

For Twelver Shi'a Islam: A Guide to the Blessed Path to Allah

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October 30, 2023

1 Disclaimer:

This exploration is deeply rooted in the Qur'an and the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (the family of the Prophet). Allah says, "And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided." (Qur'an, Surah Al-Imran 3:103). We pray for clarity and adherence to the pure teachings of Islam as understood by the Twelve Imams and the scholars who follow their path.

2 Introduction:

Continuous devotion to Allah is not a fleeting act but demands us to emulate both the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his progeny, the Ahl al-Bayt, in all aspects of life. Allah mentions in Surah Al-Ankaboot (29:69), "And those who strive for Us – We will surely guide them to Our ways." The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and the Twelve Imams exemplified true devotion to Allah, emphasizing sincerity (ikhlas) in every deed. Our spiritual journey is not about mere perfection but about sincerely seeking His mercy and forgiveness. "Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave." (Hadith attributed to Imam Ali).

3 Trusting in God's Provision:

"Allah is the best of providers" (Qur'an, Surah Al-Jumu'ah 62:11). Every being, magnificent or minute, derives its sustenance from Him, as Allah proclaims, "There is no moving creature on earth but its sustenance depends on Allah" (Qur'an, Surah Hud 11:6). As followers, when we fully surrender to Allah with a genuine heart, He unveils paths we never perceived: "Whoever

fears Allah, He will make for him a way out, and He will provide for him from places he never could imagine" (Qur'an, Surah At-Talaq 65:2-3). This trust and reliance on Allah isn't confined to tangible provision; it encompasses spiritual nourishment and enlightenment. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "He who does not have forbearance, has nothing" (Hadith attributed to Imam Ali). Hence, our piety is deeply connected with our compassion and mercy towards all of Allah's creation. Embarking on this journey means placing unwavering trust in Allah's wisdom and plan.

4 Recognizing the Divine Beyond and His Signs Within Creation:

Within the boundless expanse of existence, Allah's omnipresence is a constant reminder of His profound understanding of our innermost reflections. "We have created man, and We know the whisperings of his soul," (Qur'an, Surah Qaf 50:16) speaks to this deep bond. While creation mirrors Allah's divine attributes, it is not an equal but a testament to His will. This accentuates the cardinal principle of Tawhid: the Oneness of God. Every facet of His creation, "And within the land are neighboring tracts, and gardens of vineyards, and fields sown with corn, and palm trees..." (Qur'an, Surah Ar-Ra'd 13:4) and "To whichever direction you turn, there is the Face of Allah," (Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqarah 2:115) beckons us. We are guided by the values of the Ahl al-Bayt, "Indeed, Allah enjoins justice and kindness..." (Qur'an, Surah Al-Nahl 16:90). To traverse life's path means to discern Allah's signs in all of creation and to stay true to the principles of pure monotheism. We draw inspiration: "And those who are patient, yearning for the face of their Lord..." (Qur'an, Surah Ar-Ra'd 13:22). Each gesture of kindness and reverence we display is our homage to Him. Engaging deeply with the divine essence both within and beyond, we adhere faithfully to the wisdom: "So whoever does an atom's weight of good will perceive it," (Qur'an, Surah Az-Zalzalah 99:7). In valuing creation as a reflection of Allah's unique essence — without equating it to Him — we truly fathom the depths of Tawhid and the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt.

5 Service, Respect, and Love: Emulating Divine Commands and the Path of the Ahl al-Bayt

In His infinite wisdom, Allah instructs us to serve rather than dominate. He reminds, "And do not deem yourself superior," (Qur'an, Surah Al-Fajr 89:11-12), calling us towards humility. Service emerges from recognizing Allah's supremacy and realizing that ultimate authority rests with Him: "To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth," (Qur'an, Surah Al-Imran 3:189).

Respecting the free will of others is essential. As the All-Wise granted humanity free will, we are warned against overstepping bounds: "And do not exceed limits; indeed, Allah does not love those who exceed limits," (Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqarah 2:190). Our interactions must be marked by fairness, echoing the values upheld by the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt: "Allah commands justice and beneficence," (Qur'an, Surah Al-Nahl 16:90).

Marriage is a cherished union, depicted as: "And among His signs is that He created mates for you from yourselves that you might find rest in them," (Qur'an, Surah Ar-Rum 30:21). Spouses are likened to garments, symbolizing intimacy, shelter, and shared understanding, mirroring the love and relationship of Imam Ali and Fatimah (peace be upon them).

Furthermore, familial ties hold great sanctity. Allah counsels us, "And be wary of Allah, by whom you ask one another, and [be mindful of] the ties of kinship," (Qur'an, Surah Al-Nisa 4:1). Emphasizing the importance of kinship reflects the profound bond within the Ahl al-Bayt.

Neighbors, regardless of their faith or lineage, deserve kindness and respect. The Prophet (peace be upon him) and the Imams stressed the rights of neighbors, with the Prophet remarking, "Gabriel kept urging me about the neighbor to the point that I thought he would make him an inheritor," (Hadith, Sahih Al-Bukhari).

Our love for every creation, mirroring our love for Allah and the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt, shines through His decree: "There is no creature on the earth, nor a bird flying with its wings, but they are communities like you," (Qur'an, Surah Al-An'am 6:38).

Every being, every element of nature, is a testament to Allah's magnificence, meriting our reverence and stewardship.

6 Embracing Forgiveness, Love, and Acceptance in Light of the Qur'an and Ahl al-Bayt's Teachings:

Allah's Boundless Mercy: Our comprehension of Allah's attributes starts with His absolute monotheism (tawhid). Among His attributes, His boundless mercy stands out. He pronounces, "My Mercy encompasses all things, so I will decree it [especially] for those who fear Me and give zakat and those who believe in Our verses." (Qur'an, Surah Al-A'raf 7:156). This divine mercy is a beacon for believers to mirror in their interactions with others.

Prayer for Forgiveness: Recognizing our inherent human frailties, we consistently turn to Allah, chanting, "Our Lord, do not impose blame upon us if we forget or err." (Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqarah 2:286). This plea for Allah's forgiveness deeply underscores our duty to be forgiving towards our fellow Muslims.

Mandate to Kindness: The command to maintain kindness emanates clearly from Allah. "And those who are patient, seeking the countenance of their Lord, and establish prayer and spend from what We have provided for them secretly and publicly and prevent evil with good - those will have the good consequence of [this] home." (Qur'an, Surah Ar-Ra'd 13:22). This verse highlights the journey for believers, encouraging kindness even amidst adversity.

Love for the Sake of Allah: The pinnacle of love in Islam is to love for Allah's sake. Imam Ali (peace be upon him) elucidated this, echoing the Prophet's teachings, "Your remedy is within you, but you do not sense it. Your sickness is from you, but you do not perceive it." This emphasizes the intrinsic nature of genuine love and the self-awareness required for it.

The Call to Forgive: As we passionately seek Allah's pardon, we're similarly called upon to forgive others. "Let them pardon and overlook. Would you not love for Allah to forgive you? Allah is Forgiving and Merciful." (Qur'an, Surah An-Nur 24:22). By imitating this divine trait, we

inch closer to His abundant grace and mercy. Our trajectory in Islam, illuminated by the Qur'an and teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt, guides us to embody Allah's lessons of mercy, love, and forgiveness. Not only does this fortify our bond with Him, but it also lays down a bedrock of unity and kinship within the Ummah. By manifesting these divine traits, we resonate more intimately with the pristine essence of faith.

7 Prioritizing Divine Guidance: Navigating Through Twelver Shi'ism

Qur'an Above All: Allah's words stand paramount. He reminds us, "This is the Book about which there is no doubt," (Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqarah 2:2). Interpretations, even from esteemed scholars, must always align with the Qur'an's teachings. No interpretation should obscure the text's clear guidance on the path to paradise.

Sunnah – The Prophetic Way and the Ahl al-Bayt: The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "I am leaving among you two precious things and if you adhere to both of them, you will never go astray after me. They are the Book of Allah and my Progeny, that is, my Ahl al-Bayt." (Hadith, Sahih Al-Tirmidhi). The Sunnah, as practiced and exemplified by the Prophet and the Ahl al-Bayt, is a primary source of guidance alongside the Qur'an.

Beware of Blind Following: While deeply respecting the scholarship of the Imams, one must avoid blind adherence to any single interpretation. Every believer is accountable for their comprehension and actions. Allah says, "And they will say, 'Our Lord, indeed we obeyed our masters and our dignitaries, and they led us astray from the [right] way.'" (Qur'an, Surah Al-Ahzab 33:67).

Discerning Whisperings: While every believer is surrounded by angels noting their actions, one must also guard against the insidious whisperings (waswas) of Shaytan. To discern the spirits or intentions behind such whisperings, one can test them by asking if they come in the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, Most Compassionate, and if they testify that Muhammad is His prophet. Allah advises, "And if an evil suggestion comes to you from Satan, then seek refuge in Al-

lah. Indeed, He is Hearing and Knowing." (Qur'an, Surah Fussilat 41:36). This act of affirmation and seeking refuge in Allah can assist in differentiating between divine inspirations and those that may lead one astray, aiding believers in their pursuit of righteousness.

Role of the Imams: The Twelve Imams, due to their divinely appointed leadership and proximity to the Prophet, serve as spiritual and moral guides for Shi'a believers. Their teachings and interpretations deepen our understanding of primary Islamic sources without superseding them. Allah warns, "So do not set up rivals for Allah," (Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqarah 2:22).

Continuous Search for Knowledge: The Prophet (peace be upon him) championed the acquisition of knowledge, stating, "Seeking knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim." (Hadith, Ibn Majah). Constantly reverting to primary sources and engaging with diverse scholarship is crucial for a rounded understanding.

Maintaining Unity: Despite possible differences in interpretations, the core teachings and beliefs derived from the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet and Ahl al-Bayt are consistent. This unity, grounded in sincerity and upholding divine guidance, promotes growth and rich dialogue.

In conclusion, Twelver Shi'ism seeks a genuine understanding and practice of Islam. By valuing the teachings of the Prophet and the Ahl al-Bayt, and recognizing the need for discernment, followers can ensure that their primary allegiance remains to the Qur'an and the righteous traditions of the Ahl al-Bayt.

8 Conclusion: Embracing Rahma and Muhabba as We Near Our Meeting with the Imam of Our Time

Awareness of Mortality: Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) imparted, "Frequently remember the destroyer of pleasures - death." As stated in the Qur'an, every soul shall inevitably taste death (Qur'an, Surah Al-Imran 3:185). With each moment, we draw nearer to our destined encounter with Imam al-Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance) and our Creator.

Continuous Preparation: Wisdom

lies in those who consistently maintain the Hereafter in their hearts and continuously strive in its preparation (Hadith, Riyad as-Salihin). It revolves not merely around deeds but the condition of our heart — a heart brimming with mercy, love, and compassion until our final breath.

Life as a Trust: Our existence is a trust from Allah, and this trust brings forth the duty to treasure and propagate the ideals of love, mercy, and benevolence. The Prophet (peace be upon him) articulated, "The merciful are shown mercy by the Most Merciful. Be merciful to those on the earth, and the One in the heavens will shower mercy upon you." (Hadith, Tirmidhi).

Facing Our Personal Day of Reckoning: While the universal Day of Judgment is destined for all (Qur'an, Surah Al-Haaqqa

69:18), our individual assessment starts the day we depart from this world. Did we part with a heart overflowing with love and mercy? Were we a beacon of solace and kindness to the creation of Allah? Our utmost hope is to be among the blessed souls for whom Allah tenderly proclaims: "Enter My Paradise in peace." (Qur'an, Surah Qaf 50:34).

To sum up, our sojourn on earth is ephemeral. Nevertheless, the influence of our deeds and the purity of our hearts have an eternal resonance. May we tirelessly endeavor to fill our hearts with love and mercy, so when our predestined time arrives, we stand before Imam al-Mahdi and Allah with souls echoing His magnificent attributes of benevolence and love.