

The Mustanṣirī Sessions

The First Session

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

Praise be to God, alone in omnipotence and majesty, unique in sovereignty and everlastingness, who has rendered Himself worthy of praise by the abundant blessings He has bestowed upon His creation, exalted above partners and equals. There is no god but He, transcendent above consort and offspring. May God bless His Messenger Muḥammad, distinguished by the honor of divine election, preferred above the messengers and prophets, exemplary for the people of the earth and the angels of heaven; and upon his legatee, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, the most excellent of the foundations and the prophets, the noblest of companions and kinsmen, distinguished by al-Zahrā’, the daughter of the Prophet, the Lady of Women; and upon the Imams from her progeny, the righteous and God-fearing. May He grant peace to them all, a peace enduring with eternity and everlastingness.

O believers, may God sharpen your minds for listening to wisdom, and benefit you through obedience to His friends, the lords, the Imams. Indeed, the matter most deserving to be sought and from which benefit should be gained, and the one most worthy of earnest pursuit and increase, is knowledge of the Wise Creator, the Eternal Originator, the All-Knowing Fashioner, in the manner by which He has indicated that He should be known; professing His oneness, denying for Him all association and peers, and declaring Him transcendent above fathers and sons. Then comes knowledge of His Messenger, may God bless him and grant him peace, affirming what he brought, making obligatory what he made obligatory, setting aside what he set aside, declaring lawful what he made lawful, postponing what he postponed, and advancing what he advanced. Then comes knowledge of the Imam of the age and the time, and sincerity toward him both in secret and in public. This is the perfection of faith, the bond of religion before the Divine Judge, through which comes success at the Reckoning and deliverance from punishment.

Then contemplate the Qur’ān and seek clarification of the exposition contained within it, for it is the clearest of miracles in proof, the greatest in authority and rank, and the firmest in evidence and demonstration. Its outward meaning proclaimed its excellence, while the eloquent were rendered incapable of producing even a single chapter like it. Thus the proof was established against them and the clear path made manifest before them, so that they exchanged darkness for brightness, and people entered God’s religion in multitudes. They contemplated it, yet its wonders were never exhausted; they reflected upon it, yet its marvels never came to an end. Nor was it complete merely as revelation, for the One who revealed it informed them that it also possesses an interpretation (ta’wīl), as He says—and His speech is the truest of truth—“Do

they await anything but its interpretation? On the day its interpretation comes, those who had forgotten it before will say: 'Indeed, the messengers of our Lord came with the truth.'

When the people of deviation heard mention of interpretation, they sought after it, attempting to reach it through other than its proper gate. They abandoned its decisive verses and pursued the ambiguous ones. Therefore God, exalted is He, informed of their condition in His Book, saying: "It is He who has sent down to you the Book; in it are decisive verses—they are the Mother of the Book—and others are ambiguous. As for those in whose hearts is deviation, they follow what is ambiguous therein, seeking discord and seeking its interpretation. But none knows its interpretation except God. And those firmly rooted in knowledge say, 'We believe in it.'"

Those firmly rooted in knowledge are the companions of the Qur'ān and the repository of its interpretation. God, exalted is He, said to His Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace: "Do not move your tongue with it to hasten it. Surely upon Us rests its gathering and its recitation. Then, when We have recited it, follow its recitation. Then indeed upon Us rests its explanation." Thus the explanation of the revelation was to be sought from the Messenger, from whom one learned whatever explanation was requested of him. As for what would not reach those who questioned him, he entrusted it to his legatee, whom he designated by his proclamation, saying, "I am the City of Knowledge, and 'Alī is its Gate. Whoever desires knowledge, let him come through the gate." This saying accords with what the decisive Book contains in the words of God, who knew of the community's differences concerning their approaches: "But righteousness belongs to the one who is God-fearing; and enter houses through their doors." Thus 'Alī, peace be upon him, imparted knowledge during his own time to whoever sought it, while turning away from those who were arrogant and denied it. He urged his opponents to question him and openly proclaimed: "Ask me before you lose me." He also said, peace be upon him: "Within my breast is abundant knowledge, yet I find none fit to bear it. If I found one intelligent, he would not be trustworthy; and if I found one trustworthy, he would not be intelligent."

Thereafter that knowledge was transmitted to his descendants, whom God chose to bear it, preserving it in honored scriptures, as God, exalted is He, says: "Indeed, it is a reminder. So whoever wills may remember it, in honored pages, exalted and purified, in the hands of noble and righteous scribes." Thus the Imams, peace be upon them, are the scribes who bear the purified scriptures. The first of them delivers them to the second, and the second receives them as an inheritance from the one before him. Each Imam, in his own age, manifests from them whatever he sees to be in the interest of the time, and appoints for their proclamation whomever he chooses and approves.

So praise God, O believers, for the favor He has bestowed upon you, by which He has preferred you above many of His creatures; for He has spread over you the protective shade of your Imam, made you practitioners of the outward obligations of the revealed law while granting you knowledge of its concealed inward meaning, blessed you with knowledge of both the One described and the description, and distinguished you from those concerning whom He said: "Among mankind is he who worships God upon an edge."

Therefore, may God grant you success in uniting the outward and the inward of what we recite to you, following the clearest path. Refer your difficulties to the one whom God has made the best guide for your direction, for the outward and the inward are like body and soul: when they are united, benefits are kindled, purposes are understood, and the soul, by means of the senses, perceives the marvels of the world and thereby infers, from the existence of the workmanship, knowledge of the Craftsman.

May God make you, O believers, among those whose breasts He has opened to Islam, so that they stand upon a light from their Lord. May He protect you from the plots of Satan and the deception of his party.

Praise be to God, Possessor of might and splendor, power and blessings, Creator of the layers of heaven, Splitter of the joined expanses of the skies. May God bless His Messenger Muḥammad, the best of those who have trodden the pebbled earth and the finest of those who have walked upon the dusty ground; and upon 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, possessor of honor and exaltation, piety and modesty; and upon the Imams from his progeny, the intercessors of mankind and the lights of the darkness. May He grant them abundant peace.

God is sufficient for us, and excellent is the Trustee, excellent is the Protector, and excellent is the Helper.

The Second Session

In the name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate

Praise be to God, the Generous Rewarder, the Bestower of gifts, the One who is just in recompense among those who act and those who waste, in reward and punishment. May God bless His messenger, truthful in what was revealed to him in calling to the worship of God and taking up the rulings of the Book, and (bless) the قائم بالأمر after him, of nobility and merits, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, distinguished by the piercing star, the giver, the best of kin and companion, and the Imams from his righteous and pure descendants, as long as the lights dispel the darkness of misguidance and the spheres of east and west continue to turn.

O believers, may God raise you to the highest ranks in religion and grant you from His mercy the best of desires. You have heard what has been recited to you, and we have urged you toward it and called you to hold fast to it and persist in it: increasing in the knowledge of God—by the means through which

He indicates Himself—and sincerity in His oneness, and affirming His messenger and accepting what he brought; and what God has specially granted to the noble, righteous scribes, of the bringing down of the honored, elevated, purified scriptures, and that it is a tradition with no alteration and no replacement of its virtue.

We have made clear from that which removes doubt through its explanation, and clarifies its proof for those of insight, and the text of the Book bears witness to it, and the people of understanding who reflect upon the requirements of wisdom and decisive speech have attained its knowledge. So they held firm to the established tradition in its people, and the stability of its text and ruling. And we mentioned that God distinguished the believers from those about whom He said: “And among the people is he who worships God upon a letter.” The interpreters among the العامة (common people) differed in explaining this verse; they said it means he worships Him in doubt and other such statements filled with confusion. The meaning—without ascribing partners to Him—is that “upon a letter” indicates that God is worshipped through two paths: outward and inward together, as God said: “And leave outward sin and inward sin.” So whoever worships God by the outward without the inward, or the inward without the outward, is among those who worship Him “upon a letter,” because every word conveys meanings and does not reach its fullest completion on its own.

We have devoted this repetition to explaining its interpretation so that it may be known through what may appear as additional clarification of a difficult point or easing of what is closed and obscure. The Qur’an is a light whose illumination is not extinguished, and a sea whose water is never depleted. God, the Knower of the hidden intentions of the caliph and what speech reveals of them, says: “Do they not reflect upon the Qur’an, or are there locks upon their hearts?” And the Messenger of God, may God bless him and his family, said regarding the Qur’an: “Whoever seeks guidance in other than it, God will lead him astray.” So the Opening Chapter (al-Fātiḥa) is Sūrat al-Ḥamd, and it is the Mother of the Book, and the Seven Oft-Repeated (al-sab‘ al-mathānī), as in the interpretation of the commentators, concerning what God said to His Prophet Muhammad, may God bless him and his family: “We have given you the seven oft-repeated and the عظيم Qur’an.”

The “Great Qur’an” is this noble Book, and its companion in esoteric interpretation is the Commander of the Faithful ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, peace be upon him, because in his time he is the Qur’an’s counterpart, and the Qur’an is his counterpart. The Book is called Qur’an because of its being joined together, and this is indicated by the saying of the Messenger of God: “I leave among you two weighty things: the Book of God and my family, my household; they will never separate until they return to me at the pond.”

Thus the Qur'an is the counterpart of every one of the purified Imams, the descendants of the trustworthy Messenger, may God bless him and his pure family, in his era. He calls to its rulings and strives to manifest its teachings, and clarifies for the people its lawful and unlawful.

And it is known that two counterparts—each of them is worthy of the name of companionship, accompanying the other. Thus the Book of God was named Qur'an due to its association with the Imam of every age, since the Qur'an does not speak by itself; so God paired it with one who speaks it and clarifies its subtleties.

It is also said in interpretation that the Imam is like a counterpart due to his association with it, for it is his miracle and virtue through which God has distinguished him in clarifying what He revealed in it, just as it was the virtue of his grandfather Muhammad, the master of messengers, may God bless him and his family, that the revelation was sent down upon him and inspired to him. And 'Alī, peace be upon him, is indicated here as the noble Qur'an because he is the greatest of the Imams in rank and remembrance, for the rank of the *وصي* is greater than the rank of the Imam; thus 'Alī is singled out here with exaltation over all those whom God paired with the Wise Book.

And he is, in this sense, the exemplar of the Great Qur'an, and the Imams from his descendants are like the Seven Oft-Repeated, due to their recurrence in the world: whenever seven pass away, seven follow them, like the seven days—so that the sixth of the Imams is like Thursday, and their seventh is of great elevation like Friday. This pattern continues in these examples.

Know, O community of believers, that the Imam of your time—may blessings be upon him—is the eighth of the possessors of resolve among the Imams, of distant aspiration and lofty determination. God has aided him through awe, and spread the signs of his state in east and west, and raised his mention near and far.

If the rise of the awaited Qā'im (the *قائم*) who is indicated and referred to occurs, then he will be the possessor of that great matter and noble station. His era will last fifty thousand years without concealment or weakness. God will open for him all regions of the earth in its elevation and lowering, length and breadth, and none will be worshipped in it except God in pure monotheism and transcendence.

And the entire religion will belong to God, and God will heal the breasts of believing people and remove the anger from their hearts.

May God make you among those who are sincere to their Lord in secret and public, and for whom glad tidings are due by listening to the word and following its best.

And praise be to God, the Mighty, the Bestower, the Originator of causes, the Sender of rain from the clouds. May God bless His messenger upon whom He sent down the miracles of the Book and who was distinguished by wisdom and

decisive speech, and upon ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, breaker of the gate and vanquisher of the parties, and upon the Imams from his descendants, possessors of nobility and lineage and the firmest bonds and means. And peace be upon them abundantly.

God is sufficient for us, and the best disposer of affairs.

The Third Session (al-Majlis al-Thālith)

In the name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate
Praise be to God, exalted beyond that eloquent expressions can disclose His essence, and transcendent beyond that fine indications can hint at His “howness,” and glorified beyond that correct signs can point to His “whereness,” and sanctified beyond that God may be unveiled through description. May He bless His messenger Muhammad, sent with the noblest of messages and distinguished by proofs and miracles, and upon ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, who reveals darkness through his lights and clarifies obscure difficulties through his exposition, and upon the Imams from their progeny, by whose love good deeds are purified and ranks are elevated—a prayer continuously joined with the best greetings and blessings.

O believers—may God raise you to the highest ranks and degrees, and grant you happiness through the guardianship of your Imams in life and death—you have heard what has been recited to you regarding the naming of Sūrat al-Fātiḥa as “the Seven Oft-Repeated,” and what it contains of hidden meanings that grant the insightful guidance and deeper understanding, and increase the deniers only in blindness and destruction. Through it the people of religion and loyalty are made happy, while hypocrites are distanced, those who said: *“We believe in some of the Book and disbelieve in some, and seek a way between that.”* We have mentioned that the Qā’im of the Resurrection, who is distinguished by the greatest support and honor—peace be upon his mention—when his time arrives and his rising becomes due, will be the seventh of the connected Imams in his cycle, as a proof for him. And the one who rises for him will be the eighth of the noble Imams, because he corresponds to the first day of the week like Saturday among days. His proof precedes him, unlike the proofs of the prophets—peace be upon them—because the proof of every prophet comes after him, whereas the proof of the Qā’im comes before him, since he is the خاتم (seal) of the prophets, while the Imams are the guiding luminaries.

We have also mentioned that the Imam of our time—peace be upon him—is the eighth of the Imams among the possessors of resolve (ulū al-‘azm), endowed with firmness and determination. It is hoped that he will be the one through whom this noble matter and lofty station will be realized. Moreover, he is the nineteenth Imam among those who uphold the affairs of religion after the truthful Prophet, may God bless him and his family.

And this number—nineteen—is explicitly indicated and alluded to in various contexts. Among them is its correspondence to the number of words in the call

to prayer (adhān), and prayer itself is among the greatest acts of worship. It is also reported from Imam al-Ṣādiq that he mentioned the night of the nineteenth of Ramadan, saying: *"On it the delegations of the year are written, so ask God for pilgrimage in it."*

We shall later explain the meaning of this number in a way that sharpens the intellect and dispels doubt and confusion. So seek refuge in God, O believers, from the speech of deniers and the falsehood of rejecters and from Satan the accursed, for he has no authority over those who believe and rely upon their Lord.

Now listen to what is recited concerning the statement of God—Glorified and Exalted—regarding *"Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm."* It consists of four words containing nineteen letters, corresponding to the number previously mentioned. God has magnified this number in His Book and emphasized its mention.

He said, Exalted is He: *"Over it are nineteen. And We have not appointed the keepers of the Fire except angels, and We made their number only as a trial for those who disbelieve... and that those who were given the Book may be certain, and that the believers may increase in faith... and none knows the soldiers of your Lord except Him... and it is nothing but a reminder for mankind."*

And He swore—Glorified is He—by the moon and the night when it departs and the dawn when it brightens: *"Indeed it is one of the greatest."*

If not for the benefits in understanding this number, such elaboration would be unnecessary; yet its mention is purposeful. Were the people of outward interpretation asked about "nineteen," they would find no proof except what has been explained of its deeper meaning.

And these nineteen letters found in *"Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm"* come from the letters of the alphabet. Some letters do not repeat within it, and some repeat multiple times. This numerical structure carries hidden indications.

It has also been said by some of the people of wisdom that these four words correspond to the four elemental realms: fire, air, water, and earth; and also to the four bodily humors: blood, bile, phlegm, and black bile. And while these correspondences match the number, they are not in themselves the intended proof, but rather symbolic indications used in the language of scripture.

Rather, the deeper interpretation transmitted through the Imams is that the divine names point to God Himself, and that every letter of the phrase indicates a divine attribute or a guiding reality.

Thus the four words in *"Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm"* are seen as indications of spiritual and physical principles, through which the seeker ascends from bodily knowledge to spiritual understanding, attaining felicity and salvation. It is also interpreted that the nineteen letters symbolize: seven Imams and twelve supporting authorities, corresponding to their roles in conveying divine guidance across the lands. The seven correspond to the principal Imams in each

era, and the twelve correspond to the appointed proofs spread throughout the world.

And the division of letters into those that repeat and those that do not repeat is likewise interpreted as a symbol of higher and lower ranks of authority—those that remain constant across dispensations and those that recur in cycles of governance and guidance.

It is reported from the Messenger of God, may God bless him and his family, that he said: *“I was entrusted with five things and I entrusted five things, and between me and my Lord are five...”*—and these are interpreted according to these symbolic hierarchies of spiritual authority.

May God make you among those who are given glad tidings and who rejoice, who recognize the value of blessings and give thanks to their Lord.

And praise be to God, the Originator of all things and their end, the Inheritor and the One who brings life and death, the One and the Eternal, all else being created and transient. May God bless His messenger Muhammad, sent with the white and pure law, and upon his وصي ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, and upon the Imams from his progeny, and grant them abundant peace.

God is sufficient for us, and He is the best disposer of affairs.

The Fourth Session

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

All praise is due to God, whose majesty and greatness cannot be encompassed, the source to whom everything prostrates, casting its shade. The All-Hearing, to whom all creation and its affairs return. There is no god but He—Exalted is He above having any likeness. May God bless His Messenger Muhammad, swift in bringing punishment and shaking terror upon the people of disbelief, the intercessor on the Day of Gathering for those whose deeds fall short. And upon his trustee Ali ibn Abi Talib, whose generosity and favor are overwhelming, and whose battle and confrontation are formidable. And upon the Imams from their descendants, who are the perfection of truthfulness and its leaders, and the callers to truth and its champions. And peace be upon them all, as long as the lineage of God is joined and the light of His lineage shines.

O believers, may God water the thirst of your hearts with the oceans of wisdom, and cover the valleys of your faults with the veils of blessings.

You have heard what we have recited to you, explained and clarified, and we have set forth the meaning and purport of the discourse within it. It is a proof upon whoever hears it among mankind, because of what God has magnified within it, and what He has extensively mentioned regarding the number nineteen. This extended discussion would have been unnecessary speech were it not for the hidden benefits it contains.

We have placed our hope, upon the completion of this number of Imams, that our Imam of the present time—peace be upon him—being the nineteenth among those who undertake the affairs of religion after the trustworthy

Messenger and his trustee and the Imams from their blessed descendants (peace and blessings be upon him and them all)—that he may be the قائم (Qā'im) of the Resurrection, singled out for the highest support and honor. And that God may fulfill through him what He has promised His allies as a grace, and make him—along with the messengers and Imams—the seal of all peace, and a means of victory over those who usurped their rights.

We have also explained that the meaning of this number, nineteen, is that it is seven and twelve. One aspect of this is that “In the name of God” (Bismillah) consists of seven letters, since they agree that the alif is omitted from “bism.” And “the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate” consists of twelve letters. Among what enters into this meaning is that the foundation of Islam and the first statement to which the Messenger of God (peace be upon him) called is: “There is no god but God,” and it consists of seven phrases and twelve letters. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: “Whoever says it sincerely will enter Paradise.” It was asked: “O Messenger of God, what is its sincerity?” He said: “Knowing its limits and fulfilling its rights.”

Its limits are seven and twelve, corresponding to the seven phrases and twelve letters.

It has already been stated that the Imams of the religion (peace be upon them) are seven who circulate in the world like the days of the week until the rise of the Qā'im, and the حجج (proofs) are twelve spread throughout the world. This is the knowledge of the limits in general.

As for fulfilling its rights, it is the performance of the obligations of religion, and twelve established practices required of the pious. The seven obligations are: loyalty (wilayah), purification, prayer, almsgiving (zakat), fasting, pilgrimage (hajj), and struggle (jihad).

As for the twelve practices (sunna), they are: honoring parents, maintaining kinship ties, protecting the neighbor, commanding good and forbidding evil, truthfulness in all situations, good treatment of spouses, kindness to servants, spreading peace, feeding others, maintaining brotherhood, and caring for the sick—though this is not obligatory for women.

We will later explain these obligations and practices in detail, by which one of sound understanding may benefit, by the help of God, the One of blessings. Some of the masters of the mission (may God forgive them) have mentioned in the discussion of the spheres and natures things that occupy the listener's mind. I have only mentioned them because of the benefits and advantages contained therein.

Indeed, the saying of the Messenger of God (peace be upon him)—that sincerity in the testimony “There is no god but God” is what causes entry into Paradise—is realized through knowing its limits and fulfilling its rights, as we have explained. Its rights are the obligations of Islam whose general outlines we have mentioned and promised to explain, and its limits are the knowledge of

the Imams who uphold this religion. God has made them the manifesters of its miraculous nature, the clarifiers of its brevity, and the warriors for its honor and manifestation. God's promise over the religion as a whole is true, and He is the One who fulfills His promise.

Whoever fulfills the rights of the testimony by performing the obligations we have mentioned but does not know its limits is a Muslim but not a believer, like those whom God described:

"The Bedouins say, 'We believe.' Say: You have not believed, but say, 'We have submitted,' for faith has not yet entered your hearts."

They did not attain what the Messenger of God intended by sincere testimony, which includes knowledge of its limits and fulfillment of its rights. Whoever combines both becomes a Muslim and a believer and thus deserves entry into Paradise. According to his knowledge of the limits of religion and his effort in its practice, his rank in Paradise is elevated and his enjoyment of its blessings increases.

We do not see any place here for the discussion of natures or bodies, nor do we include them except to the extent that they complicate understanding. By God's permission, we will later present what clarifies this and saves from confusion.

Then follows what we have explained regarding "In the name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate," and the saying of God:

"All praise is due to God, Lord of the worlds, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate, Master of the Day of Judgment. You alone we worship, and You alone we seek help from."

His saying "All praise is due to God" is a declaration that He alone deserves praise and is worthy of it, and a teaching for us to praise Him, so that no one may mistakenly think that the abundance of His blessings makes His praise impossible, or say that God is too exalted to be worshiped and that idols are worshiped instead to bring us closer to Him.

So God sent His Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) calling people to affirm that there is no god but Him. He began His Book with Al-Fatiha so that we know He accepts and loves praise, and He commands in it worship directed to Him alone: "You alone we worship and You alone we seek help from," addressing us directly to remove ambiguity.

Praise is due to God in both ease and hardship, for when He grants ease He spreads its joy, and when He brings hardship He brings reward afterward—so every condition contains a blessing.

"Lord of the worlds" means that there is no true Lord besides Him. The word "lord" can be used metaphorically for others (like lord of the house or lord of wealth), but when it is attached to "the worlds" it can only refer to God.

"The Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate": "The Most Merciful" is a name that cannot be applied to anyone else, neither literally nor metaphorically. "The

Most Compassionate” may be applied metaphorically to others, but when the two names are combined, they belong exclusively to God.

“Master of the Day of Judgment” (or “King of the Day of Judgment”): both readings are valid and close in meaning. Some said “Master” is more emphatic in ownership, others said “King” is more emphatic in authority. But since it is attached to “the Day of Judgment,” no one truly owns or rules that day except God, who remains after all things perish.

“You alone we worship and You alone we seek help from”: the repetition with “You” emphasizes exclusive devotion and removes any doubt.

May God make you among those who worship their Creator with true worship, seek His help in establishing His religion, and follow the legacy of His Prophet in his descendants in hope of his intercession.

All praise is due to God, Possessor of overwhelming power, manifest wisdom, and abundant blessing, and may blessings be upon His Messenger

Muhammad, sent with the white religion and decisive wisdom, and upon Ali ibn Abi Talib, the breaker of gates and defeater of factions, and upon the Imams from his descendants, possessors of noble ranks and radiant lights.

God is sufficient for us, and He is the best disposer of affairs.

The Fifth Session

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

All praise is due to God, who has made the lands flourish with abundant rain, and made gatherings flourish with encompassing blessings, and amazed the beholders with the wonders of wisdom, and subdued the tyrants with decisive punishment. He is alone in dominion and generosity, singular in sovereignty and pre-eternity. There is no god but He, the One who alone governs what He has caused to proceed on the Preserved Tablet by the pen.

May God bless His Messenger Muhammad, through whom the darkness of gloom was illuminated, and through whom the finest aspirations were elevated; and upon Ali ibn Abi Talib, the one who benefited seekers of wisdom and destroyed the worshippers of idols; and upon the Imams from their descendants, guides of nations to the most upright religion. And peace be upon them all, as long as existence appears from nonexistence and a pilgrim circles the House and touches the Black Stone.

O believers, may God raise you to the most complete state of striving and assist you in performing the Sunnahs and obligations. How excellent is the guidance of one whose intention is good, and how clear is the right path of one whose concern is seeking knowledge, and how firm is the reliance of one who obeys God, His Messenger, and his Imam. Such a one has succeeded—his arrow has struck its mark, his star has risen, and the profit of the negligent has become clear in their loss.

So hold fast to sincerity in obedience and loyalty, and you will walk toward what God has prepared of beautiful reward for them.

You have already heard what was recited to you, in which we singled you out with glad tidings and joined you to those regarding whom God says:

“Theirs is glad tidings in the life of this world and in the Hereafter.”

We have explained the greatness of the number nineteen by linking it to the parts of the testimony of faith, its seven letters and twelve letters, and that Islam is built upon seven obligations followed by twelve Sunnahs, which is clear to anyone of knowledge and intelligence.

Now listen to what is being recited to you: that every obligation among those previously mentioned contains seven obligations and twelve Sunnahs.

The first of them is **loyalty (al-wilāya)**, which is its beginning and greatest element. It has already been stated that every reference to these numbers indicates that the arrangement of God’s friends is the ultimate intended meaning.

After loyalty comes **purification (al-ṭahāra)**, and within it are seven obligations and twelve Sunnahs.

The seven obligations of ablution (minor purification) are:

pure water, intention, washing the face, washing the hands, wiping the head, wiping the feet, and order (tartīb)—that one begins with what God mentioned first.

The twelve Sunnahs are:

seeking purification after relieving oneself, washing the hands before putting them into a vessel, saying the name of God when beginning ablution, rinsing the mouth, inhaling water into the nose, moving the ring so water reaches beneath it, combing the beard so water reaches it, allowing water into the eyes, beginning with the right side before the left, wiping both ears inside and outside, the second and third washings of the face and hands (each of which is a Sunnah, while the first is the obligation), and the tooth-stick (siwāk).

We also say that **major purification (ghusl)** of the entire body is divided into seven obligations and twelve Sunnahs.

The obligations include:

ritual bath from sexual impurity, from menstruation, the bath of a disbeliever when he accepts Islam, the bath of one who regains consciousness after fainting, the bath after postpartum bleeding, the bath after immersion in impurity, and washing the deceased—an obligation upon the living until some perform it.

As for the Sunnahs:

Friday bath, Eid al-Fitr bath, Eid al-Adha bath, the bath for entering ihram, the bath for entering the sacred precinct, the bath for entering Mecca, the bath for entering Medina, the bath on the Day of Arafah, and bathing on three nights of Ramadan: the nineteenth night, the twenty-first night, and the twenty-third night, and the bath of one who has washed a deceased person.

Each word of this speech contains meanings and explanations which, if fully expanded, would fill pages and overwhelm souls, for sacred knowledge is an unending ocean and an unfading light. It is among the words of God regarding which He says:

"If all the trees on earth were pens and the sea, with seven more seas besides it, were ink, the words of God would not be exhausted."

And God says:

"Say: If the sea were ink for the words of my Lord, the sea would be exhausted before the words of my Lord were exhausted, even if We brought the like of it as further ink."

The recitation had reached His saying:

"You alone we worship and You alone we seek help."

We have already explained the meaning of addressing with the pronoun "You."

What remains is the meaning of worship and seeking help.

Some say worship is nearness to God through righteous deeds. Others say it is ascetic devotion. Others say it is utter humility beyond which there is no humility.

We say: all of these meanings are included together. If one removes himself from any of them, he deviates from worship and becomes corrupt, for if one humbles himself to one who does not obey God, his humility is not beneficial.

And one who seeks nearness without obedience returns to disobedience.

Seeking help (isti'āna) is asking for assistance, and assistance is an increase in strength that enables one to reach what is intended. Its mention after worship indicates that God does not burden anyone beyond their capacity, and that seeking help means asking for added strength to reach obedience.

It is narrated from Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah that he said:

I entered upon Ali ibn Abi Talib, the Commander of the Faithful, and saw water on his right side. He said "In the name of God," then poured water over his right hand, then washed himself and said:

"O God, protect my private parts from disobeying You, conceal my faults, and do not let enemies rejoice over me."

Then he rinsed his mouth and said: "O God, grant me my argument (on the Day of Judgment)."

Then he inhaled water and said: "O God, do not deprive me of the fragrance of Paradise."

Then he washed his face and said: "O God, whiten my face on the Day faces are blackened."

Then he poured water over his right hand and then his left and said: "O God, give me my record in my right hand and do not make it chained to my neck."

Then he wiped his head and said: "O God, shower us with Your mercy, for we fear Your punishment. O God, do not gather our foreheads and our feet (in humiliation)."

Then he wiped his neck and said: "O God, save us from the severities of Hell and its chains."

Then he wiped his feet and said: "O God, make my feet firm on the bridge (ṣirāṭ) on the Day feet slip."

Then he stood and said: "O God, as You have purified us with water, purify us from sins."

Then drops of water fell from his fingertips, and he said: "O my son, do as I have done, for every drop that falls from your fingers, God creates from it an angel who seeks forgiveness for you until the Day of Resurrection. O my son, whoever does as I have done, his sins fall away as leaves fall from a tree."

May God make you among those who humble themselves before their Creator and obey Him, and distance themselves from those who neglect and waste the religion.

All praise is due to God, Creator of souls and Distributor of provision. May blessings be upon His Messenger Muhammad, the best of Arabs and non-Arabs, and upon Ali ibn Abi Talib, the breaker of peaks and crusher of oppression, and upon the Imams from their descendants, possessors of determination and strategy, through whose light the darkness of gloom is removed.

God is sufficient for us, and He is the best disposer of affairs. There is no power and no strength except with God, the Most High, the Great.

Majlis Six

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

All praise is due to Allah, who has made the two seas flow—fresh and salty—who has separated the two new things into darkness and light, who created His creation in pairs, raised the heavens and made their adornment stars and constellations, spread out the earth and placed in it wide paths, and sent down from the rain-laden clouds abundant water.

May Allah send blessings upon His Messenger Muhammad, through whom the heavens were ascended to, by whom crookedness was corrected and deviation removed, until people entered the religion of Allah in multitudes; and upon Ali ibn Abi Talib, who paved the path to faith and cut through the throats of disbelief; and upon the Imams from their descendants, whom Allah made in every darkness a lamp and in every hardship a relief. And peace be upon them all, as long as dust is stirred in battlefields and the scenes of debate are made clear.

O believers, may Allah protect you from doubt and uncertainty, and strengthen your minds with the firmest means of His mercy. Strive in seeking knowledge and adorn yourselves with piety and forbearance, for knowledge is the noblest of pursuits and the most precious of acquisitions. Allah the Exalted says in His decisive verses: *"Allah raises those who believe among you and those who have been given knowledge in درجات (degrees)."*

You have heard what we have recited to you regarding the divisions of the obligations of purification and its recommended practices, corresponding to the number of the testimonies and their letters, since purification is one of its rights. Among its rights is also prayer, so now listen to what we explain regarding its meaning.

Prayer consists of seven obligatory prayers and twelve recommended prayers. As for the obligatory prayers, they are:

- The prayer of residence: seventeen rak'ahs in every day and night
- The prayer of travel: eleven rak'ahs in a day and night
- Friday prayer, which is not complete unless four gather with the Imam
- The prayer of fear, part of which is performed with an Imam and part individually
- The prayer of circumambulation (Tawaf) of Hajj (obligatory)
- The prayer of Umrah (obligatory Tawaf)
- The funeral prayer, which is a collective obligation: if one performs it, the rest are absolved

As for the recommended prayers, they are:

- Eid al-Fitr prayer
- Eid al-Adha prayer
- Eclipse of the sun prayer
- Eclipse of the moon prayer
- Rain-seeking prayer (Istisqa')
- Prayer for earthquakes
- Prayer for sudden signs and occurrences
- Witr and Shaf' prayer
- The Wutayrah prayer (two seated rak'ahs)
- The two rak'ahs of Fajr (the Prophet ﷺ later made them up after sunrise and then prayed the obligatory prayer)
- Twenty-eight additional daily rak'ahs, including:
 - Six rak'ahs after midday (al-Awwabin)
 - Eight rak'ahs between Dhuhr and Asr
 - Ten rak'ahs between Maghrib and Isha (night prayer)
 - Prayer for greeting the mosque upon entering it

We will later, if Allah wills, mention what benefits the people of loyalty and piety in this matter.

Then follows the verse of the Wise Reminder:

"Guide us to the straight path. The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favor, not of those who have incurred wrath, nor of those who go astray."

The word "*path*" in Arabic means a road, and "*straight*" means one without deviation. Some exegetes among the literalists said that the path is a bridge set over Hell on the Day of Resurrection, upon which people will pass to Paradise:

some pass safely and are saved, while others fall into Hell on their sides or faces. Allah says: *"Is he who walks fallen on his face more rightly guided, or he who walks upright on a straight path?"*

This interpretation is correct and cannot be rejected. However, we also say that the path is the guardianship (wilayah) of the Imams, peace be upon them. They are the straight path, for they are those upon whom Allah has bestowed favor, distinguished from those who incurred wrath and those who went astray.

There is no contradiction between the outward interpretation (the physical bridge on the Day of Judgment) and this inward meaning. Following the Imams in this world is itself the straight path that leads to salvation in the next, and to walking upright upon the bridge over Hell.

As for the statement that those who slip fall into Hell—whether from the right or left—this is also correct. Whoever falls to the right is one who exaggerated regarding the Imams (ghuluww), who was formerly among the "people of the right." Whoever falls to the left is one who fell short in their rights, and thus is among the "people of the left."

Know that everything mentioned regarding the Day of Judgment—such as the bridge (Sirat), the scales, accountability, Paradise and its rivers and fruits, and Hell and its flames—has counterparts in this world. The outward form is what is seen, and the inward reality is what it leads to. You are commanded to believe in both the outward and the inward.

Some people of weak understanding, when they hear mention of Paradise, say: "Its interpretation is the call of truth," which leads some to deny the reality of Paradise. We seek refuge in Allah from such deviation. Rather, the call of truth exists in this world and leads to Paradise, which is its hidden reality and reward prepared for the obedient servants of Allah.

Consider the saying of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: *"Between my grave and my pulpit is a garden from the gardens of Paradise."* No one understands this to mean that the physical space itself replaces Paradise, but rather that it is a means leading to it.

So reflect upon both the outward revelation and the inward interpretation, as Allah says: *"Do you not see any inconsistency in the creation of the Most Merciful? Look again—do you see any flaw? Then look again and again; your sight will return to you humbled and exhausted."*

It is narrated from Amir al-Mu'minin Ali ibn Abi Talib, who said that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: Whoever recites *"Say: He is Allah, the One"* one hundred times after every obligatory prayer will pass the bridge on the Day of Resurrection with ease, and will be assisted by Jibril in entering Paradise, and whoever recognizes among the people of Hell those he knew in this world, he may intercede for them if they had no shirk, and they will be admitted to Paradise by his intercession.

May Allah make you among those who walk the straight path to eternal bliss, and protect you from the misguidance of the deviant and those who incur wrath and go astray.

All praise is due to Allah, the Creator of everything, the Provider, the One who splits the heavens, the One who burdens no soul beyond its capacity and has placed no hardship in religion. May blessings be upon Muhammad, the best of those who are silent and speak, the noblest of those who walk in the sacred precinct, and upon Ali ibn Abi Talib through whom truth shone and falsehood was silenced, and upon the Imams from their descendants who are lamps in every darkness.

And peace be upon them abundantly. Allah is sufficient for us, and the best Disposer of affairs.

Majlis Seven

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

All praise is due to Allah, whose favors cannot be fully described even by the most eloquent of tongues, and whose majesty cannot be grasped by the limits of all indications and allusions. The ends of explanation fall short of describing His beauty, and no declaration can encompass His perfection. There is no god but He, glorified through sanctification and praise.

May Allah send blessings upon Muhammad, His Messenger, who has a radiant and noble face, a pleasing character, and a pure and upright religion rooted in the essence of the Arabs at the height of clear honor; and upon his successor Ali ibn Abi Talib, who never followed a fleeing enemy nor passed by a wounded foe, about whom exaggerations were made as were not made even concerning Christ; and upon the Imams from their descendants, whose light in religion is like the illumination of lamps, and whose loyalty is the ultimate profitable gain for believers.

O believers, may Allah grant you success and guide you firmly to obedience. How smooth is the path of the people of faith and obedience, and how precious is the firm establishment of religious principles, and how wretched is the guidance of those who turn away from faith and waste it. Their deeds are uprooted like crops destroyed to their roots, and their efforts are undone like a spun thread broken apart.

Hold fast to the pure and blessed conclusion, so that you may attain success in this world and the next. You have already heard what was recited regarding the recommended and obligatory prayers, corresponding to the divisions of the testimony of faith and its letters. Now listen to what we explain: in every one of the five daily prayers there are seven obligations and twelve recommended practices.

The seven obligations are:

- Intention (niyyah)
- Facing the Qiblah

- Opening takbir (takbirat al-ihram)
- Recitation of Surat al-Fatihah
- Bowing (ruku')
- Prostration (sujud)
- Sitting for the closing salutation (taslim)

The twelve recommended practices are:

- The call to prayer (adhan)
- The iqamah
- Saying: "I have turned my face to He who created the heavens and the earth..." until the end of the supplication
- Seeking refuge from Satan
- Reciting al-Fatihah in the first two rak'ahs of every prayer
- Raising the hands with every bowing and returning from it
- Tasbih (glorification) during bowing
- The Imam saying: "Allah hears those who praise Him," and the follower saying: "Our Lord, to You belongs all praise"
- Tasbih during prostration
- The first sitting
- The first tashahhud
- The second tashahhud

Any prayer that does not include a first sitting compensates for it in its structure, and any prayer that includes two sittings for tashahhud does not include qunut (supplication of standing).

This confirms the correctness of these numerical divisions, and those of insight should reflect upon it. We have repeated that every religious expression contains meanings and explanations that cannot be fully contained within time itself. We will now clarify the meaning of a single example so that it may serve as guidance for the rest.

When the worshipper begins the prayer and raises his hands during the opening takbir, placing them level with his ears and face, he thereby indicates all spiritual and physical ranks—from the beginning of light until the blowing of the trumpet. Each hand has five fingers; four fingers contain ten joints, and the thumb contains two joints and a palm. The face contains seven openings: two eyes, two ears, a mouth, and two nostrils. It also contains eyebrows, cheeks, tongue, and lips. Within it are four faculties: sight, hearing, taste, and smell, while touch is represented in the hands.

Each of these corresponds to realities among the cosmic "ranks," from the beginning of creation's light until the final resurrection. Thus, when the worshipper says "Allah is Greater," he declares that Allah is greater than all spiritual beings and distinct from them, and beyond comparison with any created thing. Glory be to Allah, exalted and transcendent above all.

If one word in the prayer contains such depth—despite this being only a brief indication—then what vast ocean of meaning lies beneath the full reality of prayer?

The recitation had reached the conclusion of the Book as explained by the knowledge of the noble scribes (al-safarah al-kiram al-bararah), and next in order in the Qur'an is Surah al-Baqarah.

It is widely agreed among narrators—both supporters and opponents—that the first revelation of the Qur'an consisted of five verses from Surah "Iqra":

"Read in the name of your Lord who created, created man from a clinging clot. Read, and your Lord is the Most Generous, who taught by the pen, taught man what he did not know."

These were revealed to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in the cave of Hira, where he would withdraw for worship. The common narration says "he used to retreat," but the correct wording is closer to "he would devote himself in seclusion."

The Prophet ﷺ said that Gabriel came to him and commanded him to read three times. Each time he replied, "I am not one who reads," until the revelation was given.

When he returned to Khadijah in fear and distress, she reassured him, saying that Allah would not disgrace him because he maintains family ties, honors guests, helps the needy, and supports others in hardship. Khadijah was the first woman to believe, and Ali was the first man to believe—peace be upon them both. The full narration is extensive, and we have summarized it here.

Regarding the verse "Read in the name of your Lord," scholars noted that "In the name of your Lord" is written with an alif, whereas "Bismillah" is written without one. The reason given is consensus, but in our interpretation the presence or absence of the alif corresponds to numerical balance: whether written with or without the alif, both forms yield the number seven in their structure. This reflects hidden wisdom preserved in symbolic form.

If those in power had understood these meanings, they would have altered them just as they altered other matters. This is among the treasures of wisdom referred to in the Qur'an:

"As for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the city, and beneath it was a treasure belonging to them..."

From Amir al-Mu'minin Ali ibn Abi Talib, it is narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: whoever perfects his ablution, prayer, and charity, restrains his anger, controls his tongue, does good, seeks forgiveness, and fulfills loyalty to my family has perfected the realities of faith, and the gates of Paradise are opened for him.

May Allah make you among those who understand the structure of religion and reach the ranks of the guided, those who say: *"Our Lord, we have believed in what You revealed and followed the Messenger, so write us among the witnesses."*

All praise is due to Allah, the Possessor of exalted and mighty glory, and firm dominion. May blessings be upon His Messenger whose law abrogates what came before, and whose proof overcomes all opposition; upon Ali ibn Abi Talib, the foundation of religion and its firmly rooted pillar; and upon the Imams from their descendants, whose ranks are lofty and established.

And peace be upon them abundantly. Allah is sufficient for us, and the best disposer of affairs.

Majlis Eight

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

All praise is due to Allah, abundant in gifts and benefits, beautiful in workmanship and favors, who grants success in moments of action and return, who forgives the slips of those who walk the paths of guidance, and who suffices those who rely upon Him by removing hardships. There is no god but He—the One, the Eternal, the Mighty.

May blessings be upon Muhammad, the guide to the best paths and purposes, through whom the misguidance of every polytheist and rebel is removed; and upon Ali ibn Abi Talib, the most devoted worshipper and most ascetic of ascetics; and upon the Imams from their descendants, through whom every usurper of their rights is struck down and every arrogant opponent is humbled. Peace be upon them all as long as bowing is performed and prostration is made.

O believers, may Allah grant you success in obedience to the Creator, the Worshipped One, and guide you to what ensures success in the eternal abode. How truthful is the one who commands avoidance of malice and restrains the self from its whims, and how successful is the one who prepares for his Hereafter from the knowledge of religion, and how noble is the one who obeys the Imam of his time and strives for his pleasure. Such a person's hand has grasped the profitable transaction, and Paradise becomes his ultimate dwelling. Therefore, strive in righteous deeds, for they are weighed as the most valuable of trades. You have heard what we have recited regarding the meaning of prayer, benefiting those who understand and reflect. Now listen to what we continue to explain.

Prayer has seven levels in which the reward of the worshipper varies:

- Prayer performed at home equals one prayer
- Prayer in a marketplace mosque equals twelve prayers
- Prayer in a tribal mosque equals twenty-five prayers
- Prayer in a central congregational mosque equals one hundred prayers
- Prayer in al-Aqsa Mosque equals one thousand prayers
- Prayer in the Sacred Mosque (al-Masjid al-Haram) equals one hundred thousand prayers

Prayer is disliked in twelve places, including:

- Graveyards

- Bathhouses
- Restrooms
- Camel resting places
- Churches and synagogues
- Temples of Magians unless washed with water
- Facing a sleeping person
- Without a barrier (sutrah)
- On impure wet ground
- On food or over food

Each of these rulings contains deep meanings and wisdoms, which we will explain in due course, if Allah wills.

The explanation had reached the verse: **“Read in the name of your Lord...”**, followed by: **“Who created man from a clinging substance.”**

Allah is the Creator of all things, bringing them into existence from non-existence, moving them from stillness to motion without instruments or means, but only by His command: *“Be, and it is.”*

As for *“created man from a clinging substance,”* the “clinging substance” is the third stage of human creation. Allah says that He created man from an extract of clay, then made him a drop of fluid in a firm resting place, then created the drop into a clinging substance. Thus the “clinging substance” is the third stage of creation, meaning that human formation reaches its designated stage of divine craftsmanship at this point.

And His saying: **“Read, and your Lord is the Most Generous”** indicates that Allah alone is truly generous, granting life and wellbeing in ways beyond the capacity of creation.

And His saying: **“Who taught by the pen”** means that the Pen was the first creation of Allah, followed by the Tablet (al-Lawh). The Pen wrote upon the preserved Tablet all that will occur until the Day of Judgment. Thus the Tablet is preserved with the knowledge Allah deposited within it, and none knows from it except what Allah allows.

Allah says: *“They encompass nothing of His knowledge except what He wills.”*

And His saying: **“He taught man what he did not know”** refers to Adam, whom Allah taught the names of all things—knowledge that the angels themselves were unable to grasp until Allah taught them through him. Then Allah commanded the angels to prostrate to Adam as honor for this knowledge. This knowledge was then transmitted to our Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, along with the superiority Allah granted him over all prophets. Amir al-Mu’minin Ali (peace be upon him) said in one of his sermons that all knowledge revealed to Adam and all excellence given to the prophets was gathered in Muhammad ﷺ and his pure family.

Allah commanded His Prophet ﷺ to teach this knowledge to mankind, though He did not command the same prostration for Muhammad as was commanded

for Adam. Instead, Allah revealed: *"Say: I do not ask you for any reward except love for the near relatives."*

Thus, whoever loves the near relatives—namely the Imams from the family of the Messenger—has fulfilled the obligation toward the Prophet ﷺ, just as the angels fulfilled obedience through prostration to Adam. Whoever rejects their love and opposes them resembles Iblis, who refused to obey out of arrogance. Iblis said: *"I am better than him; You created me from fire and created him from clay,"* claiming superiority based on ignorance of divine wisdom. He did not realize that clay contains elements of water and earth, making it more complete than fire, which is only one element.

Thus, the followers of Iblis are those who cling either to outward form without inner meaning, or to inner meaning without outward form. But the followers of Adam and his pure descendants act upon both the outward revelation and the inward interpretation. This is why they deserve the great reward.

In times when truth is obscured, some of the leaders of religion would supplicate:

O Allah, Lord of the Inhabited House, the concealed mountain, the hidden "Nun," and the loaded Ark, we ask You by the light of light, the inscribed Pen, the preserved Tablet, and the Great Record that does not err or deviate, to guide those astray and correct the lost. The darkness of night has extinguished the stars of the religion, and waves of turmoil have overwhelmed the ships of salvation. O Allah, illuminate them, stabilize their knowledge, and make their path firm, for You are the best of judges.

May Allah make you among those who call upon Him in fear and hope, and grant you a noble return and dwelling in His presence.

All praise is due to Allah, the Protector who does not humiliate those who seek refuge in His might, the All-Seeing who does not disappoint those who seek His protection, the All-Powerful who forgives much and does not hold strictly to account. May blessings be upon Muhammad, the best peacemaker in the religion of Allah, upon Ali ibn Abi Talib, whose truth is inseparable from him, and upon the Imams from their descendants whose loyalty is an established divine command.

And peace be upon them abundantly. Allah is sufficient for us, and the best disposer of affairs.

Majlis Nine

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

All praise is due to God, who brings forth fire from the green tree, who causes water to flow from solid rock, who manifests His wisdom in the various forms of creation, and who brings the earth to life through pouring rain. There is no god but He, the Sovereign, the All-Powerful.

Blessings be upon the one who elevated the banner of religion for the guided and perceptive, and who destroyed the arguments of the heretics through the

inimitability of the chapters of the Qur'an—Muhammad, His Messenger, the possessor of the Fountain and the River of al-Kawthar. And upon the exalted, adorned, noble and radiant one, Ali ibn Abi Talib, known as Haydar. And upon the Imams from their progeny, the intercessors of mankind on the Day of Gathering. Peace be upon them all as long as trees bear fruit and blossoms flourish.

O believers, may God raise you up with gratitude for the abundant favors He has bestowed upon us, and assist you in fulfilling the obligations and the sunnah practices. How rightly guided is the one who follows discernment and avoids confusion, and how fortunate is the one who employs all his faculties in obedience to his Lord, until he returns after estrangement from truth to tranquility and familiarity.

We seek refuge in the Lord of mankind, the King of mankind, the God of mankind, from the evil of the whisperer who withdraws, who whispers in the hearts of mankind, whether from jinn or mankind.

We had previously mentioned aspects of the knowledge of prayer, hoping that its benefits would be gathered therein, and our purpose was to demonstrate that the Sacred Law is structured upon the numerical principles we have described. So now listen to what is recited to you regarding the meaning of doubt and forgetfulness in prayer.

Forgetfulness in prayer occurs in seven situations, six of which are corrected by the two prostrations of forgetfulness, known as the "two humbling prostrations," so named because they humiliate Satan when they repair the corruption of forgetfulness.

For example: if one forgets a prostration, he performs it when he remembers, and then performs the two prostrations of forgetfulness. If one forgets the first sitting for the testimony (tashahhud) and stands for the third unit, then upon remembering before bowing, he sits and performs the testimony, and after completing the prayer he performs the two prostrations of forgetfulness for the missed sitting. If one forgets the final testimony and ends the prayer by greeting (salam), he performs the two prostrations of forgetfulness. If one forgets and gives salām after two units in a four-unit prayer, he completes the remaining two units and then performs the prostrations of forgetfulness. If one forgets behind the imam, there is no forgetfulness upon him, for the imam carries it on his behalf.

These are the seven cases of forgetfulness that are corrected.

As for doubt in prayer, it is something that confuses many jurists, who assume it is like forgetfulness, but it is not so. The one who forgets is certain of what he missed, whereas the one who doubts has no certainty.

Doubt occurs in twelve forms. Some of them require the prostrations of forgetfulness, while others require nothing. As for those requiring prostration: if a person doubts whether he has bowed while still in prayer, he bows and

performs the two prostrations of forgetfulness. If he is unsure whether he is in the first or second unit, he builds upon certainty (the lesser number). Likewise, if he doubts between two and three, he builds upon the lesser. If he doubts between three and four, he completes the prayer and then performs two units while sitting and performs the prostrations of forgetfulness. If he doubts between two and four, he completes two units standing and performs the prostrations of forgetfulness.

As for cases in which nothing is required: if one doubts the opening takbīr after having already bowed, he continues and nothing is upon him. Likewise, doubt in recitation after bowing, or doubt in bowing after prostration, or doubt in the first prostration after the second, or doubt after the taslīm—none of these require anything.

The interpretation of this is that whoever believes in the Imam of his time and knows him as one of the purified members of the Prophet's household, and is certain of his connection to that sacred order and enters into his guidance in prayer, then his doubt does not invalidate his certainty nor alter the foundations of his religion. Rather, he discards doubt and builds upon certainty, for doubt does not remove established certainty.

The two prostrations of forgetfulness are like humbling Satan, reminding the believer, as God says: "Indeed, those who fear God—when a thought from Satan touches them, they remember and immediately see clearly."

Then follows the interpretation of the Qur'anic verse: "No! Indeed man transgresses when he sees himself self-sufficient. Surely to your Lord is the return."

The outward meaning of these verses is that wealth leads man to arrogance, so God commands him to return to his Lord on a Day in which rich and poor are equal, noble and lowly are alike, and in which a humble deed may raise one above another.

In the inner meaning, wealth is to the body what knowledge is to the soul. Just as wealth gives life and strength to bodies, knowledge gives life and perfection to souls. The scholar is not made arrogant by knowledge, because the more he knows, the more he realizes how much remains unknown, so he remains humble and constantly seeks learning. God says to His Prophet: "My Lord, increase me in knowledge."

The ignorant, however, becomes arrogant when he gains a little and believes he has become self-sufficient. Some rely on opinion and analogy instead of seeking knowledge from its rightful sources; others rely on their own reasoning and claim independence from divine authority. But when reason is exposed to the light of revelation, its truths become clear; and when it faces the darkness of ignorance, its possessor becomes arrogant and misled.

It is narrated from the Commander of the Faithful, Ali (peace be upon him), that the Messenger of God said: "The position of my household among you is like

the Ark of Noah—whoever boards it is saved, and whoever turns away from it is drowned. Learn from the scholars of my household, and through them you will be saved from the Fire.”

May God make you among those for whom goodness has been decreed and who have attained the highest ranks of divine favor. All praise is due to God, who grants success to those who seize the opportunity of obedience and love for the Ahl al-Bayt. Blessings be upon Muhammad, who was sent with a Book that silenced the eloquent, and upon Ali ibn Abi Talib, the defender of religion, and upon the Imams from their descendants, through whom God’s promise will be fulfilled. God is sufficient for us, and He is the best disposer of affairs.

Majlis Ten

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

Praise be to God, the Great, whom hidden thoughts and whispering suggestions cannot escape; the All-Knowing of what arises in the passing thoughts of doubts; the Wise, exalted above impurity and filth; the Forbearing, the All-Aware, from whom even the creeping of an ant in the darkest places is hidden.

And blessings upon the Noble, the Generous, the One who established the landmarks of the law and erased by them the signs of disbelief; Muhammad, whom God adorned with the noblest prophetic qualities and the finest garments.

And upon the one who continually fasted in intense heat and engaged in fierce struggle, Ali ibn Abi Talib, who is second to the Prophet and sixth among the successors.

And upon the Imams from their descendants, the offspring of the one of the cloak, those who possess the choicest virtues and rare excellences.

O believers, may God protect your hearts with the lamps of His intimacy and settle you in the seats of honor in His sacred presence. The winds sent forth bring glad tidings before His mercy, and the clouds of continuous wisdom have arisen; their watering has been beneficial and their pouring has brought benefit, so firm understandings have been established and knowledge refined. So recognize the right of blessings lest its rain of harm fall upon you.

We had mentioned from the divisions of prayer what the listener may have thought had been fully explained, and awaited our transition from it to

something else. Yet there remains mention of leadership (imamate), which is the greatest pillar of prayer.

Leadership in prayer is obligatory for seven distinct levels of rank in superiority. Ja'far al-Sadiq said: the people are led by the one who preceded them in migration; if they are equal, then the best of them in recitation; if equal in memorization of the Qur'an, then the most knowledgeable in jurisprudence; if equal in jurisprudence, then the oldest in age. The owner of the mosque has the greatest right to his mosque, and the appointed imam has priority over all of them. A woman may lead women in prayer, but she does not stand ahead of them; rather they stand on her right and left.

It is not permissible for twelve categories of men to lead in prayer: the sick does not lead the healthy; nor the leper; nor the one with severe skin disease; nor the insane; nor the one who has been legally punished; nor the child of fornication; nor the Bedouin does not lead the emigrant; nor the one in restricted condition over the unrestricted; nor the one performing dry ablution over those with full ablution; nor the mute over those who speak; nor the traveler over residents; nor those of differing status in lineage and affiliation. Each of these leads only those like him in condition.

We have presented from the weeks of prayer and their twelve what has not been mentioned before. The meaning of this is that its counterpart is the prayer of Abraham, peace be upon him, for he built the Sacred House and established the station, and God said: "Take from the station of Abraham a place of prayer." Thus the divisions of prayer were increased because of the origin of its model, for Abraham the Friend of God had many weeks and abundant sources. His descendants divided into two groups: a group from Isaac who continued in these divisions in orderly succession, each of them having twelve proofs; and a group from Ishmael who are superior through our Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him and his family, who is superior to the descendants of Isaac. Among them is the righteous servant whom Moses met at the junction of the two seas, and Moses was unable to accompany him and saw from his actions what his penetrating understanding fell short of grasping. Some said they were idolaters, and among what is narrated from the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, is that they were transferred from noble loins to pure wombs and came forth from lawful marriage, not from fornication. The view not rejected by either group is that they were entrusted with the light of the Messenger of God, which continued to pass through them until it reached him. We will mention further explanation of this in its proper place.

And the recitation reached His saying: "Have you seen the one who forbids a servant when he prays? Have you seen if he is upon guidance or enjoins piety? Have you seen if he denies and turns away? Does he not know that God sees? No indeed, if he does not desist, We will seize him by the forelock, a lying, sinful forelock."

The one who is intended here among those who forbade prayer, according to reliable transmitters, is Abu Jahl ibn Hisham—may God curse him—who denied and turned away, while the one who was praying and upon guidance was the Messenger of God, peace be upon him. Abu Jahl met the Prophet in Mecca before the migration and said: "O Muhammad, have I not forbidden you from prayer?" The Prophet rebuked him and said: "Do you not know that God sees? If you do not desist, We will seize you by your lying, sinful forelock and cast you into a blazing fire."

Abu Jahl said: "I have the greatest gathering in this valley; do you fear I will call them to support me against you?" So God revealed: "Let him call his council; We will call the guards." And they are not the nineteen mentioned by God in His saying "Over it are nineteen," for those are the keepers over it who warn against it and intercede for those among their followers whom they witness therein, whereas the guards here are of the second rank of angels mentioned after them when God said: "None knows the soldiers of your Lord except Him." When this disbeliever boasted of his assembly, God informed His Prophet that He would summon against him the guards whom none knows except Him because of their number.

Then His saying: "No indeed, do not obey him," meaning do not obey him in what he forbids you from prayer.

And His saying: "Prostrate and draw near," meaning: prostrate and draw near to God through your prostration. For this reason the Messenger of God said: the closest a servant is to his Lord is while he is prostrating.

It is narrated from some of the pure Imams that he said: O people, whoever seeks knowledge is guided, and whoever submits is saved, and whoever is ignorant of the signs of God doubts, and whoever deviates from them is destroyed. Do not dispute lest you go astray; and seek guidance so you may be guided. Follow them so you may be rightly directed. Among you is the remaining proof of God, which is best for you if you are believers. Hold firmly to the rope of God all together and do not divide. Remember God's favor upon you when you were enemies and He united your hearts, so you became brothers by His favor, and you were on the edge of a pit of fire and He saved you from it.

May God make you among those who see with the eye of certainty and travel upon the straight path to God.

And praise be to God, the Exalted in majesty, Lord of the Throne, Creator of humans, jinn, birds, and beasts.

And blessings upon Muhammad, who forbade what is unlawful through eloquent exhortation and severe authority; and upon Ali ibn Abi Talib, whose heart God filled with certainty and sincerity, empty of doubt and deceit; and upon the Imams from their descendants, those who established faith as firm bedding and spreading.

And peace in abundance. God is sufficient for us, and He is the best disposer of affairs. And there is no power and no strength except with God, the Most High, the Most Great.

Majlis Eleven

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

Praise be to God, the One who bestows the most noble benefits upon the people of monotheism and sincerity, and the One hoped in for removing hardships when there is no escape, whose action is just in both forgiveness and retribution.

And blessings upon the best of His creation, His Messenger Muhammad, the most noble of the people of purity and distinction, the most generous of those who rode horses and swift camels; and upon his وصي (successor), Ali ibn Abi Talib—peace be upon him—whose protection is the only refuge from salvation and deliverance except through his loyal followers from deviation and reversal; and upon the Imams from their descendants, who are the most noble subtleties placed in the most honored persons.

O believers, may God guide you to the path of salvation and safety, and raise you to fulfill the rights of leadership (imamate).

Indeed, in the sky is that which returns again and again; when it comes back it pours its water upon the earth that is split open, and thereby replaces the lands with what descends upon them of rain, bringing forth varieties of plants and flowers, spreading through hills and mounds, providing sustenance for humans and livestock—this is a lesson for those of understanding, a reminder for the wise, and a sign for those of insight regarding His manifest wisdom and a proof for those of sight of His tremendous power.

When we concluded the mention of the jurisprudence of prayer up to the point of explanation—wherein the outward meaning is clarified and the inner meaning is hinted at—we now follow it with what we recite to you regarding the

supplications after prayer, and what is contained in them of the seven and the twelve according to what we previously explained.

Among them are:

the supplication of reconciliation,
the supplication of seeking refuge,
the supplication of humility,
the supplication of devotion,
the supplication of pleading,
the supplication of earnest entreaty,
the supplication of dusting (tadharru'),
and again the supplication of reconciliation.

In the supplication of reconciliation, the supplicant spreads his hands and places the palms facing his face.

In the supplication of seeking refuge, he grasps his shoulders with his hands, and this is not done except in solitude.

In the supplication of devotion, he gestures with the index finger.

In the supplication of pleading, he moves the finger.

In the supplication of earnest entreaty, he raises his hands toward the sky.

In the supplication of dusting, he supplicates while his cheeks are placed upon the ground.

Each of these seven supplications has meanings we have mentioned in the Qur'an, which we will return to when we explain what we have already recited, for all that we have mentioned are like the roots of trees awaiting the branching of their limbs and the arrival of their fruits.

As for the twelve, they are the foundations of supplication and the basis of construction.

It is necessary for whoever intends that his supplication be answered to precede it with repentance from the forbidden things of God, or with charity he gives, or fasting, or prayer. For God, the Exalted, says: "To Him ascends the good word, and righteous action raises it."

Then he must make his intention sincere in supplication, turn to it with his entire heart, begin by praising God and extolling Him as He deserves, and send blessings upon the Prophet—peace be upon him and his family—in the beginning, middle, and end of the supplication.

He should draw near to God by mentioning the Imams of the religion, naming them one by one until he reaches the Imam of his time, and through them and by means of them he seeks access to Him in the answering of his supplication. Then he asks for the good of this world and the hereafter, and seeks refuge from the evil of this world and the hereafter, and then supplicates for whatever he wishes.

These are the foundations of supplication.

We had previously mentioned in the earlier majlis that the “Zabāniyah” are not the nineteen mentioned on the surface, and that they are from the second group whom God refers to in His saying: “None knows the soldiers of your Lord except Him.”

And there remains another group: the guardians (khazanah), and their likeness in Paradise.

God says:

“The disbelievers will be driven to Hell in groups until, when they reach it, its gates are opened and its keepers say to them: Did there not come to you messengers from among yourselves...? They said: Yes, but the decree of punishment has been fulfilled upon the disbelievers. So enter the gates of Hell to abide therein—how evil is the dwelling of the arrogant.”

And He says:

“And those who feared their Lord will be driven to Paradise in groups until, when they reach it and its gates are opened, its keepers say to them: Peace be upon you; you have been purified, so enter it to abide therein.”

In this place there is a hidden treasure of wisdom known only to those whom God has favored with divine grace: namely, that when He mentioned Paradise He said “and its gates were opened” with an added wāw (and).

The reason for this is that the gates of Hell are seven, while the gates of Paradise are eight.

And the Qur’an has come in several places with the addition of a wāw for the eighth element in enumerations, such as:

- “They will say: Three, the fourth of them is their dog... and they say: Five, the sixth of them is their dog... and they say: Seven, and the eighth of them is their dog.”

And in the description of the believers:

“...the repentant, the worshippers, the praisers, the travelers, the bowing, the prostrating, the enjoiners of good and forbidders of evil...”

And in the description of women:

“...Muslim women, believing women, devout, repentant, worshipping, fasting, widows and virgins.”

Thus the eighth is marked with the wāw.

And because of what the Qur’an has indicated in this addition related to the eighth, we hope for an increase in the strengthening of our Imam of the time—peace be upon him—for he is the eighth among the noble successors. And we ask God to open for him all lands, unite all servants upon obedience to him, and fulfill His promise to him, for God does not break His promise.

It is narrated from Abu Ja’far Muhammad ibn Ali al-Baqir—peace be upon him—that he said:

The Messenger of God—peace be upon him—was asked by some of his companions. They said: We fear hypocrisy regarding the Messenger of God.

He said: Why is that?

They said: When we are with you and hear your speech, our hearts soften, we are filled with awe, we forget the world and become ascetic, as if we are seeing the Hereafter, Paradise, and Hell. But when we leave you and enter our homes and see our children and women and mix with people, that state leaves us, and we fear that this is hypocrisy.

The Messenger of God said: No. That is only from the footsteps of Satan to make you forget the world. If you remained in the state you described, the angels would shake hands with you and you would walk upon water. Were it not that you sin and then seek forgiveness, God would create a people who would sin and then seek forgiveness, and He would forgive them.

Have you not heard His saying: "Indeed God loves those who repent and loves those who purify themselves"?

May God make you among those whom He purifies inwardly and outwardly, and who are sincere to His friends in what they declare and conceal.

And praise be to God, who if He raises none can lower, if He acts none can annul, and if He gives or withholds none can repel His command or oppose Him.

And blessings upon His Messenger Muhammad, the source of the path of the Sunnah and obligations, through whom the argument against the polytheists is made void; and upon his وصي Ali ibn Abi Talib, the sea of overflowing knowledge and the lightning of radiant religion; and upon the Imams from their descendants, who by the light of their proof remove every obscure difficulty.

And peace in abundance.

God is sufficient for us, and He is the best guardian, the best master, and the best helper. There is no power and no strength except with God, the Most High, the Most Great.

The Twelfth Session

In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful

Praise be to God, the One accustomed to pardoning lapses and errors; renowned for overlooking those who have fallen short in striving and have been negligent; whose vengeance is feared by those who expose themselves to His wrath and indignation; who forbids despair of His mercy and hopelessness.

May God bless His Messenger, Muḥammad, sent with the tolerant religion in which there is neither hardship nor excess; who removed from the earth the defilement of unbelief that had covered it before his mission. And upon 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, peace be upon him, the first to believe in God and His Messenger and to enter the path of the Imamate; and upon the Imams from their descendants, from whom the sciences of religion are derived and deduced.

O believers, may God raise you up by reminding you of the abundant blessings He has bestowed upon you, and assist you in fulfilling the obligation He has

placed upon you through the guardianship (*walāya*) of His chosen saints, the noble Imams. Compete in lofty aspirations, and ascend through the gardens of wisdom. God has made you members of a community that is the best of nations, has distinguished you through the Imam of your age—peace be upon him—with the most perfect blessings, and has apportioned to you, in his radiant days, a share of grace. Therefore adorn yourselves with the finest ornaments of the God-fearing and become learned in the landmarks of the Sacred Law.

For God, exalted is He, called upon a group of the believers to gain understanding in His religion, saying—and He is the most truthful of speakers: "It is not for the believers to go forth all together. Rather, let a group from every party go forth to gain understanding in religion, and to warn their people when they return to them, so that they may beware."

You have already heard what we recited to you concerning the jurisprudence of *walāya*, purification, and prayer, by which, together with the Qur'an, the sincerity of the testimony of faith—which is the foundation of religion and worship, and the first cause of mercy and felicity—is perfected.

Now listen to what we recite concerning *zakāt*, which is among its prescribed obligations, as previously mentioned. The sincerity of its performance consists in knowing its noble limits and fulfilling its prescribed rights by observing the seven obligations that are among the pillars of Islam, according to the arrangement we have already explained.

In *zakāt* likewise there are seven obligations and twelve established practices, corresponding to the divisions and letters of the testimony of faith.

Zakāt must be collected by the Imam. It is taken from seven things: gold, silver, camels, cattle, sheep, crops, and minerals.

It is distributed among eight named categories, which are divided into seven groups: the poor and the needy, to whom charity is given; those employed to collect it, who receive from it the wages of the collectors; those whose hearts are to be reconciled, who are given from it to strengthen their support; for the freeing of slaves, by which those in bondage are emancipated; those burdened with debt, whose liabilities are discharged if they are people of the *walāya*; in the path of God, meaning the *jihād* that is a communal obligation; and the stranded traveller who has been cut off from his way.

As for its twelve established practices, the first is that it should not be taken before the completion of the year. The minimum amount (*niṣāb*) for gold is twenty dinars; for silver, two hundred dirhams; for camels, five grazing camels; for cattle, thirty head; and for sheep, forty head.

The *zakāt* should be taken from animals of average quality, neither from the finest nor the poorest. Scattered property should not be combined, nor combined property separated, in order to affect the assessment. Nor should an animal be taken that is reserved for breeding.

The owner of crops should also give charity from what does not reach the minimum amount—which is five *awsuq*—by giving a handful or a sheaf at the time of harvest, in accordance with the saying of God, exalted is He:

"And give its due on the day of its harvest."

There is no *zakāt* upon houses, ornaments, or anything kept for personal use. For every statement in this discourse there are abundant meanings and many wisdoms. We intend to mention some of them.

For *zakāt* is the fourth obligation among the obligations of Islam, and it symbolizes the first to call to it among the possessors of the revealed laws: Moses the Speaker with God, peace be upon him, in the saying of God, exalted is He:

"Go to Pharaoh, for he has transgressed. Then say: 'Will you purify yourself?'"

The seven obligations we have mentioned symbolize the Imams of his cycle, peace be upon him, while its twelve established practices symbolize the twelve tribes as nations, representing the twelve Proofs (*ḥujaj*) of his age, concerning whom God, exalted is He, said:

"And We divided them into twelve tribes as nations,"

and,

"We caused twelve springs to gush forth from the rock."

We shall return to this subject in its proper place with explanations beneficial to the attentive listener.

When we had completed, through recitation and the connected exposition, the *Sūrah "Recite in the Name of your Lord Who created,"* we returned to that which we had stipulated we would return to from the Wise Remembrance, and we began with what we regard as standing at the beginning of every *sūrah*, namely:

"In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful. Alif Lām Mīm. That is the Book wherein there is no doubt, a guidance for the God-fearing."

Many interpretations have been transmitted concerning the explanation of this verse, each of those who preceded us mentioning one of its aspects. We have already said that the meanings of the Qur'an are inexhaustible and never reach their ultimate limit, especially in light of what has been related from Abū 'Abd Allāh Ja'far ibn Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq, peace be upon him. When someone questioned him concerning a matter in which his answers differed, he said:

"We answer a single question with seven answers."

The questioner asked, "With seven, O son of the Messenger of God?"

He replied, "Yes—and with seventy."

The reason for this is that the answer is according to the circumstances of those who ask and the capacity of those who seek benefit. For the Imams, peace be upon them, are the physicians of the world: in every age they impart to the people what they deserve and teach them that by which they may benefit.

Your own age, O company of believers, has been enriched through the blessings of your Imam by what we recite to you. Therefore listen to it, reflect upon its meanings, contemplate it, and recognize the worth of the blessing bestowed through it, that you may preserve it.

His saying, exalted is He, "**Alif Lām Mīm**": the **Alif** here is an indication of the primordial Pen in the act of origination. Since the first of created things was the Pen, it was alluded to by the first letter of the alphabet, the *alif*, whose upright form and pointed extremity resemble the pen found in this world.

The **Lām** is an indication of the Tablet (*al-Lawḥ*), which follows it, and *lām* is the first letter of its name.

The **Mīm** symbolizes that which is inscribed upon the Tablet, over which the Pen passes in writing.

God, exalted is He, then pointed to that which had become inscribed upon the Tablet and informed us what it is, saying:

"That is the Book wherein there is no doubt, a guidance for the God-fearing."

By referring to that which is written in the Preserved Tablet, He indicated to us that the Mighty Qur'an proceeds from it. He clarified this elsewhere, saying:

"Rather, it is a glorious Qur'an, in a Preserved Tablet."

And He, exalted is He, also said:

"Indeed it is a noble Qur'an, in a concealed Book, which none touch except the purified."

Some of the commentators held that by "the Book" here He meant the Preserved Tablet, and by "the purified" the angels, since His saying "**none touch it**" is a statement informing us that none touch this hidden Book except the angels, who are pure by their very nature and creation.

Others maintained that God intended by "the concealed Book" the Qur'an contained within the written codex (*muṣḥaf*), and that His saying, "**none touch it except the purified,**" is a command expressed in the form of a statement—that is, none among mankind should touch it except those who are in a state of ritual purity, not one who is in a state of major ritual impurity or menstruation. In our view, both opinions are sound. The Preserved Tablet is touched only by the purified angels, and likewise this Book, which contains what proceeds from it, should be touched only by those among mankind who are purified, not by those who have defiled themselves through deeds from which God has protected and preserved the angels.

The Commander of the Faithful, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, peace be upon him, instructed in his testament:

"I enjoin upon my children, the people of my household, and all the believers, to fear their Lord. God! God! Concerning the *zakāt*, for it extinguishes the anger of your Lord."

And from the Messenger of God, may God bless him and his Family:

"No wealth has ever perished on land or at sea except through the withholding of *zakāt*. Therefore fortify your wealth with *zakāt*, treat your sick with charity, and repel affliction through supplication."

May God make you among those who prosper and purify themselves, who remember the name of their Lord and so pray.

Praise be to God, Knower of the hidden before it appears in words, fully aware of the secrets concealed within breasts and the furtive glances of the eyes.

May God bless His Messenger Muḥammad, sent to awaken mankind from the slumber of heedlessness, to call them to take admonition from those who passed before them and to receive instruction.

And upon his legatee, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, peace be upon him, who is mercy to the believers and a blazing fire to the hypocrites.

And upon the Imams from their descendants, who are the guardians and keepers of God's religion.

Peace be upon them all.

God is sufficient for us, and He is the best Trustee.

The Thirteenth Session

In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful

Praise be to God, the All-Powerful, whose majesty has been exalted and risen high; the Helper, whose bounty has become abundant and brought forth prosperity; the All-Aware, who perfected what He fashioned and brought into being; the All-Seeing, who governs what He gives and what He withholds. There is no god but God, who holds the heaven lest it fall upon the earth.

May God bless the bearer of glad tidings, announcing the security that follows the Day of Terror; the warner, cautioning against the dread of the Day of Rising; Muḥammad, His Messenger, by whose radiant proof the difficulties that had obscured mankind were dispelled. And upon the minister who hastened in every matter of benefit and harm, the supporter who crushed the people of polytheism and innovation, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, the first to believe in God and the foremost follower of His Messenger. And upon the Imams from their descendants, before whom the Fire casts its flames upon hearts. Peace be upon them all, as long as stars rise and set, and as long as men prostrate and bow.

O believing women, may God guide you upon the path of the people of religion and piety, and benefit you through devotion to your Imams, by whose love you attain benefit. When the rains of knowledge poured down upon those endowed with insight, the grateful received them eagerly while the estranged found comfort in them. Their place is exalted among those who possess true knowledge, and their rank is elevated among those gifted with discernment, for they are a blessing unclouded by anything that might mar it, and a source of knowledge unsullied by any admixture.

When, in the previous session, we mentioned the *zakāt* that is obligatory upon those who possess wealth, we followed it by mentioning the *zakāt* that is incumbent upon every household and upon those of modest means who give it in charity, namely the *zakāt al-fiṭr*. It consists of seven obligations and twelve established practices.

Its obligations are that a man gives it on behalf of himself, his adult dependants and his children, his wives, his servants, both male and female.

Its established practices are that he gives from the average of what he himself eats: one *ṣāʿ* of wheat, or one *ṣāʿ* of barley, or one *ṣāʿ* of dates, or one *ṣāʿ* of raisins. Half a *ṣāʿ* of wheat suffices, whereas nothing less than a full *ṣāʿ* suffices for the other kinds. A *ṣāʿ* consists of four *mudds*. It should be delivered to the Imam, peace be upon him, or to one appointed by the Imam. It should be paid before the breaking of the fast. Whoever delays its payment must make it up afterward. Whoever lacks food may give its value in silver or gold. A woman who has no husband gives it on behalf of herself and those whom she supports. What we have recited has required that we mention the *fiṭra* before its proper season. When, by God's power, we reach its appointed time, we shall present, by His success, a full explanation of its meaning.

You have heard recited to you the words:

"That is the Book wherein there is no doubt, a guidance for the God-fearing."

Now listen to the description of the God-fearing, for whom God, exalted is He, has made this Book a guidance. God, the Mighty and Most Generous, says, continuing what has preceded:

"Those who believe in the unseen, establish prayer, spend from what We have provided them, believe in what has been sent down to you and what was sent down before you, and are certain of the Hereafter. Those are upon guidance from their Lord, and those are the successful."

His saying, exalted is He, **"They believe in the unseen"**: the unseen here is the hidden knowledge of the Sacred Law, which God has concealed from all except its rightful possessors. It is the concealed inner knowledge (*ʿilm al-bāṭin*) of which the Commander of the Faithful, ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, peace be upon him, spoke when he described the Qur'an, saying:

"Its outward aspect is obligatory knowledge, and its inward aspect is concealed knowledge."

For us, that knowledge is known and recorded.

Thus, those who believe in the unseen are those who establish prayer in its true reality. Whoever performs only the outward obligation of prayer but does not believe in its concealed inner meaning is not among those whom God described in this verse by saying:

"They believe in the unseen and establish prayer."

Likewise, whoever performs the outward prayer and believes in its inward meaning, yet does not spend from what God has provided him—through the *zakāt* of his wealth, the *khums* of his earnings, the purchase of his own soul, and the ransom of his pledge—falls short of the excellence with which God describes those of whom He says:

"And from what We have provided them they spend."

In proportion to the generosity with which a person's soul gives in this spending, so does he distinguish himself by drawing near to the people of excellence and joining their ranks.

His saying:

"And those who believe in what has been sent down to you and what was sent down before you,"

possesses an outward meaning, while its inner interpretation will be explained later. Thus God praised those who believe in the outward aspect, which has an inward reality, just as He praised those who believe in the inward reality, which has an outward expression.

Then He said:

"Those are upon guidance from their Lord, and those are the successful."

Thus He combined for them guidance and success, leading to triumph and salvation.

Therefore strive, O believing women, in performing good deeds. Compete in acts of obedience. Increase your store of enduring righteous works, that you may attain lofty ranks and enter exalted gardens wherein are raised couches, arranged cushions, spread carpets, flowing rivers, leafy trees, graceful branches, and fruits hanging low, dwelling beside the pure and righteous Household.

"That is the end of those who are God-fearing, while the end of the unbelievers is the Fire."

It is related from the Commander of the Faithful, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, peace be upon him, that the Messenger of God, may God bless him and his Family, said:

"When God desires good for one of His servants, He sends to him an angel from among the keepers of Paradise, who wipes his breast, whereupon his soul becomes generous in giving *zakāt*. The worshipper possesses three signs: *zakāt*, fasting, and prayer."

And it is also related from him, may God bless him and his Family, that the Messenger of God forbade a man from concealing the *zakāt* of his wealth from his Imam, saying that concealing it is a mark of hypocrisy.

May God make you among those who strive in obedience to their Lord and who give wealth, despite loving it, to those near of kin.

Praise be to God, the Possessor of immense and overflowing blessings and perfect, all-reaching wisdom.

May God bless His Messenger Muḥammad, sent to guide those who had strayed from the truth, distinguished by manifest miracles and perfect intellect. And upon his legatee, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, peace be upon him, who never ceased to be upon faith, whether as a child or as a mature man, and who strove tirelessly in the support of religion. And upon the Imams from their descendants, who are an all-encompassing mercy for the believers and an overwhelming punishment for the unbelievers.

Peace be upon them all.

The Fourteenth Session

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Praise be to God, who by His might originated the marvels of creation; who by His mercy gave glad tidings to those who devoted themselves sincerely to His oneness and confessed it; who by His guidance made clear the path of justice and equity; and who by His will caused abundant springs to gush forth from solid rocks with pure flowing water.

May God bless the one who made God's religion manifest and called to it with the finest qualities; who exhausted, by his warnings, the excuses of the people of unbelief and excess—Muhammad, His Messenger, the master of the noble, the best of the descendants of ‘Abd Manāf. And upon him who strove in the cause of God, fought the people of deviation and error, and forsook all relatives and forefathers in support of Islam and faith—‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (peace be upon him), the reliever of distress and remover of affliction. And upon the Imams from their descendants, the men of assistance, through whose allegiance what is feared and dreaded is repelled. Peace be upon them. May He grant you insight into the meanings of His verses, all of which are healing and sufficient. Indeed, earnest striving is the companion of attainment, while negligence is the companion of destruction. Therefore strive for deliverance and salvation, that you may attain the company of the angels.

We have already recited to you the divisions of almsgiving (zakāt) corresponding to what preceded, from which understanding brings benefit. We shall now recite to you concerning fasting (ṣawm), which is divided into categories, among them seven obligatory fasts and twelve recommended practices.

The obligatory fasts are: the fast of the month of Ramaḍān each year; fasting two consecutive months for one who deliberately breaks a day of Ramaḍān and cannot free a slave; fasting two consecutive months for one who accidentally kills a believer if he cannot free a slave, together with paying blood money to the victim's family; fasting two consecutive months as expiation for ḡīḥār when one cannot free a slave; fasting three days as expiation for breaking an oath when one cannot provide food, clothing, or emancipation; the fast of the

pilgrim performing tamattu' who cannot find a sacrificial animal, which is ten days; and the fast of a vowed fast (nadhr).

As for the fasts of the Sunnah and recommendation: the fast of spiritual retreat (i'tikāf); fasting during Sha'bān; fasting every Thursday at the beginning of the month; fasting the middle Wednesday of the month; fasting the last Thursday of the month; fasting the three white days; the fast of David (peace be upon him), namely fasting one day and breaking the next, which is the most strenuous form of fasting; fasting Friday joined either to Thursday or Saturday, without singling out Friday alone; fasting the Day of 'Arafah for one who is not a pilgrim; training a child to fast when he reaches seven years of age; the fast prescribed as compensation for hunting, which varies according to the judgment of those whom God has entrusted with judgment; and the fast required for shaving the head because of injury or illness.

There is much more concerning fasting, which we shall present, if God brings us to its proper time, so that knowledge and practice may each come in their proper season, by God's help and beneficence.

You have heard what was recited to you concerning the description of the believers. Now listen to what follows regarding the description of their opposites in religion and those who differ from them among mankind. God, the Most Truthful of speakers, says, in sequence with what has preceded in the recitation and explanation:

"Indeed, those who disbelieve—it is all the same to them whether you warn them or do not warn them—they will not believe. God has sealed their hearts and their hearing, and over their sight is a covering, and for them is a great punishment."

Disbelief (kufr) means to cover or conceal something. Thus it is said that someone "covered" a blessing when he concealed it. God also calls the farmer a *kāfir* because he covers the seed with the soil, as in His saying:

"Like rain whose vegetation pleases the farmers."

The commentators are unanimous that "the farmers" (*al-kuffār*) here means the cultivators. Their covering of the seed resembles the covering of the truths of religion by the unbeliever.

Thus the meaning of His saying, "It is all the same to them whether you warn them or do not warn them—they will not believe," is that He intended particular people who had recognized the truth and deliberately concealed it. Warning them or leaving them unwarned is the same, for warning benefits only one who is ignorant of something, so that when warned he returns to the truth. But one who knows it, conceals it, recognizes the religion and rejects it—warning does not benefit him, nor will he believe in what he has denied.

God's informing His Messenger that certain people would never believe, that warning would not benefit them, and that they would die in unbelief and obstinacy, thereby deserving entry into the Fire, is itself a miracle of

prophethood. They possessed the ability to profess faith and thereby appear to falsify what had been revealed concerning them in the Qur'an—such as Abū Lahab and his wife, concerning whom God declared that they would enter the Fire in His words:

"He shall enter a Fire of blazing flame, and his wife, the carrier of firewood."

Had it been possible for either of them to change their condition, the certainty established by the sūrah would have been nullified. Instead, their persistence after God had informed them of their ultimate state became a tremendous miracle and a powerful challenge to anyone who imagined he could alter what God had declared: that he would die persisting in disbelief and could not go beyond what God had foretold, though he outwardly possessed the ability. The Qur'an contains many passages of this kind, whose meanings we shall explain fully when we reach them, if God wills—He whose help we seek and upon whom we rely.

It is related from Abū 'Abd Allāh Ja'far ibn Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) that he said one day to some of his followers:

"You have loved us while people hated us. You befriended us while people opposed us. You maintained ties with us while people severed them. Therefore may God make your life our life and your death our death. By God, there is nothing between one of you and the delight of his eye except that his soul reaches this place"—and he pointed to his throat. "Are you not content that you pray and your prayer is accepted, while theirs is not accepted? By God, prayer, almsgiving, fasting, pilgrimage, striving in God's cause, and every act of righteousness are accepted only from you. The people took from here and there, but you took from where the Messenger of God and the friends of God took. God chose Muḥammad from among His servants, and you have chosen what God chose. So fear God, fulfill the trust, and you shall be successful."

It is also related from him (peace be upon him) that he said:

"Shall I not tell you of the good deed by which whoever performs it will be safe from the Greatest Terror on the Day of Resurrection, and the evil deed by which whoever commits it will be cast headlong into the Fire?"

They said, "Indeed, O son of the Messenger of God."

He replied:

"The good deed is love for us, and the evil deed is hatred for us."

May God make you among those who prepare well for themselves, who make up today for what they neglected yesterday, and who make allegiance to their Imams the provision for the repose of their graves.

Praise be to God, the One, the Creator, the Glorious, the Provider, who bestows blessings before they are deserved and guarantees sustenance for all creation. May blessings be upon Muḥammad, His Messenger, who dispelled the darkness of night and annihilated the people of idolatry and discord, who was carried by night upon al-Burāq; and upon the distinguisher between the people of faith

and hypocrisy, the reconciler of those endowed with insight and harmony, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (peace be upon him), for whom the covenant was taken on the Day of Ghadīr; and upon the Imams from their descendants, noble in soul and character, pure in lineage and root. Peace be upon them all. God alone is sufficient for us.

The Fifteenth Session

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Praise be to God, who originated what He created; all created things belong to Him as His dominion, and He is their most generous Master. He is exalted above what He has fashioned, far beyond the need for any helper or partner therein. There is no god but He, who overlooks the lapses of His servants through His encompassing forgiveness.

May God bless him through whom the various obligations of religion and the practices of the sacred rites were brought together, uniting everlasting bliss with deliverance from destruction—Muḥammad, His Messenger, who by that with which he proclaimed the truth shattered every falsehood of every obstinate unbeliever. And upon the one who uprooted the gate of Khaybar and cast down champions upon the battlefields, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (peace be upon him), the boldest warrior and the most humble worshipper. And upon the Imams from their descendants, the adornment of states and kingdoms, whom God purified and blessed—blessed is He who bestows blessings. Peace be upon them all, accompanied by the seeking of forgiveness by the angels.

O believers, may God guide you by the straightest roads and paths to His obedience, and join you to those whom He rewarded for their patience with Paradise and silk, reclining therein upon couches.

Indeed, in the deep darkness of the night, when it grows still, lets down its veils, and wraps itself in the garments of its shadows and gloom, then suddenly its lights break forth and its radiance shines—therein is evidence of the power of the Creator who brings things into being, testimony to the wisdom of Him who governs both the hidden and the manifest, and a lesson for those possessed of reflection and insight. Out of His mercy He made for you the night and the day, that you might rest therein, seek of His bounty, and perhaps give thanks.

We had stipulated that, concerning each of the seven obligations that are the pillars of Islam, we would mention seven obligations and twelve recommended practices. We have now reached the pilgrimage (ḥajj), whose sevens are many. We shall therefore confine ourselves to what is rare and noteworthy. Among its commonly known sevens are that the circumambulation of the House consists of seven circuits, the going between al-Ṣafā and al-Marwah consists of seven passages, and each of the stone pillars is pelted with seven pebbles. This is well known.

What we shall mention, because knowledge of it is needed, is that the pilgrim performing *tamattu'* or *qirān* stands at seven stations: he enters the state of consecration from the appointed station (*mīqāt*), circumambulates the House, goes between *al-Ṣafā* and *al-Marwah*, proceeds to *Minā*, stands at *ʿArafāt*, departs to *Muzdalifah*, and passes to the stoning places in order to cast the pebbles.

Likewise, when the pilgrim enters the state of consecration, seven things become forbidden to him: hunting, sexual intercourse, disputation, wearing sewn garments, cutting the hair, trimming the nails, and using perfume.

As for its recommended practices, they are twelve: that he enter consecration following every obligatory or supererogatory prayer; that he remove sewn garments and wear the two garments of consecration; that he not cover his head or face; that he pronounce the *talbiyah* aloud, raising his voice, saying the four phrases:

"*Labbayka Allāhumma labbayk. Lā sharīka laka labbayk. Inna al-ḥamda wa al-niʿmata laka wa al-mulk. Lā sharīka laka labbayk.*"

When he sees the houses of Mecca he ceases the *talbiyah*, pronounces the *takbīr* and the *tahlīl*, enters through the Gate of *Banū Shaybah*, and lets his first act be kissing the Black Stone. He performs the circumambulation with the House on his left side, greets the Corner whenever he passes it—whether by kissing it, touching it with his hand, or pointing toward it. He pours over himself water from the Well of *Zamzam* and drinks from it. He circumambulates outside the enclosure (*ḥijr*) and does not enter it.

We have composed a separate book concerning the rites of pilgrimage, and what it contains frees us from lengthy discussion here. It is available to whoever seeks it.

You have heard what we recited concerning the Book, the believers in it, and the unbelievers who reject it. At the beginning of this *sūrah*, *Sūrat al-Baqarah*, there are twenty verses: four concerning the believers, which we have already recited; two concerning the unbelievers, which we have explained; and fourteen concerning the hypocrites. Listen now to what we recite of them, so that you may avoid every characteristic with which God has described them.

God, besides whom there is no other deity, says, continuing from what we have already recited:

"Among the people are those who say, 'We believe in God and the Last Day,' but they are not believers. They seek to deceive God and those who believe, but they deceive none but themselves, though they do not perceive it. In their hearts is a disease, so God increased them in disease; and for them is a painful punishment because they used to lie."

This is the description of the hypocrites who turned aside from the clear path of truth, whose sight was dimmed from the light of guidance. They entered upon the way of right guidance, then turned away from it; the path of truth became

confused to them, and they were cut off from it. Each professed faith with his tongue but not with his heart, failing to realize, through the weakness of his certainty, that a person's conviction is among his greatest possessions. He deceived the believers with speech that was false, displayed outward acts that did not seek the Face of his Lord, and persisted in his hypocrisy and grievous sin.

God therefore informed us that in doing so they deceived only themselves, because no deed performed without true belief profits its doer. Rather, all of his works are rendered void, and their burden remains upon him.

God described their hearts as diseased because of the doubt lodged within them. The heart is the ruler of the body. It has seven pathways: five lead into it and two proceed from it. The five leading into it are sight, which conveys colors; hearing, which conveys sounds; smell, which conveys scents; taste, which conveys flavors; and touch. The two proceeding from it are the tongue, which conveys speech, and the hand, which conveys writing.

From one of those five pathways the diseases of the heart arise. The disease of the heart is difficult to perceive because it consists of hypocrisy and doubt.

Therefore God taught His Prophet how to recognize the disease of hearts despite their outward appearance of soundness. Thus God said:

"You shall surely recognize them by the tone of their speech."

And He also said:

"When they come to you, they greet you with a greeting with which God has not greeted you, and they say among themselves, 'Why does God not punish us for what we say?' Hell shall suffice them; they shall enter it, and wretched is that destination."

His saying,

"For them is a painful punishment because they used to lie,"

is an affirmation of divine justice, showing that He punished them only because they deserved it through their previous falsehood.

It is related through Jābir ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī that he said:

"By God, during the lifetime of the Messenger of God, we recognized the hypocrites only through their hatred for 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (peace be upon him)."

Another chain of transmission relates from Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī concerning God's saying,

"You shall surely recognize them by the tone of their speech,"

that he said:

"It refers, in some of them, to their attitude toward 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (peace be upon him)."

And from 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (peace be upon him) himself:

"The Messenger of God entrusted me with this: 'None shall love you except a believer, and none shall hate you except a hypocrite.'"

May God make you among those who are sincere in love and allegiance, and who avoid the conduct of the people of hypocrisy and ostentation.

Praise be to God, Possessor of majesty and glory, generosity and bounty, the Great and Most High. May blessings be upon Muḥammad, who erased the traces of unbelief and misguidance and called to obedience to his Lord by word and deed; upon ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (peace be upon him), the Lion of the battlefield and destroyer of champions, who gave generously before being asked; and upon the Imams from their descendants, the best household and family, distinguished by the perfection of every excellence. Peace be upon them. God is sufficient for us, and He is the best Disposer of affairs.

The Sixteenth Session

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Praise be to God, Possessor of abundant favors and mighty bounties, Creator of spirits and bodies, Bestower of intellects and understanding. There is no god but He, the Lord of Majesty and Honor. May God bless the one whom He distinguished with perfect excellence and honored with the loftiest station—Muḥammad, His Messenger, whom He made the noblest seal of the messengers. And upon the one who fasted in the scorching heat, stood in prayer by night, and was a lion on the day of battle, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, peace be upon him, the destroyer of the worshippers of idols and divining arrows. And upon the Imams from their progeny, the guides of mankind and the moons that shine in the darkness. Peace be upon them all, everlasting and enduring.

O believers, may God enrich you with gifts and blessings and benefit you through the guardianship (wilāya) of the chosen among His noble creation. Truly, the fortunate one is he who embraces the firm commands of religion, clings to the pillars of faith, makes the righteous of former generations his companions in reflection, and contemplates the deeds of those who came before him. Therefore, take heed from those who have passed away, imitate the deeds worthy of approval, and beware of becoming merely an example for others through your own negligence. Obey the Imams of religion so that you may join the footsteps of the rightly guided and be among the company of the God-fearing, of whom God said:

"Our Lord, we believe in what You have sent down, and we have followed the Messenger, so write us among the witnesses."

Since we began these sessions by explaining the excellence of the testimony that there is no god but God, and the numerical correspondences between its sections and letters with those found in wilāya, purification, almsgiving, fasting, and pilgrimage, we now proceed to jihād, which symbolizes the Imam known as al-Qā'im, peace be upon him, the ultimate object of hope and expectation.

Jihād is of two kinds:

the lesser jihād, which is the struggle of the body; and
the greater jihād, which is the struggle against the soul.

Just as every Imam is the Qā'im of his own age, while the final Qā'im, peace be upon him, awaits the appointed time.

The lesser jihād is divided into seven categories:

Fighting the worshippers of idols until they embrace Islam; no tribute (jizya) is accepted from them.

Fighting the Arab Christians until they either accept Islam or pay double the alms-tax (zakāt), since they were exempted from the jizya on the condition that they pay twice what Muslims pay in zakāt.

Fighting the Christians of Byzantium and Egypt until they either accept Islam or pay the jizya humbly and in submission.

Fighting the Jews until they either embrace Islam or pay the jizya in submission.

Fighting the Magians until they either embrace Islam, abandon marriage with their close female relatives, or pay the jizya.

In all five of these categories, those who fight are to be killed, their offspring taken captive, and their property becomes war booty.

Fighting the hypocrites until they return to obedience to the Imam, peace be upon him, and submit to the obligations of the divine law.

Fighting rebellious Muslims until they return to God's command. Those who fight among the hypocrites and rebels are to be killed, but their children are not taken captive.

The greater jihād is the struggle against the soul, and it consists of twelve divisions. The believer must strive against himself by:

restraining himself from passion,
directing himself toward guidance,
leading himself to piety,
adorning himself with love for the scholars,
remaining patient in obedience to God despite hardship,
practicing forbearance toward the foolish,
restraining himself from aggression in moments of anger,
enduring trials with patience,
praising God in adversity just as in prosperity,
cultivating forgiveness when able to retaliate, especially toward the weak,
avoiding the disgrace of pride and ostentation,
distancing himself from greed and immorality.

Whoever accomplishes these has exerted himself in seeking the company of the Highest Assembly.

You have heard, O believers, the description that was recited concerning the hypocrites—those who profess with their tongues what they do not truly believe in their hearts. This should move you to purify your souls from their evil conduct, keep your limbs from following their path, and fear their miserable end.

Now listen to the remainder of their description, and avoid the qualities with which God has characterized them. God, exalted is He, said, continuing the passage we have been explaining:

"And when it is said to them, 'Do not spread corruption upon the earth,' they say, 'We are only reformers.' Truly, it is they who are the corrupters, but they do not perceive. And when it is said to them, 'Believe as the people have believed,' they say, 'Shall we believe as the foolish have believed?' Truly, it is they who are the foolish, but they do not know. And when they meet those who believe, they say, 'We believe,' but when they are alone with their devils they say, 'Indeed we are with you; we were only mocking.' God mocks them and leaves them to wander blindly in their transgression."

Corruption upon the earth consists of any action that obstructs its proper course. Thus highway robbers are called "cutters of the road" because they prevent travelers from passing. Likewise, the hypocrites sought to block the path of guidance and turn people away from it. This is among the greatest forms of corruption upon the earth.

Yet despite this, they clothed themselves in the garments of righteousness, though the robe of hypocrisy cannot conceal what lies beneath it. They fail to perceive that their hypocrisy is evident to those who observe them. While imagining themselves reformers through their own judgment, they in fact become corrupters through what becomes manifest of their conduct.

His saying, "Indeed, they are the foolish, but they do not know," means that the fool is one who squanders his wealth and is ignorant of what benefits him. Thus God said:

"Do not give your property, which God has made a means of support for you, to the foolish."

This is a warning against those who squander wealth, concerning whom God also said:

"Indeed, the squanderers are brothers of the devils."

In the same way, He described these fools here, saying:

"When they are alone with their devils, they say: We are with you; we were only mocking."

The fool is likewise one who lacks skill in buying and selling, who does not know the proper conduct of trade and therefore exposes himself to great loss. Thus God described these foolish ones who squander and associate with devils:

"Those are the ones who have purchased error in exchange for guidance, so their trade has brought no profit, nor were they rightly guided."

Therefore beware, O believers, of the devils among men and jinn, for some of them inspire others with embellished speech as deception. Separate yourselves from the hypocrites and mockers, for God has declared that He mocks them, leaves them wandering in their transgression, and casts them into Hell—an evil destination.

Hold fast instead to the profitable quality of loyalty to your Imams, peace be upon them, and to sincere devotion toward them, so that you may attain everlasting bliss and drink of the sealed nectar.

It is related from Ja'far ibn Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq, peace be upon him, that he once said to some of his followers:

"On the Day of Resurrection we shall hold fast to the girdle of our Prophet, and you shall hold fast to ours. Where then do you suppose you will be taken?"

One of them replied:

"To Paradise, if God wills."

Al-Ṣādiq answered:

"To Paradise—by God, to Paradise."

May God make you among those who benefit from admonition and the testament, who avoid the opinions of the hypocrites and the misguided.

Praise be to God, the Lord of grace and beneficence, of power and sovereignty, the Creator of ages and times, who every day is engaged in a new affair. May He

bless His Messenger Muḥammad, distinguished by the clearest proof and favored with the revelation of the Qurʾān; and his legate, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, peace be upon him, the معدن (source) of courage and faith, whose obedience is obligatory upon mankind and the jinn; and the Imams from their descendants, who are the gates of wisdom and explanation and the means of mercy and forgiveness. Peace be upon them all.

God is sufficient for us, and He is the best Trustee.

The Seventeenth Session

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

Praise be to God, He by whose avoidance (of disobedience) one is protected, by whose guidance one is guided through guides, and by whose holding fast to His friends one is saved. There is no deity but Him, the One who answers the distressed when he calls upon Him. May God bless the one whom He supported and chose, raised his rank and elevated him: Muhammad, His Messenger, who clarified His revelation and conveyed it; and upon his successor, the one whom he joined by marriage and made his brother, and through whom he challenged those whom he invited to mutual imprecation: ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib, peace be upon him, concerning whom he said: “For whoever I am his master, then ‘Ali is his master. O God, befriend whoever befriends him and oppose whoever opposes him.” And upon the Imams from their descendants, those who have ascended the peaks and heights of glory, who have attained the utmost limits and ends of virtue. May peace and abundant blessings be upon all of them, a peace whose extent does not cease.

O believers, may God cause you to attain the banner of faith and adorn you with the gifts of His kindness. Indeed, the testimony that there is no deity but God is a light word upon the tongue, yet heavy in the balance, because of the meanings and explanations God has gathered within it. It is pleasing to the Most Merciful, humiliating to Satan. To it necks have submitted, difficulties have been humbled, through it the Arabs have spoken eloquently, and through it speech has been perfected and expanded.

The explanation of what we mentioned concerning its seven obligatory rights, corresponding to the number of its divisions, which are not to be broken, has already been completed. What remains are its twelve established practices (sunan), corresponding to the number of its letters, according to what we previously mentioned in defining it.

The first of them is **honoring one’s parents**.

God, the Exalted, said:

“And We have enjoined upon man kindness toward his parents. His mother carried him with hardship and gave birth to him with hardship...”

Thus, He commanded kindness toward both parents together, but He attributed to the child the deed of the mother in particular. And He said in another place: "And We have enjoined upon man [care] for his parents. His mother carried him, weakness upon weakness..."

Here as well, in these two places, the mother is relied upon in relation to the child because of her actions. And the one whom God, the Exalted, has distinguished by mention must be distinguished by honor and righteousness. Therefore, Christ, peace be upon him, took pride in his righteousness toward his mother when he spoke to the people in the cradle. He said, boasting before the people of doubt and denial:

"Indeed, I am the servant of God. He has given me the Scripture and made me a prophet. And He has made me blessed wherever I may be, and has enjoined upon me prayer and charity as long as I remain alive, and [He has made me] dutiful toward my mother, and He has not made me arrogant or miserable."

If someone says: "That was only because Christ, peace be upon him, had no father," we say: "You have spoken truthfully; Christ has no father. But if the cause in the case of Christ is what you have mentioned, then what is the cause of God revealing to Moses, peace be upon him, but not revealing to his father?" For He, Glorified is He, said:

"And We inspired the mother of Moses: 'Nurse him; and when you fear for him, cast him into the river, and do not fear and do not grieve. Indeed, We shall return him to you and make him one of the messengers.'"

And He said:

"So We returned him to his mother, so that her eye might be comforted and she might not grieve."

Yet He did not mention his father. Is this not a particularizing of the mother, a highlighting and honoring of her by mentioning her, and an indication of the greatness of her rank, so that her child would strive to honor her and be dutiful toward her?

The mother, in interpretation, possesses a magnificent rank by which the realities of revelation become sound. Because of this, the mother became more deserving of the child's guardianship than the father, and her family became more deserving of caring for him than the father.

For this reason also, the Prophet, may God bless him and his family, was called **the unlettered Prophet**. People have discussed this name and have given five explanations regarding it:

Some people said: He was called "the unlettered" because he did not write.

Some said: He was called "the unlettered" because he was from Umm al-Qurā, meaning Mecca.

Some said: He was called "the unlettered Prophet" because he was the prophet of the nation (ummah).

Some said: He was called “the unlettered” because his mother remained alive after the death of his father for a time, and thus she continued the virtue of caring for him, so he was attributed to her.

The people of true understanding hold the fifth explanation, for it reveals the reality of this meaning.

We shall present, God willing, with the help of the One who grants success, portions concerning honoring parents that will benefit the people of piety and religion.

The recitation had reached, concerning the description of the hypocrites, what necessitates their destruction and their dwelling in the lowest depth of the Fire, for they were more severe in crime than the disbelievers. Then comes what we are about to mention, so listen, O assembly of believers, and contemplate it. God, Possessor of might and authority, said, following what preceded in the recitation and explanation:

“Their example is like that of one who kindled a fire; when it illuminated what was around him, God took away their light and left them in darknesses, unable to see.

Deaf, dumb, blind — so they will not return.

Or like a rainstorm from the sky, within which are darknesses, thunder, and lightning. They put their fingers into their ears against the thunderclaps, fearing death. But God encompasses the disbelievers.

The lightning almost snatches away their sight. Whenever it gives them light, they walk in it; and when darkness falls upon them, they stand still. Had God willed, He could have taken away their hearing and their sight. Indeed, God is over all things powerful.”

This is the example that God, the Exalted, gave for the hypocrites: those who believe with their mouths but whose hearts do not believe; those who display faith among the believers and reveal hypocrisy among the hypocrites.

He compared what they display of the light of faith among the believers to the light of the one who kindled a fire, and when it illuminated what was around him, God took away their light. He made clear that when they display hypocrisy among the hypocrites, the light of faith leaves them, and they remain in the darkness of hypocrisy, unable to see.

And His saying:

“Or like a rainstorm from the sky, within which are darknesses, thunder, and lightning.”

This is a second example with the same meaning as the first. He compared the darknesses of the rainstorm to hypocrisy, and the light of the lightning to what they outwardly display of faith, so that they may walk by its light among the believers.

And His saying:

“They put their fingers into their ears against the thunderclaps, fearing death, and God encompasses the disbelievers.”

God, the Exalted, informed us of a people of Noah with something similar to this. He said, narrating from Noah, peace be upon him:

“And indeed, every time I called them so that You might forgive them, they placed their fingers in their ears...”

And God, the Exalted, said in another place:

“So they put their hands into their mouths and said: ‘Indeed, we disbelieve in that with which you have been sent.’”

The hands, the mouths, the fingers, and the ears are boundaries of expression, understood by the one who possesses a previous foundation in faith.

And when this noble gathering and this exalted station were established upon the believer who preceded and the one who responds and follows afterward, we made what we present into two divisions: indication and explanation, so that all may remember the ranks of blessings. And God, through His generosity, benefits the seeker of knowledge with knowledge and makes its outcomes good.

So beware, O assembly of believers, of hypocrisy and its people — both that which is outward and apparent from it, and that which is inward and hidden.

For it has branches that neither shade nor provide protection from the Fire.

Let your words in the matters of your religion, your one in authority, may God’s blessings be upon him, and all the causes connected to him and your brothers in religion, be like what you hold in your hearts as belief. Do not display something contrary to what you believe. For indeed, the contradiction of speech with belief in the religion of God and in loyalty to His friends removes the ruling of hypocrisy and lifts it away.

Avoiding those who oppose [the truth] adorns a person and benefits him.

Striving in righteous deeds raises the rank of the believer and elevates him.

It has been narrated from the Messenger of God, may God bless him and his family, that he said to the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib, peace be upon him:

“O ‘Ali, your love is not harmed by any sin as long as one avoids the major sins, and your hatred is not benefited against by any good deed.”

May God make you among those whose tongues and hearts have purified faith, whose loyalty and love have been purified for His friends.

And praise be to God, the One who is free from heedlessness and forgetfulness, Creator of the heavens and the earth in truth, not for play and amusement.

May God bless the master of those present in the cities and those dwelling in the deserts, the one purified from wandering and pride: Muhammad, His Messenger, the one who took hold of reconciliation and forgiveness.

And upon ‘Ali, his successor, the remover of the traces of the Age of Ignorance through obliteration and erasure.

And upon the Imams from their descendants, those who are the purest essence among creation.

And may He grant abundant peace upon them.

God is sufficient for us, and He is the best disposer of affairs.

There is no power and no strength except through God.

The Eighteenth Assembly

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

Praise be to God, who made the days alternate among His creation, and charged them with obedience in order to test them as to which of them is best in deeds. He created mankind from dust, then from a drop of fluid, then proportioned him into a man. And your Lord inspired the bee: "Take for yourself houses in the mountains, and in the trees, and in what they build. Then eat from every fruit, and follow the paths of your Lord made easy."

May God bless the one who made clear the paths of the signs of religion and made Paradise a dwelling for those who affirm his truth: Muhammad, His Messenger, whose glory rose with honor and became elevated; and upon the one who did not fear, in supporting the religion of God, becoming a hero, and who did not encounter weakness from the enemies of God: 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, the one who hastened first to faith.

And upon the Imams from their descendants, those whom God made the direction (qiblah) for the believers and granted, by His فضل, a share from everything. May peace be upon all of them, a continuous and connected peace.

O believers, may God grant you the gifts of generosity and purify you through piety from the stains of sins.

Indeed, in the creation of man from dust, and his transformation into a drop within the loins, and his transfer from that narrowness into the spaciousness of the womb, and his waiting for what descends to him of subtle nourishment — like the waiting of those on earth for the descent of rain from the sky — there is a clear indication of the transition from this abode to that which is wider than it.

Then, when his number was completed and his appointed term reached its end, he emerged from the narrowness of the womb into the vastness of the world, a fully formed creation. His Creator caused milk, fresh and pure, to flow for him from between blood and waste.

This is a clear proof of the transition from this dwelling to what is broader than it, and a decisive testimony to the truth of what God had informed about it previously:

“Does man not remember that We created him before, while he was nothing?”

We had finished mentioning the honoring of parents and reached what God, the Exalted, counted in favor of the parent from the mother’s actions, which necessitates for her an additional rank in righteousness and honor.

So now listen to what we recite to you:

Indeed, honoring parents consists of seven obligatory divisions and twelve etiquettes.

It is obligatory upon believers to honor:

Their father and mother, who were the cause of the appearance of their bodily form, striving to nourish them with the most beneficial and pleasant foods until they reached in them the utmost hope;

And their parents in religion, who are the cause of the appearance of their intellectual and spiritual form — and they are the Imam of the time, upon him be the best peace, and his proof;

And the parents of this nation who convey to them the divine sciences — and they are the Prophet and the successor, may God’s blessings be upon them and upon the Imams from their descendants.

For it has been narrated from the Messenger of God that he said:

“I and you, O ‘Ali, are the fathers of this nation.”

And the completion of this honoring is honoring oneself: by making it clear to oneself, perfecting it, advising it, encouraging it, warning it, separating it [from evil], and saving it from that which has ruined it and rescuing it.

As for the twelve etiquettes involved in honoring parents, they are:

That one honors their dwelling;

That one stands for them when seeing them;

That one answers their call;

That one lowers his voice in their presence;

That one advises them;

That one does not rebuke them;

That one lowers for them the wing of humility out of mercy;

That one does not walk ahead of them in light;

That one does not put them ahead of himself in darkness;

That one does not show opposition to their commands;

That one does not say to either of them "uff";

And that one desires their life even when they have grown old, just as, when he was young, they desired his life.

And that he undertakes the provision and care of each one of them when they are in need of him, just as they used to care for him when he was in need of them.

And you have heard, O assembly of believers, what we recited to you from the Book of clear verses. Following this is the saying of the Gentle, the Helper:

"O mankind, worship your Lord, who created you and those before you, so that you may become righteous. He who made for you the earth a resting place and the sky a structure, and sent down water from the sky, and brought forth through it fruits as provision for you. So do not set up equals with God while you know."

O assembly of believers, make your religion to your Lord through His worship, and worship Him. Know Him, and humble yourselves before His noble countenance, and praise Him.

He reminded you of His blessings, so appreciate their worth and give thanks for them.

Know that God brought forth for you, through the water sent down from the sky, thirty kinds of fruits of this world:

Among them are ten whose outer coverings are eaten without their inner parts;

Ten among them possess seeds, whose outer parts are eaten without their inner parts;

And ten have neither coverings nor seeds, whose outer and inner parts are eaten.

This is the manifest blessing of God upon you.

God has informed that He has completed upon you a blessing, outward and inward. Therefore, it is necessary that these fruits have an inner reality, so that God's blessings may be completed through it.

The inner meaning of this is that everything with which the body is nourished from fruits of different tastes has, in the noble interpretation, an example in that with which the soul is nourished from sciences.

And sciences are of three types, like the three types we mentioned concerning fruits:

Among them are those whose meaning is both their outward and their inward;

Among them are those whose intended meaning is their inward without their outward;

And among them are those whose intended meaning is their outward without their inward.

As for that whose outward and inward are both intended: these are all the acts of worship. For acting upon their outward form without their inward reality is not sufficient, nor is their inward reality sufficient without their outward form.

Likewise is the avoidance of all sins.

God, the Exalted, said:

"Leave the outward sin and its inward [aspect]."

As for that whose inward is intended without its outward, it is the stories of the previous prophets:

Such as the flood of Noah and his Ark, the fire of Abraham and his safety from it, the staff of Moses and his hand, and the calling upon of Jesus.

The outward occurrence of these things has already passed in their time, while their inward meaning remains acted upon in its place.

The Messenger of God said:

“The likeness of my family among you is like the Ark of Noah. Whoever boards it is saved, and whoever stays behind from it is drowned.”

As for that whose outward is intended without its inward, it includes:

Drinks, sales, debts, transactions, divorce, and marriages.

All of these, although they possess an inner wisdom known [to those who know], the purpose of worship regarding them is acting according to their defined and described outward forms.

And their inward meaning remains, benefiting the knowledge of it, and one must act upon it in matters that resemble the outward from the inward interpretation.

Al-Sadiq, Ja‘far ibn Muhammad, said:

“I do not see in the interpretation of the warnings concerning people’s wealth...”

(The text here appears to have a missing or corrupted phrase in the manuscript.)

The fig is among the fruits we mentioned previously. It is something whose outward and inward are both eaten.

The olive as well is among them, and it is something whose outward is eaten without its inward.

God, the Exalted, swore by both of them, and each of them has a likeness among the noble sciences and subtle wisdoms that resembles their meaning.

And the pomegranate is something whose inward is eaten without its outward, and God, the Exalted, also joined it with the olive in His Book, saying:

“By the fig and the olive, and the pomegranate — similar and dissimilar.”

(There appears to be a textual corruption here; the Qur’anic wording differs.)

And the apple is also of the type of the fig, because its outward and inward are eaten. However, it surpasses the fig through the beauty of its appearance, its pleasant fragrance, and its endurance when touched by the hand.

If we wished to divide the fruits and what emerges from them — from sourness to sweetness, such as grapes, and from tastelessness to sweetness, such as fresh dates — and if we matched every type with its corresponding likeness from knowledge, most of the time would be exhausted, and what we presented in explanation would not become tiresome.

Rather, we only point toward a type of knowledge with an indication that clarifies the path toward it through some expression, so that it may be known that the knowledge of the Imams is an ocean whose current does not cease, and a dawn whose lights shine brightly.

Someone from among the people of loyalty said concerning this meaning:

“News of the family of Muhammad is extraordinary,
A deep well and an elevated palace.

For the palace is their glory that has no end,
And the well is their knowledge that never runs dry.”

It has been mentioned in some reports that when the Messenger of God concealed Umm ‘Ali, peace be upon him, in her grave — after he had shrouded her in his own shirt and laid himself down in her burial place, saying: “I wished to make it spacious for her” — he sat at the head of her grave as if listening.

He said:

“Your son, your son.”

Not “No, no” — but “Ali.”

Then he departed from her grave.

His companions said to him:

"Today we have heard something that we have never heard before. What is its meaning?"

He said:

"When she was placed in her grave, the two angels came to her and asked her: 'Who is your Lord?' She answered and mentioned Him. They asked: 'Who is your Prophet?' She replied and informed them. Then they asked: 'Who is your Imam?' She remained silent.

So I said: 'Your son, your son.'

She said: 'Aqil.'

I said: 'No, no — 'Ali, 'Ali.'"

May God make you among those who follow in religion the clearest path, and who stand firm at the question with the clear proof.

And praise be to God, Possessor of the pleasant favor and the hidden gentleness, the One who rewards every doer of good and every wrongdoer.

May God bless the one distinguished by the radiant light and the clear proof: Muhammad, His Messenger, the pure and purified one.

And upon the pleasing Imam and the brave hero, the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali.

And upon the Imams from their descendants, the rains of the friends and the callers against the misguided.

And may He grant abundant peace upon them.

The Nineteenth Assembly

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

Praise be to God, whose mention is majestic, whose praise is abundant, whose goodness and giving are beautiful, whose pardon and trial have been glorified by His earth and His heavens.

May God bless His Messenger, the one whom His prophets gave glad tidings of, and whose support His friends undertook: Muhammad, whose judgments and reports are truthful.

And upon the one who is the adornment of religion and its splendor, the light of faith and its radiance: 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, whose judgment and decree are just, by whose loyalty his lovers were saved and by whose opposition his enemies perished.

And upon the Imams from their descendants, upon whom God's blessings and favors descend, those through whom the glory of honor and majesty is adorned.

May peace be upon all of them, a peace whose continuity and permanence remain connected.

O believers, may God extend to you assistance in what He has commanded and protect you from what He has forbidden and warned against.

Indeed, sin is a deep sea of regret; whoever remains burdened by it remains blameworthy. And righteousness is a path of hope; whoever continues upon it remains honored.

God, the Exalted, says in what has been written in His Book:

"Indeed, the righteous will drink from a cup whose mixture is of camphor — a spring from which the servants of God drink, causing it to gush forth abundantly."

You have heard, O assembly of believers, what we recited to you concerning honoring parents. Now listen to what we mention regarding what God has commanded concerning maintaining ties of kinship.

Within it are seven and twelve.

As for the seven: they are the maintaining of the ties of those whom God commanded to be connected from among the relatives of the Messenger of God, according to His saying:

“Say: I do not ask you for any reward for it except love for the near relatives.”

They are the Imams, may God’s blessings be upon all of them, and their number is seven, alternating like the days of Friday.

As for the relatives of a person, they are divided into twelve categories.

The first of them is the child, both male and female.

Then:

The children of the father through the mother — they are the full siblings and are called brothers of the same parents.

The children of the father without the mother — they are the paternal siblings and are called brothers through the father.

The children of the mother without the father — they are the maternal siblings and are called brothers through the mother.

The grandfathers and grandmothers from the father’s side.

The grandfathers and grandmothers from the mother’s side.

The paternal uncles and paternal aunts.

The maternal uncles and maternal aunts.

And whoever is connected through one of these has the ruling of maintaining ties with them.

The commanded connection is that the one who is among those who do good should:

Maintain ties with them even if they cut him off;

Give to them even if they deprive him;

Draw close to them even if they distance themselves from him;

Love them even if they abandon him.

This is the entirety of what is commanded regarding maintaining the ties of relatives.

And in the inward interpretation, it has this rank.

The recitation had reached His saying:

“So do not set up equals with God while you know.”

And following that is His saying, Glorified is He:

“And if you are in doubt about what We have sent down upon Our servant, then produce a chapter like it and call upon your witnesses other than God, if you are truthful.

But if you do not — and you will never do so — then fear the Fire whose fuel is people and stones, prepared for the disbelievers.”

This challenge to the polytheists is among the lasting miracles of prophethood that remains throughout the passing of days.

This is what we had promised to point out when we reached it.

For our Prophet was sent to a people possessing eloquence and clarity of speech, and the greatest part of their ability was devoted to poetry and rhetoric.

God protected him by giving them what rendered them incapable of producing even a chapter like it.

At the time of the revelation of this verse, He decisively informed them that they would not do so, through His saying:

“But if you do not — and you will never do so.”

This was a report of the unseen and a decisive statement that they would never accomplish it.

And it occurred exactly as God, the Exalted, had informed.

None of the authors or opponents have said that any of the polytheists, at the time this verse was revealed and they were challenged by this statement,

produced anything resembling the Qur'an, whether close to it or different from it, despite how frequently they confronted the Prophet with questions and debates, seeking to overcome the proof against him, support their idols, and defend their religion.

And the Muslims differed regarding the meaning of His saying:

"and you will never do so."

They held two opinions.

The first is that within the Qur'an there exists such eloquence, clarity, sciences, and explanations that no one is capable, alongside it, of producing a chapter like it.

The second opinion is that they were capable of producing something like it, but God turned them away from doing so, so that the miracle would be completed through His saying:

"and you will never do so."

Both of these opinions are among the miracles. However, every person who adopted one of these two opinions took a portion of the truth and left another portion of it.

What we say regarding this matter is that God, the Exalted, distinguished the Qur'an with both miraculous aspects together.

He made people truly incapable of producing a chapter like it because of its eloquence, its conciseness, and what it contains of noble meanings and subtle wisdoms — meanings which no speaker, from the time God revealed it until today, has been able to encompass completely, let alone produce something equal to it.

As for the sarfah (the turning away) which those who hold that view mentioned, it is not what they pointed toward.

For they say that the polytheists were capable of producing something like the Qur'an, but they were prevented from doing so.

The matter is not as they described.

Rather, they were prevented from producing speech that they could compare to the Qur'an, even if it did not equal it in eloquence and clarity, and from debating it and proceeding according to the custom which God, the Exalted, informed about concerning those before them:

"And they argued with falsehood in order to refute the truth."

Just as the magicians did with Moses, peace be upon him, when they brought their ropes and staffs, attempting to imitate the miracle of his staff.

Then God caused another miracle to occur through it, by swallowing their deception, and thus destroyed their falsehood.

So God protected the Noble Qur'an from such a thing and struck down the fabrication of every fabricator.

We have previously mentioned that the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali, peace be upon him, is the companion and counterpart of the Qur'an.

He was present at Şiffin against Mu'āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān, who sought to make himself his equal, despite the gathering of all Muslims and the differences among them.

Mu'āwiyah brought his witnesses besides God and his supporters.

The Commander of the Faithful said in one of his letters to him:

"Where will you be, O sons of Umayyah, when compared with us?

From us is the unlettered Prophet, and from you is the one who denied the religion.

From us is the Lion of God, and from you is the lion of alliances.

From us is the master of the youths of Paradise, and from you are the youths of the Fire.

From us is the mistress of the women of the worlds, and from you is the carrier of firewood.

So persist in hypocrisy and tyranny, and the deception of Satan has covered your hearts."

Then the matter of arbitration occurred as it did, and doubt fell upon those whose insight had become blind.

Had it not been for the sarfah through which God protected the Qur'an, something similar to that would have occurred concerning it.

But God protected it from objection, so that it would be a witness for its counterparts through the attainment of its meanings.

Likewise, the interpretation of the Qur'an is a miracle of the Imams, peace be upon them.

No one who claims their station is able to produce its like, and its authentic form is found only with the one who received it from its people.

It has been narrated from the Messenger of God that an Arab man asked him about the authority and guardianship of the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib.

He mentioned his virtues, among which was that he said to him:

"When the Day of Resurrection comes, my pulpit will be brought and placed on the right side of the Throne.

Then the pulpit of Abraham will be brought and placed on the right side of the Throne.

O Arab man, the Throne has two right sides.

My pulpit will be on one right side, and the pulpit of Abraham, peace be upon him, will be on the other right side.

Then the chair, known as the Chair of Honor, will be brought and placed between the two pulpits.

I will be on the right side of the Throne upon my pulpit.

Abraham will be on the right side of the Throne upon his pulpit.

And 'Ali, peace be upon him, will be upon the Chair of Honor.

My companions who did not alter [their faith] will be around me, and the true followers of 'Ali will be around him.

So what do you say about a successor between a beloved friend and a close friend, O Arab man?

Love 'Ali with true love.

For Gabriel, peace be upon him, never descended to me except that he asked me about 'Ali, and he never ascended from me except that he said:

'Convey my peace to 'Ali.'

May God make you among those who are sincere in love and loyalty, and those who hold firmly to the firmest handhold of the guardianship of the chosen ones.

And praise be to God, the Creator of the earth and the lofty heavens, and the Knower of what is between them and what is beneath the soil.

There is no deity but Him. To Him belong the Most Beautiful Names.

May God bless His chosen Messenger, the one who does not speak from his own desire:

Muhammad, the one who drew near and ascended, and was at the distance of two bows or even nearer.

And upon his successor, the one upon whom the peak of glory was established:

'Ali ibn Abi Talib, the one indicated by His saying, the Exalted:

"By the star when it falls."

And upon the Imams from their descendants, the people of piety and righteousness, the doors of mercy and the paths of guidance.

And may abundant peace be upon them.

And God is the best disposer of affairs.

The Twentieth Assembly

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

Praise be to God, who made guidance accessible and provided its means, allowed assistance and brought it near, transformed barrenness and made it fertile, removed hardship and expanded it, and created mankind and proportioned him — in whatever form He willed, He composed him.

May God bless His Messenger Muhammad, the one who placed the shoulder of disbelief beneath his foot and placed the vehicle of religion beneath his step, until he caused the remembrance of God to be upon every high place and elevated station. He removed the procession of polytheism and made the drink of faith sweet and pure.

And upon 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, through whom God honored the position, and by whom He protected His religion and His way.

And upon the Imams from their descendants, those upon whom judgment has been made of justice and victory.

May peace be upon all of them whenever a seeker attempts his seeking and whenever a contender strives for his purpose.

O believers, may God raise you in ranks of knowledge and attach you to the branches of divine support.

No one succeeds who does not climb the difficult path:

“Then he did not attempt the steep path: and what will make you know what the steep path is? It is freeing a slave, or feeding on a day of hunger an orphan of near relationship, or a needy person in misery.”

And no striving succeeds more than the striving of the one whose connection is joined to the friends of God, who rejects falsehood and its followers, who gives thanks to the one who made him perceive religion and refined him, and who repels with clear proofs whoever opposes him and denies him.

Thus he deserves the sweetest of the fruits of Paradise and drinks the purest of the sealed nectar.

So accept what we cast before you of glad tidings that strengthen the foundations of religion, so that you may become among those of whom God said:

“They rejoice in a blessing from God and bounty, and that God does not allow the reward of the believers to be lost.”

Following what we mentioned concerning honoring parents and maintaining ties of kinship, among what we previously mentioned from the practices of religion is:

Preserving the rights of the neighbor.

God, the Exalted, said:

“And the neighbor who is near, and the neighbor who is distant, and the companion by your side.”

This is divided into seven categories and twelve etiquettes.

The first:

Preserving the rights of the believing neighbor between whom and you there is a relationship of kinship.

For him are three rights:

The right of neighborhood, the right of kinship, and the right of faith.

The second:

The one between whom and you there is neighborhood and lineage, but between you there is no connection of faith.

For him are two rights:

The right of neighborhood and the right of kinship.

The third:

The distant neighbor — meaning the believing neighbor who has no kinship connection with you.

For him is the right of neighborhood and the right of faith.

The fourth:

The companion by your side — meaning the neighbor who differs from you in religion and doctrine.

For him is the right of neighborhood.

The fifth:

The companion in the ship.

He is the one who sits beside you during the period of your journey.

For him is the right of companionship.

The sixth:

Your companion in your riding mount.

And the seventh:

The one who sits with you in listening to wisdom.

For him there is the most emphasized sanctity and the most binding obligation.

Regarding this, the Prophet said:

“Honor your neighbor, even if he is a disbeliever, and honor your guest, even if he is sinful.”

As for the twelve etiquettes of neighborhood, they are:

That the neighbor should not look into the house of his neighbor;

That he should not listen to his speech within his home;

That he should not reveal a matter of his which he has come to know;

That he should not listen from his house to something which he would dislike being heard;

That he should not show him something which he would dislike seeing;

That he should not withhold assistance from him when he asks for it;

That he should not act arrogantly toward him if he is beneath him;

That he should not envy him if he is above him;

That he should help him when he seeks his help;

That he should conceal his private matters if something of them becomes exposed;

And that he should not harm him with any kind of harm, regardless of the harm.

These are the actions of a people whose hearts God has tested for piety.

You have heard, O assembly of believers, what we recited to you concerning God's warning of the Fire whose fuel is people and stones.

Now listen to what follows it, which God has specifically granted to the believers of precious glad tidings.

God, Possessor of greatness and power, said, continuing from what preceded in the recitation and explanation:

"And give glad tidings to those who believe and do righteous deeds, that for them are gardens beneath which rivers flow. Whenever they are provided with a fruit from them as provision, they say: 'This is what we were provided with before.' And they are given it in resemblance. And for them therein are purified spouses, and they shall remain therein forever."

This is the description of the Paradise which God prepared for the believers who performed righteous deeds.

God has explained the mention of its rivers in another place, saying, Glorified is He:

“In it are rivers of water that does not become stagnant, and rivers of milk whose taste does not change, and rivers of purified honey, and rivers of wine delightful to those who drink.”

Thus He specified the rivers without ambiguity.

But concerning the fruits, He said:

“They are given it in resemblance.”

Our previous statement has already preceded regarding what we promised to explain:

That the outward reality of Paradise is the call of the Imams, upon them be the best peace and mercy.

For from the guiding call is reaching Paradise.

And we said that every type of the sciences of the call leads to enjoyment from a particular type of the fruits of Paradise.

And since the Noble Book is the spring of noble sciences and the source of subtle wisdoms, and since its verses are both decisive and similar, according to His saying:

“He is the One who sent down upon you the Book. Among it are decisive verses — they are the foundation of the Book — and others are ambiguous.”

God, Glorified is His mention, made the reward in Paradise:

Through the decisive verses of the Book: the rivers which He specified;

And the reward for its similar verses: the similar Imams, whose entrance is Paradise;

And through righteous deeds: the difference in the ranks of Paradise;

And through acquiring knowledge: enjoyment of its rivers and fruits.

Thus, the judgment of knowledge, as we mentioned previously, corresponds to what He designated through the rivers.

And its similar aspects correspond through the resemblance of the fruits.

And His saying:

“And for them therein are purified spouses”

is an additional increase of favor.

For He, Glorified is He, does not accept, due to His generosity, that His reward should merely be an exchange of one thing for another without granting additional generosity and increase.

And His saying:

“And they shall remain therein forever”

is the greatest kindness and favor.

For the deeds of those who act in this world are limited by a period of time, so He made the reward for them the everlasting eternity of eternal bliss.

And we had mentioned to you previously that the fruits of this world, their inward reality, are knowledge.

And we mentioned here that knowledge is the intermediary between the fruits of this world and the fruits of the Hereafter.

For the fruits of this world are outward, and they indicate knowledge because knowledge, while it exists, is more subtle than them. It is the guide toward them, and through it one reaches the enjoyment of them.

It has been reported from Abū ‘Abd Allāh Ja‘far ibn Muhammad al-Şādiq, peace be upon him, that he said one day to some of his followers:

“Indeed, whoever falls short regarding what God has made obligatory upon him will not attain God’s mercy, and the intercession of our grandfather, may God’s blessings be upon him and his family, will not reach him on the Day of Resurrection.

So listen from us to what God has made obligatory upon you and act according to it.

Do not disobey God and His Messenger, and then disobey us through opposing it.

For, by God, it is nothing except the saying of God, the Exalted:

‘We and our followers are in Paradise, and all other people are in the Fire.

Through us God is worshipped, through us God is obeyed, and through us God is disobeyed.

Whoever obeys us has obeyed God, and whoever disobeys us has disobeyed God.

Our obedience preceded by God’s decree among His creation:

That He does not accept from anyone except through us,

He does not show mercy to anyone except through us,

And He does not punish anyone except through us.

For we are the door of God, His proof, His trustees over His creation, and the guardians of His secret.

The one who prevents us from our rightful share in his wealth has no portion.”

May God make you among those who are reminded by the verses of their Lord, so they remember, strive in obedience to the friends of God, and prepare themselves.

And praise be to God, the One who removes hardships and distress, accepts repentance, and forgives sins.

May God bless Muhammad, His Messenger, who was sent to all Arabs and non-Arabs, the one for whom spoils were made lawful and who was aided through fear [cast into the hearts of his enemies].

And upon his successor, ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib, his support in peace and war, the one who closed the heads of his enemies with the sharp sword.

And upon the Imams from their descendants, the abundant rains in times of dryness and hardship, and the chosen ones of the Creator, the Lord.

And may He grant abundant peace upon them.

God is sufficient for us, and He is the best disposer of affairs.

The Twenty-First Assembly

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

Praise be to God, whose blessing is all-encompassing, whose proof is far-reaching, whose argument is decisive, and whose gift is abundant. There is no deity but Him. His wrath preceded His mercy.

May God bless His chosen one, the one whose law is guiding, and His selected one, whose wisdom is apparent:

Muhammad, His Messenger, whose intercession is saving on the Day of Gathering.

And upon his successor, whose might against the polytheists is overwhelming and whose bravery against heroes is striking:

‘Ali ibn Abi Talib, whose praise and precedence in Islam are manifest.

And upon the Imams from their descendants, those who are the lights of religion and its adornment, and the salvation and provision of the believers.

May peace be upon all of them, a peace whose greetings and blessings are desired.

O believers, may God benefit you through the guardianship of the one whose imamate has become obligatory by clear proof, and may He join you with the one whose rank in the degrees of religion has risen.

Indeed, God, the Exalted, paired His creatures together in order to indicate His Oneness.

So He let loose the two seas: one fresh and sweet, and one salty and bitter.

And He separated the two new creations: darkness and illumination.

And He said:

“And among His signs is that He created for you from yourselves spouses so that you may find tranquility in them, and He placed between you affection and mercy.”

The scholars of the general people (‘ulamā’ al-‘āmmah) became perplexed regarding the mention of mercy here, and they returned to interpretation due to necessity.

They said:

“The mercy here is the mercy of God which encompasses all things and to which every living being turns.”

For a child may sometimes be a punishment: if he lives, he exhausts his parents; and if he dies, he breaks them.

Therefore, what the interpretation of the verse requires is that the spouses mentioned in His saying:

“And among His signs is that He created for you from yourselves spouses...”

are an example for those who benefit from the knowledge of those who impart knowledge.

When those who benefit gather around the one who imparts knowledge, and he gives them something from the religion of God, God places between them affection and mercy, shelters them with mercy, surrounds them with angels, and they are called out:

“May God forgive you.”

For this reason, He commanded good companionship between spouses.

This is required from the man toward his wife and from the woman toward her husband.

The man owes his wife seven qualities, and the woman owes her husband twelve qualities, according to the saying of God, the Exalted:

“And for the men is a degree over them.”

What is required from the man toward his wife is:

That he provide her with a dwelling;

That he does not harm her;

That he does not make things difficult for her;

That he clothes her according to his ability;

That he spends upon her according to what he can afford;

That he does not harm her as long as she obeys his command;

And that he treats her with good silence (meaning patience and restraint).

What is required from the woman toward her husband is:

That she obey his command;

That she honor his rank;

That she fulfill her oath to him;

That she be grateful for his blessings;

That she lower the wing of humility for him;

That she provide good care for his child;

That she fulfill his trust;

That she preserve his wealth and protect it;

That she guard herself for him;

That she not reveal any of his secrets;

That she not ride upon his prohibition (meaning not violate what he forbids);

And that she not display her adornment except to him, or to those whom God has permitted her to show it to among her unmarriageable relatives.

The recitation from the preserved remembrance had reached what follows, so listen to it, O believers.

God, the Exalted, who is far above movement and stillness, said:

“Indeed, God is not ashamed to present an example — even that of a mosquito or what is above it. As for those who believe, they know that it is the truth from their Lord. But as for those who disbelieve, they say: ‘What did God intend by this example?’ By it He misleads many and guides many, but He does not mislead by it except the defiantly disobedient.”

O assembly of believers, indeed God, the Exalted, has presented examples for you, both collectively and in detail. He was not ashamed of the smallness of an example when through it He explained what it represents.

He made the outward aspect of the Qur’an a guide to its inward aspect, and made its apparent meaning a path toward its hidden meaning, so that the clear path may become evident to the one who obeys Him and seeks His pleasure, and so that the proof may be cut off from the one who opposes the Imam of his time and disobeys him.

The mosquito which God, the Exalted, informed us that He is not ashamed to use as an example — despite its smallness — is among His wondrous creations.

For it resembles the elephant in its greatest instruments, and yet between them there is a difference in size and smallness, strength and weakness, which is unmistakable.

Yet God did not neglect it out of contempt for it. Rather, He made it an example from which lights may be struck forth.

And He, Glorious above all speakers, informed that:

“Those who believe know that it is the truth from their Lord.”

They are those whom God described by His saying:

“And these examples We present to people, but none understand them except those who possess knowledge.”

It has been reported in some narrations that God, the Exalted, tested Nimrod with a mosquito which entered into his nostril and reached his brain.

It remained there tormenting him for a period, and it became the cause of his destruction.

That tyrant was unable to repel the harm of this insignificant mosquito.

And in this there is a profound matter of interpretation.

And someone who was encouraged to reflect upon the greatness of divine power said, addressing his Lord, Glorified is He:

O He who sees the spreading of the mosquito's wings
in the darkness of the intensely dark night,

And sees the place of its heart and its veins,
and the marrow within those delicate bones.

Grant me a glance of Your mercy,
by which I may attain [Your favor],

As You did in the beginning of time.

The speaker of these words asked that God look upon him with a gaze of mercy, transferring him from the abode of hardship and suffering to the place of bliss and everlasting existence, just as He looked upon him in the beginning, bringing him into existence from nonexistence.

And His saying:

"But as for those in whose hearts is disease, they say: 'What did God intend by this example?' By it He misleads many and guides many, and He does not mislead by it except the defiantly disobedient."

Following this, He described the corrupt and disobedient ones, those who break the covenant of God after its confirmation, sever what God has commanded to be joined, and spread corruption upon the earth.

Know that God, Glorified is He, explained that the sinful transgressor is the one who makes a covenant and then breaks his covenant and pledge, and cuts off that which God commanded to be connected.

This is the cutting off of what is between prophethood and imamate, for that is the rope of God extended until the Day of Resurrection.

Every prophet whom God sent had the matter of imamate continuing among his descendants, until the matter reached our Prophet, with whom God sealed His messengers.

He informed that there would be no prophet after him, and nothing remained by which guidance could be attained except the imamate, which is the successor of prophethood.

So they severed that which God commanded to be connected.

And His saying:

“And they spread corruption upon the earth.”

We previously mentioned, in what we recited at the beginning of this chapter, the explanation of His saying:

“And when it is said to them: ‘Do not spread corruption upon the earth,’ they say: ‘We are only reformers.’”

That corruption upon the earth is cutting off the path of guidance.

Here, God has explained that statement, informing that those who cut off what God commanded to be connected are those who spread corruption upon the earth.

This is one of the benefits of repetition in the Qur’an, for it increases clarity and explanation.

And its ways will be according to what is intended by this meaning, by the will of God, the Bestower.

And His saying:

“Those are the losers.”

Who has greater loss than the one whose effort God considered a deficiency, and who presents his deeds only to find that He has made them scattered dust?

On the Day of Resurrection, he will call for destruction and enter the blazing Fire.

Indeed, he was joyful among his family.

He thought that he would never return.

Yes indeed, his Lord was ever seeing him.

It has been narrated from the Messenger of God that he said to the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib:

"You, O 'Ali, and the successors from your descendants are the distinguishing signs of God between Paradise and Hell.

No one enters Paradise except the one who recognizes you and whom you recognize.

And no one enters Hell except the one whom you reject and who rejects you."

May God make you among those who recognize His friends and whom they recognize, through their abundant wisdom, and whom they assist.

And praise be to God, who made the earth a gathering place for the living and the dead.

May God bless His Messenger Muhammad, the one who raised the voices of the people of religion through his reputation, and gathered Islam after its separation and scattering.

And upon 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, for whom God gathered courage and humility.

And upon the Imams from their descendants, through whom God honored eras and times.

And may abundant peace be upon them.

God is sufficient for us, and He is the best disposer of affairs.

The Twenty-Second Assembly

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

Praise be to God, the protector of the fearful and their refuge, the fortress of the distressed and their place of seeking help.

There is no deity but Him, the One who demonstrates His eternity through bringing creation into existence and originating it.

May God bless the one sent forth through the spreading and expansion of religion, the one sent to uproot disbelief and eradicate it:

Muhammad, His Messenger, through whose coming He sealed the chain of messengers.

And upon his successor, the remover of the innovations and fabrications of hypocrisy, the victorious against the one who broke his covenant and turned away:

‘Ali ibn Abi Talib, who did not finish off a wounded enemy because of his lack of concern for worldly matters.

And upon the Imams from their descendants, the companions of the Book, its bearers and inheritors, the rivers of knowledge from whom its flow and emergence began.

May peace be upon all of them, a peace whose eternity and continuity do not vanish.

O believers, may God grant you the abundant streams of His mercy and surround you with the overflowing bounty of His blessings.

The signs of guidance have become clear to you, and it has become obligatory upon you to distinguish yourselves from the people of ignorance and misguidance.

Sincerity toward the Imam of your time in love and loyalty has become necessary, as well as reaching the highest degree in obedience to him and advising him.

For he is the witness over your deeds, because God, the Exalted, has granted him the ability of perceiving and recognizing your actions.

God, the Exalted, said:

“Indeed, in that are signs for those who perceive.”

Ja‘far ibn Muhammad al-Ṣādiq said:

“The perceivers are the Imams; they look by the light of God. Therefore, beware of their insight concerning you.”

We have reached, according to what we stipulated to mention from the practices of religion, the matter of what has been commanded concerning kindness toward servants and slaves whom God has assigned to serve you and through whose care He has protected you.

For they are human beings; they did not emerge from stone, nor were they created from trees.

The slave has seven rights upon his master:

That he provides for his needs of food and drink;

That he covers his body with proper clothing;

That he does not burden him beyond his capacity;

That he does not assign him work beyond what he is able to do;

That he does not harm him, except as discipline and not as oppression;

That he does not command him to do what is unlawful;

And that he does not prevent him from prayer at its appointed times.

And the slave owes his master twelve qualities:

That he believe in his sincere advice;

That he show him his affection and goodwill;

That he preserve his wealth;

That he protect his private matters and household;

That he fulfill the trust placed in him;

That he does not deceive him;

That he does not betray him;

That he does not withhold himself from serving him;

That he does not conceal from him a skill or craft which he knows well;

That he obey him;

That he does not oppose him;

And that he does not dispose of any of his property except by his permission.

God, the Exalted, said:

“And God presents an example: a slave owned and unable to do anything, and one whom We have provided with good provision from Us, so he spends from it secretly and openly. Are they equal?”

This example has, in its interpretation, the finest proof and evidence.

The recitation and interpretation continued, and we reached what follows from the saying of God, the King, the Powerful:

“How can you disbelieve in God when you were lifeless and He gave you life? Then He will cause you to die, then He will give you life, then to Him you will be returned.

He is the One who created for you all that is on the earth. Then He turned toward the heaven and fashioned them into seven heavens, and He is Knowing of all things.”

His saying:

“How can you disbelieve in God...”

is in the manner of rebuke, reprimand, and expressing amazement at their action.

And His saying:

“And you were lifeless, and He gave you life...”

cannot mean, according to the statement of those who say that “the dead” refers to nonexistence and “life” refers to existence.

For that which is not created cannot be said to have been.

Rather, it would be said: “It was not.”

And God informed of this in His saying:

“Has there not come upon man a period of time when he was not a thing mentioned?”

And His saying:

“Does man not remember that We created him before, while he was nothing?”

So when He says in this verse:

“You were lifeless and He gave you life,”

it is known that God intended by death here ignorance and misguidance, and by life the life of knowledge and faith.

Just as He, Glorious and Mighty, described the disbelievers by saying:

“Dead, not alive.”

And He described the martyrs by saying:

“Rather, they are alive with their Lord, receiving provision.”

And His saying:

“Then He causes you to die”

refers here to the natural death which God has decreed upon all creation.

And His saying:

“Then He gives you life”

refers to the life prepared for the Hereafter on the Day of Judgment.

And His saying:

“Then to Him you will be returned”

is a promise of being gathered to Him, so that He may reward those who did evil according to what they did and reward those who did good with the best reward.

And His saying:

“He is the One who created for you all that is on the earth. Then He turned toward the heaven and fashioned them into seven heavens.”

And He said in another place:

“Are you more difficult to create or is the heaven? He built it. He raised its height and proportioned it. He darkened its night and brought forth its brightness. And the earth, after that, He spread out.”

Thus, in this place, He informed that the spreading out of the earth came after all of that.

And in the first verse He informed that He created all that is on the earth, then He turned toward the heaven and fashioned them into seven heavens.

The earth and the heaven have counterparts (representations) through which the realities of the statement concerning them become clear, and through which the meaning of the precedence and delay of each of them is known.

This will, by the will of God, be mentioned in its proper places.

For we had previously mentioned that repetition in the Qur'an increases the clarity of its explanation.

We shall point out everything that comes from it in its proper places, thereby gathering the meanings of interpretation and clarifying the miraculous nature of revelation, with the help of God, the King, the Majestic.

So, O assembly of believers, hold firmly to obedience of your Imams and submit to the authorities of your affair from the descendants of your Prophet.

God has called you toward their path, guided you by the light of their lamps, and raised their signs for you so that you may follow their traces.

Know that the Imam of your time, may his rank be exalted, follows those who came before him and succeeds those after him.

He is an intercessor for the one who follows him and a witness against the one who turns away from him and cuts himself off from him.

He does not force you to enter his doctrine by compulsion, nor does he ask you for payment for what he conveys to you.

And he does not cease from bringing to you the wisdoms that you need to hear, because he has been entrusted with guiding you, while you have been entrusted with being guided by him.

Upon him is what he has been charged with, and upon you is what you have been charged with.

If you obey him, you will be guided.

“And upon the Messenger is only the clear conveyance.”

It has been narrated from the Messenger of God that he said:

“I have been commanded to obey my Lord, and I have commanded the Imams from the people of my household to obey God and my obedience.

And I have commanded the people after them to obey God, my obedience, and their obedience.

Whoever follows them is saved, and whoever leaves them is destroyed.

And no one leaves them except one who has departed from the faith.”

May God make you among those who obey the one whose obedience He has commanded, and those who store up for their Hereafter the noble intercession of His chosen ones.

And praise be to God, the Most Generous Helper and the One who answers every person seeking help.

May God bless His Messenger Muhammad, upon whom the best speech was revealed, and through whom the pure was distinguished from the impure.

And upon his successor 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, through whom God sealed His successors and with whom He began them from Shith (Seth).

And upon the Imams from their descendants, the resting place of the lights of guidance in the ancient and the recent.

And may abundant peace be upon them.

God is sufficient for us, and He is the best disposer of affairs.

The Twenty-Third Assembly

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

Praise be to God, who made clear the proof of truth, illuminated its lamps, made eloquent the tongue of truthfulness, granted happiness to the one who directed his speech toward Him, revealed the beacon of guidance, made its path easy, extinguished its opposition, and through it brought joy to every believer and completed his delight.

May God bless Muhammad, His Messenger, through whom He strengthened the foundations of the Sacred Law and established its proofs, through whom He cut off the abode of disbelief and extinguished its flames;

and upon his successor, through whom He caused its causes and connected its bonds, and through whom He removed every hardship and difficulty;

and upon the Imams from their descendants, through whom God hastened relief for every believer and adorned the banner of knowledge with their pride and honor.

O believers, may God raise you by a degree in knowledge and make you among the happiest of those who come to Him through His door and enter it.

Indeed, the connection of knowledge from the Imam — may the best peace be upon him — to his proof, the one appointed to convey from him and announce his message, is a hidden connection from those who respond [to the call], like the connection of the soul to the body of the fetus.

Through it reaches him from the subtle creations of his Lord, Glorified is He, that which the eyes do not see.

Then a created movement appears from stillness.

This is what God, the Exalted, informed us of regarding the condition of Zakariyya and Maryam, peace be upon them, in His saying:

“Whenever Zakariyya entered upon her in the sanctuary, he found with her provision. He said: ‘O Maryam, from where is this for you?’ She said: ‘It is from God. Indeed, God provides for whom He wills without account.’”

We have completed the mention of the commanded practices which we promised to discuss with their divisions, reaching the spreading of peace and elevating it.

Its highest level is divided into seven categories, and it is that which comes from God and His angels.

Its lower level is divided into twelve categories, and it is that which comes from mankind.

As for its highest level:

The first, and the most specific, elevated, and purest, is the saying of God, the Exalted:

“Peace — a word from a Merciful Lord.”

The second, containing some indirect expression, is His saying:

“It was said: ‘O Noah, descend with peace from Us.’”

The third, which is more subject to resemblance and interpretation, is His saying:

“Their greeting on the Day they meet Him will be: Peace.”

The fourth is His saying:

“And they will be greeted therein with: Peace.”

The fifth, which clearly indicates that it is specifically from the angels, is His saying:

“And the angels will enter upon them from every gate: ‘Peace be upon you.’”

The sixth is His saying:

“Indeed, God and His angels send blessings upon the Prophet. O you who believe, send blessings upon him and greet him with complete submission.”

The seventh is His saying:

“Peace be upon the family of Yasin.”

Yasin is Muhammad, our Prophet, may God’s blessings and peace be upon him. The family of Yasin are the family of Muhammad.

And we shall mention in what follows of this assembly the remaining twelve divisions of peace, by the will of God, the Mighty, the All-Knowing.

You have heard, O believers, from the verses of the Noble Qur’an what we recite from the saying of God, the Hearing, the Knowing:

“And when your Lord said to the angels: ‘Indeed, I am placing upon the earth a successor.’ They said: ‘Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we glorify You with Your praise and sanctify You?’ He said: ‘Indeed, I know that which you do not know.’

And He taught Adam the names — all of them — then presented them to the angels and said: ‘Inform Me of the names of these, if you are truthful.’

They said: ‘Glory be to You! We have no knowledge except what You have taught us. Indeed, You are the Knowing, the Wise.’

He said: 'O Adam, inform them of their names.' And when he had informed them of their names, He said: 'Did I not tell you that I know the unseen of the heavens and the earth, and I know what you reveal and what you conceal?'

And when We said to the angels: 'Prostrate before Adam,' they prostrated except Iblis. He refused, became arrogant, and was among the disbelievers."

This is the account of what occurred before the creation of mankind, which God, the Exalted, mentioned so that those possessing intellect and reflection may take heed.

It contains a second indication that the caliphate and the imamate are by appointment from God, the Exalted, to the one deserving of honor.

And that if this matter were left to the choice of mankind, as some people of speculation claim, no one would choose anyone except himself or one who agrees with him from among his own kind.

Do you not hear the words of the angels — who were people of purity and noble ranks — when God informed them that He was placing a successor upon the earth?

He did not consult them regarding this, nor did He grant them the choice.

Yet they quickly condemned one whom they had not seen and described themselves, saying:

"Will You place therein one who causes corruption and sheds blood, while we glorify You with Your praise and sanctify You?"

He answered them:

"Indeed, I know what you do not know."

He intended, Glorified is He:

"I know, through My choosing of the one whose choosing is required, what you do not know."

Likewise, He described the one whom He chose from among His purified servants and whom He favored after Adam with His succession among the Imams of religion — may blessings be upon them all:

“And We certainly chose them with knowledge above the worlds.”

So how can it be permissible after this to rely upon the choice of mankind for an Imam whom they appoint, or a successor whom they place forward?

This verse contains a second indication of the excellence of knowledge and its people, and that God, the Exalted, has made a path for raising the rank of the one whose virtue He wishes to make apparent.

This is because Adam, peace be upon him, surpassed the angels in the precedence of worship and glorification, while they had seen him as a body of clay lying without a spirit.

So when God wished to favor him over them, He taught him what they did not know and asked them about the names of which they were ignorant.

Thus, their incapacity became evident, and they became in need of Adam, peace be upon him.

He learned, and God commanded them to prostrate before him, so he was given superiority over them and precedence before them.

And in these verses there is also a third indication of the invalidity of the opinion of those who see analogy (qiyās) and deduction (istinbāṭ) as methods in the religion of God.

This is shown by the statement of the angels, despite the purity of their essence and the ancientness of their knowledge:

"سبحانك لا علم لنا إلا ما علمتنا"

“Glory be to You! We have no knowledge except what You have taught us.”

This is an affirmation after a negation.

They negated from themselves all knowledge except what God had taught them.

They did not derive things through their own intellects when He said to them:

“Inform Me of the names of these.”

And He presented the named things before them.

It would have been possible through analogy for them to say of one whom they saw as tall:

“This is the tall one,”

and of one whom they saw as short:

“This is the short one.”

But they did not consider themselves permitted to do so.

And in these verses there is also a fourth indication that envy and arrogance are destructive, harming the one who possesses them while benefiting the one who is envied and the one against whom arrogance is shown.

For Iblis — may God curse him — was destroyed because of his envy and arrogance.

Yet Adam, peace be upon him, was not harmed by the transgression of the arrogant one against the command of his Lord.

Rather, that became a cause for what God mentioned of his honor, the excellence of what He brought him toward, and the greatness of what He bestowed upon him.

For when God singled him out and taught him, He made the angels in need of him.

By this, He indicated the ranks in religion, and obedience became obligatory upon those devoted to religion.

For every person possessing a rank has a virtue that is due to him over those beneath him.

So reflect, O believers, and beware of exceeding the limits in religion.

For whoever is touched by self-admiration slips, and whoever is entered by arrogance goes astray.

It has been narrated from al-Ṣādiq, Abū ‘Abd Allāh Ja‘far ibn Muḥammad, peace be upon him, that one of his followers asked him concerning the holder of authority after him.

He said to him:

“Perhaps you think that any of this matter is ours, that we may do with it whatever we wish?

No, by God!

We do not follow in this matter except what God, Mighty and Majestic, and His Messenger established for us.

And we do not entrust any part of it except to the one whom He commanded us to entrust it to, and whom He has shown us through His proofs.”

By God, Mighty and Majestic, He is pleased for this matter with the one whom He approves, and whom He sees as worthy of what He has singled him out for of His honor.

May God make you among those who submit and are granted safety, and who follow the chosen ones of God and gain success.

And praise be to God, the One who brings forth the dawns, the One who makes the paths clear, the One who sends down the flowing water of guidance, and the One who spreads out the seas by the succession of waves.

May God bless the radiant lamp of religion, honored by the Night Journey:

Muhammad, His Messenger, the possessor of the staff, the pulpit, and the crown;

and upon his successor, the guide to the clearest path, the one proven by the clearest explanation and argument:

‘Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib, the one distinguished by the finest of spouses;

and upon the Imams from their descendants, the path of God in which there is neither deviation nor crookedness.

And may abundant peace be upon them.

God is sufficient for us.

The Twenty-Fourth Assembly

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

Praise be to God, who made the path of faith easy and made it clear, perfected the revelation of the Qur'an and made it eloquent, and purified the trade of those who act [righteously], granting them comfort.

There is no deity but Him, the One who rewards the one who declares His oneness and glorifies Him.

May God bless the one whom He sent with the finest of His gifts, whom He singled out with a law whose explanation He made clear:

Muhammad, His Messenger, who did not leave any door leading to guidance except that he opened it;

and upon his successor, who did not leave any corrupt matter except that he reformed it, nor any stubborn opponent except that he pushed him away:

‘Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib, whose effort God acknowledged and made successful;

and upon the Imams from their descendants, through whom God guided those to whom He granted His gift, and through whom He disgraced and condemned their enemies.

O believers, may God expand your hope in goodness and grant you spaciousness, and join you with those whose efforts He accepts and whom He pardons.

Indeed, among the obligatory rights are three rights:

The right of God, the right of the parents, and the right of the child.

God has commanded that they be fulfilled, and He will not accept them except in their complete fulfillment.

The right of God is to depart from what He has forbidden and to enter into what He has commanded.

The right of parents is gratitude for what has passed and obedience regarding what follows.

The right of the child is that he be raised with compassion, nourished with blessing, and taught the Book and wisdom.

So preserve the boundaries of the religion and uphold the obligations of the Sunnah.

Know that spreading peace (salām) is an obligatory practice among the practices of Islam.

It conveys affection and submission, and it is one of the names of the Possessors of Majesty and Honor.

You have heard what we recited to you regarding its seven divisions.

Following this are the twelve divisions, which are the greetings exchanged between human beings.

The first is the greeting of the people of the right hand to the trustworthy Prophet, may God's blessings and peace be upon him, and to his blessed family, by the saying of God — and He is the truest of speakers:

“But if he is among the companions of the right hand, then: Peace be upon you from the companions of the right hand.”

The second is the greeting of the mosque upon entering it with peace, according to His saying:

“When you enter houses, greet yourselves with a greeting from God, blessed and good.”

The third is the peace with which one exits from prayer.

The fourth is the peace which indicates turning away from the ignorant, according to His saying:

“And when the ignorant address them, they say: Peace.”

The fifth is what has come in the Sunnah: that the rider of a camel begins the greeting of peace to the rider of a horse.

The sixth is that the rider of a horse begins the greeting of peace to the rider of a donkey.

The seventh is that the rider of a donkey begins the greeting of peace to the one walking.

The eighth is that the one walking begins the greeting of peace to the one standing.

The ninth is that the one standing begins the greeting of peace to the one sitting.

Then the returning of peace (the reply to the greeting) is divided into three categories:

A superior reply,
A complete reply,
An equal reply.

As for the superior reply, it is to greet the one who began the speech with something better than what he greeted with.

The complete reply is to return the greeting with the same greeting.

God, the Exalted, said:

“And when you are greeted with a greeting, then greet with one better than it or return it.”

And the equal reply is the reply to the people of protected status (ahl al-dhimmah), because they do not begin with the greeting of peace.

If they begin with peace, it is said to them:

“And upon you.”

This is because among them were those who deceived Muslims in the greeting, saying instead of:

“Peace be upon you” (salām ‘alaykum)

“Death be upon you” (sām ‘alaykum)

and death (sām) was intended.

So the Sunnah established that one says to them:

“And upon you.”

It is an equal response because if they intended good, then the same is upon them, and if they intended evil, then it is upon them.

And following what we have recited to you, O believers, from the verses of the Qur’an supported by explanation and clarification, is the saying of God, the Possessor of truth and excellence:

“And We said: O Adam, dwell, you and your wife, in Paradise, and eat from it freely wherever you wish, but do not approach this tree, lest you become among the wrongdoers. Then Satan caused them both to slip from it and removed them from that state in which they were. And We said: Descend, some of you enemies to others, and for you upon the earth is a dwelling place and enjoyment for a time. Then Adam received words from his Lord, and He accepted his repentance. Indeed, He is the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful.”

This honor was a reward for the one against whom arrogance and envy were directed; God honored him with an extended blessing.

And in these verses there is an indication that the soul is eager for increase, longing for that from which it is prevented, and striving toward it with the greatest effort.

It neither becomes satisfied, nor content, nor listens to what benefits it until it removes itself from what it has gathered.

This is because God, the Exalted, permitted Adam, peace be upon him, everything in Paradise, and forbade him from one tree only.

So his soul inclined toward it, and what was in human nature of these qualities agreed with it.

Then the accursed one deceived him with the greatest deception, swearing to them:

“Indeed, I am for both of you among the sincere advisers.”

Adam had never seen anyone before him swear by God while being a liar.

So he and his wife were removed from it, and they were expelled from Paradise and distanced from it.

And in these verses there is also a second indication that the authority of the caliphate and the imamate is not diminished in its ruling, nor is the connection commanded by God to be severed from its people because of a sin that may be committed by them. For repentance erases that matter.

This is because God, the Exalted, created Adam in order to make him a caliph upon the earth, as God informed the angels when He said:

“Indeed, I am placing upon the earth a vicegerent.”

Then He honored him by allowing him to dwell in His Paradise.

When he disobeyed Him in Paradise, He caused him to descend to the earth over which he was to have the responsibility of the caliphate. The disobedience did not harm the purpose for which he was created.

This is because there is agreement that Adam’s repentance was upon the earth, and that he descended to it while still in the state of having committed the act.

He remembered there what he had seen the angels do when they fell into their mistake, as God said to them:

“And I know what you reveal and what you conceal.”

So they recognized their mistake and circled around the Throne seeking forgiveness from their Lord, and He forgave them.

Adam, peace be upon him, did the same. He circled the place of the Ancient House (the Ka'bah) and said:

"My Lord, forgive me."

Then he was called:

"O Adam, I have forgiven you."

He said:

"My Lord, and my descendants?"

He was told:

"O Adam, whoever among them acknowledges his sin in the same manner that you acknowledged yours, I will forgive him just as I forgave you."

And in these verses there is also a third indication: that the messengers and the Imams — may the best peace be upon them all — are protected, regarding what relates to the message and the imamate, from forgetfulness, alteration, error, and distortion.

As for what relates to human actions, they are not compelled to be sinless by force. Rather, they are the ones who restrain themselves from sin through religion and choice.

This is as God related about Joseph when He said:

"He sought to preserve himself."

He did not say:

"We prevented him."

For if they were unable to restrain themselves from sins except through an imposed protection, then those among ordinary people who abstain from God's prohibitions without such protection would be superior to them.

And God refuses that they should have an equal among mankind.

So how could anyone prefer another over them?

For this reason, many of the prophets had a matter for which they sought forgiveness from God, and He forgave them — among them David, Moses, and others whose accounts are mentioned in the Qur'an.

Their mistakes did not prevent them from what God created them for: prophethood and vicegerency, nor did it remove them from the group of those whom He chose.

Based on this example, whoever sees from the actions of one of the Imams of religion, peace be upon them, something that appears to him to be a shortcoming, a mistake, or a sin, should not change the certainty of his faith because of it, nor should it cause him to doubt his religion.

Rather, he should await their return and expect their repentance.

For the rank of the messengers and the Imams, peace be upon them, before their Creator is immense, and their standing with Him is great.

Have you not heard His saying, relating from Moses, peace be upon him:

"My Lord, indeed I have wronged myself, so forgive me."

And He forgave him.

The letter fa in this verse does not necessarily indicate delay; rather, it means that the forgiveness followed the seeking of forgiveness without separation.

So understand, O believing women, what we convey to you. Do not doubt and become lost, nor ask for falsehood and thus fall into error. Instead, follow and imitate them, and you will be guided.

Among you is the remaining proof of God, which is better for you if you are believers.

It has been narrated from Abū Ja'far Muhammad ibn 'Alī al-Bāqir that he was asked about the saying of God:

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

Was this specific or general?

He replied:

“It is specific to our followers (Shīʿah).”

Then he said:

“Our followers will emerge on the Day of Resurrection from their graves despite whatever faults they have and whatever sins they possess. They will be upon camels with wings, wearing garments of radiant light. Their paths will have been made easy for them and their hardships removed.

People will fear, but they will not fear. People will grieve, but they will not grieve.

They will proceed to the shade of the Throne, and a table will be placed for them from which they will eat, while the people are still being held for reckoning.”

May God make you among the people of this magnificent glad tidings, and may He make you successful through the loyalty to your Imams in this world and the next.

Praise be to God, the Splitter of the dawn, the Sender of the winds, the Creator of bodies and souls.

May God bless Muhammad, His Messenger, who was sent with righteousness and called to success;

and upon his successor, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, possessor of generosity and noble giving, the one who fought in the cause of God with the strongest struggle;

and upon the Imams from their descendants, whose love is the highest success and whose loyalty is the most precious of gains.

And may He grant them abundant peace.

The Twenty-Fifth Assembly

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

Praise be to God, Possessor of the overwhelming and lofty might, the abundant and exalted grace, the manifest and firmly established wisdom.

There is no deity but Him, the One who holds the earth so that it does not collapse with those upon it.

May God bless His Messenger Muhammad, who was sent with a law that abrogates the previous laws, and with a proof that refutes the arguments of the deniers.

And upon his successor, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, whose right hand pours forth generosity, and whose strength against the enemies is crushing;

and upon the Imams from their descendants, those who guide to the eye of certainty, which has always flowed with guidance.

O believers, may God grant you success and joy, and benefit you through the greatness of these days and months.

Indeed, the signs of God are astonishingly clear, the proofs of His religion are radiant, and the meanings of His wisdom are both hidden and manifest.

Blessed is the One who placed among every kind of creation an elite, and selected among them leaders and examples.

He distinguished among stones the ruby and pure gold, among shells the pearl and the coral, among birds the falcons and eagles, and among all animals He distinguished this human being.

And among His months He distinguished Rajab, Sha‘bān, and the month of Ramaḍān.

All of this is an indication of His chosen servants, a sign pointing toward the path that leads to guidance, and a guidance toward His witnesses on the Day when witnesses shall stand.

The month of Rajab has now come upon you — the month which God singled out with the honor of being mentioned, as an indication of the greatness of what it represents.

It is one of the four sacred months which God mentioned in His decisive Book.

And its explanation came from the Gate of the City of Knowledge, may God's blessings and peace be upon him:

"Among them are three consecutive months and one separate month."

The separate one is Rajab al-Aşamm al-Aşabb (the deaf and overflowing Rajab).

God singled it out because its companion months are separated from it, and He made its inner meaning the strongest pillar of His religion.

So honor it through fasting and humility, and populate it through prostration and bowing.

Draw near to God in it through clarification and returning to Him.

Adorn yourselves in it with submission and humility.

For the good deed in it has its reward multiplied, and the evil deed has its burden increased.

And repent to God all together, O believers, so that you may succeed.

You have heard, O believers, what we recited to you from the saying of God, the Exalted:

"And We said: Descend, some of you being enemies to others, and for you upon the earth is a dwelling place and enjoyment for a time. Then Adam received words from his Lord, and He accepted his repentance. Indeed, He is the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful."

Now listen to what follows, which the listener may think has repeated the same meaning:

"We said: Descend from it, all together. Then whenever guidance comes to you from Me, whoever follows My guidance, there shall be no fear upon them, nor shall they grieve. And those who disbelieve and deny Our signs — they are the companions of the Fire; they will remain therein forever."

The listener may think that the mention of descent in this verse is a repetition of what was previously mentioned in the first verse:

"And We said: Descend, some of you being enemies to others."

But the noble interpretation reveals the reality of this matter and clarifies its meanings.

The first descent was from Paradise to this world.

The second descent is like the descent of Noah, peace be upon him, while he was still in this world and had not left it.

God said regarding this:

“It was said: O Noah, descend with peace from Us and blessings upon you and upon nations from those with you.”

Thus, Noah’s descent was with peace.

The second descent was for receiving guidance, according to His saying:

“Then whenever guidance comes to you from Me, whoever follows My guidance, there shall be no fear upon them, nor shall they grieve.”

In mentioning the descent from Paradise, there is the letter wāw:

“And We said: Descend, some of you being enemies to others.”

But in the second descent there is no wāw:

“We said: Descend from it, all together.”

The reason for this is what we previously explained regarding God’s saying:

“Until, when they come to it, and its gates are opened...”

where the letter wāw appears.

This wāw in:

“And We said: Descend...”

has the same meaning, because it refers to the leaving of Paradise, just as that wāw refers to entering Paradise.

The gates of Paradise are eight, and the addition of the wāw with the eighth number is an established linguistic usage.

We have already explained this previously, and it is sufficient without repeating it.

When Adam, peace be upon him, received guidance from his Lord, he established the signs of religion and confirmed them.

He arranged their order according to what he had seen and established in the heavens.

He appointed for himself a successor who would come after him, the most knowledgeable person he found in his era.

And he established proofs equal in number to the angels whom God commanded to prostrate before him.

He commanded those proofs to obey the one whom God had chosen as successor after him, just as God commanded the angels to prostrate before Adam when He made him His vicegerent on His earth.

Thus Adam followed in this matter the practice of God which he had witnessed and the arrangements whose order he knew.

The prophets after him followed the same example.

Each one appointed a successor whom he explicitly designated, and proofs whom he commanded people to obey and return to.

And God, the Exalted, commanded our Prophet Muhammad to do the same, saying:

“This is the way of those whom We sent before you, and you will not find any change in Our way.”

And He said:

“The way of God which has passed before, and you will never find alteration in the way of God.”

So the Prophet, may God's blessings and peace be upon him, appointed 'Alī, the Commander of the Faithful, as the successor after him over his community.

And he established for him proofs like the number that Adam established.

This practice continues among the prophets and Imams until the Day of Resurrection.

It has been reported in some narrations that when Adam's descendants became numerous and he saw the domination of Satan — may God curse him — over them, and how he entered through the desires placed in their nature, Adam said:

"My Lord, this one has helpers, while I am Your chosen one. He caused me to slip and removed me from Your Paradise. My descendants have no strength against him except through Your help."

So God revealed to him:

"O Adam, whoever among your descendants sins and seeks My forgiveness will find Me Forgiving and Merciful."

Adam said:

"My Lord, increase me."

He said:

"I have made their evil deed equal to one, and their good deed equal to ten."

Adam said:

"My Lord, increase me."

He said:

"And I forgive all sins."

Adam said:

"My Lord, that is sufficient for me."

Then Satan, may God curse him, stood and said:

“My Lord, if You have granted this to the descendants of Adam, then where will I receive my allotted share?”

It was said to him:

“Incite whoever you can among them with your voice, and rally against them your cavalry and infantry, and share with them in wealth and children, and promise them. But Satan promises them nothing except deception. Indeed, over My servants you have no authority.”

The servants mentioned here are God’s chosen ones among His creation — those through whom He placed in every age an Imam who repels Satan’s schemes, directs people to obedience of the Most Merciful, and guides them to the path of Paradise.

Whoever holds firmly to the Imam of his time is saved.

Whoever turns away from him is lost and misguided.

So praise God, O believers, for what He has bestowed upon you, since He placed you within His secure protection and favored you over those who oppose you among creation.

You are the party of God, and they are the party of the accursed Satan, those whom God informed:

“They are the companions of the Fire; they will remain therein forever.”

It is narrated from ‘Abd Allāh Ja‘far ibn Muhammad al-Ṣādiq, peace be upon him, that he once said to some of his followers:

“Tell me: which groups are worst in condition according to people?”

One of them replied:

“May I be your ransom, I do not know anyone whose condition is considered worse among them than ours.”

He said:

"By God, there are not two of you in the Fire — no, not even one. These verses were only revealed concerning you."

And they said:

"Why do we not see men whom we used to count among the wicked? Did we take them as a joke, or have our eyes turned away from them?"

Then he said:

"Do you know why your condition became bad in their eyes?"

They said:

"Why, O son of the Messenger of God?"

He said:

"Because they obeyed Satan, and he deceived them regarding you."

May God make you among those who hold firmly to the bonds of faith and are protected from the schemes of Satan.

Praise be to God, whose glory is exalted, whose greatness is above all, whose thanks and praise are obligatory.

May God bless Muhammad His Messenger, who illuminated the lamp of guidance and extinguished the power and army of those who stray;

and upon his successor, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, the sword of religion whose edge never dulls, and the flame of certainty whose light never fades;

and upon the Imams from their descendants, whose ocean of knowledge continues to flow, and whose mercy and protection encompass none except their loyal followers.

And may He grant them abundant peace.

God is sufficient for us, and He is the best disposer of affairs.

The Twenty-Sixth Assembly

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

Praise be to God, who through His generosity brings [His servants] to praising Him, and through His guidance grants success to whoever extends his hand toward glorifying Him; the One whose bringing His servants into existence points to His transcendence and existence.

There is no deity but Him, an acknowledgment of what is required by His oneness.

May God bless the one whom He singled out for His protection and support, the beloved whose ancient and recent glory is renowned:

Muhammad, His Messenger, the one given glad tidings of dwelling in Paradise and remaining there forever;

and upon the destroyer of ancient and recent unbelief, and the eradicator of the multitude and numbers of polytheism:

‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, the knight of truth and its champion;

and upon the Imams from their descendants, through whom God distinguished between the wretched and the fortunate among His creation, and whom He made necklaces adorning the neck of glory.

And may He grant them all a peace whose description and enumeration cannot be encompassed.

O believers, may God fulfill His promise to you and overlook His threat, and make you among His righteous friends and servants.

Indeed, fasting according to the doctrine of the People of the Household, upon them the best of peace, is divided into forty-one complete categories.

We have previously mentioned nineteen of them in our explanation and arrangement: the obligatory fasts, the Sunnah fasts, and the recommended fasts.

There remain twenty-two categories, and we promised to present their explanation at their proper time.

God, the Exalted, has brought us to that time, and it is therefore necessary that we fulfill what we promised concerning their explanation and clarification.

Of these twenty-two categories, ten are fasts which are not permissible, and twelve are matters in which a person has a choice: if he wishes, he may fast, and if he wishes, he may break the fast.

The first of the optional fasts is the fast of Rajab, because it is neither obligatory nor Sunnah.

It has been reported that whoever fasts it for one year is kept away from the Fire for one year; likewise until he fasts for eight years, at which point the seven gates of the Fire are closed to him and the eight gates of Paradise are opened to him.

When he fasts for ten years, it is said to him:

“Resume your deeds.”

And whoever increases [his fasting], God, Mighty and Glorious is He, increases [his reward] for him.

I will present what remains, God willing, according to the will of the Most High.

This report has repeatedly been narrated by both the particularists and the general scholars.

And it is known that there is no distance between the Fire and the one deserving it that can be traversed in years, because God, the Powerful and Mighty, says:

“And it is not far from the wrongdoers.”

The noble esoteric interpretation clarifies the various meanings of this report and establishes the intended meaning behind it.

For a year is a collection of twelve months, four of which are sacred.

Here, this is an example of the Imam, peace be upon him, because the Imam has twelve proofs, four of whom are sacred and noble.

Thus, when a person who believes in the authority of one of the Imams of religion fasts this month, God accepts it from him and distances him from the Fire.

And so it continues until this fasting person reaches the time of the eighth of the Imams, peace be upon him.

Then God closes the seven gates of the Fire to him and opens the eight gates of Paradise for him.

So rejoice, O believers, at this glad tidings, for you are living in the time of the eighth of the successors, may God bless him and all the noble Imams.

Put forward good deeds and you will find them [with you].

Know and perform what is righteous, and you will be praised for it.

For it is through knowledge that deeds are accepted and their performer is counted among those whose efforts are approved; while through ignorance, the deed becomes scattered dust.

And following what we recited to you, O believers, from the verses of the Qur'an made clear through explanation, is the saying of God, the Exalted:

"O Children of Israel, remember My favor which I bestowed upon you, and fulfill My covenant; I will fulfill your covenant, and fear Me."

Although those being addressed by this verse were a people in the era of the Prophet who traced their lineage to Israel, we have already explained that the miraculous nature of the Qur'an remains throughout the ages.

If that is so, then those addressed by this verse in our own age are those who made a covenant with God concerning sincerity in loyalty and allegiance — rather than those of whom God said, and He is the truest of speakers:

"We found no covenant with most of them; rather, We found most of them to be defiantly disobedient."

Among all the other groups of Islam in this age, there is none from whom God has taken a covenant and a mighty pledge to establish obedience to Him, obedience to His Messenger, and obedience to those vested with authority whose obedience God has made obligatory, other than you, O believers.

So fulfill the covenant of God to which you pledged yourselves, and thereby realize what He promised in His saying:

“Fulfill My covenant, and I will fulfill your covenant.”

And your covenant with Him is the one He mentioned in His Book:

“Indeed, God has purchased from the believers their lives and their wealth in exchange for Paradise. They fight in the way of God; they kill and are killed. It is a true promise binding upon Him in the Torah, the Gospel, and the Qur’an. And who is more faithful to his covenant than God?”

So fulfill what you pledged to God concerning His friends, peace be upon them, namely the affection which has been made obligatory upon you.

God will fulfill His covenant with you, and His covenant is Paradise, whose breadth is that of the heavens and the earth.

Then He said, continuing from what preceded:

“And believe in what I have sent down, confirming what is with you, and do not be the first to disbelieve in it. And do not exchange My signs for a small price. And fear Me alone. And do not mix truth with falsehood or conceal the truth while you know. And establish prayer and give alms and bow with those who bow.”

Everything commanded and enjoined in this verse is sufficiently clear in its outward meaning, except for the saying:

“And bow with those who bow.”

For this is among the wonders of the Revelation.

The people of the outward meaning have no way of explaining it away without resorting to the esoteric interpretation.

Those who establish the prayer have already bowed before their prostration.

And whoever does not bow in his prayer has not established the entire prayer.

Thus, all prayer is being associated here with bowing.

We say: the obligatory prayers amount to seventeen rak'ahs in every day and night:

four rak'ahs for Ṣuḥr,
four for 'Aṣr,
four for the late evening prayer, 'Ishā',
three for Maghrib,
and two for Fajr.

And by consensus, if someone forgets the bowing and then prostrates, his prayer is invalid.

So what is meant by His saying:

"Establish the prayer, give the alms, and bow with those who bow"

if not, in this repetition, an indication specifically distinguishing and clarifying the meaning of bowing?

Among the remarkable aspects of the esoteric interpretation is also that bowing and prostration in prayer correspond to the mother and father in the honoring of parents.

God attributed the prayer to bowing because of its symbolic counterpart, while the symbolic counterpart of prostration is superior.

He made the responsibility of caring for the child particularly associated with the mother, while the father shares in that responsibility and provides greater protection.

This is because bowing in prayer is an example of the successor (waṣī), while prostration is an example of the Prophet.

For this reason, bowing occurs once while prostration occurs twice.

The Prophet has two levels, since from him the outward revelation and the esoteric interpretation are derived.

The successor has one level, namely the esoteric interpretation.

Likewise, the mother represents the successor, while the father represents the Prophet, according to the saying:

“I and you, O ‘Alī, are the two fathers of this community.”

For this reason God made the inheritance of the male twice the inheritance of the female, because, as previously mentioned, the Prophet has two levels while the successor has one level.

God singled out the mother for mention just as He singled out bowing in this verse by saying:

“And bow with those who bow.”

This was because He knew of the many who would dispute the rank of the successor and oppose his position.

Thus it would serve as a further confirmation of God’s proof concerning His Household, both in the outward matter and in the inward matter.

So, O believers, be sincere in your allegiance to the trustworthy successor, and hold firmly to love for his descendants, the guided Imams, peace be upon them.

Recognize the value of what your Imam has generously bestowed upon you through what we have presented.

For every word of it is beyond the ability of many learned scholars of distinction.

Give thanks for his overflowing generosity, and recognize the blessing of his days, so that His abundant rain of grace may continue for you and He may continually bring you gifts and honor.

It has been narrated from the Messenger of God that he said:

“Indeed, in Paradise there is a tree whose trunk is of gold. It neither defecates nor urinates. It is saddled and bridled; its bridle is of gold and silver, and its saddles are of pearls and rubies.”

The people of the highest levels of Paradise will mount upon it and pass by those below them.

The people of Paradise will say:

“Our Lord, by what did Your servants attain this honor?”

And it will be said to them:

“They used to fast during the day while you ate. They used to stand in prayer at night while you slept. They used to give charity while you were miserly. They used to strive [in God’s cause] while you were cowardly.”

May God make you among those who employ their limbs in obedience to God, thereby deserving His honor and generosity.

Praise be to God, the Powerful, the Firm, the Originator and the Restorer, who sends down water from the sky and causes gardens and grain to grow by it.

May God bless His chosen one, the one who points toward the realities of divine oneness, the one who suppresses every rebellious Satan:

Muhammad, His Messenger, the intercessor when Hell says, “Is there any more?”

And upon his successor, the lofty fortress of knowledge:

‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, the fearless knight of truth;

and upon the Imams from their descendants, whose lovers are fortunate in this world and for whom, in the Hereafter, is the reward of a martyr.

And may He grant them abundant peace.

God is sufficient for us.

Majlis Twenty-Seven

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate

Praise be to God, the refuge of the fearful and their sanctuary, the salvation of those who possess knowledge and their protection. There is no god but Him. Through His guidance He delivers from the schemes and domination of Satan. May God bless His Messenger Muhammad, who exerted himself in conveying the command of his Lord and carrying it through; and his wasi, Ali ibn Abi Talib, who dispersed the assembled forces and factions of disbelief, destroyed the foundations and armies of polytheism, and brought them to ruin; and the

Imams from their progeny, whose allegiance is the cause of the believer's deliverance from destruction and his salvation. May peace be upon them all. O believers, may God shower you with His grace and generosity and clothe you in the abundance of His bounty and blessings.

When a person has been negligent for much of his life, it is fitting that he strive diligently during these exalted months, increasing his fasting and prayer and drawing near to God through righteousness and almsgiving. In this way, he may increase the number of his deeds, which have been few and diminished, and become like the one described in the report:

"The believer continues to walk with both feet upon the path, but if one foot slips, he relies upon the other until the slipped foot is restored."

You have already heard what was mentioned concerning the virtue of fasting in Rajab, and that it is the first of the forms of fasting in which a person has a choice: if he wishes, he fasts, and if he wishes, he breaks the fast.

As for fasting Sha'ban, it is a sunnah. Fasting the month of Ramadan is an obligatory duty every year. We have already discussed both of these among the sunnah and obligatory forms of fasting.

The **second form of optional fasting** is fasting after the Feast of Breaking the Fast, for several days of Shawwal, thereby continuing the month of Ramadan.

The **third** is fasting nine days of Dhu al-Hijjah, namely the days of the first ten days.

The **fourth** is fasting the Day of 'Ashura. Abstaining from food and drink on that day without believing that it is itself an obligatory fast is preferable, because this is more akin to mourning.

The **fifth** is fasting Muharram, because it too is among the sacred months.

The **sixth and seventh** are the fasting of the sick person and the traveler, because both are required to make up an equivalent number of days later, whether they fast or refrain from fasting at the time.

The **eighth** is fasting on Monday.

The **ninth, tenth, and eleventh** concern permission. A woman should not undertake a voluntary fast except with the permission of her husband; a slave should not undertake a voluntary fast except with the permission of his master, lest fasting weaken him in carrying out his service; and a guest should not fast except with the permission of his host.

As for the **twelfth form**, which completes the forty-nine forms, we shall mention it in what follows of this majlis, together with what remains of the categories of fasting, God willing.

The recitation from the Wise Remembrance then proceeds to the words of God, the Mighty, the Knowing:

"Do you command people to righteousness and forget yourselves, while you recite the Book? Will you not then understand?"

And:

“Seek help through patience and prayer. Indeed, it is difficult except for the humble—those who are certain that they will meet their Lord and that to Him they will return.”

Regarding His saying:

“Do you command people to righteousness and forget yourselves, while you recite the Book? Will you not then understand?”

God has mentioned in the Noble Book the qualities that constitute righteousness. He says:

“Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east or the west. Rather, righteousness is [the quality of] one who believes in God, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets; who gives wealth, despite loving it, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveler, those who ask, and for freeing those in bondage; who establishes prayer and gives zakat; those who fulfill their covenant when they make a covenant; and those who are patient in hardship, adversity, and at the time of battle. Such are the ones who are truthful, and such are the God-fearing.”

If righteousness is the combination of all these qualities, then the person who abandons them while commanding others to practice them is in a state of misguidance.

And regarding His saying:

“Seek help through patience and prayer,”

the placing of patience before prayer requires an understanding of its meaning and the reason for this order.

Prayer is the third pillar among the pillars of Islam, preceded by wilayah and purification. Prayer and patience are among the pillars of faith.

The Commander of the Believers, Ali ibn Abi Talib, said in some of his words:

“Faith in God rests upon four pillars: patience, certainty, justice, and striving.”

Patience itself has four branches: longing, apprehension, renunciation, and anticipation.

Whoever longs for Paradise is consoled concerning worldly desires. Whoever fears the Fire turns away from what is forbidden. Whoever renounces the world takes calamities lightly. Whoever anticipates death hastens toward good deeds. Prayer is an outward act of the body, whereas patience is an inward act of the soul. Therefore God joined the two and commanded that assistance be sought through them, in accordance with God's unchanging practice of establishing the outward and inward together.

And regarding His saying:

“Indeed, it is difficult except for the humble,”

whoever maintains prayer with humility and submission finds it easy. But whoever neglects it gives Satan the opportunity to overcome him, causing him to fall into grave matters.

God, exalted is He, then described the humble as:

“Those who are certain that they will meet their Lord and that to Him they will return.”

This expression of “thinking,” and similar expressions found in the Book of God, signifies certainty. Its meaning is: those who are certain that they will meet their Lord.

The first among those who possess such certainty is the Commander of the Believers, Ali ibn Abi Talib, peace be upon him, and he is the foremost of them. He said:

“By God, if the veil were lifted, my certainty would not increase.”

That is, he possessed such certainty concerning the Hereafter that even witnessing it would not increase it.

The verse therefore applies to him, to the rightly guided Imams among his descendants, peace and blessings be upon them all, and to their true followers who adhere to them, in accordance with the words of Abraham, peace be upon him:

“Whoever follows me is truly of me.”

Then God, exalted is He, says:

“O Children of Israel, remember My favor which I bestowed upon you, and that I favored you above the worlds.”

Know, may God have mercy upon you, that whenever God addresses one of those who came before us—the messengers, their awsiya, and the Imams of their communities, peace be upon them all—as having been favored “above the worlds,” this means above the worlds of their own respective times.

This does not apply in the same restricted sense to our Prophet Muhammad, may peace and blessings be upon him. God favored him above all the other prophets, favored his wasi above all the awsiya, and favored the Imams from his progeny above the Imams who preceded them in every age. For through him the age was brought to its completion, and God did not appoint a prophet after him to transmit this noble matter through them, just as through his grandfather the religions of those before him were abrogated, and with his mission the favor and divine support that had continued through their descendants came to an end.

Therefore, praise God, O Muslims and believers, that He made you the best community, made your Prophet the best of prophets, and your Imams the best of Imams.

It is reported from Abu ‘Abd Allah Ja‘far ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, that he said to some of his followers, advising them:

“You must practice scrupulous piety, for one of you rejoices only when his soul reaches his throat.”

Then he said:

“If you live, you will see what delights your eyes; and if you die, you will go before God with what has preceded.”

He then said:

“By God, you are upon the religion of God and the religion of His forefathers. By God, I do not mean only Muhammad ibn Ali and Ali ibn al-Husayn. Rather, I mean them together with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is one religion, by God. Deeds are accepted only from you, and sins are forgiven only for you.”

Then he said:

“Our Shi‘a are those who follow us and do not oppose us. When we fear, they fear; when we are secure, they are secure. Those are truly our Shi‘a.”

May God make you among those who hear the counsels of their Imams, understand them, act according to their disciplines, and do not transgress them.

Praise be to God, who causes those possessing knowledge to incline toward the annihilation of self in His mercy as a refuge, and whose humble hearts seek refuge in Him from His punishment; whose decrees among His creatures are carried out and made effective.

May God bless His chosen Messenger Muhammad. Whoever believes in him is secure from the evil of reckoning and punishment. And upon his wasi, Ali ibn Abi Talib: disappointment belongs to whoever opposes him concerning his right and contends against him. And upon the Imams from their progeny, whose allegiance is a shield that delivers from punishment.

May God grant them abundant peace.

God is sufficient for us, and He is the best of protectors.

Majlis Twenty-Eight

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate

Praise be to God, by whose lights the darknesses have been illuminated, and before whose decrees the nations have been bewildered; the Witness from whom nothing that stirs within the heart of His hidden secrets is absent; the Knower of what the ocean of the Qur'an has concealed in the depths of its resting place.

May God bless His chosen one, the sincere adviser in his warning, and His trustworthy wali over His revelation and reports, Muhammad, His Messenger, who called people to Him through warning and admonition.

And upon the foremost of his relatives and in-laws, the establisher of the standards of His friends and supporters, Ali ibn Abi Talib, the tongue of truth that silenced the outbursts of the unbelievers; and upon the Imams from their progeny, through whose love the believer attains the finest reward.

May peace be upon them all—a peace whose manifestation does not diminish and whose spread does not cease.

O believers, may God bring each of you to the utmost degree of your trial in this world and in religion, and make you among those who are sincere toward the Friends of God, both in what they openly proclaim and what they conceal. The possessor of knowledge has attained felicity through gratitude, while the one who turns away from the favor of his Lord is ungrateful.

Therefore follow what is spoken by the written Book:

“Eat of the provision of your Lord and be grateful to Him—a good land and a forgiving Lord.”

You have heard what we recited to you concerning the categories of optional fasting. Now listen to the prohibited forms of fasting, which are **ten categories**. The **first** is fasting on the Feast of Breaking the Fast.

The **second** is fasting on the Feast of Sacrifice.

The **third, fourth, and fifth** are fasting the Days of Tashriq.

The **sixth** is continuous fasting—joining two days, or more, without breaking the fast between them.

The **seventh** is perpetual fasting.

The **eighth** is the fasting of a menstruating woman.

The **ninth** is fasting in fulfillment of a vow made in disobedience.

The **tenth** is fasting on the Day of Doubt, since fasting is not permissible except on the basis of certainty.

With this, the **forty forms** are complete.

As for the **forty-first form**, it is fasting by abstaining from speech. God, exalted is He, informed us of this concerning Mary, peace be upon her, when He said:

“Eat and drink and be comforted. And if you see any human being, say: Indeed, I have vowed a fast to the Most Merciful, so I shall not speak today to any human being.”

He commanded her to eat, drink, and speak, for He said, “say.” This demonstrates that the speech from which she was prohibited was a particular kind of speech, not speech in every sense.

Likewise, speech was permitted during prayer in the form of intimate supplication to God, exalted is He, while other forms of speech were prohibited. Mary's abstention from speech contains a clear indication of ta'wil, whose proof and evidence are manifest. For fasting, in its inward meaning, is abstaining from initiating discourse concerning the knowledge of ta'wil during the time when the outward aspect predominates—the outward being represented by the symbol of daytime. We shall mention this in its proper place, in a manner that refines the understanding of the listener, God willing.

The recitation of the verses of the Qur'an and explanation of their meanings then reached the following words of God, the Exalted, whose statement is true and without doubt:

“And fear a Day when no soul will avail another soul in anything; no intercession will be accepted from it, no compensation will be taken from it, and they will not be helped.”

And regarding His saying:

“No intercession will be accepted from it,”

this is not universal, because God has made an exception elsewhere concerning those for whom intercession applies. He says:

“They possess no intercession except for one who has taken a covenant with the Most Merciful.”

We have already stated that among the sects of Islam there is none whose members have a covenant imposed upon them requiring obedience to God, obedience to the Messenger, and obedience to those vested with authority from his progeny, other than you, O believers.

You are the few in number, whereas the greater number are those whom God described:

“We found most of them without any covenant; indeed, We found most of them defiantly disobedient.”

Therefore rejoice, O believers, in what God has bestowed upon you in the clear text of His manifest Book.

Put forward good deeds and you will find them. Perform righteous works and you will be praised for them.

God, the Exalted, has informed us that those whom He has honored by accepting their intercession do not intercede except for those with whom He is pleased, and they are apprehensive out of fear of God.

Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq, peace and blessings be upon him, said to some of his followers:

“Assist us through scrupulous piety and striving.”

And the Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him, said to one of his followers who asked him to pray to God that he enter Paradise:

“Assist me in that by abundant prostration.”

Then God, exalted is He, continues in sequence with what preceded:

“And when We delivered you from the people of Pharaoh, who afflicted you with the worst of punishment, slaughtering your sons and sparing your women. In that was a great trial from your Lord. And when We parted the sea for you, saving you and drowning the people of Pharaoh while you were looking on.”

Reflect, O believers, upon the trials endured by those who came before you and what they suffered for the sake of their religion.

Praise God that He has spared you from what He inflicted upon others.

Recognize the measure of His favor upon you: He has settled you on the right side of your Imam, raised you through his knowledge to the understanding of

causes and means, attached you to his wilayah by the firmest rope, and made his Imamate a means of welfare for the world.

Whenever something of the worries of this world afflicts you, remember the tribulation from which God has spared you, that which He imposed upon others. In this way you will recognize the measure of His favor upon you and, through submission to His command, become deserving of an increase in His generosity toward you.

It is reported from Ja'far ibn Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, that Ziyad entered upon him. He looked at Ziyad's feet and saw that they had become cracked.

He asked:

"What is this, O Ziyad?"

Ziyad replied:

"My master, I set out upon a weak camel of mine and walked most of the journey."

Abu Ja'far felt compassion for him until tears welled in his eyes.

Ziyad said:

"May I be your ransom. By God, I have many sins and have wronged myself greatly, so much so that at times I have said, 'I am ruined.' Then I remember my allegiance to you and my love for you, the People of the House, and through that I hope for forgiveness."

Abu Ja'far turned his face toward him and said:

"Is religion anything other than love? By God, if a matter occurred that frightened people, you would not turn for refuge except to us, and we would not turn for refuge except to our Prophet. You are with us, so rejoice—then rejoice again. By God, God will never make you equal to others. No, by God, nor will He grant them the honor [that He has granted you]."

May God make you among those who meet His blessing with gratitude and thereby become deserving of abundant reward and recompense.

Praise be to God, the King, the Mighty, the Compeller, the Most Forgiving, Knower of what is public and what is hidden:

"Whether one of you conceals his speech or declares it openly, and whether he hides himself by night or goes forth openly by day."

May God bless His chosen one and His select Prophet, distinguished by glory and honor, Muhammad, His Messenger, sent from the purest house of Mudar ibn Nizar.

And upon his wasi, the standard-bearer of the Emigrants and the Helpers, the destroyer of the unbelievers and wicked, Ali ibn Abi Talib, the divider between Paradise and the Fire.

And upon the Imams from their progeny, adornments of the ages and generations, and the resting place of light and illumination.

May abundant peace be upon them.

God is sufficient for us, and He is the best of protectors.

Majlis Twenty-Nine

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate

Praise be to God, who supports the people of truth with His victory and might, and guides the people of sincerity through knowledge of the reality of speech and its figurative expression.

There is no god but Him. He grants success to whoever is mindful of Him, guiding him to the path of salvation and triumph.

May God bless His Messenger Muhammad, distinguished by the proofs of truth and his miracles, upon whom was sent down a Book whose eloquence and concision rendered the eloquence of the masters of Arabic incapable of matching it.

And upon his wasi, Ali ibn Abi Talib, destroyer of the champions of disbelief through his confrontation and valor, and shaker of the foundations of polytheism through the strength of his arm and the sharpness of his sword.

And upon the Imams from their progeny, through whom the fulfillment of God's promise to His Prophet is hoped for and its realization brought near.

May abundant peace be upon them all, a peace that ensures their enduring preservation.

O believers, may God purify your innermost selves from impurity and illuminate your inner sight with the light of certainty.

The fortunate person is the one who strives to store up precious reward and recompense. The rightly guided person is the one who makes the wilayah of the Imams, upon whom be the finest peace, among his greatest provisions. But obstinate is the one who closes his ears to the Remembrance and therefore derives no benefit from the distinction of a day or a month.

So gird yourselves, may God grant you success, for what remains of your lives, and prepare provisions for your arrival at the Resurrection.

Sha'ban has now come upon you—a month in which the overflowing abundance of mercy and forgiveness is awaited. Its fasting is an established sunnah, announcing victory and Paradise, and its days are mounts upon which repentance may be carried. Therefore load your burdens upon them. Its nights are hours of refuge, so scatter your sins across their vast deserts.

At its end, there arises the greatest disagreement concerning the obligation of fasting.

One group says that religious observance requires that they neither fast until they have seen the crescent at the beginning of Ramadan nor break the fast until they have seen it.

Yet they contradict this position in practice.

If Sha'ban completes thirty days, they fast without paying attention to whether the crescent has actually been seen. If Ramadan completes thirty days, they break the fast without taking account of the appearance of the crescent. If it happens that they see the crescent of Shawwal after only twenty-eight days of Ramadan have passed, they break the fast, but they do not consider the twenty-eight days they have already fasted sufficient. Instead, they make up one day for the beginning of the month, thereby making the month twenty-nine days, which they regard as the minimum number of days a month may contain. If religious observance truly depended upon sighting alone, this would not be the proper consequence. Rather, fasting should not become obligatory until the crescent is seen, and breaking the fast should not occur until it is actually observed.

Furthermore, someone who fasted at the beginning of the month on the basis of the sighting and then saw the crescent at the end should not be required to make up a deficiency below twenty-nine days.

This, then, is the position of those who say that fasting depends upon sighting the crescent.

Another group says that religious observance in fasting depends upon calculation and the numerical count of the days.

Yet the same argument can be made against them. For if they saw the crescent of Ramadan before their calculated number of days of Sha'ban had been completed, they would know that Ramadan had entered and would disregard the numerical count.

Likewise, if the crescent appeared before their calculated number of days of Ramadan had been completed, they would break the fast and could not say, "There are still days remaining in the month."

Thus, if religious observance depended exclusively upon one method, the other could not be relied upon.

What is established by the noble madhhab, protected from alteration and distortion, is that determining the entrance into and exit from fasting depends upon **both sighting and calculation**.

The two are like the outward and the inward: when the matter becomes unclear through one of them, the other is consulted.

For this reason there is a need for the Imam, upon whom be the choicest peace, to extract its reality and clarify its method.

The crescent is like the outward because it is visible and witnessed.

Calculation is like the inward because it is understood intellectually.

The calculation is established from the beginning of every year, and then the appearance of the crescent is observed.

If the calculation agrees with the sighting, then the outward and inward have come into agreement, the difficulty disappears, and the deeds are sound.

If the calculated period is completed but the crescent does not appear, it is known that it has been obscured, or that an error has occurred in the observation.

We shall explain this meaning in what follows of this majlis, God willing.

The recitation of the Qur'anic verses then proceeds to the words of God, the King and Judge:

“And when We appointed for Moses forty nights, then you took the calf after him while you were wrongdoers. Then We pardoned you after that so that you might be grateful. And when We gave Moses the Book and the Criterion so that you might be guided. And when Moses said to his people: ‘O my people, you have wronged yourselves by taking the calf. So repent to your Creator and kill yourselves. That is better for you in the sight of your Creator.’ Then He accepted your repentance. Indeed, He is the Acceptor of repentance, the Merciful.”

You have heard, O believers, how God, exalted is He, reproached those who came before you for taking the calf, and how Moses, peace be upon him, rebuked them for this and commanded them to kill themselves as repentance to their Creator.

This was something that God had not imposed upon any people before or after them, because of the enormity of their sin.

We have already stated that whatever God records in the stories of the messengers, peace be upon them, has passed in its outward meaning in their own time, while its inward meaning remains operative in its proper place.

Know, therefore, that whoever appoints as Imam someone other than the Imam of his own time, or magnifies him, or takes knowledge from him, or derives benefit from him, has taken a calf, just as the people of Moses took the calf, and has established him as a wali in place of the Friends of God, upon whom be peace.

Therefore beware, may God grant you success, of transgressing the limits.

Guard yourselves against exceeding the command of the present Imam. Do not listen to anyone outside the door to which you have been directed, and do not seek to quench your thirst from any reservoir other than your own appointed watering place.

Otherwise, you will become like the People of the Ditch.

May God protect you from the Fire fed with fuel.

It is reported that the Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him, advised Usama ibn Zayd, saying:

“O Usama, adhere to the path of Paradise, and beware lest you be diverted from it.”

Usama asked:

“O Messenger of God, what is the easiest way by which that path may be traversed?”

He replied:

"Thirst during the hottest hours and restraining the soul from the pleasures of this world."

Then he said:

"O Usama, you must fast, for fasting is a shield from the Fire. If you are able to meet death while your stomach is hungry, then do so."

And again:

"O Usama, you must fast, for it is a means of drawing near to God, exalted is He."

May God make you among those who benefit from the Remembrance and fill every day of every month with good deeds.

Praise be to God, who brought everything into existence and brought it forth, and who appointed for every living thing a term that it cannot exceed.

May God bless the one whom He favored above all the messengers:

Muhammad, His Messenger, to whom He gave the most eloquent and most concise speech.

And upon his wasi, who fulfilled on his behalf what had been entrusted to him and brought it to completion.

And upon the Imams from their progeny, whoever hastened toward their covenant and seized it attained success through that covenant; and whoever cherished their love as a provision for his Hereafter and stored it up attained felicity through their affection.

May abundant peace be upon them.

God is sufficient for us, and He is the best of protectors.

Majlis Thirty

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate

Praise be to God, who has purified the conscience of those who possess knowledge through their gratitude and sanctified it; who has brought the gardens of the hearts of those who fear Him to life through reciting His Remembrance and finding intimacy with Him; and who has made the path of truth easy for those who seek it and made its acquisition accessible.

There is no god but Him, the One who grants the one who follows His pleasure a share of His mercy.

May God bless the one who established and founded the beacon of religion:

Muhammad, His Messenger, to whom He granted the highest and most precious of His gifts of love; and his wasi, Ali ibn Abi Talib, who erased and obliterated the traces of polytheism, leaving innovations abandoned and destroyed; and the Imams from their progeny, who caused springs of wisdom to flow forth and who protected from an evil outcome those whose love for them was firmly rooted in the heart.

O believers, may God illuminate your hearts with the lamps of His Remembrance and bring your hearts to life through love of the Friends of His command.

God has protected you from misguidance through His Friends and has made you understand, through their knowledge, the calculation of the months and the appearance of the crescent.

You have learned that religious observance depends upon both, and that they are like the outward and the inward: when the matter is unclear through one, the other is consulted.

This is supported by the Sunnah. The principal evidence relied upon by those who hold to sighting is what they report from the Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him:

“Fast when you see it, and break the fast when you see it. If it is obscured from you, complete thirty [days].”

In another report:

“Then complete the count.”

Thus, this report in both versions does not omit mention of the numerical count.

The crescents, in relation to calculation, are like proofs and indications.

God, exalted is He, says:

“He is the One who made the sun a radiance and the moon a light, and determined for it phases so that you may know the number of years and the calculation.”

This points to what we have said: sighting the crescent is an indication of calculation, just as the outward is used as evidence for the inward.

If religious observance depended upon sighting alone, then the person with the soundest judgment and sharpest eyesight would have the greatest claim to it.

And if religious observance depended upon calculation alone, then whoever possessed the astronomical tables would be able to determine it independently.

But because there is a meaning in combining sighting and calculation that ordinary people cannot fully comprehend, there was a need for the Imam, upon whom be the choicest peace. He is the one who clarifies what is difficult and opens what is locked.

Thus, the beginnings of the years and months are observed, and the Imam does in this matter what is appropriate for the ordinary people and the majority.

When the Imam al-Mahdi bi'llah, peace be upon him, manifested his command, and God caused the dawn of his good fortune to rise and spread his glory among the people of religion, he assumed responsibility for the matter of fasting in a way that neither the elite nor the ordinary people were able to undertake.

It is narrated from his noble forefathers that the month of Ramadan is never incomplete.

He and the Imams from his progeny observed it in this manner, as did those among humanity who were blessed through their allegiance to them. During the days of none of them was this system disrupted.

Their opponents, according to their own doctrine, were unable to say that the crescent had appeared before their calculation—not at the beginning of Ramadan nor at its end.

Thus, throughout these periods—which amount to more than one hundred and fifty years—it has not occurred that Ramadan was incomplete according to their calculation, so that the crescent would appear before the calculation of the Imams, peace and blessings be upon them.

This is among the matters by which the guided Imams were distinguished through their miraculous proof, while their opposing adversaries were incapable of it.

Therefore, praise God, O believers, for you are people of verification and those who travel toward God upon the straightest path.

The recitation from the hidden Remembrance then reached the following words of God:

“And when you said, ‘O Moses, we will never believe you until we see God openly,’ the thunderbolt seized you while you were looking on. Then We raised you up after your death so that you might be grateful. And We shaded you with clouds and sent down upon you manna and quails: ‘Eat of the good things We have provided for you.’ They did not wrong Us, but they were wronging themselves.”

This is an account of the greatness of God's generosity, His forbearance, and the vastness of His pardon and patience toward those who failed to recognize His proper measure and imagined that physical eyes could perceive Him. Exalted is God above the claims of those who invalidate the truth and the falsehood of those who have gone astray.

Rather, He is as He described Himself:

“Vision does not perceive Him, but He perceives vision, and He is the Subtle, the All-Aware.”

Yet their ignorance and transgression in asking for something beyond their proper limit did not prevent Him, exalted is He, from raising them after their death, shading them with the clouds, and sending down upon them manna and quails.

He also informed us of His obligation of pardon toward them when He said:

“They did not wrong Us”

—that is, by asking for something they had no right to demand—

“but they were wronging themselves.”

Therefore take heed, O people of understanding, and beware of bypassing the intermediaries and means.

Worship God in the manner in which He has commanded you to worship Him, and declare Him transcendent, for:

“There is none comparable to Him.”

Physical eyes cannot perceive Him, and the senses cannot encompass Him. Everything that occurs within the imagination is created by God.

Yet He has indicated the way toward Him, warned against opposing Him, established His proof through His messengers, and made them the gates of righteousness and prohibition, and the means through which His wrath and pleasure are known.

Whoever follows their guidance succeeds and is saved, while whoever opposes them goes astray and is lost.

Therefore, hold firmly to obedience so that you may attain the precious gift of intercession.

It is reported from the Commander of the Believers, Ali, peace be upon him, that he said:

“There are seven deeds that precede all others, so hold firmly to them: testimony that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger;

true love of the People of the House of God, truly, from the heart;

striving in the path of God;

fasting during the hottest hours;

performing ablution thoroughly during the difficult and cold periods;

maintaining the prayer;

and pilgrimage to the Sacred House of God.”

May God make you among those who strive in righteous deeds and compete for the highest ranks.

Praise be to God, the Mighty, the One of irresistible power.

There is no god but Him, the Lord of humanity, the King of humanity, the God of humanity.

May God bless the one whose explanation removes confusion: Muhammad, His Messenger, pure in lineage and noble in origin; and his wasi, Ali ibn Abi Talib, who destroyed the schemes of the corrupt and impure, the finest of awsiya and the foundation [of this matter]; and the Imams from his progeny, from whom God removed impurity and through whose guidance He rescued us from the trial of the impure.

May abundant peace be upon them.

Majlis Thirty-One

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate

Praise be to God, through whose Remembrance troubled hearts find tranquility, through whose gratitude hardships are relieved, and through whom spirits remain refreshed.

There is no god but Him, the One who prohibits every indecency, both outward and inward.

May God bless the one whose resolve has never ceased to be directed toward obedience to God: Muhammad, the Messenger of God, through belief in whom a person is secure at the Reckoning from interrogation and dispute.

And upon his wasi, before whom the doors of his rivals are scattered in terror: Ali ibn Abi Talib, whose hand has never ceased striking at and demolishing the foundations of polytheism.

And upon the Imams from their progeny, the springs of the water of life toward which souls thirstingly turn, who generously bestow wisdom upon the people who seek knowledge and engage in inquiry.

O believers, may God protect you from the schemes of Satan and benefit you through the realities of faith.

Remembrance is the polishing of hearts; insight is the ultimate goal of what is sought; and forgiveness removes the stain of sins.

Therefore hasten to righteous deeds so that you may attain the precious and profitable commerce.

Your month is a month honored in both its nights and days. God has made it an intermediary in the order of the months, between a sacred month and a month of fasting.

It is the month of your Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. During it he would prolong his night worship and forsake sleep.

If you follow his Sunnah, you will enter Paradise in peace.

We have explained what our Imams, peace be upon them, have guaranteed concerning the meaning of fasting, until they clarified its reality and completion for us, just as God commanded the one who worships Him:

"And so that you may complete the count."

Whoever submits to their command, fasts according to their fasting, and breaks the fast according to their breaking of the fast has followed the Imam of his time. By doing so, he is secure from the dangers of his age and succeeds in his return and resurrection.

Among the remarkable customs is that everyone among the opponents who fasts submits throughout the entire month to the callers to prayer.

When he hears the call to prayer at sunset, he breaks his fast.

Yet we do not know that any of them goes each night to a high place to look at the sun and determine whether it has disappeared behind its veil or not.

Rather, throughout all the days of the month, he simply follows a caller to prayer, whether he knows that caller or does not know him.

Yet when the end of the month arrives, he does not follow the Imam of his time, even though he knows that the purpose of the Imam, upon whom be the choicest peace, is that the month should be complete, as God commanded the completion of its count:

“And complete the count, and glorify God for having guided you, so that you may be grateful.”

Therefore praise God, O believers, that He has distinguished you through completion, distinguished you through obedience to the Imam, upon whom be the choicest peace, and made you people who know and act upon this favor. That is the bounty of God, and God is sufficient as Knower.

The recitation then reached from the Wise Remembrance the following words of God, the Hearing, the Knowing:

“And when We said: ‘Enter this town and eat from it freely wherever you wish, and enter the gate prostrating, and say: “Relieve us of our burdens”; We shall forgive you your sins, and We shall increase the good-doers.’ But those who wronged exchanged a word other than that which they had been told, so We sent down upon those who wronged a punishment from heaven because of their disobedience...”

The towns mentioned in the Qur'an are of two kinds: outward and inward.

This is indicated by God's saying:

“And We placed between them and the towns which We had blessed, other towns that were visible...”

The outward towns are the physical cities, and among the blessed towns is the town from which those being addressed were commanded to eat abundantly and into whose gate they were commanded to enter in prostration.

But they exchanged the word they had been commanded to say for another word, and punishment descended upon them from heaven because of their wrongdoing.

A city is greater than a town, and the gate of a city is more noble than the gate of a town.

It has been reported from the Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him:

“I am the city of knowledge, and Ali is its gate. Whoever desires the city should come through the gate.”

A people followed the practice of those who came before them and exchanged the word they had been commanded to say.

They therefore became subject to what had afflicted those before them, namely the descent of punishment, in the manner we shall explain.

This is because God, exalted is He, used to hasten punishment upon whoever turned away from the path of reward.

But when He sent our Prophet Muhammad, God exempted his community from this, protected them from destruction, and deferred their punishment until the Day of Resurrection.

God revealed concerning a people who sought to hasten the punishment:

“God would not punish them while you are among them, nor would God punish them while they seek forgiveness.”

For this reason, the ignorant persisted in his transgression, the hypocrite tightened his reins, and the misguided listened to the misguidance of his Satan. God, however, firmly established faith upon the foundations of its pillars, strengthened its people through the established word and its proof, and humbled the devils of humanity and the jinn through the might of His authority. Therefore, O believers, you must obey your Imam, enter through his gate, know his limits, ascend through his means, accept his admonitions, and conduct yourselves according to his disciplines.

Then you will attain the mercy of God and be secure from His punishment.

It is reported from the Commander of the Believers, Ali ibn Abi Talib, peace be upon him, that he said:

The Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him, ascended the pulpit and said:

“Amin.”

Then he ascended another step and said:

“Amin.”

Then he delivered his sermon and prayed, and afterward departed.

He was asked about this, and he said:

“Gabriel came to me and said: ‘May the nose of the one be rubbed in the dust in whose presence you are mentioned and he does not send blessings upon you.’

So I said, ‘Amin.’

Then he returned and said to me: ‘May the nose of the one be rubbed in the dust who reaches the month of Ramadan and it ends without him being forgiven.’ So I said, ‘Amin.’

Then he returned and said to me: ‘May the deed of the one who reaches his parents, or one of them, be rendered fruitless if he does not treat them with righteousness, such that through honoring them they cause him to enter Paradise.’ So I said, ‘Amin.’”

May God make you among the righteous who drink from a cup whose mixture is camphor, and may He meet you, through His grace, with radiance and joy.

Praise be to God, who fulfills the hopes of the one who draws near to Him through the reality of faith and sincerity, and grants success to the one who turns away from his own desires and strives for salvation.

May God bless Muhammad, His Messenger, whom He honored through the nobility of his virtues and distinction, and raised above creation through His choosing and purification.

And upon his wasi, Ali ibn Abi Talib, who brings forth knowledge of that whose meaning is obscure and whose understanding is difficult to unlock.

And upon the Imams from their progeny, whoever loves them belongs to the party of God and His chosen ones.

May abundant peace be upon them.

God is sufficient for us, and He is the best of protectors.

Majlis Thirty-Two

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate

Praise be to God, praised in His heaven and His earth, who does whatever He wills in expanding and restricting, the Judge according to whatever He desires, whose decree cannot be overturned, whether in its enactment or its annulment.

There is no god but Him, the One who grants security from His punishment to whoever works for the Day when he will be presented before Him.

May God bless His Prophet, the warner who admonishes and exhorts:

Muhammad, His Messenger, the guide to the Sunnah of religion and its obligations.

And upon his wasi, the destroyer of the people of polytheism, repelling and defeating them: Ali ibn Abi Talib, who preferred wakefulness in obedience to God over sleep.

And upon the Imams from their progeny, who guide people concerning the true and pure realization of God's oneness.

O believers, may God shower you with the rain of His blessings and favor you above others and protect you from His punishments.

The causes of felicity have begun to shine with their lights. The faces of blessings have drawn near in their radiance, and the tree of good deeds has let its fruits fall, with the arrival of the blessed month, whose goodness God has made available to His creation.

Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, used to say to his sons when the month of Ramadan entered:

"Strive with all your strength during it, for in it provisions are apportioned, lifespans are appointed, those who will come as God's visitors are recorded, and in it is a night in which an act is better than an act performed during a thousand months."

He also said:

"Fasting the month of Ramadan is obligatory every year. The minimum by which its obligation is fulfilled is the believer's firm resolve in his heart to fast, with sincere intention, and to refrain from eating, drinking, and sexual relations throughout the daytime. He must also make his fasting include guarding all his limbs and restraining them from the things his Lord has forbidden, drawing near to Him through all of this."

When he does this, he has fulfilled his obligation.

He also said:

"How many a fasting person receives nothing from his fasting except thirst and hunger, when he is ignorant of our right, O People of the House."

And he said:

"There is no fasting for one who disobeys the Imam; no fasting for a child who is disobedient to his parents until he becomes dutiful to them; no fasting for a runaway servant until he returns to his masters; and no fasting for a rebellious wife until she repents."

Therefore obey, may God have mercy upon you, the Imam of your time.

Honor your parents, and whoever among them is present, honor them through deeds by which you draw near to God, exalted is He.

Let every runaway servant return to his master.

Then God will accept his fasting, and Paradise will be his final destination and dwelling.

The recitation from the Wise Remembrance then reached the words of God, the Hearing, the Knowing:

"And when Moses prayed for water for his people, We said: 'Strike the stone with your staff.' Then twelve springs burst forth from it. Every people knew its drinking place. 'Eat and drink from the provision of God, and do not act corruptly upon the earth, spreading disorder.' And when you said: 'O Moses, we cannot endure one kind of food, so call upon your Lord to bring forth for us some of what the earth grows—its herbs, cucumbers, garlic, lentils, and onions.' He said: 'Would you exchange what is better for what is inferior? Go down to a city, and you shall have what you have asked for.' And humiliation and poverty were imposed upon them, and they incurred the wrath of God. That was because they used to disbelieve in the signs of God and kill the prophets without right. That was because they disobeyed and transgressed."

O believers, God bestowed a favor upon those who came before you when He gave them water flowing from the stone.

But you are upon the shore of the sweet, pure, fresh sea, whose water is lawful to you. You receive from it inwardly and outwardly, without any favor or obligation from another that might disturb it.

Therefore remember God's blessings.

Do not act corruptly upon the earth, spreading disorder.

Do not exchange what is better for what is inferior, as those who came before you sought to exchange what descended from heaven—the manna and quails—for what grows from the earth: its herbs, cucumbers, garlic, lentils, and onions.

Because of this, they became deserving of humiliation and poverty being imposed upon them, and they incurred God's wrath, through which He distanced them from Paradise.

Be content with what God has approved for you, and you will be among those who attain success.

Submit to His command, and you will become deserving of the reward of those who are grateful.

It is reported from Abu Dharr, may God have mercy upon him, that he stood beside the Ka'bah and said:

"O people, I am Jundub ibn al-Sakan al-Ghifari. I am a sincere and compassionate adviser to you. Come and gather around me."

The people surrounded him, and he said:

"If one of you intended to undertake a journey, would he not take provisions sufficient for the journey? The road of the Day of Resurrection is even more deserving of provisions."

A man stood and said:

"Guide us, O Abu Dharr."

He replied:

"Perform a pilgrimage for the great matters you will encounter.

Fast a day for the terror of the Resurrection.

Pray two rak'ahs in the darkness of night, for the loneliness of the graves.

A word of truth that you speak, or a word of evil that you refrain from speaking, is charity from you toward a needy person. Perhaps through it you will be saved from a difficult Day.

Make the world consist of two words: one word in seeking the lawful, and one word in seeking the Hereafter.

Consider any word that harms and does not benefit, and abandon it.

Make your wealth consist of two dirhams: one dirham that you send ahead for your Hereafter, and one dirham that you spend upon your family. That is charity every day."

May God make you among those who hear admonition and understand it, and who act in obedience to their Lord and thereby please Him.

Praise be to God, Creator of the heavens and the earth, Possessor of expansion and restriction.

May God bless His Messenger Muhammad, the guide to salvation on the Day of Presentation; and his wasi, Ali ibn Abi Talib, who strove for the Sunnah and the obligatory duties; and the Imams from their progeny, whose command God has given authority in both enactment and annulment.

May abundant peace be upon them.

Majlis Thirty-Three

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate

Praise be to God, who bestows pardon upon whoever turns back to Him after having exceeded the bounds against himself, and who grants the elevation of ranks to whomever He wills among His servants after their obscurity and decline. There is no god but Him, who requites the one who denies His blessings by effacing and nullifying his deeds.

May God bless His Messenger, sent with the ordinances and signs of the religion of God: Muhammad, the caller to His path and the guide to His straight way. And upon his wasi, Ali ibn Abi Talib, whom whoever loves rejoices in the Hereafter at attaining the mercy of God and delighting in His favor. And upon the Imams from their progeny, firmly rooted in knowledge and standing to resolve difficulties and derive their meanings.

O believers, may God grant you success in performing obedience and protect you from negligence and waste. You are people of sincerity in Divine Unity, and God has sheltered you, through allegiance to your Imams, within a mighty refuge. So strive in preparation and right guidance.

This is the month of fasting, whose days are preferred above other days. It comes seeking your righteous deeds and bearing witness for you in the Hereafter through good works. It is the month whose fasting God has prescribed every year.

Fasting is abstaining throughout the entire day from drink and food, while avoiding all sins. It is invalidated by various things, some of which enter the body, some of which leave the body, and some of which neither enter nor leave the body.

As for what enters the body, everything that reaches the throat through the mouth—such as food, drink, and the like—has five categories of rulings: deliberate action, error, forgetfulness, that from which one cannot protect oneself, and what is permissible.

Deliberate action is when the fasting person intentionally eats or drinks; he must make up the fast and offer the prescribed expiation.

An error is, for example, when he immerses himself in water and water reaches his throat, or when he rinses his mouth for something other than the ablution for an obligatory prayer and the water reaches his throat. In this case, he must make up the fast but there is no expiation.

Forgetfulness is when he eats or drinks forgetfully. There is nothing upon him, for God Himself has fed him.

That from which one cannot protect oneself includes a fly or mosquito that suddenly enters the throat of the fasting person. There is nothing upon him.

The permissible act is swallowing one's saliva.

As for what reaches the throat through the nose, it is of two kinds: deliberate and that from which one cannot protect oneself.

The deliberate case is when the fasting person inhales perfume and tastes it in his throat; he must make up the fast.

What cannot be avoided is dust entering through the fasting person's nose and reaching his throat; there is nothing upon him.

As for what reaches the throat through the eye, it is the kohl applied by the fasting person. If he finds its taste in his throat, he must make up the fast; if he does not find its taste there, there is nothing upon him. Kohl is permissible for the fasting person.

This, then, is the ruling concerning what enters the body. As for the ruling concerning what leaves the body and affects the fast, we shall mention it in the remainder of this Majlis, God willing.

We had reached, in our reading of the Wise Remembrance, the words of God, the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing:

“Indeed, those who believe, those who are Jews, the Christians, and the Sabians—whoever believes in God and the Last Day and performs righteous deeds—they shall have their reward with their Lord; no fear shall be upon them, nor shall they grieve.”

This verse indicates that deeds are judged by their endings, and that whoever is brought to his end in faith is not harmed by having previously followed whichever religion he followed. His righteous deeds are accepted, and he need have no fear of punishment nor grief over being deprived of reward through his shortcomings.

But whoever rejects faith, his previous deeds will not benefit him, and God will render his striving void, as He, exalted is He, says:

“Whoever disbelieves in faith, his deeds have surely become worthless, and in the Hereafter he shall be among the losers.”

Following this is the saying of God, exalted is He:

“And when We took your covenant and raised the Mount above you: ‘Hold firmly to what We have given you, and remember what is in it, so that you may attain piety.’ Then you turned away after that. Had it not been for the favor of God upon you and His mercy, you would surely have been among the losers. And you certainly knew those among you who transgressed concerning the Sabbath, so We said to them, ‘Be despised apes.’ Thus We made it an exemplary punishment for those before them and those after them, and an admonition for the God-fearing.”

God has taken your covenant, O community of believers, just as He took the covenant of those who preceded you among the followers of the Prophets.

So take firmly what you have been given of the knowledge of religion, remember what is contained in it, and do not turn away from it while you are hearing.

Do not transgress in your religion as those before you transgressed. Do not violate the limits set for you. Beware lest what happened to them befall you, so

that you yourselves become an admonition for the God-fearing. The fortunate person is the one who takes heed from the example of another and does not himself become an example for others.

Let everyone perform righteousness, for he shall encounter it. And fear a Day in which you will be returned to God; then every soul shall be paid in full for what it earned, and they shall not be wronged.

It is narrated from the Messenger of God, may God bless him and his progeny, that when he mentioned the month of Ramadan, he said:

“It is a month whose beginning is mercy, whose middle is forgiveness, and whose end is freedom from the Fire. Whoever lightens the burden of his servant during it, God will forgive him and free him from the Fire. So increase therein in four qualities: two qualities by which you please your Lord, and two qualities of which you have no needlessness. As for the two qualities by which you please your Lord: bearing witness that there is no god but God, and seeking His forgiveness. As for the two of which you have no needlessness: asking God for Paradise and seeking refuge with Him from the Fire.”

May God make you among those who act in obedience to their Lord and are with His Friends and His party.

Praise be to God, who watches over every servant, knowing what his conscience conceals and what his tongue utters, knowing what his heart contains and what his eyes hide; the One who judges with pardon whoever awakens from the sleep of heedlessness through good remembrance and awakening.

May God bless His Messenger Muhammad, the foremost warner and admonisher to creation; and his wasi Ali ibn Abi Talib, the radiance of God sent forth in carrying out His command and confronting His adversaries; and the Imams from their progeny, the custodians and protectors of the knowledge of God's Book.

And may He grant them abundant peace.

God is sufficient for us, and He is the best disposer of affairs.

Majlis Thirty-Four

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate

Praise be to God, who raised the structure of the heavens and elevated it, who spread out the expanse of the earth and widened it, and who caused water to gush forth from the solid rocks of the earth.

There is no god but Him, the One who is unique in perfecting what He has created.

May God bless the one sent with the religion He approved and ordained, the truth who struck down and suppressed falsehood: Muhammad, His Messenger, whose mention and intercession God elevated.

And upon his wasi, the first to believe in him and follow him, Ali ibn Abi Talib, who demolished and weakened the foundation of polytheism.

And upon the Imams from their progeny, the rope of God: whoever holds fast to it is saved, and whoever cuts it is destroyed.

May peace be upon them all—a peace in which blessings are gathered together. O believers, may God assist you in His obedience and grant you success in what pleases Him and in His worship.

You have heard what was read to you concerning the meaning of fasting, what must be avoided lest it invalidate it, and how we divided these matters into categories. We explained those things that affect fasting by entering the body. What remains are those things that leave the body and affect fasting.

They are of two kinds: vomiting and semen.

As for vomiting, it is divided into three categories, each having its own ruling. If the fasting person deliberately induces vomiting and vomits, he must make up the fast.

If some of the vomit returns to his throat, he must make up the fast and offer the expiation.

But if vomiting overcomes him involuntarily and he is unable to prevent it, and he vomits, there is nothing upon him.

As for semen, it is divided into two categories, each having its ruling.

If it leaves the fasting person through intercourse, through caressing his wife, or through an act of his own doing, he must make up the fast and offer the expiation.

But if it comes from him while he is asleep, there is nothing upon him.

As for what neither enters nor leaves the body but nevertheless affects fasting, it is when the fasting person deliberately sleeps while in a state of ritual impurity until dawn. He must make up the fast.

Likewise, if he sleeps during the day and experiences a nocturnal emission, then awakens without performing the ritual bath and goes back to sleep until the time of an obligatory prayer has passed, he must make up the fast.

The terms **making up the fast (qada')** and **expiation (kaffara)** have been mentioned repeatedly, and we wish to explain them so that this may serve as a reminder to those who know them and information for those who do not.

Making up the fast means fasting one day in place of the day on which one's fast was invalidated.

As for the expiation: if one is unable to do what is required, then one must fast two consecutive months. If one breaks the fast during the first month after beginning the expiation, one must begin again. But if one has completed the first month and has entered the second, even if only by one day, and then breaks it, one completes what remains of it.

Whoever is unable to fast must feed sixty poor persons, giving each poor person one mudd of food for every day on which the fast was invalidated.

So safeguard the landmarks of Islam and avoid the calamities of sins.

We now come to what we recited from the Wise Remembrance, the words of God, the Mighty, the All-Knowing:

“And when Moses said to his people, ‘Indeed, God commands you to slaughter a cow,’ they said, ‘Do you take us in mockery?’ He said, ‘I seek refuge in God from being among the ignorant.’ They said, ‘Call upon your Lord for us to make clear to us what it is.’ He said, ‘He says: It is a cow neither old nor young, but of middle age between the two. So do what you are commanded.’

They said, ‘Call upon your Lord for us to make clear to us what its color is.’ He said, ‘He says: It is a yellow cow, bright in color, pleasing to those who look upon it.’

They said, ‘Call upon your Lord for us to make clear to us what it is. Indeed, all cows seem alike to us, and if God wills, we shall be guided.’ He said, ‘He says: It is a cow neither trained to plow the earth nor to water the fields, sound and without blemish upon it.’ They said, ‘Now you have brought the truth.’ So they slaughtered it, though they had almost not done so.

And when you killed a soul and disputed concerning it, God was to bring forth what you had concealed. So We said, ‘Strike him with part of it.’ Thus does God bring the dead to life and show you His signs, so that you may understand.”

The interpreters of the outward meaning have mentioned that a man was killed and the people differed concerning who had killed him. God therefore commanded them to slaughter a cow. Had they slaughtered any cow they found, it would have sufficed for them. But they made the matter difficult by repeatedly asking questions, so God clarified its characteristics for them.

They found the required cow only with one who demanded, as its price, an amount of gold sufficient to fill its hide. They then struck the grave of the dead man with part of it, and God brought him back to life, whereupon he informed them who had killed him.

This is the outward meaning, concerning which reports have been transmitted abundantly.

Its counterpart in the hidden knowledge is the story of **Joshua ibn Nun**: Moses, peace be upon him, commanded his chiefs to establish him as wasi over his son. His son was still a child, and therefore he needed a wasi to care for him until he reached maturity, at which point the authority would be delivered to him.

A similar matter occurred in the days of our Master **al-Mahdi bi'llah**, peace be upon him. Every one of those whom he indicated from among his own sons as Imam would die, until none of the sons of this wasi remained.

Then God opened Yemen through **al-Hasan ibn Nuh ibn Hawshab**, the da'i. He made garments upon which the name of al-Mahdi bi'llah, peace be upon him, was written and sent them to his wasi.

By then all of the wasi's sons had died. He therefore took the garments and delivered them to Imam al-Mahdi, peace be upon him, reciting these verses as an illustration:

**God has given you that which is beyond which there is nothing,
Yet how many sought to divert it and obstruct it from you.
But God refused anything except to direct it toward you,
Until they placed its collar around you.**

So praise God, O believers, for you are upon the upright religion of God and His straight path. You follow the traces of the Prophets and follow the established way of God that continues until the Day of Judgment—there is no alteration or change in it.

Its beginning bears witness to its end, and its earlier part bears witness to its latter part.

Some of the people of wilayah used to say in their supplication:

"O God, You who have veiled the eyes from seeing You, and from whom none but You can grant protection against loss; O Remover of destructive sins, O Reliever of afflictions, O Refuge of refuges and Helper of every distressed one: I complain to You of the loneliness of estrangement, the evil of companionship, and the lack of desire.

O God of Abraham and the family of Abraham, of the first and the last, I ask You by Yourself and seek nearness to You through the particularity of Your Names and all Your favors: overlook the slip, forgive the error, complete the blessing, rectify the community, and grant relief from Yourself by which Your Friends are overwhelmed with grace and Your humble servants receive mercy. Indeed, You are the Most Merciful of those who show mercy.

O God, bless him through whose hands You have shown us the one to whom You directed us, and bless the predecessors among his fathers and the successors among his Friends, just as You blessed Abraham and the family of Abraham. Indeed, You are Praiseworthy, Glorious."

And their final supplication is:

"Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds."

May God make you among those whose supplication is answered and whose proof triumphs in the truth.

And praise be to God, Possessor of the decisive proof and the abundant blessing.

May God bless Muhammad, His Messenger, the rising sun of guidance; and his wasi Ali ibn Abi Talib, who is for the believers an encompassing mercy and for

the unbelievers a crushing punishment; and the Imams from their progeny, whose love is readily received in the hearts of their Friends.
And may He grant them abundant peace.
God is sufficient for us, and He is the best disposer of affairs.

Majlis Thirty-Five

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate

Praise be to God, who has veiled thoughts from conceiving Him, so that they are turned away from Him; who has blinded the inner perceptions from apprehending Him, so that they seek what is below Him; and who has caused intellects to wonder at the essence of His greatness, leaving them suspended in bewilderment.

There is no god but Him, who turns His servants toward that which bends them toward Him.

May God bless His chosen one, possessor of lofty and exalted virtues, Muhammad His Messenger, whose descriptions are recorded in the Torah and the Gospel.

And upon his wasi, who was his brother and successor, Ali ibn Abi Talib, possessor of renowned merits and well-known achievements.

And upon the Imams from their progeny, through whom noble aspirations have risen and through whose justice the terrifying calamities have become secure.

O believers, may God raise your station in religion and elevate your fortune in the Hereafter.

Gird yourselves for action in this month whose rank is tremendous and whose praise and remembrance are noble. Strive during what remains of it, for half of it has passed and its full moon has returned toward the form of the old date-stalk.

Fortunate is the one who increases his praise and gratitude to God during it, purifies his secret and his public conduct for his Creator, fulfills what is obligatory upon him during its day through fasting, and strives during its night according to his ability through vigil and prayer.

And let him fully discharge what is obligatory upon him of the **zakat al-fitr**, which must be delivered to the Imam, upon him be the most excellent peace.

It has been related in a report that:

“The fast of the fasting person remains suspended between heaven and earth until he gives the zakat al-fitr.”

It is obligatory upon the fasting person and upon those whom he supports, whether young or old, male or female, and upon one who is born before the Eid prayer.

So let those who strive exert themselves in fulfilling the obligations, that they may attain precious ranks.

We had reached, in recitation and interpretation, the words of the Gentle, All-Aware:

"Then your hearts became hardened after that, so that they were like stones or even harder. For indeed, among the stones are some from which rivers gush forth; among them are some that split and water comes forth from them; and among them are some that fall down from the fear of God. God is not unaware of what you do."

Servants of God, beware of hardness and soften your hearts through fear and reverence.

For God says—and God speaks the truest of all speakers:

"Woe, then, to those whose hearts are hardened against the remembrance of God. They are in manifest error."

Know that hardness of heart toward the remembrance of God, audacity and disregard concerning His commands, turning away from His Friends, and being deceived by the respite granted by God are snares of those upon whom the word of punishment has become binding, and the association of those for whom painful punishment has become necessary.

Therefore, hold fast to softness of heart.

God, the Mighty, the Bestower, has said:

"God has sent down the finest discourse—a Book consistent in itself, repeated in its teachings. The skins of those who fear their Lord shiver from it; then their skins and their hearts soften to the remembrance of God."

Perform righteous deeds and you shall find them. Put forward good and you shall be praised for it.

Beware your Creator and fear Him. Do not dare to disobey Him, for He has informed you—and He is the truest of informers—that He is not unaware of what you do.

One whom God granted knowledge and made worthy of wisdom described them, saying:

"Its fruits are made accessible to them, its clusters near at hand; its shade is present for whoever seeks it and unbounded for whoever reaches its end. Eyes are humbled before perceiving it, and intellects are bewildered in the constellations of its celestial spheres. Those who strive cannot attain its purpose, nor can those endowed with insight perceive an increase in it except through what God has bestowed upon whomever He wills among His servants."

They are people of honor, connected to it by the rope of salvation.

Whenever God opens a mercy for people, they are the most deserving of it.

Whenever a foot of theirs slips from remembrance, God establishes another firmly for them.

They tread upon the command with the soles of the best of deeds, and they seek the opening of the rain through hands of blessing.

Through them the circle of faith was set in motion, and through their determination the order of Islam became harmonious.

Their station is the settled place upon the elevated hill; their share of the springs is their pure source.

Certainty raised them to the summit of the mountain of guidance and brought their striving to the lowest celestial sphere and to converse with the highest assembly.

Thus they reached the furthest limits and became connected to the signs of the Worshipped One.

They are the fountains of knowledge and the strongholds of instruction. They are the possessors of the signs, the scholars of **tanzil**, the jurists of **ta'wil**, and the sages of explanation and distinction.

“Such is their likeness in the Torah and the Gospel.”

May God make you among those endowed with knowledge and understanding, and raise you through the degrees of faith and knowledge.

Praise be to God, who perfects what He creates and makes goodness easy for whoever He grants success.

May God bless Muhammad, His Messenger, the foremost whom God caused to hear and speak, who clarified the religion and established its truth; and his wasi Ali ibn Abi Talib, the first to believe in him and affirm his truth, who scattered the gathering of falsehood and divided it;

and the Imams from their progeny, whose hands overflow with generosity and whose hearts are naturally formed upon compassion and mercy.

And may He grant them abundant peace.

God is sufficient for us, and He is the best disposer of affairs.

Mulla Mustafa Shabbirbhai Saifi

Al-Saifiyah al-Burhaniyah School