

Seventh Rule

CHECKING AND INSPECTION

Self-conditioning and self-examination are essential pre-requisites for a wayfarer who is battling with his self. Self-conditioning means binding oneself with the resolve not to do anything against God's Commands. Shaytan and his accursed legions may magnify the volume of the task in our eyes, but these are the guiles played by The Accursed. al-Khumeini (AR) advises us

To remain in this state of mind till night, the time for introspection and inner deliberation, and evaluate our deeds of the whole day. This is the time to see whether you have been honest to The Giver of all, to whom everybody is accountable. If you have been faithful to Him, you should be thankful to Him that He has made you successful in your intentions. Indeed, Imam al-Kadhim (AS) has said,

He who does not take account of himself once everyday is not one of us.

We have to remind ourselves that Shaytan is always there to misguide us but his powers are nonetheless much less convincing if we are good and obedient servants of Allah, and seek His Divine Assistance.

Imam Musa al-Kadhim (AS) had said,

One who does not examine and evaluate himself every day is not one of us (i.e. he is not a follower of The Prophet and The Ahlul-Bayt). (A person who examines himself every day), if he does a good deed, he beseeches God to increase him (in virtues) and if he has perpetrated a vice, he seeks God's forgiveness for it and is penitent before Him.

Taking account and being watchful are two main ingredients in this part of the journey. It means taking account of one's acts of obedience and sinfulness to see which one exceeds the other. If the acts of obedience are more, we should thank Allah for all the blessings and opportunities; and if our sins exceed or even one sin is committed, we need to ask forgiveness from Allah and pray that we do not stumble once again. One has to do this with the sincerest of intentions, for it is easy to sin repeatedly and very difficult to repeat a good act, unless we are blessed with The Almighty. Allah is indeed worthy of remembrance and constant asking for forgiveness. The following two traditions just explain how much.

The Prince of Believers – Imam Ali (AS) has said,

Whenever one repents and God The Almighty accepts his repentance, God will employ his body parts to cover up his sins. God will employ the places where the sins were committed to hide the sins, and will make the guardian angels who record the sins forget them.

Imam al-Sadiq (AS), says on the authority of God's Prophet (S),

"God shall accept the repentance of whoever repents one year before he dies." Then he said, "One year is too long. God shall accept the repentance of whoever repents one month before he dies." Then he added, "One month is too long. God shall accept the repentance of whoever repents one week before he dies." Then he said, "One week is too long. God shall accept the repentance of whoever repents one day before he dies." Then he said, "One day is too long. God will accept the repentance of whoever repents before he faces death."

al-Amini writes,

As the early hour of the day before starting daily routine activities some time must be allocated for this purpose. For example, after offering morning prayer one may sit alone in an isolated place and should address to his self in the following manner,

Right now, I am alive but do not know how long it may last, may be for next one hour or may be little bit more. The time of life already spent has all been wasted, and the remaining time left might be counted as capital still at my disposal. For each hour spent out of this remaining life, I could arrange some provisions for The Hereafter. If right now The Israel – The Angel of Death (AS) would have arrived for receiving my soul I would have desired for living one more day or even one extra hour.

O' helpless poor self! Just imagine that you are in such a condition and your desire for this living a little longer has been granted and you have been allowed to return to this world. Oh self! Be kind to me as well as to yourself and do not waste these precious hours for indulgence into nonsense amusements. Do not be negligent now, otherwise you will be ashamed tomorrow on The Judgment Day -The Day when being regretful will not be of any help. O' self! For each hour spent during this life, God-Almighty has created a treasure box in which good and evil deeds will be deposited, and to be opened on The Judgment Day. O' self! Try to fill this treasure with righteous deeds. Be careful not to fill this treasure with sins and transgressions.

Likewise, all the parts of the body should be addressed individually to comment themselves not to commit sins. For example, the tongue should be asked that lying, backbiting, tell-bearing, fault-finding, abusing, babbling, insulting, self-praising, disputing, and false testimony are moral abjectness and divinely forbidden, which destroy eternal life of human beings. Therefore, I will not allow it to indulge in these acts. O' tongue! Be kind to yourself and Me and do not commit immoral acts because everything said will be taped and deposited into the treasure box containing the deeds and I will be accountable on The Day of Judgment.

In this manner, the tongue should be required to commit itself not to indulge into sinning. After that, the righteous deeds, which could be performed by it, should be reminded and their performance should be made obligatory during each day. For example, it could be said to the tongue: you may recite such and such invocation (dhikr), such and such supplication, may fill up the treasure box of deeds with joy and illumination and may receive a good result in The Hereafter. Therefore, do not be negligent otherwise, you will feel terribly sorry later on. Similarly, all other parts of the body should be required to commit themselves to perform only righteous deeds and strictly guard them against sins and transgressions.

Imam al-Sadiq (AS) narrated a tradition from his father as follows,

When night approaches, it makes an announcement, which is heard by all the creation except human being and jinns as follows,

O' sons of Adams! I am a new creation and will testify about all the deeds performed during my tenure. Utilize my existence to the best of your advantage, because, after the sunrise you will never see me again. After that, you would not be able to increase your righteous deeds and offer repentance for your sins and transgressions. After the night departs, each coming day repeats the same announcement.

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It is quite possible that Satan and imperious-self will tell us: You cannot live a life with such program. Is it possible to live a life with such limitations and restrictions? How could you allocate a certain hour for auditing program every day? With these whispers The Satan and imperious-self want to deceive, thus, preventing us from taking the important decision. We must offer resistance against these Satanic plots and must neutralize these plots by telling them,

This program is feasible and does not have any contradiction with life's daily routine activities, and since it is necessary for attaining self-refinement and self-purification as well as for accomplishing the eternal salvation, I must undertake this program. It is not so difficult either, and once you have decided firmly it would become easier. Even if it is a little bit difficult in the beginning, would become easier gradually.

Rights

This is precisely where the question of 'Rights' comes into one's mind and we cannot ignore it. We have a large number of sayings that warn and advise us to remind ourselves of God's, the people's rights and ours. Concerning the 'Rights' in general, Imam al-Sajjad (AS) says,

KNOW, Allah (SWT) has mercy upon you, that Allah (SWT) has rights against you and that these encompass you in every movement through which you move, every rest through which you rest, every way station in which you reside, every limb which you employ, and every instrument which you put to work. Some of these rights are greater and some less.

[1] The greatest of God's rights against you is the right, which He has made incumbent upon you for Himself and which is the root of all rights, then [2] those, which He has made incumbent upon you in yourself, from your crown to your foot, in keeping with the diversity of your organs. He has given [3] your tongue a right against you, [4] your hearing a right against you, [5] your sight a right against you, [6] your hand a right against you, [7] your leg a right against you, [8] your stomach a right against you, [9] and your private parts a right against you. Acts take place through these seven organs.

Then He gave your acts rights against you, He gave [10] your ritual prayer a right against you, [12] your fasting a right against you, [13] your charity a right against you, [14] your offering a right against you, and your acts a right against you.

Then these rights extend out from you to others who have rights against you. The most incumbent of them against you are the rights toward your leaders, then the rights toward your subjects, then the rights toward your womb (relatives).

From these rights branch out other rights. The rights of your leaders are three. Incumbent upon you is [15] the right of him who trains you through authority, then [16] of him who trains you through knowledge, then [17] of him who trains you through property.

The rights of your subjects are three. The most incumbent upon you is [18] the right of those who are your subjects through authority, then [19] the right of those who are your subjects through knowledge for the man of ignorance is the subject of the man of knowledge then the right of those who are your subjects through property, such as [20] wives and [21] what is owned by the right hand.

The rights of your womb relatives are many. They are connected to you in the measure of the connection of the womb relationship. The most incumbent upon you is [22] the right of your mother, then [23] the right of your father, then [24] the right of your child, then [25] the right of your brother, then the next nearest, then the next person most worthy, then the next most worthy.

Then there is [26] the right of your Master Who favors you (by freeing you from slavery), then [27] the right of the slave whose favors reach you (by the fact that you free him), then [28] the right of him who does a kindly act toward you, then [29] the right of The Caller who calls you to the ritual prayer, then [30] the right of The Leader who leads the prayer, then [31] the right of your sitting companion, then [32] the right of your neighbor, then [33] the right of your companion, then [34] the right of your partner, then [35] the right of your property, then the right of him who has a debt he must pay back to you, then [36] the right of him to whom you owe a debt, then [37] the right of your associate, then [38] the right of your adversary who has a claim against you, then [39] the right of your adversary against whom you have a claim, then [40] the right of him who asks you for advice, then [41] the right of him whom you ask for advice, then [42] the right of him who asks your counsel, then [43] the right of him who counsels you, then [44] the right of him who is older than you, then [45] the right of him who is younger than you, then [46] the right of him who asks from you, then [47] the right of him from whom you ask, then the right of [48] him who does something evil to you through word or deed, or [48] him who makes you happy through word or deed, intentionally or unintentionally, then [50] the right of the people of your creed, then [51] the right of the people under your protection, then all rights in the measure of the causes of the states and the occurrence of events.

Therefore happy is he whom Allah (SWT) aids in the rights which He has made incumbent upon him and whom He gives success therein and points in the proper direction.

Rights of Allah (SWT) against Oneself

The greatest right of Allah (SWT) against you is that you worship Him without associating anything with Him and worship Him with sincerity. He has made it binding upon Himself to give you sufficiency in the affair of this world and the next.

Imam Ali (AS) says,

Blessed is he who sincerely devotes the entirety of his actions, knowledge, love, hatred, receiving, relinquishing, speech, silence, deeds, and statements absolutely for Allah (SWT).

The right of your self against you is that you employ it in obeying Allah (SWT), then you deliver to your tongue its right, to your hearing its right, to your sight its right, to your hand its right, to your leg its right, to your stomach its right, to your private part its right, and you seek help from Allah (SWT) in all that.

The right of the tongue is that you consider it too noble for obscenity, accustom it to good, refrain from any meddling in which there is nothing to be gained, express kindness to the people, and speak well concerning them.

A Brief Note on The Tongue

The Aimmah (AS) have reported that,

Everyday early in the morning, all the organs of the human body address themselves to the tongue and exclaim, 'if you are safe today then we all are safe.

Allah (SWT) states further,

One who reduces his talk increases his wisdom

O' Son of Adam (AS)! Your religion is not going to correct you until you straighten your tongue and your heart. In addition, your heart is not going to be straightened unless you straighten your tongue. In addition, your tongue is not going to be straightened unless you are humble towards your Lord.

O' Son of Adam (AS)! If your tongue is (like) a lion and if you leave it alone, it will destroy you - your destruction is because of your tongue.

Imam Ali (AS), The Prince of Believers once exclaimed to an individual who was talking at random and informed him that,

O' Man! You are dictating to your Angel a letter to Allah (SWT), so speak what concerns you and omit that which does not concern you.

The Prophet (S) says,

I recommend you to practice silence, because it would keep Shaytan away from you. It helps a lot for the protection of your religion.

Avoid speaking too much except while reciting invocations for Allah (SWT), because, utterance of too many words other than God's remembrance causes hard-heartedness, and the most distant apart people from The Allah Almighty are the people with darkened heart.

Control your tongue because it is the best gift, which you may present to the self. A person never tastes the reality of belief but to control his tongue.

Imam al-Ridha (AS) remarks,

There are three things, which indicate symptoms of intelligence and religious knowledge of jurisprudence - patience, learning, and silence. Moreover, among them, silence is the gate of wisdom, causes love, and is responsible for each blessing.

Imam al-Sadiq (AS) says,

There is no worship superior to silence...

As mentioned before, the most celebrated mystic of our time, the great Allamah Tabataba'i (AR) concludes the following after years of struggle in his quest for attaining spiritual perfection,

I have witnessed the most precious effects of silence. Practice silence for forty days and nights, speaking only when it is required, remaining engaged in meditation and invocation until attaining purity and enlightenment.

Imam al-Sajjad (AS) continues,

The right of hearing is to keep it pure from listening to backbiting and listening to that to which it is unlawful to listen. The right of sight is that you lower it before everything, which is unlawful to you and that you take heed whenever you look at anything. The right of your hand is that you stretch it not toward that which is unlawful to you. The right of your two legs is that you walk not with them toward that which is unlawful to you. You have no escape from standing upon the narrow bridge over Hell, so you should see to it that your legs do not slip and cause you to fall into The Fire. The right of your stomach is that you make it not into a container for that which is unlawful to you and you eat no more than your fill. The right of your private parts is that you protect it from fornication and guard it against being looked upon.

Right of Acts

The right of your daily ritual prayer is that you know that it is an arrival before Allah (SWT) and that through it you are standing before Him. When you know that, then you will stand in the station of him who is lowly, vile, beseeching, trembling, hopeful, fearful, and abased, and you will magnify Him who is before you through stillness and dignity. You will approach the prayer with your heart and you will perform it according to its bounds and its rights.

The right of The Hajj is that you know it is an arrival before your Lord and a flight to Him from your sins. Through it, your repentance is accepted and you perform an obligation made incumbent upon you by Allah (SWT).

The right of fasting is that you know it is a veil, which Allah (SWT) has set up over your tongue, your hearing, your sight, your stomach, and your private part to protect you from The Fire. If you abandon the fast, you will have torn God's protective covering away from yourself.

The right of charity is that you know it is a storing away with your Lord and a deposit for which you will have no need for witnesses. If you deposit it in secret, you will be more confident of it than if you deposit it in public. You should know that it repels afflictions and illnesses from you in this world and it will repel The Fire from you in the next world.

There is a tradition in al-Tafseer of al-Ayyashi from Imam al-Baqir (AS) that Allah (SWT) once remarked,

I have given (some) authority to others (i.e. Angels, etc.) about things, except charity, because I take hold of it with My (own) Hand. So much so that a man or a woman gives half a date in alms, and I nurture it for him as one of you nurtures his calf and colt, until I shall leave (i.e. return) it on The Day of Resurrection (and it shall be) bigger than (the mountain of) Uhud. In addition, he who spent a property in the way of Allah (SWT) and he stayed in the house shall get for every dirham, seven hundred dirham.

(Prophet (S))

Imam al-Sajjad (AS) continues,

The right of the offering is that through it, you desire Allah (SWT) and you not desire His Creation. Through it, you desire only the exposure of your soul to God's Mercy and the deliverance of your spirit on The Day you encounter Him.

Rights of Leaders

The right of The Possessor of Authority is that you know that Allah (SWT) has made you a trial for him. Allah (SWT) is testing him through The Authority He has given him over you. You should not expose yourself to his displeasure, for thereby you cast yourself by your own hands into destruction and become his partner in his sin when he brings evil down upon you.

The right of the one who trains you through knowledge is magnifying him, respecting his sessions, listening well to him, and attending to him with devotion. You should not raise your voice toward him. You should never answer anyone who asks him about something, in order that he may be the one who answers. You should not speak to anyone in his session nor speak ill of anyone with him. If anyone ever speaks ill of him in your presence, you should defend him. You should conceal his faults and make manifest his virtues. You should not sit with him in enmity or show hostility toward him in friendship. If you do all of this, God's Angels will give witness for you that you went straight to him and learned his knowledge for God's sake, not for the sake of the people.

The right of him who trains you through property is that you should obey him and not disobey him, unless obeying him would displease Allah (SWT), for there can be no obedience to a creature when it is disobedience to Allah (SWT).

Rights of Subjects

The right of your subjects through authority is that you should know that they have been made subjects through their weakness and your strength. Hence, it is incumbent upon you to act with justice toward them and to be like a compassionate father toward them. You should forgive them their ignorance and not hurry them to punishment and you should thank Allah (SWT) for the power over them, which He has given to you.

The right of your subjects through knowledge is that you should know that Allah (SWT) made you a caretaker over them only through the knowledge He has given you and His storehouses which He has opened up to you. If you do well in teaching the people, not treating them roughly or annoying them, then Allah (SWT) will increase His bounty toward you. However, if you withhold your knowledge from people or treat them roughly when they seek knowledge from you, then it will be God's right to deprive you of knowledge and its splendor and to make you fall from your place in people's hearts.

The right of your wife is that you know that Allah (SWT) has made her repose and a comfort for you. You should know that she is God's favor toward you, so you should honor her and treat her gently. Though her right toward you is incumbent, you must treat her with compassion, since she is your prisoner whom you feed and clothe. If she is ignorant, you should pardon her.

The right of your slave is that you should know that he is the creature of your Lord, the son of your father and mother, and your flesh and blood. You own him, but you did not make him. Allah (SWT) made him. You did not create any one of his limbs, nor do you provide him with his sustenance. On the contrary, Allah (SWT) gives you the sufficiency for that. Then He subjugated him to you, entrusted him to you, and deposited him with you so that you may be safeguarded by the good you give to him. So act well toward him, just as Allah (SWT) has acted well toward you. If you dislike him, replace him, but do not torment a creature of Allah (SWT). Moreover, there is no strength save in Allah.

Rights of Womb Relatives

The right of your mother is that you know that she carried you where no one carries anyone, she gave to you of the fruit of her heart that which no one gives to anyone, and she protected you with all her organs. She did not care if she went hungry as long as you ate, if she was thirsty as long as you drank, if she was naked as long as you were clothed, if she was in the sun as long as you were in the shade. She gave up sleep for your sake; she protected you from heat and cold, all in order that you might belong to her. You will not be able to show her gratitude, unless through God's help and giving success.

The right of your father is that you know that he is your root. Without him, you would not be. Whenever you see anything in yourself, which pleases you, know that your father is the root of its blessing upon you. So praise Allah (SWT) and thank Him in that measure. In addition, there is no strength save in Allah (SWT).

The right of your child is that you should know that he is from you and will be ascribed to you, through both his good and his evil, in the immediate affairs of this world. You are responsible for what has been entrusted to you, such as educating him in good conduct pointing him in the direction of his Lord, and helping him to obey Him. So act toward him with the action of one who knows that he will be rewarded for good doing toward him and punished for evil doing.

The right of your brother is that you know that he is your hand, your might, and your strength. Take him not as a weapon with which to disobey Allah (SWT), nor as equipment with which to wrong God's Creatures. Do not neglect to help him against his enemy or to give him good counsel. If he obeys Allah (SWT), well and good, but if not, you should honor Allah (SWT) more than him. Moreover, there is no strength save in Allah (SWT).

Rights of Others

The right of your master who has favored you (by freeing you from slavery) is that you know that he has spent his property for you and brought you out of the abasement and estrangement of bondage to the exaltation and comfort of freedom. He has freed you from the captivity of possession and loosened the bonds of slave-hood from you. He has brought you out of prison, given you ownership of yourself, and given you leisure to worship your Lord. You should know that he is the closest of God's creatures to you in your life and your death and that aiding him with your life and what he needs from you is incumbent upon you. Moreover, there is no strength save in Allah (SWT).

The right of the slave whom you have favored (by freeing him) is that you know that Allah (SWT) has made your freeing him a means of access to Him and a veil against The Fire. Your immediate reward is to inherit from him if he does not have any maternal relatives as a compensation for the property you have spent for him, and your ultimate reward is The Garden.

The right of him who does a kindly act toward you is that you thank him and mention his kindness. You reward him with beautiful words and you supplicate for him sincerely in that which is between you and Allah (SWT). If you do that, you have thanked him secretly and openly. Then, if you are able to repay him one day, you repay him.

The right of The Caller (for daily prayer) is that you know that he is reminding you of your Lord, calling you to your good fortune, and helping you to accomplish what Allah (SWT) has made obligatory upon you. So thank Him for that just as you thank one who does well to you.

The right of your Leader in your ritual prayer is that you know that he has taken on the role of mediator between you and your Lord. He speaks for you, but you do not speak for him. He supplicates for you, but you do not supplicate for him. He has spared you the terror of standing before Allah (SWT). If he performs the prayer imperfectly, that belongs to him and not to you. Nevertheless, if he performs it perfectly, you are his partner, and he has no excellence over you. So protect yourself through him, protect your prayer through his prayer, and thank him in that measure.

The right of your sitting companion is that you treat him mildly, show fairness toward him while vying with him in discourse, and do not stand up from sitting with him without his permission. However, it is permissible for him who sits with you to leave without asking your permission. You should forget his slips and remember his good qualities, and you should tell nothing about him but good.

The right of your neighbor is that you guard him when he is absent, honor him when he is present, and aid him when he is wronged. You do not pursue anything of his that is shameful. If you know of any evil from him, you conceal it. If you know that he will accept your counsel, you counsel him in that which is between him and you. You do not forsake him in difficulty, you release him from his stumble, you forgive his sin, and you associate with him generously. In addition, there is no strength save in Allah (SWT).

The right of the companion is that you act as his companion with bounty and in fairness. You honor him as he honors you and you do not let him be the first to act with generosity. If he is the first, you repay him. You wish for him as he wishes for you and you restrain him from any act of disobedience he might attempt. Be a mercy for him, not a chastisement. In addition, there is no strength save in Allah (SWT).

The right of the partner is that if he should be absent, you suffice him in his affairs, and if he should be present, you show regard for him. You make no decision without his decision and you do nothing based on your own opinion, but you exchange views with him. You guard his property for him, and you do not betray him in that of his affair, which is difficult, or of little importance, for God's Hand is above the hands of two partners as long as they do not betray each other. Moreover, there is no strength save in Allah (SWT).

The right of your property is that you take it only from what is lawful and you spend it only in what is proper. Through it, you should not prefer above yourself those who will not praise you. You should act with it in obedience to your Lord and not be miserly with it, lest you fall back into regret and remorse while suffering the ill consequence. Moreover, there is no strength save in Allah (SWT).

The right of him to whom you owe a debt is that, if you have the means you pay him back, and if you are in straitened circumstances, you satisfy him with good words and you send him away with gentleness.

The right of the associate is that you neither mislead him, nor act dishonestly toward him, nor deceive him, and you fear Allah (SWT) in His affair.

The right of the one who has a claim against you is that if what he claims against you is true, you give witness to it against yourself. You do not wrong him and you give him his full due. If what he claims against you is false, you act with kindness toward him and you show nothing in his affair other than kindness. You do not displease your Lord in His affair. In addition, there is no strength save in Allah (SWT).

The right of the adversary against whom you have a claim is that, if your claim against him is true, you maintain polite moderation in speaking to him and you do not deny his right. If your claim is false, you fear Allah (SWT), repent to Him, and abandon your claim.

The right of him who asks you for advice is that, if you consider that he has a correct opinion you advise him to follow it, and if you do not consider it so you direct him to someone who does consider it so.

The right of him whom you ask for advice is that you do not make accusations against him for an opinion, which does not conform to your own opinion. If it conforms to it, you praise Allah (SWT).

The right of him who asks your counsel is that you give him your counsel, but you conduct yourself toward him with compassion and kindness.

The right of your counselor is that you act gently toward him and give ear to him. If he presents you with the right course, you praise Allah (SWT), but if he does not agree with you show compassion toward him and make no accusations against him. You consider him to have made a mistake and you do not take him to task for that, unless he should be deserving of accusation. Then attach no more importance to his affair. Moreover, there is no strength save in Allah (SWT).

The right of him who is older than you is that you show reverence toward him because of his age and you honor him because he entered Islam before you. You leave off confronting him in a dispute, you do not precede him in a path, you do not go ahead of him, and you do not consider him foolish. If he should act foolishly toward you, you put up with him and you honor him because of the right of Islam and the respect due to it.

The right of him who is younger is that you show compassion toward him through teaching him, pardoning him, covering his faults, kindness toward him, and helping him.

The right of him who asks from you is that you give to him in the measure of his need.

The right of him from whom you ask is that you accept from him with gratitude and recognition of his bounty if he gives, and you accept his excuse if he withholds.

The right of him through whom Allah (SWT) makes you happy is that you first praise Allah (SWT), and then you thank the person.

The right of him who does evil to you is that you pardon him. However, if you know that your pardon will harm him, you defend yourself. Allah (SWT) says,

Whosoever defends himself after he has been wronged against them there is no way.

(Qur'an - Chapter 42, Verse 41)

The right of the people of your creed is harboring safety for them, compassion toward them, kindness toward their evildoer, treating them with friendliness, seeking their well-being, thanking their good-doer, and keeping harm away from them. You should love for them what you love for yourself and dislike for them what you dislike for yourself. Their old men stand in the place of your father, their youths in the place of your brothers, their old women in the place of your mother, and their young ones in the place of your children.

The right of the people under the protection (of Islam) is that you accept from them what Allah (SWT) has accepted from them and you do no wrong to them as long as they fulfill God's covenant.