in that judgment was motivated by compassion and mercy toward the people.

There is therefore no contradiction or disagreement between the two.

Rather, all of it was knowledge, wisdom, and harmony.

What al-Manṣūr, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, had perceived was the strengthening and vindication of the truth, and the manifestation of his authority and awe within people's hearts and before their eyes.

What al-Muʿizz, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, perceived was more considerate toward the people and more comprehensive in reconciling the two objectives.

Thus, in this matter, they were like what Allah, the Mighty and Glorious, said concerning David and Solomon:

“And to each We gave judgment and knowledge.”

This was also an example of what we have mentioned concerning Allah bringing joy to His Friends by allowing them, during their lifetimes, to see in their successors and designated heirs what gladdens their eyes: that Allah has deposited in them knowledge beyond what had been deposited in them, and taught them wisdom beyond what they themselves had taught them.

This is not a deficiency in the predecessor. Rather, it is an elevation, excellence, honor, and blessing from Him upon them.

For the honor of the child is the honor of the parent, and it is a source of joy for a parent that his child should be more distinguished than he is.

I heard al-Mu‘izz li-Dīn Allāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, speak of something similar during a gathering in which the Imams, peace and blessings of Allah be upon them, were being discussed.

He said:

“Allah bestowed upon Muḥammad, His Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family, excellence through their Imamate.”

He then immediately clarified his meaning, so that no one who heard him would interpret his words incorrectly. He said:

“I do not say this except as a means of honoring Muḥammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family, because Allah, the Mighty and Glorious, bestowed this honor and excellence upon him by placing it in his progeny and perpetuating it among his descendants.

“They attained this through Allah's honoring him. I do not mean that his excellence itself came from them.

“Rather, he is their master and the master of all the worlds. Through him they were ennobled, and through his excellence they attained what they attained.

“This is therefore among Allah's blessings and His beautiful favor toward him.”

This demonstrates what we have just mentioned, and it supports what I stated earlier: that Allah honors the Imams by showing them, during their lifetimes, the excellence manifested in the chosen members of their descendants, so that their souls may rejoice in what Allah has prepared for them after their deaths.

In this same connection, and as another example belonging to this meaning, one of our brethren related to me that al-Manṣūr billāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said:

“I wished to appoint a governor over one of the frontier regions. I considered carefully whom I should choose for the position, but no matter how I examined the matter or directed my thoughts elsewhere, my choice kept returning to one particular man among our companions.

“When I found that my choice settled upon no one other than him, I knew that this was from Allah's divine guidance.

“I therefore wished to test what Allah, the Mighty and Glorious, had in store for the one whom I had hoped would serve in my place and whom I had preferred for this responsibility.

“I wrote the man's name—the one who had occurred to me—on a piece of paper, sealed it, placed it before me, and then summoned him”—meaning al-Mu‘izz li-Dīn Allāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.

Al-Mu‘izz entered, offered the salutation, and stood before him.

Al-Manṣūr said:

“My son, I wish to send a governor to such-and-such a land”—and he named the land.

“Whom do you think would be suitable for this?”

Al-Mu‘izz kissed the ground and said:

“My master, what opinion could I possibly have alongside your opinion? May Allah extend His divine guidance to you and grant you success.”

Al-Manṣūr said:

“Give me your opinion nevertheless.”

Al-Mu‘izz refrained from answering and began to excuse himself and ask to be relieved of giving an opinion.

Al-Manṣūr said to him:

“You must give an opinion on this. I have written the name of a man on this sheet. Take it and write down whom you think should be appointed.”

He said:

“When he found that there was no way around it, he took a pen and a sheet of paper, wrote upon it, and handed the sheet to me.

“When I looked at it, it contained the name of precisely the man whom I had chosen.

“I praised Allah for the blessing He had bestowed upon me in this matter. I then gave al-Mu‘izz the sealed sheet containing the name I had written and said:

‘Open it and see what is inside.’

“He did so.

“When he saw that his choice agreed with mine, he praised Allah Most High, became joyful, and his face became radiant with delight.

“This is another example of what I mentioned earlier, and have repeated both in this chapter and in the preceding one: Allah brings joy to His Friends by showing them, during their lifetimes, what He has placed in those whom they appointed in their own place and entrusted with their affairs.”

Al-Mu‘izz, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, related this account to me afterward.

A Conversation During a Musāyara

He said:

One day, during the lifetime of al-Manṣūr, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, I accompanied al-Mu‘izz li-Dīn Allāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, on a *musāyara*. He mentioned the days of the upheaval and some of those who had followed the accursed Mukhlad during it, taken him as their master, and inclined toward him.

He said:

“By Allah, those people are the party of Satan, the refuse of Hell, and the fuel of the Fire.

“Those among them who abandoned us, took our enemy as their master, assisted him against us, and died in that condition without repenting of it or turning back from it—”

I said:

“My master, what of one who regretted what he had done, repented of it, returned to you, and made amends for what he had previously done against you?”

He said:

“O Nu‘mān! We are the gates of Allah and the means of approach to Him. Whoever draws near through us is accepted; whoever seeks access through us reaches Him; whoever seeks our intercession, we intercede for him; and whoever asks us to seek forgiveness for him, his sin is forgiven.

“But, by Allah, the one who has sinned is not equal to the one who has no sin. This is why there are degrees in the Hereafter.

“And Allah sometimes punishes whomsoever He wills among His creation for his sin in this world. That is the lighter form of his punishment.”

I said:

“My master, by Allah, during those troubled days I saw that most of those who were caught up in the tribulation—people who had previously had a history of fighting alongside you, accompanying you, or professing allegiance to you—hardly any of them escaped some misfortune in this world or some punishment.

“Either they were killed at the hands of your adherents or at the hands of those whom they had followed, or some calamity befell them personally, their families, or their property.”

He said:

“O Nu‘mān! By Allah, the wretched one is the person who dies persisting in what he had done.

“But whoever dies having reconciled his soul with them according to our command, they are upon different degrees.

“If one of those who turns toward us comes to us with the same measure with which he had turned away from us, then his sins have been washed away and his soul purified.

“If his turning toward us exceeds the degree to which he had turned away from us, his reward and recompense increase accordingly.

“And if it falls short of that, his share likewise decreases.

“As for the misfortunes that befall them in the immediate life of this world, they are among the lightest forms of punishment.

“By Allah, purification (*tamḥīṣ*) is inevitable.

“Have you not seen gold when it is mixed with impurities? Must it not be purified by fire, until the fire burns away what has been mixed into it and the gold becomes pure?

“The same is the case with the believers.”

I had never heard words before these that were of such exalted worth and greater benefit.

I reflected upon them and found that all of them were derived from the Book of Allah, Glorious is His remembrance, and from the words of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family.

As for his making the Fire obligatory for one who dies upon allegiance to the accursed deceiver, Mukhlad ibn Kaydād, turning away from the *walāya* of the Friends of Allah toward the *walāya* of His enemies, abandoning the party of Allah and inclining toward the party of Satan, this derives from the saying of Allah, the Mighty and Glorious:

“And do not incline toward those who do wrong, lest the Fire touch you.”

I know of no group more unjust, nor any religious faction more corrupt, than the faction of Mukhlad and his party.

Among the other proofs is Allah's saying:

“You will not find a people who believe in Allah and the Last Day showing affection toward those who oppose Allah and His Messenger.”

And His saying:

“O you who believe! Do not take as allies a people upon whom Allah has become angry.”

And His saying:

“Whoever among you takes them as allies is indeed one of them.”

As for his statement concerning the one who repents and turns back, Allah, the Mighty and Glorious, says:

“And He is the One who accepts repentance from His servants.”

And He says:

“Say: O My servants who have transgressed against themselves, do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Truly, He is the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful.”

And:

“Turn back to your Lord ...”

And He says:

“The Forgiver of sin and the Acceptor of repentance.”

As for his statement concerning the degrees of the Hereafter, it comes from the saying of Allah, Glorious and Exalted is He:

“See how We have favored some of them over others, and the Hereafter is greater in degrees and greater in distinction.”

And His saying, the Mighty and Glorious:

“Those of you who spent before the victory and fought are greater in degree than those who spent and fought afterward. Yet to all Allah has promised the finest reward.”

Thus He, the Mighty and Glorious, informs us that although all of them may be in Paradise, they are nevertheless there upon different degrees.

And He says:

“They are degrees with Allah.”

Our transmitters have also related to us from our Imams, peace and blessings of Allah be upon them, from the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family, that he said:

“People from the inhabitants of the highest ranks of Paradise will pass by those who are below them, and they will say:

‘Our Lord, by what did Your servants attain this honor?’

“It will be said to them:

‘They used to rise during the night while you slept. They used to fast during the day while you ate and drank. They used to spend in the path of Allah while you were miserly. They used to strive and fight while you were cowardly.’”

And he said:

“The people of Paradise will look upon the inhabitants of the highest ranks just as the people of the earth look upon the stars in the sky.”

As for his statement concerning punishment through misfortunes in this world, it comes from the saying of Allah, Glorious is His remembrance:

“Whatever misfortune befalls you is because of what your hands have earned, though He pardons much.”

And from the saying of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family, which our transmitters have related to us from our Imams.

He was asked about the saying of Allah, the Mighty and Glorious:

“Whoever does evil will be recompensed for it.”

It was said to him:

“O Messenger of Allah, if we are recompensed in the Hereafter for every evil deed we have committed in this world, then we are ruined!”

He said:

“You are indeed recompensed in this world. Do you not suffer affliction? Do you not experience pain? Do you not grieve? Do you not suffer hardship, adversity, and distress?”

They said:

“Yes, O Messenger of Allah.”

He said:

“That is part of it.”

The saying of Allah, the Mighty and Glorious,

“Whoever does evil will be recompensed for it,”

also confirms al-Mu‘izz’s statement, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him:

“By Allah, purification is inevitable.”

And his comparison of the believer who accumulates sins to gold into which impurities have entered likewise derives from the Book of Allah, Glorious is His remembrance.

The words of the Friends of Allah concerning matters such as these are all derived from the Book of Allah, Glorious is His remembrance, and from the words of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family.

Therefore, whoever hears something from their words and finds no basis for it there should know that the deficiency lies only in his own failure to understand and his lack of divine enabling.

We ask Allah for guidance, and we bear witness concerning His Friends to their knowledge, wisdom, and *walāya*.

An Answer to a Question Concerning a Musāyara

He said:

When al-Manṣūr billāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, appointed me as qāḍī in al-Manṣūriyya, some people disputed with me concerning one of the matters over which I was judging. I referred the matter to him in a written note.

He wrote at the bottom of it:

“O Nu‘mān! You have neither established yourself in the position in which We established you, nor have you shown the discretion and restraint we expected from you. Indeed, we find a teacher of the Qur’an more formidable than you!”

When I read this decree, I was completely disheartened, and the world seemed dark to me. I thought only that I had exceeded the proper limits in severity and gone too far in excessive caution and harshness.

At that time al-Mu‘izz, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, went out for one of his customary excursions. I greeted him, accompanied him, and complained to him about what I had received from al-Manşūr, while acknowledging that, in my own view, I had indeed exceeded the proper limits.

He saw the distress that had overcome me and said:

“O Nu‘mān, do not let your breast become constricted, nor let your heart be saddened. Do not exceed the proper limits and do not go beyond what is appropriate in your conduct.

“By Allah, I hear him say many things of the kind you have described. Yet I do only what you have already done.

“We cannot take anyone other than him as our example, and in all matters we ought to follow only him.

“By Allah, he has adopted a manner of gentleness to which it is necessary to adhere in governing the affairs of this world. Indeed, if the affairs of worldly people were managed according to that degree of gentleness, they would become disordered.

“But Allah has set them right for him because of what He has shown him concerning his intention and what He knows of the beauty and sincerity of his inner disposition.

“He says what he says as instruction and admonition, so that negligence may not arise and so that all those engaged in his service do not imitate him in excessive leniency.

“Allah watches over him in what He has entrusted to him and protects him in what He has charged him to safeguard.”

I praised Allah and gave Him thanks, and the distress I had been feeling departed from me.

Then, after this, al-Manşūr billāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, mounted his horse. I greeted him while in a state of intense fear because of what had passed between us.

He drew me close, brought me near to himself, and praised me with words appropriate to my merit.

Then he said:

“O Nu‘mān, employ severity where severity is appropriate, and gentleness where gentleness is appropriate.

“By Allah, when I see a sparrow being slaughtered, my heart softens toward it. Yet you see me wading through blood when the truth requires it and when it is unavoidable.”

I reflected upon the statements of al-Manşūr billāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, and al-Mu‘izz li-Dīn Allāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, and found that they were one and the same, without contradiction between them.

Al-Manşūr, when he commanded severity and firmness, had not commanded me to enter into falsehood or transgress into it.

And al-Mu‘izz li-Dīn Allāh, when he commanded gentleness, had not commanded me to abandon the truth or compromise it.

I found that both their statements—may Allah's blessings be upon them—were derived from the Book of Allah, Glorious is His remembrance, and from the words of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family.

Allah, Most High, said to His Prophet:

“O Prophet! Strive against the unbelievers and the hypocrites and be severe with them. Their abode is Hell, and what an evil destination!”

And He said:

“There has certainly come to you a Messenger from among yourselves. Your suffering is grievous to him; he is deeply concerned for you; and toward the believers he is compassionate and merciful.”

Thus He described him as gentle where gentleness was appropriate, while commanding him to be severe where severity was appropriate.

And He described the believers among his Companions by saying:

“Severe against the unbelievers, merciful among themselves.”

Our transmitters have related to us from our Imams, from the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family, that he said:

“Whoever encounters an unbeliever should meet him with a stern and forbidding face.”

And he said:

“‘Īsā ibn Maryam met Yaḥyā ibn Zakariyyā, peace be upon them both. ‘Īsā smiled at him, while Yaḥyā frowned.

“Yaḥyā said: ‘Are you laughing, O Spirit of Allah, as though you have become secure from the punishment of Allah?’

“‘Īsā said: ‘And you, O Prophet of Allah, are frowning as though you have become despairing of the mercy of Allah?’

“Allah then revealed to both of them:

‘The one I love most among you is the one who brings joy to his companion.’”

And he, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family, said:

“When a believer meets his brother, let him greet him, shake his hand, and meet him with a cheerful face. But when he meets an unbeliever or a sinner, let him meet him with a stern and forbidding face.”

‘Alī, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said:

“The believer is firm without arrogance, and gentle without weakness.”

And Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said:

“Allah has vessels upon the earth, and the ones He loves most are those that are tender, pure, and firm.”

He was asked:

“What are those vessels, O son of the Messenger of Allah?”

He said:

“The hearts of the believers: their tenderness is toward the believers, their firmness is in religion, and their purity is from sins.”

All of this confirms what I have stated concerning al-Manṣūr and al-Mu‘izz li-Dīn Allāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon them: **severity has a place in which it is appropriate, and gentleness has a place in which it is appropriate.**

Therefore, if someone hears or is told that one of the Friends of Allah employed one of these two qualities, he should not apply that one quality universally.

Rather, he should place each quality where it properly belongs and interpret it accordingly.

And there is no divine enabling except through Allah. He is sufficient for us, and He is the best of guardians.

Words Containing Admonition

He said:

A group of people brought a complaint before al-Manṣūr billāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, against one of his officials.

He summoned the official and ordered me to bring him before me together with the complainants and investigate their grievances.

They accused him of having taken various things from them. He admitted some of the accusations and stated that these were things which the Commander of the Faithful, al-Manṣūr billāh, had permitted him to take.

I recorded their claims, what he admitted, and his assertion that he had been granted permission to take those things. I submitted the matter to the Commander of the Faithful, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.

He then sent al-Mu‘izz li-Dīn Allāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, to me and summoned me to his presence.

When I stood before him, he said:

“The Commander of the Faithful only sends you those who are complained against from among his officials so that you may hear what people say about them and their complaints, render justice to them concerning what they properly claim, and be severe with those officials where severity is appropriate.

“The Commander of the Faithful has seen what you reported concerning the admission of so-and-so—his admission that he took things which he had no right to take, and his claim that these things had been permitted to him.

“He has concluded that you should not have accepted this claim from him and that you should have been stern with him concerning it.”

I said:

“My master, when he made this statement and put forward this claim, I thought it better not to act hastily against him until I knew what our master, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, would decide concerning his case and the claim he had made.”

He said:

“There was indeed a problem in this. We have taken your defense upon ourselves concerning it and made excuses for you.

“Be careful not to repeat such a thing in the future.

“Go in righteousness and let your heart be at ease. You have nothing from the Commander of the Faithful except what you will be pleased with.”

I thanked him and departed.

I then reflected upon the matter and realized that I had fallen into error through negligence. It became clear to me that my previous reasoning was unsound.

I remembered what our transmitters have related to us from our Imams, from the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family:

“You will transmit reports, and those who come after me will transmit reports, which I did not say. Whoever is told a report attributed to me should present it to the Book of Allah. If it agrees with it, let him accept it and know that I said it. If it contradicts it, let him reject it and know that I did not say it. How could I contradict the Book of Allah, when Allah guided me through it?”

And the saying of Ja‘far ibn Muḥammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him:

“Whatever comes to you from us that is sound and true, we have said it, so transmit it from us. Whatever comes to you that is false and is attributed to us, reject it and know that it is a lie and a fabrication against us.”

I therefore understood that it had been my duty to declare the man's statement false when he attributed to the Commander of the Faithful, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, something which was not consistent with the kind of command he would give.

Even though I myself had not believed his claim, it was nevertheless necessary that the person who had brought the complaint should hear me reject it, so that he would not remain in doubt about the matter.

This was neither the first thing we had learned from the Friends of Allah, nor was it the only thing through which we had been guided by them.

Every piece of knowledge we have acquired, every understanding of jurisprudence we have gained, and every guidance from which we have drawn inspiration—we received it from them and transmitted it through them.

From the depths of their vast seas we have drawn.

They are our guides to the truth and the Imams of creation—

may Allah's blessings be upon them, those Imams whom He has approved, chosen, and accepted—with the most complete, purest, most excellent, highest, and most sanctified blessing.

An Allusion in a Musāyara

He said:

“I served al-Mahdī billāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, during the last nine years, together with some months and days of his life, and thereafter served the Imam al-Qā‘im bi-Amr Allāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, throughout his lifetime. During all that period, I conveyed the reports of the court to both of them every day, except on a very few days.

“They had—peace and blessings of Allah be upon them—such favors and beneficence toward me in this that I could never enumerate them, nor could I ever adequately give thanks for

even a portion of them. The least of their favors was that they covered my errors and pardoned whatever reached them from me.

"I know that, however much I strove, exercised care, and took precautions, I could not remain entirely free of error. Yet throughout all that period, I never received from either of them any rebuke that I knew of, nor any criticism concerning something I had been unaware of.

"I hope that this was joined to the pardon and mercy of Allah.

"Whenever I remembered this, I remembered the well-known report concerning Anas ibn Mālik and his statement:

'I served the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family, for nine years, yet he never once said to me concerning anything I had done, "You have done wrong," nor did he ever say, "How badly you have done."

"I would reflect upon this and upon the satisfaction and favor shown to me by al-Manṣūr billāh and al-Mu'izz li-Dīn Allāh—peace and blessings of Allah be upon them—and their covering and pardoning of my shortcomings. Then I would remember Anas's statement and say:

'They, peace and blessings of Allah be upon them, are, as Allah the Exalted has said concerning them: "A progeny, one from another; and Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing."

"If Anas intended by mentioning this the forbearance, pardon, and mercy of the Messenger, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family, just as I have mentioned these qualities concerning the Commander of the Faithful, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, toward me, then he was correct and had spoken well.

"But if by it he meant that he had passed through the entire period of his service without committing anything blameworthy, then what a poor assumption that would be!

"Even if he had nothing else against him, there is what is related from him concerning his turning 'Alī, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, away from the door of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family, three times.

"This was after he had heard the Messenger praying when a roasted bird had been brought before him. He was saying in his supplication:

'O Allah, bring to me the one who is most beloved of Your creation to You, that he may eat this bird with me.'

"According to what Anas himself related, 'Alī, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, came and knocked at the door.

"Anas went out to him and said:

'The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family, is asleep.'

"Then he came a second time, and Anas said:

'The Messenger of Allah is occupied with something.'

"Then he came a third time, and Anas intended to turn him away with something similar. But 'Alī pushed him in the chest and entered, saying:

'O son of Mālik! Allah has afflicted you with a whiteness that the turban cannot conceal.'

"Anas said:

'By the supplication of 'Alī, I was afflicted with the leprosy that befell me.'

“When he entered, the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family, said:

‘What kept you so long from me, O ‘Alī?’

“‘Alī told him what had happened.

“Anas said:

‘The face of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family, changed, and he said to me:

“O Anas, what made you do that?”

“I said:

“O Messenger of Allah, it was love for my people. I heard your supplication and wished that the man who came to you to eat with you would be a man from the Anṣār.”

“He then fell silent concerning me.

“There is much that could be said about this, but I did not intend to pursue it here, so I will not examine it at length.”

An Allusion in a Musāyara

“I served al-Manṣūr billāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, during some of the days of al-Mahdī billāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, and throughout the entire period of al-Qā’im bi-Amr Allāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.

“He had bestowed upon me favors and blessings whose number I could never enumerate.

“My service to him consisted in collecting books for him and copying them.

“When al-Qā’im, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, died, he appointed me as qāḍī before his own accession became manifest. I was the first of his judges whom he appointed. He elevated my standing, raised my rank, and bestowed upon me favors which, were I to attempt to describe them, would make this account too long for what I intend to mention.

“Before him, I had received no favor greater than his favor toward me, together with the obligation Allah—Mighty and Glorious—is under no compulsion to impose, namely, the recognition of his right and love for him.

“During his days, there was no one dearer to me than he, none of greater rank, and none more exalted in my heart.

“Whenever I allowed myself a wish, the greatest thing I could wish for was that I might die during his lifetime and while he was pleased with me.

“When he fell ill with the illness from which he died, I was overcome by tremendous alarm and great fear.

“During his days, al-Mu‘izz li-Dīn Allāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, was my means of access to him and my reliance in all my affairs concerning him.

“I would meet al-Mu‘izz while al-Manṣūr was ill and ask him about his condition. He would tell me of the soundness of his state, which would calm me.

“Then, one day, he obtained permission for me, together with a group of the Friends of Allah, to enter upon him. I entered and saw him severely ill and weak.

"I did not leave his presence until my heart was almost melting.

"I would then meet al-Mu'izz, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, and ask him about his condition, and he would tell me that he was in sound condition.

"Yet I could see upon the face of al-Mu'izz, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, the effects of grief, which had altered him and changed him from the radiance and freshness he had formerly possessed.

"Each day I saw this increase, and my grief over it likewise intensified, until I saw such a change in the condition of al-Mu'izz li-Dīn Allāh that my grief over him exceeded the grief I had felt at what I had feared might happen to al-Manṣūr, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.

"Then, on the very day on which al-Manṣūr died, al-Mu'izz went out, while I had no knowledge that this had happened.

"I met him as I ordinarily did, and I found his outward condition better than I had previously seen it. I was therefore pleased.

"Then, with a hopeful heart, I asked him about al-Manṣūr—may Allah sanctify his soul.

"He said to me:

'O Nu'mān! If this sun, this moon, these stars, this heaven, this earth, and these mountains are all destined to disappear, pass away, and perish, what then do you suppose will become of what is beneath them of this human race? Every soul shall taste death, as Allah, Glorious and Exalted, has said: "Everything shall perish except His Face."'

"I then understood that al-Manṣūr had died, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.

"The impact of this struck me so forcefully that I nearly fell to the ground. Then I recovered myself, seeing the people around me.

"I composed myself and said something resembling what al-Mu'izz, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, had said, though I did not understand it; what I was experiencing caused me to forget it.

"I departed from him with sobs choking me and tears rushing from my eyes.

"When I reached an isolated place in the open countryside, I let my tears flow, raised my voice, and wept for a long while, until some of the burden upon me was relieved.

"I remained in this state for several days. Whenever my chest became full and my patience was exhausted, I would go out to that place and pour out what was within me.

"The death of al-Manṣūr, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, became widely known.

"I saw al-Mu'izz li-Dīn Allāh—may Allah prolong his life and multiply His blessings upon him—each day consoling himself, increasing in patience, and maintaining an increasingly composed outward appearance.

"I knew his place with al-Manṣūr, his standing in his sight, and the position he held in his heart. I had feared for al-Mu'izz should anything happen to al-Manṣūr because of the effect it would have upon him.

"Yet I saw in him such consolation, patience, fortitude, and beautiful composure that I became certain that this was the result of the Imamate having passed to him. I saw its effect and its signs manifesting in him.

"Even so, I could not restrain my own grief and terror.

“Some of this was made easier for me by what I saw of the patience of al-Mu‘izz li-Dīn Allāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, the beauty of his consolation, and what Allah, Glorious and Exalted, had granted him of self-command and sufficiency, together with the subtle care and providential attention He had bestowed upon him.

“I think he, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, saw in my outward condition something that revealed to him the intensity of my grief and the weakness of my patience.

“One day, therefore, a decree came to me in his own handwriting—may Allah exalt it:

‘O Nu‘mān, may your consolation be beautiful and your patience noble. Your master has departed, but your master remains. You will find with us what you found with him. We were your means of access to him, and that means of access to us for you will not, Allah willing, be severed. So be at ease, take comfort, think well of us, and let your soul rest in what you desire from us.’

“While I had feared being overwhelmed by grief at his loss, al-Mu‘izz, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, instead consoled me concerning him—through the support Allah granted him, His enabling of him, the excellent disposition He had bestowed upon him, and the noble habit He had established in him.”

Words Spoken in a Majlis

He said:

“I heard him, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, say to a group of the Friends of Allah who were present in his majlis, while he was encouraging them to seek excellence from him and to seek good from him:

‘When Allah withholds rain from His servants—the rain through which He has established the well-being of their livelihoods and the strength of their bodies—they gather together, come out from their homes, ask for rain, call upon Him, and beseech Him.

‘If this is something they ought to do because they hope thereby to preserve the life of these perishing bodies and to prolong for a short while the few remaining days of this life, then how much more ought they to do so concerning that through which they hope to save their everlasting souls from the enduring punishment of the Hereafter and attain everlasting bliss!

‘Is it not therefore fitting that their longing for this should be greater and their seeking of it more earnest?

‘Do you not know that the rain of the heavens has its season in which it is awaited and through which Allah benefits people? Once its season has passed, its benefit has passed, and it is no longer appropriate to ask for it.

‘Likewise, by Allah, this immense blessing and expansive mercy has its appointed season and a time in which it descends. If its season passes and its appointed time comes to an end, you will not find it, and seeking it then will not benefit you.

‘Behold! This is its season, its appointed time, and the moment of its manifestation. Beware of heedlessness. Intensify your seeking and longing. Hasten before the opportunity is lost, and act before death comes.

‘These are only a few days, and the time in which salvation and mercy may be sought is passing away.’

“Then he said:

‘Who among you has found from an Imam before us what you have found with us? We answer whoever asks, and we initiate those who have not asked when we see that they are receptive. None is disappointed in our presence except those who turn away from Allah and from us.’”

Adab in a Musāyara

He said:

“I heard him say while I was accompanying him on a *musāyara*, when he mentioned a secret and the necessity of concealing and keeping it hidden:

‘Al-Manṣūr billāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, would sometimes confide a secret to me. Then, when I had committed it to concealment and secrecy, I would sometimes forget it, and afterward he would ask me about it and I would not know it.’”

An Admonition Given in a Majlis

He said:

“I heard him say, when he mentioned a man deformed in appearance, blind, and crippled, whom he had seen on one of the roads—and this man was well known:

‘Whoever sees such a person, or others like him among those afflicted by physical disabilities and trials, ought to praise Allah for the well-being He has granted him and reflect upon the greatness of His blessing upon him.’

“This resembles the saying of his grandfather, the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family:

‘Whoever sees one afflicted by a trial and says, “Praise be to Allah who has spared me from that with which He has afflicted you, and favored me over many of His creatures with great favor,” it is incumbent upon Allah not to afflict him with that trial.’”

A Discussion Concerning *Ghulūw* Mentioned in a Majlis

He said:

“I heard al-Qā’im bi-Amr Allāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, speak concerning a group among the *du‘āt*. It had reached him that they had gone to excess concerning him and his forefathers, the Imams, the Truthful Ones—may the blessings of Allah be upon them all—and that they claimed that they knew the unseen.

“He cursed them and said:

‘These are those who turn people away from us and lie about us. By Allah, they intended by the description they have attributed to us nothing but to make people reject us and distance people from us. For when they describe us to people with what is not in us, and people do not see it and do not find it in us, they will no longer regard us as Imams.’

“Then al-Mu‘izz li-Dīn Allāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said:

***‘The unseen that the Imams know is what is hidden from people of the knowledge that Allah has entrusted to them and charged them with safeguarding its secret.

‘As for the unseen of which He, Glorious and Exalted, said, “Say: None in the heavens and the earth knows the unseen except Allah,” that is known by none but Him, as He, Mighty and Glorious, has said.’**

“The statement of al-Qā’im bi-Amr Allāh resembles the statement of his grandfather Ja‘far ibn Muḥammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, when news reached him of what Abū al-Khaṭṭāb had said about him in his *ghulūw*.

“Mufaḍḍal said:

‘I entered upon him one day and found him withdrawn and weeping.

“I said: “What is the matter, may I be your ransom?”

“He said:

“O Mufaḍḍal! This unbelieving liar claims that I know the unseen. Glory be to Allah! There is no god but He, my Lord and the Lord of my forefathers, who created us. He is the One who gave us and bestowed upon us.

“We are indeed the standards of guidance and the supreme proof!

“Go out to these people”—meaning the companions of Abū al-Khaṭṭāb—“and tell them:

“We are created beings, creatures of Allah, and servants under the Lordship of Allah.

“But we possess from Allah a rank which He has granted to no one else and which belongs exclusively to us.

“We are a light from the Light of Allah, and our Shi‘a are from us, while the rest of creation is in the Fire.””

A Benefit in a Musāyara

He said:

“I accompanied him one day, and he said to us, while we were a group riding in his procession:

‘Say something. Speak about what you do not know. You will find with us the answer to whatever you seek. For you to depart from us without receiving any benefit from us is a loss for you and a deficiency on your part.’

“I said:

‘May Allah protect us from departing from His Walī without benefit. By Allah, I do not think I have ever seen him and departed from him without gaining some benefit—either from what I heard him say or from what I observed in him.

‘One of the sages has said: “Everything silent is eloquent.” If this is true even of inanimate things when one reflects upon them, then what of the Friends of Allah, Mighty and Glorious?’”

“He said:

‘It is as you have said. It is only pure intellects that perceive this.’”

Words Mentioned in a Musāyara

He said:

“I accompanied him one day, and the conversation turned to people's expression *al-qamarān*—‘the two moons’—meaning the sun and the moon.

“They attributed the term to the one of the two that was more widely known among them, namely the moon.

“They said this was because the moon is seen both by night and by day, because the eyes encounter it more often than they encounter the sun, and because the Arabs used to stay awake at night conversing in their gatherings and therefore saw the moon more frequently than they saw the sun during the day. Thus, in their usage, it was more famous than the sun.

“I said:

‘Some transmitters have taken the verse of al-Farazdaq:

**“We have taken the horizons of the heavens from you;
For us are its two moons and the rising stars.”**

“and interpreted it in a different way, turning it toward the *bāṭin*.

“They claimed that by ‘the two moons’ he meant Ibrāhīm and Muḥammad, and by ‘the rising stars’ he meant the Caliphs, because this was closer to Quraysh, against whom he was boasting.

“He, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said:

‘This interpreter has not got it right, even though, in the eyes of people, he has produced an unusual interpretation and brought forth what they regard as a subtle meaning.’

“Then al-Mu‘izz li-Dīn Allāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, caused a vast sea of *bāṭin* to surge forth concerning the matter.

“He opened up the discussion in the direction toward which that interpreter had inclined, and then said:

‘If he intended the *bāṭin*, then this is what the *bāṭin* is—but he was still mistaken. And if he intended the *ẓāhir*, then his interpretation contradicts what he said, as is evident to the eye.’

“Then he, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said:

****‘It is in this same manner that those who claimed the knowledge belonging to us went astray from guidance—those who, supposedly speaking according to our teaching, stripped away the *bāṭin*, embraced it exclusively, rejected the *ẓāhir*, and denied what the *ẓāhir* requires.**

‘Such a person deserves nothing less than that his soul should leave his body, so that he may see whether that soul can exist without a body, or whether the body can exist without a soul!

‘This is where those who perished perished, and those who went astray went astray: they isolated the *bāṭin*, professed it as their religion, rejected the *ẓāhir*, abandoned acting according to it, and declared the forbidden lawful whenever they could find no outward form upon which to base it.

‘How can this be established by the wretched ones? Can there be a *bāṭin* unless it has a *ẓāhir*? And if no *ẓāhir* is established, then why would there be a *bāṭin*?

‘Likewise, if there were no *bāṭin*, then there would be no *ẓāhir*.

‘Each of the two is valid and stands by virtue of the affirmation of the other. If either one were not established, the name of the other could not point to it.

‘One does not call something “bāṭin” unless it has a ṣāḥir, nor does one call something “ṣāḥir” unless it has a bāṭin. Otherwise the statement would be impossible.

‘Whoever is ignorant of something as simple as this cannot be counted among those who understand, for it is neither obscure nor difficult.’**”

Words in a Musāyara

He said:

“I heard him, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, speak about *walāya* and love. He said:

‘By Allah, that does not go to waste for one who holds it firmly.’

“I once saw so-and-so in a dream—he mentioned a man who was a staunch adherent of the ṣāḥir in his doctrine, although he had been connected to al-Qā’im, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, and al-Qā’im had bestowed a favor upon him.

“He said:

‘I saw him in a dream after he had died, and I asked him:

“What have you come to?”

“He replied:

“By Allah, I have benefited from my love for al-Qā’im, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.”

“One of those present asked:

‘Do you think that this will save him, despite remaining upon what he had been upon?’

“He replied:

‘No, by Allah. But, as he said, it benefits him to some extent.’”

“He said:

‘I saw so-and-so’—meaning one of the Friends of Allah—‘who had some confusion in his conduct, but whose condition, exertion, and striving subsequently improved, and al-Manṣūr billāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, singled him out.

“He died after al-Manṣūr.

“Al-Mu‘izz li-Dīn Allāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said:

‘I saw him in a dream the night after he died. He passed by me, so I called him. He looked at me as though he were engulfed in distress and hardship.

“When I called him, he said:

“Leave me! Do you not see what I am experiencing?”

“He said:

‘I awoke deeply saddened by what I had seen.

“On the second night I saw him in the finest condition. He came toward me laughing.

“I said:

“How are you? What have you come to?”

“He replied:

“To good, praise be to Allah! Allah has created nothing among creation like your father. By Allah, he did not cease until he forcibly rescued me from a terrible distress and a tremendous matter.”

“I said:

‘Indeed, in the dream of the Commander of the Faithful there is a great proof. Few people see anything in their dreams except confusion and disordered dreams.’

“He smiled and said:

‘Have you seen the schoolchildren when they leave the teacher? Consider how different their conditions are.

‘One of them walks with dignity, heading purposefully toward what he needs, and attends to whatever concerns his school—such as putting his tablet, inkpot, and Qur’ān in proper order.

‘Another hurries off toward play, idleness, and frivolous preoccupation.’

“I said:

‘Yes.’

“He said:

‘That is according to what they were like beforehand and according to the concern they had for what occupied them.’

“I said:

‘Yes.’

“He said:

‘Likewise, when souls depart during sleep, they roam and wander only according to their dispositions and according to what they were upon while awake.’”

- رمز في مسأيرة is literally something like “An allusion/sign in a musāyara.” I would retain allusion rather than “symbol,” because ramz here seems to introduce an illustrative or suggestive report.
- تغمد الزلل is stronger than simply “forgave”: the image is of covering/concealing a person’s slips, hence “covered my errors.”
- كنت أول من استقضاه من قضائه means Nu‘mān was the first of al-Manṣūr’s qāḍīs whom he appointed, not necessarily the first judge ever appointed by him in an absolute sense.
- مولاك مضى ومولاك بقي is deliberately elegant and poignant: “Your master has departed, but your master remains.” The second mawlā refers to al-Mu‘izz, who is now Nu‘mān’s Imam/master.
- The ghulūw passage makes an important doctrinal distinction: the Imams possess knowledge of hidden knowledge entrusted to them by Allah, but this does not make them possessors of the absolute, divine knowledge of the unseen.
- The ṣāḥir/bāṭin passage is especially significant. Al-Mu‘izz is explicitly rejecting the separation of the two: neither the bāṭin can stand without the ṣāḥir, nor the ṣāḥir without the bāṭin. This is a particularly useful passage for understanding Fatimid Ismaili approaches to ta’wīl.

Part Three

In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Compassionate.

And may Allah bless our master Muḥammad and his family, and grant them peace.

Words Concerning Trustworthiness, Mentioned in a Majlis

Al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān ibn Muḥammad said:

“I heard al-Mu‘izz li-Dīn Allāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, describe one of the *du‘āt*—who had since died—and speak of the soundness of his conduct, his trustworthiness, and his *walāya*.

“He said:

‘Whenever he purchased musk for us among the things we instructed him to send to us, he would empty it onto his garment in order to weigh it, and then put it back into its container. Since its fragrance would cling to his garment, he would take money from his own property equal to the value of that fragrance and place it among the funds belonging to us that were in his custody, as a precaution against dishonesty.’

“Then he prayed for mercy upon him and praised him for his excellent qualities.

“He then said:

‘One of those who belonged to his *da‘wa* told me that the man would sometimes pour water over his hands. When he had finished, he would take the vessel and pour water over that man's hands. The man would refuse and regard the gesture as excessive. He would say to him:

“By Allah, I will do it. If, by pouring water over my hands, you intended to perform an act of righteousness and gain its reward, then I am more in need of that than you are. And if you did it because you believed that I had some right over you, then the right belongs to the Walī of Allah. Whatever you intended to discharge of that right, discharge it to Him.””

A Counsel Given in a Majlis

He said:

“I heard him one day in a majlis attended by a group of the men of Kutāma. He was admonishing them and giving them counsel. Among the things he said to them was:

***‘I ask three things of you, and I dislike three things for you.

‘I want truthfulness from you, and I dislike falsehood for you.

‘I want chastity and self-restraint from you, and I dislike betrayal for you.

‘I want humility from you, and I dislike arrogance for you.

‘And this last is what I fear most for you.’***”

Words Concerning Justice, Spoken in a Majlis

He said:

“I heard him, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, say one day in a majlis:

'If I wished for the approval of the people, I could attain their approval through the easiest things in their eyes. But if they only knew, that would mean plunging into the Fire.'

"He was asked:

'And what would that be, O Commander of the Faithful?'

"He said:

'To leave them free to follow their desires. We could—Allah forbid—permit the open public consumption of wine, fornication, sodomy, and the display of amusements and musical instruments, just as the usurping rulers of the earth do today for themselves and permit for those whom they have subdued.

'If we did that, we would receive nothing from them but praise and thanks.

'But Allah, Mighty and Glorious, has entrusted their affairs to us. He has made it obligatory upon us to set them right, to rescue those among them who turn to us, to command what is right and forbid what is wrong among them.

'We seek their salvation from the Fire, while they are angry with us; and we desire to bring them into Paradise, while they dislike this from us.'"

"One of those present then mentioned the conduct of the usurping rulers among the Umayyads in al-Andalus.

"He said that they and their subjects openly drank wine and bought it in their markets, openly took pleasure in boys, openly committed fornication, and engaged in many other manifest and obvious acts of wrongdoing.

"He mentioned that their prisons for women were such that a person who desired fornication could go to the jailer and openly choose whichever woman he wished. Each woman had a known price; whichever one he chose, her price was raised, and he would commit fornication with her. He mentioned many other obvious and manifest forms of wrongdoing among them.

"Al-Mu'izz, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said:

****'This is precisely what we have just mentioned.**

'We know that reforming the outward condition of the common people and winning their hearts is easier and more immediate than reforming them through religion and compelling them to adhere to the truth.

'The truth is bitter except to the few.

'Nothing has caused people to dislike us, in former times or in recent times, except this.

'Had 'Alī, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, not compelled the people to follow the truth in its entirety, and had he overlooked some things, granted concessions concerning them, and dealt with them through accommodation, many of those who turned away from him and inclined toward Mu'āwiya would not have done so.

'Granting concessions concerning falsehood, flattering people concerning the truth, injustice and favoritism, preferring worldly interests, abandoning the commanding of right and forbidding of wrong, and failing to establish the rights and limits of Allah which He commanded us to establish—these were the causes of the Umayyads' original seizure of power, and by these same things they have maintained themselves until today.

'Our adherence to the truth is what has made us fall short in the eyes of the general populace.

‘No, by Allah! We will not abandon it until Allah makes His cause manifest.

‘For He, Glorious is His praise, has said:

“Rather, We hurl the truth against falsehood, and it crushes it, and behold, it vanishes.”

‘And I hope that its time has drawn near and that its appointed moment has arrived, if Allah wills.’**”

A Counsel Given in a Majlis

He said:

“I heard him, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, say one day, when al-Manṣūr billāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, was near death, as he was giving me instructions concerning what I should undertake after him:

‘This is the time of death; counsel at such a time is tearful and sorrowful. But I give you a comprehensive counsel: undertake such deeds that you would be pleased for others to follow your example in.’”

“He then indicated toward a man among his servants who was standing before him.

“He looked at him, and his eyes filled with tears. Then he said:

‘By Allah, you will witness from this master of yours, and in his excellent actions and conduct, and in the good which Allah will bring about through his hands, place upon him, support him with, establish for him, and open before him, things the like of which you have never seen or heard before.’

“The man said:

‘My master, what remains for him of this which you have not already accomplished?’

“He replied:

‘A great deal, by Allah! It is present in potential strength, but it has not yet emerged into action. Allah will bring it forth for him and cause it to proceed through his hands.’”

An Allusion to Wisdom, Mentioned in the Majlis

He said:

“I heard him, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, say one day:

‘By Allah, I have never taken pleasure in anything as I take pleasure in knowledge and wisdom. If only I could find someone to whom I might pour it forth, I would have reached the utmost limit of my desire and longing.’”

“I understand this statement to contain an allusion.

“The one to whom he pours forth his wisdom is his *ḥujja*.

“May Allah bring near for him and for us what he hoped for, if Allah Most High wills.

“For it is he who pours forth all the wisdom he possesses, in accordance with the practice of Allah concerning those of His Friends who have passed before and those who remain.

“As for imparting from it according to what is possible and in proportion to the capacity of the one who hears, he, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family, does this at every moment.

“Perhaps he meant that he wished to find among us someone with greater capacity to bear what he carried of wisdom.

“We ask Allah to make us among those capable of bearing what he has entrusted to us, who preserve it as it deserves to be preserved, and among those whom He strengthens in supporting His Friends in this through His power.”

Words of Wisdom Mentioned in a Majlis

“He, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said concerning what he experienced within himself of such matters:

***“By Allah, I find such pleasure, comfort, and delight in contemplating wisdom that if the people of this world experienced what I experience, they would abandon the world for it.

‘Were it not for what Allah has made incumbent upon me concerning the affairs of this world, its people, the maintenance of its outward order, and their worldly interests, I would abandon it altogether for the pleasure I find in wisdom and contemplation of it.

‘Even though the worldly affairs with which I have been entrusted, and the consideration of them, are themselves a profound wisdom for the one who sees, and a proof for the one who reflects and contemplates.’***”

A Report Concerning the Excellence of al-Mu‘izz li-Dīn Allāh, May Allah's Blessings Be Upon Him

He said:

“I heard the Imam al-Mu‘izz li-Dīn Allāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, one day speak about the love which al-Qā’im bi-Amr Allāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, had for him, his particular favor toward him, and the things he used to prefer for him and seek out for him, as we knew and as had reached us from him.

“He said:

‘He once said to me: “Were it not for your young age, I would have entrusted this affair to you. But you are truly Abū Tamīm, just as you have been given the *kunya*.”’

“He said:

‘He would often say this to me and repeat it:

“You are truly Abū Tamīm.”

“At the time, I did not know what he meant by this.

“He said:

‘When he, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, died, I was ill and had remained behind because of an illness that had befallen me.

“He asked about me, but they disliked telling him that I was ill.

“He then lost consciousness.

“When he regained consciousness, he asked about me and said:

“Bring him to me.”

“He then lost consciousness again.

“This happened several times.

“When he regained consciousness and asked about me again, they brought me to him.

“He had lost the ability to speak.

“When he saw me, he embraced me and then lost consciousness.

“I was moved away from him.

“When he regained consciousness, he called for me again.

“This happened repeatedly, until he died, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.”

“Al-Mu‘izz, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, then said:

‘I witnessed two scenes which, even if the mountains had been made to bear what I bore in them, they could not have endured it: this, and the death of al-Manṣūr, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.’”

“This conduct of al-Qā’im toward al-Mu‘izz, peace and blessings of Allah be upon them both, at the time of death resembles the conduct of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family, toward al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, peace be upon them both, when he died.

“It is related from him, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family, that he called for them in the same manner and embraced them.

“He then lost consciousness, so ‘Alī, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, moved them away from him.

“When he regained consciousness, he said:

‘My two sons?’

“‘Alī replied:

‘I moved them away from you when I saw what was happening to you.’

“He said:

‘There they are? Bring them close.’

“Then he said:

‘Let them enjoy me, and let me enjoy them.’

“They remained with him in this manner until he died, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family.”

A Report Concerning the Excellence of the Imams, Peace Be Upon Them

He said:

“I heard him, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, say:

‘Al-Manṣūr, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said to me among the instructions he gave me:

******“When a matter presents itself to your heart, establish yourself firmly upon it. If you find no means within yourself of turning it away from you, then take hold of it and act upon it, even if reason and deliberation, as they appear to you, point in another direction.

“Know that, when this occurs, it is something from Allah, Mighty and Glorious, which He has cast into your heart.”******

“He said:

‘I cannot count how many times something of this kind presented itself to me.

“I would find that rational consideration and deliberation pointed in the opposite direction, yet I would abandon them and act upon what had fallen into my heart.

“In this I found divine enabling, and the outcome proved good.”

A Report Concerning the Excellence of the Friends of Allah and a Counsel

He said:

“I heard him, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, one day when a group of the elders and prominent men of Kutāma were present in his majlis, giving them counsel.

“Among what he said to them was:

******‘I have placed your elders in the position of brothers to me, and your younger ones in the position of children.

‘You are living in a good age, so recognize the value of the blessings bestowed upon you.

‘Compare yourselves today with those of your people who preceded you yesterday. You are, in part, the beneficiaries of the good deeds of those who came before you—their precedence, their striving, their distinction, and the establishment of this Cause by Allah, Mighty and Glorious, through their swords and hands.

‘They were upon the finest path until Satan intervened against them through corruption of thought. They conceived something wrongly and formed a false assumption.

‘They did not have their stumble pardoned, nor was their error forgiven, and destruction overtook them in the worst of conditions.

‘This was what the circumstances of the age, truth, justice, and possibility required.

‘Yet I hope that they will be purified of what they defiled, and that Allah, Mighty and Glorious, will not cause their previous efforts to be lost.

‘As for you today, you are with us in a good age and with the best of Imams: one who is righteous toward you, compassionate toward you, and beneficent toward you.

‘He pardons your stumble, forgives your error, treats the one among you who does good with excellence, and covers over the faults of the one among you who does wrong.’******

“They thanked him and kissed the ground before him, saying:

‘O Commander of the Faithful, we are your servants. Whatever kindness you have shown us, may Allah reward you for it. Even if we were to thank you for the rest of our lives, we would never reach the measure of even the least of your kindness toward us or your favor upon us.’

“He, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said:

‘If you recognize this, then you have given thanks for the blessing and sought an increase of it, if Allah Most High wills.’”

The Counsel of al-Manṣūr to al-Mu‘izz, Peace and Blessings of Allah Be Upon Him

He said:

“I heard him, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, say:

‘When al-Manṣūr billāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, was near death, he said to me:

“Counsel at the time of death is tearful and sorrowful, but I give you a comprehensive counsel: perform such deeds that you would be pleased for others to follow your example in.””

A Report Concerning Establishing the Truth, from al-Mahdī, Peace and Blessings of Allah Be Upon Him

He said:

“I mentioned to him, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, one day something that had reached us concerning al-Mahdī billāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.

“A man had brought him what he claimed was an advisory proposal. He argued that if the common people were required to follow their own sectarian doctrines and legal judgments were applied to them accordingly—such as their practice of refusing to inherit relatives by blood and assigning much of such property to the public treasury—this would increase the wealth of the treasury in a manner they could not deny or object to.

“Al-Mahdī, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, rejected this argument and became extremely angry with the man. He ordered that he be brought before him and said:

***‘I see no purpose behind what he has said except to attack us and have us rule contrary to what Allah has revealed.

‘Allah, Glorious and Exalted, has established us only so that we may establish His religion for His servants, not so that we may increase our worldly wealth through what is unlawfully acquired.’***”

“Al-Mu‘izz li-Dīn Allāh said:

***‘Al-Mahdī, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, spoke truly. May Allah illumine his face and raise his rank.

‘No, by Allah! We judge among the servants of Allah only according to what Allah has revealed, whether they like it or dislike it, whether they are pleased or angry.

‘We will not allow them to oppose the judgment of Allah, because Allah has charged us with this.

‘They have resented nothing about us except this.

‘Had we left them to their own claims and choices, as the usurping rulers left them—those whose only concern was to obtain their worldly interests, who paid no attention to

establishing religion and left the community divided concerning it—they would have loved us and submitted to us just as they submitted to those rulers.

‘But Allah, Mighty and Glorious, has refused this for us because of what He has made obligatory upon us: establishing His religion, setting His servants upright upon its path, and preventing them from judging by and publicly acting according to anything contrary to it.’**”

A *Tawqīʿ* Concerning Concealing the Fault of a Believer

He said:

“He, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, asked me about a matter that had been brought before him concerning one of the judges, in which a serious accusation had been made against him.

“I wrote to him that this was something being said about the man, widely circulated, and discussed by the people, without any established fact proving it—and Allah knows best the truth of the matter.

“He wrote beneath it:

‘We have covered it.’

“And likewise said his master, ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him:

‘No one lives among people except one who does not know them.’”

A Report in a Majlis Concerning Benefit Derived from Intention

He said:

“I heard him, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, say one day in a majlis, when mention was made of a certain man who had served al-Manṣūr, al-Mahdī, and al-Qāʾim, peace and blessings of Allah be upon them, and who possessed *walāya*.

“Something was said about him before al-Manṣūr, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, and al-Manṣūr turned away from him somewhat.

“The man was overcome by tremendous grief and great fear.

“Al-Muʾizz li-Dīn Allāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, met him one day, and the man complained to him about what had happened.

“I said to him:

‘If you are truthful with me about yourself, you will find a way out and a means of relief.’

“He said:

‘My master, how could I not be truthful with you?’

“I said:

‘Has this turning away changed anything in your intention, or altered any aspect of what you used to hold within yourself and conceal toward our master, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—your love, sincerity, and all the other things that are incumbent toward him? Has it changed anything of what you believed while he was pleased with you and showing you favor?’

“He said:

‘No, by Allah. None of that has changed for me.’

“I said:

‘Allah?’

“He said:

‘Allah!’

“I said:

‘Then put your heart at ease and take comfort. By Allah, nothing displeasing from him has reached you.’

“It happened exactly as I had told him.

“He suffered no harm until he died during the lifetime of al-Manṣūr, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, while continuing to serve in the same position he had held.

“His son was subsequently kept in his father's place and appointed to succeed him.

“This was only because, as he had said, the man was sincere.”

“Then al-Mu‘izz li-Dīn Allāh, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, mentioned some of the lapses of this man's son.

“He had spoken against one of the Friends of Allah, attributing to him something of which he was innocent.

“Al-Mu‘izz overlooked this in consideration of his father.

“The worst of what he did in this regard was that he would repeatedly express amazement and say:

‘So-and-so said to so-and-so, “You are such-and-such,”’

“referring to an insult that one had directed at the other.

“Yet we knew what their true circumstances were.

“Indeed, no one casts an innocent person into disgrace except someone who himself belongs among the people of disgrace.”

“I recited to him the well-known verse:

**‘The boldest of those whom you see, in another's absence,
to find fault with men are themselves people of faults.’**

“He, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said:

‘Its author has spoken truly.’”

A Report in a Musāyara Concerning the Poor Discernment of the Ignorant

He said:

“I heard him say during a *musāyara*:

****‘I have transmitted from our grandfather ‘Alī, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, that he said:**

“Whenever Allah brings good near to a people, they become indifferent to it.”**

“And he said:

‘When people recognize a learned man among themselves and become familiar with him, they take his knowledge lightly. What most impresses them is that which comes to them from someone whom they do not know.’**

“He therefore said that it was related that one of the sages, at the beginning of his career, left his homeland in search of wisdom.

“He traveled through many lands and pursued his quest earnestly until he found no one who possessed more than he did.

“He therefore returned to his homeland.

“The people of that land had learned of his search and had heard of the wisdom he had acquired and the knowledge he had attained.

“They came to him asking to benefit from him and seeking wisdom from him.

“But he closed his door to them and refused to teach them anything.

“He was asked about this.

“He said:

**‘I never encountered a wise man in any land, nor a scholar from whom I sought knowledge or wisdom, without finding that the people of that land regarded him as insignificant, belittled him, and preferred me over him.

‘Yet I know the excellence he possesses over me.

‘Therefore I will not spread knowledge or wisdom in my own land, exposing it to the contempt of the ignorant and to the belittling of those men who possess no discernment.

‘Instead, I went somewhere I was not known, revealed what I possessed there, and people learned from me and benefited from it during my lifetime and after my death.’**”

“There is also a transmitted report in this connection:

‘The people who are most indifferent to a scholar are his own household, then his neighbors, then those nearest to him, and so on.’

“The scholar is like a spring of water in a village. Its people do not store up any of its water because they think that whenever they wish, they can simply take from it.

“Then, while they remain in this state, the spring dries up.

“At that point they regret that they did not benefit from it.

“Likewise, when a scholar dies, those who knew him regret that they did not take knowledge from him.

“He then said:

‘Scholars, in their pursuit of knowledge and their seeking to increase it, are like wealthy people seeking to increase even a small amount of wealth, despite already possessing much of it.’”

The Fear of People Concerning Death

He said:

“I heard him, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, say during a *musāyara*, when the subject of death arose before al-Manṣūr, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.

“The discussion concerned the fear of the Friends of Allah and His Prophets concerning death, despite their knowledge of the honor they possess with Allah and their knowledge that through death they would pass to something better than what they had been experiencing.

“I said:

‘Can that really be the case with them?’

“He said:

‘Yes. They fear death more intensely than all other people, because of the gravity of the matter in their eyes and the awe it inspires in them.’

“I said:

‘How is that?’

“He said:

‘Because of the majesty and greatness of Allah in their hearts and the position He occupies within their breasts. They fear death and dread meeting Him.’

“This resembles what is related from ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.

“When he began performing ablution for prayer, his complexion would change and his limbs would tremble.

“He was asked about this, and he said:

‘I am about to stand before a mighty King.’”

A Report in a Majlis Condemning Wrongdoing

He said:

“I heard him, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, one day mention a man who had been connected with al-Qā’im, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him. He cursed him.

“He said:

‘This man reported a man to al-Qā’im and testified against him concerning something that warranted execution.

“Al-Qā’im had thought well of the accuser, so he ordered the man to be killed, and he was killed.

“Al-Manṣūr, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, knew that the man was innocent of what the accuser had attributed to him.

“He immediately went to al-Qā’im, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, and informed him of this.

“Al-Qā’im sent a messenger quickly in order to save the man, but the messenger found that he had already been killed.

“Al-Qā’im was deeply distressed by this.

“He ordered me to go to the man who had testified against him and convey his message:

‘Tell him: I have been informed by someone whom I regard as trustworthy that the man concerning whom you said what you said was innocent.’

“I conveyed this to him.

“He replied:

‘Then tell him: after this, let this trustworthy person no longer be trustworthy to him, for he has spoken falsely.’

“I reported his words to al-Qā’im, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.

“His complexion changed at this, and he regarded the matter as grave and was deeply angered by it.

“He said:

‘This is more serious than what he did before. Go out to him and ask him: How did you make such a categorical assertion concerning the statement you made?’

“The man then produced an account which contradicted his own testimony and confirmed the statement of al-Manṣūr, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.

“When this reached al-Qā’im, his anger intensified, and he spoke harshly concerning the man.

“The man who had been killed did in fact have another cause that warranted his execution, but it was not the matter about which this man had testified against him.

“Al-Qā’im had intended to explain that matter to him.

“He was deeply astonished that this man had made such a categorical judgment concerning something of which he had no knowledge.

“He was further astonished at the man's audacity toward the Walī of Allah: after being told by someone he himself had regarded as trustworthy, he had said of him, ‘Let him no longer be trustworthy to you,’ and had the audacity to make such a statement about someone whom he did not know.

“The man died afterward in the worst of conditions.

“His hypocrisy became manifest, and his condition deteriorated.

“His son subsequently displayed the same character that his father had possessed and was killed in the worst possible manner.

“Allah hastened His vengeance upon them.

“Allah, Mighty and Glorious, would not allow one who had shown such audacity toward His Friends to remain without being punished for it in this world.

‘And the punishment of the Hereafter is more severe and more enduring,’

“as Allah, Mighty and Glorious, has said.”

A *Tawqī‘* Concerning the Audacity of the Ignorant

He said:

“A *tawqī‘* came to me from him, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, without my having first asked for it:

‘O Nu‘mān! How forbearing Allah, Mighty and Glorious, is toward His creation, and how immense is His forbearance!

****‘So-and-so mentioned such-and-such to me yesterday and asked me such-and-such. Yet this man whom he named is famous for a vile defect, and the matter about which he asked was something by which he wished to pursue that same vile course.**

***'Ignorance and excessive desire carried him to the point that he dared to address the Wali of Allah in such a manner.

***'He bore with him, and I do not think that this matter reached me except because he wished to find relief through it, since his heart had become constricted and he had no other way, concerning what was obligatory, except to overlook it.

***'I was therefore greatly astonished at his forbearance toward one who had confronted him in such a manner, despite that man's having neither rank nor standing.

***'Then only a short time passed before that man became blind.

'I knew then that Allah, Mighty and Glorious, would not leave such audacity upon him without afflicting him with something like that with which he had afflicted himself.'

"I saw him afterward when al-Mu'izz, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, had gone out, and the man had been brought before him being led along.

"He, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said to me:

'Had the one whose heart Allah blinded also been blinded in this manner in his sight, that would have been an immediate punishment. But the punishment of the Hereafter is more disgraceful and more severe.'"

A Discussion on Patience in Times of Calamity

He said:

I heard him—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—say during a *musāyara*:

"When al-Manṣūr—peace be upon him—was on his deathbed, and the decree of Allah concerning him drew near, he lost consciousness. I witnessed a sight that I could not bear without weeping. He regained consciousness while I was crying and said:

'Ah! What is the matter with you? Did I not forbid you to weep?'

I said, 'How can one who sees you in this condition possibly be expected to show patience, O my master?'

He said to me:

'You have not requited me as I deserve. I am happy for you and rejoice in what will come to you after me of the immediate blessings of this world, while you are distressed and grieved by what I am going to receive of the bliss of the Hereafter? Do not return to this. Do not meet what Allah has bestowed upon you of your worldly state with grief and weeping. Rather, rejoice in what Allah has given you of your worldly portion, and in what He is bringing me to and granting me in my Hereafter.'

Thus, he—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—acted according to what he had been instructed. No cheek was slapped over him, nor was any garment torn. And al-Manṣūr—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—had likewise instructed that this be done, just as it is related that his grandfather, Ja'far ibn Muḥammad—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—gave the same instruction: that no lamentation be made for him, that there be no weeping over him, that no cheek be slapped, no garment torn, and no garment be dyed black on his account.

This was an expression of humility before Allah on their part, even though permission has been given for lamentation and weeping over the Imams and those who are held in high esteem among them, because of the magnitude of their loss and the gravity of their affliction.

It is related from the Messenger of Allah—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family—that he heard the women of the Anṣār weeping for those killed at Uḥud and said:

“But Ḥamza is among them, and there is no one to weep for him.”

When this reached the women of the Anṣār, they all came to the house of Ḥamza and began lamenting and weeping over him. The Prophet said:

“What is this?”

He was informed of what had reached them from him, and that this was why they had done what they did. He praised them for it, and from that time until today it became a custom in Medina that no woman laments her dead until she has first lamented Ḥamza—peace be upon him.

Lamentation and weeping were also practiced for al-Ḥusayn—peace be upon him—every day for a year, and for three years on the anniversary of the day on which he was slain. The women of Banū ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib did this in the presence of ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him. Those of the Companions and Successors who remained would come to the women's mourning assembly, listen to them, and weep.

Lamentation and weeping were also practiced for al-Mahdī bi-llāh—peace be upon him—for a period of days during the Imamate of al-Qā’im—peace be upon him. And many of the Imams were neither wept over nor lamented.

The prohibition against lamentation has been transmitted from the Messenger of Allah—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family—and from the Imams among his descendants—peace be upon them—through a general statement indicating that this prohibition was directed toward ordinary people, while permission was granted to them, to their *nuqabā’* (chief representatives), and to those who occupied a position like theirs and like that of Ḥamza—may Allah be pleased with them.

This also indicates that lamentation is not an obligatory duty, since some among them refrained from it and some instructed that it be abandoned.

An Allusion through Wisdom and What Is Required by It

He said:

I once heard him—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—make a subtle and hidden allusion through wisdom in a gathering in which a number of his *Awliyā’* were seated. I understood what he was indicating, but I saw no sign that any of those present had understood it.

I wished that they had understood it, so in another gathering I mentioned this to him privately.

He said:

“If we were to disclose everything to you and make it clear to all of you, the distinction between you would disappear. The worthy and the unworthy alike would attain excellence. But we wish excellence to reach the one who is entitled to it, while the word passes harmlessly over the hearing of the one who is not entitled to it.”

He then mentioned some of the *du‘āt* and said:

“Peoples were destroyed through this very thing: they burdened people with more than they could bear, and gave them more than they deserved, and they did not exercise this degree of restraint.

Had they placed people according to their ranks, degrees, and rightful capacities, they themselves would have been safe, and the people would have been safe from the consequences of their wrongful conduct.”

A Discussion on the Excellence of al-Manṣūr—Peace and Blessings of Allah Be Upon Him

He said:

One day, while I was in his presence—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—he was turning over some letters and examining one of them. He continued looking at it for a long time, then his eyes filled with tears as he looked at something in the middle of the letter.

Then he said:

“I looked at this letter, and it was in the handwriting of al-Manṣūr—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him. I found that his writing had become diminished and fallen short of the excellence of his customary handwriting. I did not know why this was until I saw this verse of poetry in the middle of it, which he had quoted:

We have withered, while the long, rising stars do not wither;
And the ruins and constructions remain after us.

I think this was during his illness.”

Then he said:

“By Allah, this is the destination to which we are all heading.”

A Discussion Concerning What the Ignorant Dislike

He said:

I heard him—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—say:

“By Allah, the people have taken exception to nothing about us except that we have singled out Allah—Exalted is He—for true *tawḥīd*, and have denied of Him, Glorified is He, everything that is not fitting for Him.”

A Discussion on Misguidance and Lying about the Awliyā’ of Allah

He said:

I heard him—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—mention one of the *du‘āt*. He cursed him and said:

“He declared the sacred things lawful.”

And he had said to someone who accepted his teaching:

“To abandon sins is سوء ظن بالله—an evil opinion of Allah, Exalted is He—for it implies that He does not forgive sins.”

Then al-Mu‘izz—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—said:

“Should we leave these wicked men to bring disgrace upon us and drive people away from us while they make such an ugly statement and claim themselves to belong to us?

We dissociate ourselves before Allah, Exalted is He, from such people, and we draw near to Him by cursing them and declaring ourselves free of them.”

A Word of Rebuke and Encouragement toward Good

He said:

I heard him—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—say to a group of people who had asked him to obtain Allah's mercy for them through him, and who persisted in asking this of him.

He addressed them with words that made clear how far they had fallen short of the degree they were asking for. They had said:

“May our master favor us with forgiveness and overtake us with mercy.”

He said:

“Consider this: if a thief stole some of your property, and you discovered this and then pardoned and forgave him, would it be appropriate for you to bring him to me and recommend him to me as someone trustworthy, so that I might entrust property to him?”

They said:

“No.”

He said:

“Likewise, when I know of someone among you something that I dislike, if I were to pardon him, it would not be appropriate for me to present him before Allah, Exalted is He, until we see that he is deserving of such favor.

So improve your condition, purify yourselves through your deeds, cleanse yourselves of impurity, and free yourselves from confusion, so that you may deserve what you are asking for, if Allah, Exalted is He, wills.”

A Discussion on Intercession

He said:

I heard the Imam al-Mu‘izz li-Dīn Allāh—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—one day advising a group of his *Awliyā’* in one of their gatherings and reproaching them for falling short in what would entitle them to the honor of religion.

Then, immediately afterward, he—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—said to them:

“We only wish for you to attain the stations of honor through your pure deeds and your pleasing actions.

As for rescuing you from destruction because you have believed in our *walāya*, we shall do that for you, if Allah, Exalted is He, wills.”

I heard al-Manṣūr bi-llāh—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—say:

“If I do not put my hand here”—and he indicated his armpit—“in rescuing one who has wronged himself from among those who have taken me as their *Walī*, then by what would he have deserved this excellence?”

This resembles what his grandfather, Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—said to some of his *Awliyā’*:

“Assist us in bringing about the good that we desire for you through righteous deeds!

By Allah, all of you are indeed in Paradise. But how unbecoming it is for a man among you to be there with a people who entered it through their righteous deeds, while he is among them with his covering removed, his nakedness exposed, because of the lapses he committed in the past—known for them even though he has been forgiven.”

A Discussion on the Scarcity of Trustworthy People

He said:

I heard him—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—say one day:

“If I could find ten people according to what I desire, I would accomplish through them what I wish.”

I said:

“Does the Commander of the Believers not know that even this was not fully achieved by the Messenger of Allah—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family—or by his legatee ‘Alī—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him? Did they find such people?”

He said:

“That is indeed so. But I hoped to accomplish through them what those two did not accomplish, and to find what they did not find, because Allah, Exalted is He—praise be to Him—has enabled me and brought together for me of this world and the Hereafter what He did not bring together for those of my predecessors who came before me.”

I said:

“May Allah bring our master to the fulfillment of his hopes and requests, if Allah Most High wills.”

He said:

“What Allah wills.”

An Allusion of the Same Kind

He said:

I heard him—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—say:

“The orphan is one who has no *waṣī*. But if he has a *waṣī*, then that *waṣī* takes the place of the father, and he is not then called an orphan.”

This too contains an allusion that can be understood by one who has been granted understanding.

As for the outward meaning of the statement of Allah, Exalted is He,

“And test the orphans until, when they reach marriageable age ...”

the verse applies both to one over whom there is a *waṣī* and to one who has no *waṣī*, among those whose father died while they were still children.

Another Allusion in a Gathering

He said:

I heard him—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—say:

“I heard al-Manṣūr—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—say:

‘I attended the table of al-Mahdī—peace be upon him—with a number of his sons and grandsons, including his son al-Qā’im, my father. There were several boys, and a slave-girl was standing with water at the table.

She said to one of them, “Would you like some water?”

He said, “No.”

Al-Mahdī—peace be upon him—became extremely angry at this and said:

“Had it not been for the sanctity of food, I would have punished all of you with a severe punishment!”

He then said to the slave-girl:

“What made you offer him water when he had not asked for it?”

And he said to the boy:

“What harm would there have been in your drinking some, even if you had no need for it?

Water is too noble and too honored for it to be offered to someone who has not asked for it and then be refused by him.”

Al-Manṣūr bi-llāh—peace be upon him—said:

“At that time, because of my youth and the smallness of my age, I did not understand the meaning of this.”

This too contains an allusion from the **Awliyā’* of Allah. Its outward meaning stands by itself and is powerful in its indication.

A Discussion on the Excellence of the Believer

He said:

I heard al-Mu‘izz li-Dīn Allāh—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—mention the excellence of the mosque and the reverence that is due to it.

This followed a discussion of a man who had been mentioned to him as having, in former times, entered the mosque while riding his animal. He condemned his action and regarded it as a grave matter, and spoke of the reverence due to the mosque and its excellence.

Then he said:

“And the believer is more excellent than it and higher in rank.”

This resembles the statement of his grandfather, Muḥammad, the Messenger of Allah—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family—when he looked at the Ka‘ba, the Sacred House, and said:

“By Allah, you are indeed magnificent in the sight of Allah, and I know of one who is greater than you in His sight.”

They asked:

“Who is that, O Messenger of Allah?”

He said:

“The believer, because Allah, Exalted is He, has made his property and his honor sacred, and has forbidden that evil be thought of him.”

A Concise Instruction

He said:

One of the *Awliyā'* asked him—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him:

“O our master, teach us an action by which we may attain success with Allah and with you.”

He—peace be upon him—said:

“By Allah, this is not hidden from any one of you. Whatever you would like and approve of for yourself and your child, do it for us.

Through this you will attain success with Allah, Exalted is He, and with us.”

A Discussion on the Excellence of the Imams—Peace and Blessings of Allah Be Upon Them

He said:

I heard him—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—say:

“Whoever among you is fortunate has only become fortunate through us.”

This is a concise statement that entails a great deal of meaning.

Among its meanings is that happiness comes from Allah, Exalted is He, to His servants, but He causes it to flow through the hands of His *Awliyā'*. Thus whoever is fortunate becomes fortunate through them.

It also means that true happiness belongs only to the one who recognizes them and submits to their Imamate. Were it not for them, the fortunate person would not be counted as fortunate.

And it means that whoever attains happiness attains it through what they bestow upon him.

And the statement may be understood in many other ways besides these.

A Discussion Containing Adab and an Instruction

He said:

One day I attended his gathering—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—while a group of the foremost among his *Awliyā'* were with him.

He mentioned to one of them a *sa'āya*—a report of malicious accusation—that had been made against him before al-Manṣūr—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—by one of al-

Manṣūr's officials who used to visit his residence and attend his gatherings. The accusation had nearly brought harm upon him.

He mentioned what the accuser had said and what he had attributed to him.

The man swore by Allah, and by whatever else was used to reinforce an oath, that the matter was not as the accuser had claimed. He explained the circumstances and described how the affair had actually occurred and how the accuser had distorted his words.

One of those present among the *Awliyā'* said:

"He deserves this and more. This is the recompense of one who abandoned his master's palace, frequented the houses of other people, and went back and forth to their doors."

Al-Mu'izz—peace be upon him—said:

"Yes, this is his recompense, and something worse, by Allah.

We did not bring you out from among us to go to others. We did not place any hand of authority over you other than our own hands. We did not compel you to take anyone besides us as an intimate protector or patron.

We did this only to exalt and honor you, and so that nothing like this might befall you.

Yet you insisted on lowering yourselves and diminishing your own standing.

Whoever turns away from what we have approved for him and chooses something contrary to it for himself, let him blame no one but himself when something unpleasant befalls him because of it.

Allah has spared you, in our regard, from the harm that those who came before you had expected to suffer at the hands of others, whether from those near or those far away.

By Allah, no one harms anyone in our presence except himself; no one lowers him except his own sin; and no one raises him except his own deed.

Seek what pleases us, and do not concern yourselves with who is angered.

For, by Allah, nothing pleases us except that which pleases Allah concerning you.

And do not regard anyone as able to benefit or harm you except us.

Let none of you hope, with us, for anything other than our favor through the excellence of his intention and his deed; and let him fear nothing except what he has brought upon himself."

This statement resembles the saying of his grandfather, 'Alī—peace be upon him:

"Four things are such that even if riding-beasts were driven toward them until they were exhausted, that would still be little:

No one should fear anything except his own sin;

no one should hope for anything except his Lord;

the ignorant person should not be too proud to learn;

and when a learned person is asked about something he does not know, he should not be ashamed to say, 'I do not know.'"

- الصحة والامانة والولاية — ṣiḥḥa here is better understood as soundness/integrity of conduct, alongside trustworthiness and walāya, rather than merely "health."

- ليزنه — the musk is emptied onto his garment in order to weigh it. His compensating his own account for the fragrance that adhered to his clothing is an unusually vivid example of amāna.
- الحق لولي الله — the point is subtle: if the act of washing his hands was understood as discharging a right owed to him, that right properly belongs to the Walī of Allah, not to the individual servant personally.
- أبو تميم حقا كما كنيت is deliberately enigmatic. Al-Qā'im repeatedly calling al-Mu'izz "truly Abū Tamīm" is presented by al-Nu'mān as something whose significance he did not understand at the time.
- وما ذاك إلا انه كان كما ذكر مخلصا — the reason the son's position was preserved was specifically his father's ikhlāṣ, his sincerity.
- الانتفاع بالنية is literally "benefiting through intention": the remarkable point is that the servant's sincere niyya toward the Imam remained intact despite the Imam's temporary displeasure, and that sincerity ultimately preserved both him and his position.
- In the ṣāhir/bāṭin discussion from Part Two, and here in the discussions of justice, walāya, and divine knowledge, al-Mu'izz repeatedly presents the Imam's outward conduct as inseparable from an inner wisdom. That seems to be one of the recurring architectural themes of al-Majālis wa'l-Musāyarāt.
- "...لو كشفنا كل شيء لكم" is particularly important for understanding ramz in this work. al-Mu'izz is explicitly saying that the Imam does not disclose every meaning to every person. Knowledge is given according to rank and capacity, so the obscurity of some statements is intentional rather than accidental.
- The water at al-Mahdī's table is another example. The outward etiquette is clear—one should not casually offer something precious only to have it rejected—but al-Nu'mān explicitly says that there is a deeper ramz which he did not understand when young.
- "Whoever among you is fortunate has only become fortunate through us" is deliberately compressed. al-Nu'mān himself unfolds three meanings: divine happiness is conveyed through the Awliyā'; recognition of their Imamate is itself a condition of true felicity; and what they bestow is the immediate means through which that felicity is realized.
- In the final passage, "ولا يجعل عليكم يدا غير أيدينا" is literally "We did not place over you a hand other than our hands." The idiom conveys authority, protection, patronage, and benefaction. I rendered it accordingly rather than literally, because the literal English "hand" would obscure the political/spiritual sense.
- "لا يضر أحدا عندنا إلا نفسه ولا يضعه إلا ذنبه ولا يرفعه إلا عمله" is a very strong formulation of individual moral responsibility: his own self causes his harm, his own sin lowers him, and his own deed raises him. It fits closely with the recurring theme in the Majālis that walāya brings salvation, but does not make righteous action dispensable.

Part Four

In the Name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate

A Discussion in a Gathering Concerning a Vision Seen by al-Manṣūr—Peace and Blessings of Allah Be Upon Him

Al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān said:

I was sitting in the presence of al-Mu‘izz—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—when he mentioned the affair of the *fitna*, the tremendous trial that occurred during it, what befell the people because of it, and how Allah, Mighty and Exalted is He, removed that affliction from them through al-Manṣūr—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—and rescued them from it through his hands.

He then said:

“Before this happened, al-Manṣūr—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—had told us about a vision he had seen which contained everything that subsequently occurred.

He said:

‘I saw someone who came to me, carrying a large sheet of paper. He spread it out before me and said, “Look at this.”

I looked, and there were many circles upon it.

I said, “I have seen these circles. What are they?”

He said, “This is your kingdom.”

I began looking at them. As I was looking, I saw a blackness spread over some of them. The blackness continued extending across them, covering one after another, until it covered all of them except one, which was closest to me.

I was alarmed by this and said, “If these are our dominions, and this blackness has covered them, then this cannot be a good sign.”

The man said to me, “Place your finger upon that which this blackness first covered, one after another.”

I did so. Every time I placed my finger upon one of them, the blackness disappeared from it, and it returned to the condition in which it had been, until I had passed over all of them. The blackness then disappeared from all of them. After that, I awoke.”

Al-Mu‘izz said:

“That is exactly how the matter unfolded. Wherever al-Manṣūr—peace be upon him—set foot in pursuit of the accursed Mukhlad and his companions, he expelled them from it, and they never returned there afterward.

Then Allah enabled him to seize the wicked man and purified the land from his defilement.”

A Discussion in a Gathering Concerning Dhū al-Fiqār, the Sword of the Messenger of Allah—Peace and Blessings of Allah Be Upon Him and His Family

He said:

One day I sat before him with a group of his *Awliyā’*. He mentioned Dhū al-Fiqār, the sword of the Messenger of Allah—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family—and then ordered that it be brought out to us.

I looked at it and found that it was entirely made of iron, a single solid piece, both its blade and its hilt. As I estimated it, its length was approximately three *shibr*—spans. Its width was less than three fingers. Near the hilt it was slightly narrower than the width of its striking portion, while its tip was made of iron like the iron of a spear, suitable both for striking and thrusting.

It had two cutting edges, with a central ridge and a concealed [central feature].

Al-Mu‘izz—peace be upon him—said:

“The Banū al-‘Abbās had overcome us and taken possession of it, but Allah returned it to us.

This happened when Ja‘far, who had assumed the title al-Muqtadir, was killed and his palace was plundered. Among those who witnessed this was one of our *Awliyā’*’.

He saw one of the women of Ja‘far's household exposed and uncovered. She was saying:

‘Is there not a free man who will cover me and escort me to such-and-such a place?’

The man took pity on her, covered her, and said:

‘Walk ahead of me, and I will take you there.’

She said:

‘By Allah, I have nothing with which to repay you. But enter this room’—and she showed him its location—“for there is a chest in it. Dhū al-Fiqār, the sword of the Messenger of Allah—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family—is in it.’

So he took it and proceeded with her to the place she had requested, and Allah, through His grace and favor, caused it to come back to us.”

Then al-Mu‘izz—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—said:

“I heard al-Manṣūr—peace be upon him, may Allah sanctify his spirit—say—and he had carried it with him when he went out to fight the accursed Mukhlad, and never parted from it:

‘Whenever I encountered a difficult situation in any battle, and I drew it from its sheath, the enemy fled from before me as soon as I drew it.’”

A group of those present who had fought alongside al-Manṣūr said:

“By Allah, we saw this ourselves on the day of al-Khuṣūṣ. It was an extremely difficult day. The enemy had seized the mountain passes around us and hemmed us in from every side.

He—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—was among us, leading us, and this sword was in his hand, drawn from its sheath.

Whenever he raised it and charged toward one of the enemy's positions, they fled before him as though a thunderbolt from heaven had struck them, and they did not reach us until he had opened a way through them.”

A Discussion in a Gathering Concerning the Cursing of the Banū Umayya

He said:

I heard him—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—say:

“This messenger who has come from the Banū Umayya was mentioned to me. In some of what he said concerning ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, the accursed, he asks for peace and says:

‘How is it permissible for him to curse us when we are Muslims? If our fathers were cursed by the Messenger of Allah—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family—as he claims, then what sin have we committed? What made us deserving of being cursed?’”

Then al-Mu‘izz—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—said:

“Have you ever heard anyone more ignorant than this wretched man?

It is as though he has never heard the saying of Allah, Mighty and Exalted is He:

‘Surely, the curse of Allah is upon the wrongdoers.’

And he is one of them!

And His saying:

‘Whoever among you takes them as allies is one of them.’

He allies himself—and that cannot be denied—with his two grandfathers, the ones driven into exile and cursed by the Messenger of Allah—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family.

And there is the saying of Allah, Mighty and Exalted is He:

‘And the accursed tree in the Qur’an.’

And there is the statement of his Imams in religion, from whom he transmits and whose words he accepts, that the tree mentioned here means the Banū Umayya.

A tree is not called a tree except together with its branches and offshoots. The root by itself is not called a tree.”

The statement of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—supports this interpretation. He did not say it except on the authority of the Messenger of Allah—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family:

“There is no people except that among them is a noble one or a saved one, except the Banū Umayya: among them there will be neither a noble one nor a saved one.”

A Discussion on Seeking Clarification and Testing Knowledge

He said:

One day he sat, and we, a group of the *Awliyā’*, sat before him. He spoke to us and imparted to us benefits of knowledge and wisdom.

We thanked him for them and kissed the ground before him upon hearing what he had taught us.

He said:

“I love for you to come back to us concerning whatever you hear and remember—whatever you have doubts about or find difficult—and that I clarify it for you.

Do not simply take it on trust and receive it with acceptance while you yourself see that it leaves room for an objection, or while something of it stirs uncertainty in your hearts.

For if you come back to us concerning it, we will explain it and give you as much additional discourse as the matter requires.

Whoever encounters such a thing should mention what has occurred to him and should not remain upon a doubt.

We permit our *Awliyā* ' to receive an increase from the bounty of Allah that is with us, and we desire that doubts depart from them and that uncertainties be removed from their hearts.

Whoever has this firmly established in his heart and whose soul accepts it should praise Allah for it.

Then, if he wishes to ask for the proof (*ḥujja*) concerning it against one who opposes him, so that he may overcome his opponent, silence his adversary, and repel his enemy with it, let him do so. He will find with us what he seeks.

Allah, Mighty and Exalted is He, says:

'Rather, We cast the truth upon falsehood, and it crushes it, and behold, it vanishes.'

And woe to you, by Allah, for what those who oppose us say. Whoever opposes us has nothing but woe as a consequence of opposing us."

He then said:

"When al-Manṣūr—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—would teach me something of knowledge and wisdom, he would say to me:

'State what occurs to you concerning this—whatever objection you think might arise against it.'

Sometimes I would say, 'Nothing occurs to me concerning it.'

He would then say:

'Ask about whatever of it is unclear to you.'

If still nothing was unclear to me, I would say so.

He would then say:

'State what you imagine our enemy and opponent might say concerning it.'

For knowledge and wisdom do not become firmly established in hearts except after *ḥujja* and opposition.

Sometimes I would do this, and from it would pour forth upon me seas of knowledge and wisdom beyond anything I had hoped for. He would increase me with benefits beyond what I had expected, and matters would become apparent to me in ways I had never imagined.

So do likewise. In this way you will acquire wisdom and multiply your benefits.'"

A Discussion on the Inability to Give Thanks for Allah's Blessings

He said:

I heard him—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—enumerate the blessings of Allah, Exalted is He, upon him, while considering his own gratitude for them to be insignificant.

Among what he said was:

"By Allah, if a person were to worship Allah for the duration of the world, continually bowing and prostrating without rest, remembering Him and fasting without breaking his fast, in order thereby to fulfill the right of gratitude for a single drink of water that Allah, Exalted is He, gave him to drink, he would not have fulfilled it—not even a fraction of it.

How, then, could he fulfill the right of gratitude through offering the self whose offering is itself worthy of thanks, when Allah created it and fashioned it?

Or through offering a blessing which He Himself bestowed and gave?

Or through obedience and worship to which He guided him, granted him, strengthened him to perform, directed him rightly in, and opened its way for him?

How can one give thanks to the One who created and fashioned, gave sight and guided, bestowed and gave, yet when He was disobeyed, He pardoned?

He bestowed blessings—blessings that cannot be numbered and whose limit cannot be reached and exhausted.

O Allah, I confess my incapacity before You, and I acknowledge my shortcoming before You in ever attaining even a portion of the gratitude due to You.”

A Discussion on Recording the History of the State and the Merits of Banū Hāshim

He said:

He—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, and may his authority continue to rise—ordered me to collect the reports of the State in one book, and the merits of Banū Hāshim and the faults and disgraceful qualities of Banū ‘Abd Shams in another book.

I did so. I collected material from every branch of these two subjects into two large, comprehensive books, consisting of many volumes, according to the arrangement he had instructed me in and the knowledge he had imparted to me.

I presented the two books to him. He approved them, was pleased with them, and praised the quality of their meaning.

He—peace be upon him—said:

“As for the history of the State and those who stood within it and strove to establish it, among the *du‘āt* and the believers, I would like their history to be preserved in this manner among those who come after them, so that their good name may remain among later generations and the prayers of those who hear of them may reach them.

Their descendants should know what Allah, Exalted is He, has prepared for them of honor in the Abode of Permanence.

This is among the duties of preservation and rightful obligation that we owe them, since they did not live to reach us; therefore we must convey this to them.”

“As for the excellence of our forefathers and their merits, and the lowliness and faults of our enemies, this is something that sons, descendants, and *Awliyā’* ought to know. It should be used to rebuke the opponents and enemies. It should be spread among people and endure through the ages.

Even though the excellence of the people of excellence and the lowliness of those who are lowly are known, neither hidden nor obscure, they have nevertheless cast many doubts and employed many kinds of stratagems.

In this they are as Allah, Mighty and Exalted is He, says:

‘They wish to extinguish the light of Allah with their mouths, but Allah will perfect His light, even though the unbelievers dislike it.’”

A Discussion on Wishing Good for All People

He said:

I heard him—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—say:

“By Allah, we desire so much good for all people that they may well not desire it for themselves.

By Allah, we want nothing for them except their happiness and that their Lord be pleased with them.

But their passions incline them toward the opposite of this.

We call them to Allah even when they turn away from the path, and we correct them even when they prefer deviation.

If they obeyed us, they would eat from above them and from beneath their feet, and they would attain the pleasure of their Lord.

By Allah, whoever turns away from us does so only because he disdains being guided by us—as though they had never heard the saying of Allah, Mighty and Exalted is He, to Muḥammad—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family:

‘You are only a warner, and for every people there is a guide.’

By Allah, we are their guides. In every age among us there is a guide for those who are in his age.

By Allah, we are the standards of truth and the guides of creation.

So whoever wishes, let him believe; and whoever wishes, let him disbelieve.

The people merely wanted to be the Imams of themselves, with no intermediary between themselves and their Lord.

Allah, the truest of speakers, says:

‘What is the matter with them that they turn away from the Reminder, as though they were startled asses fleeing from a lion? Rather, every one of them wishes to be given open scriptures.’”

A Discussion on the Excellence of a Servant

He said:

I heard him—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—praise one of his servants and approve of his service, trustworthiness, counsel, and conduct, in a manner befitting him.

Then he said:

“By Allah, his son does not surpass him in my estimation until the son reaches the degree at which preference is deserved.

Whoever does good in our regard receives this, and even more than this.”

A Discussion Concerning the Days of the Fitna

He said:

I heard him—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—mention the days of the *fitna* and what those involved in it took exception to.

He said:

“The greatest thing they took exception to, by Allah, was the conduct of one whom we had entrusted with authority, hoping that he would be accepted by us and would adhere to our command.

He transgressed and did not accept it, just as Khālīd ibn al-Walīd did not accept the command of the Messenger of Allah—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family.

So he [the Prophet] dissociated himself from him before Allah, and the Prophet—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family—was not burdened with blame for what he himself had done.”

He continued:

“I heard al-Qā’im bi-Amr Allāh—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—say to his men from Kutāma during the days of the *fitna*:

‘By Allah, I know of no sin of mine that would justify these people rising against me, nor anything that would justify the war they have mounted against me.

By Allah, they have taken exception to nothing concerning me except what they took exception to concerning some of you: those who transgressed my command and violated my prohibition, in matters concerning which I have a greater right to exercise judgment than they do.

They wanted me to surrender those among you who are good and those among you who are bad to them, and to allow them authority over you.

Had they found that with me—and Allah forbid that they ever should—they would have been the most obedient of people to me.

And most of what they have taken exception to concerning you contains that in which Allah's pleasure with you lies.

Even if there is some evil mixed into it, Allah will not cause your good to be lost because of your evil.

Rather, you are closer to His forgiveness and to His granting you victory over your enemy.

This *fitna* is nothing but a trial and a *tamhīṣ*—a purification and refining—for you.”

A Discussion on How the Awliyā’ Make Use of People According to Their Capacities

He said:

I heard him—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—say:

“We do our utmost good toward the *Walī*, and we pardon the enemy so long as he does not rise up against us.

We retain both the noble and the ignoble, and we reckon with both the strong and the weak.

For perhaps an enemy will become our *Walī*; the weak will become strong in supporting us; the lowly will become noble; and the treacherous will become trustworthy.

If we were to hasten to punish them, we would lose them when we later had need of them.

Everyone, in every circumstance, has a place where his particular strength is needed.

A ship at sea may sometimes need even the smallest thing, and if that thing cannot be found, it may be wrecked because of the inadequacy of its equipment.

A fine horse may lack even the smallest item of its riding equipment, making it impossible to ride.

And a wall cannot stand as a structure except through large stones and small ones.

Likewise, every person among mankind—whether small or great, honored or lowly—has a place with us, provided that he makes his intention sincere.

We bring him to that place and, when we approve of him, raise him from one station to another, until we bring him to the highest degrees of his peers.

We bring him an excellence that he had never even imagined.

People only lower themselves in our sight by their own actions. If they treated themselves well, we would raise them all.”

A Discussion in a Gathering Condemning Deception Through False Means

He said:

I heard him—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—say:

“Sometimes I look at one of those who seeks to circumvent me through trickery in what he presents and says to me, and I have no response to him, so I remain silent, astonished at the poverty of his judgment.

He imagines that what he has brought and the deception by which he has tried to turn the matter around will succeed with me.

I am astonished at the misfortune he brings upon himself and at his poor choice in adopting and pursuing such a course.

Had people preferred truthfulness in our presence and pursued the truth directly, they would have attained what they wanted.

They would not have debased themselves before us through tricks and evasions, placing themselves in a position of loss.”

A Discussion on the Meaning of the Words of the Awliyā³

He said:

I heard him—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—say:

“Sometimes I say something, and one who hears it from me thinks that I intended joking or something contrary to what I actually intended by those words.

I often address the person before me by way of questioning him, drawing out what he has within him, and testing his condition.

But, praise be to Allah, there is no joking, idle speech, falsehood, or frivolity in our words.

Rather, all of them are wisdom and correctness for whoever reflects upon them and whom Allah grants success in understanding and accepting them.”

A Discussion in a Gathering on the Imams' Preoccupation with the Welfare of the Community

He said:

I heard him—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—say:

“The people are occupied with their worldly affairs and with whatever pleasures they derive from them.

We are occupied with setting their affairs right, correcting their condition, considering what benefits them, protecting their community, defending their collective security, preserving their blood from being shed, safeguarding their women and their property, and restraining the hands of those who seek to oppress them.

For this we spend our nights and days, while they remain far removed from it and heedless of it because of what occupies them.

Then, whenever we require something from them that we have no choice but to require, they raise their heads like sheep raising their heads when the shepherd drives them from their pasture.

One of them speaks about what does not concern him, and the ignorant among them object to what they do not understand.

Allah alone is the One from whom help is sought concerning the burden of responsibility He has placed upon us for their affairs and the obligation He has imposed upon us to establish the means of securing their welfare.

We hope in Him that He will reform them and guide them to what contains their benefit and salvation in this world and the Hereafter.”

A Discussion in a Gathering on Benefiting from Admonition

He said:

One day I sat before the Imam al-Mu‘izz li-Dīn Allāh—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him. It was Friday, and he had prepared to go out to lead the people in prayer. The time was approaching.

It was said to him:

“The mosque is filled to overflowing with people, and the surrounding area is likewise crowded. They have gathered in great numbers.”

He said:

“How good that would be, if it were done with sincere intention, with hearts made pure, with acceptance of the admonitions, and with action according to what they are commanded.

But most of them come only to look at us and hear what we say. Then they pay no attention to it and derive no benefit from it.

By Allah, were it not for establishing the obligatory duty and reviving the Sunnas of his grandfather that have become neglected, I would not go out to them or deliver a sermon to them.”

I said:

“Yet their looking upon the Commander of the Believers—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him—and their listening to him are themselves a source of merit and reward for them, and the Commander of the Believers is the cause of that reward being joined to the reward of establishing Allah's obligatory duty and reviving the Sunnah of his grandfather, the Messenger of Allah—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family.”

He—peace be upon him—said:

“That would be so if they believed that their looking and listening were for Allah.

But they do not believe this.

Rather, they look as entertainment and listen absentmindedly, and they return empty-handed, just as they came.”