

Twenty-First Rule

PRECEPTOR AND SPIRITUAL GUIDE

The late Ayatullah Mirza Ali Qazi (AR) has said,

The most important requirement in this path is having a knowledgeable, selfless perfected preceptor. When a person is a seeker on The Path to Allah, if they spend half of their lives looking for a preceptor, it is worth it. The one who has found a preceptor, they have traversed half the way.

A preceptor/spiritual guide is necessary for any spiritual traveler and adhering to his or her commands is a requirement of the journey itself. The preceptors are of two types, General and Special. A *general preceptor* is a highly experienced scholar who can answer questions whenever possible and assist us in our journey towards practicing The Unity of Allah (SWT) in its totality. To know whether a general preceptor is fit to be so, it is necessary to watch him or her closely and have contact for a considerable time. Remember, no one can be a preceptor in the true sense unless and until he or she receives The Light of The Glory of Divine Essence.

Scholars have cautioned us that the further stages of this journey require a special kind of preceptor. Only The Prophet (S) and his Rightful Successors (AS) hold this extremely high position. Their guidance and company are vital and crucial throughout the journey. The nature of this company is esoteric and not physical, *for the real nature of The Imam (AS) is his luminosity, the authority of which extends to everyone and everything in this world* (al-Taba Tabai in **Light Within Me**)

Allamah Taba Tabai (AR) further writes that,

Whatever stages the spiritual traveler traverses, he covers them in The Light of The Imam (AS), and The Imam (AS) controls every position to which he advances, that position. Throughout his journey, the spiritual traveler enjoys the company of The Imam (AS) and remains associated with him. Even after reaching his destination, he needs the company of The Imam (AS), for it is The Imam (AS) who teaches him the rules that are observed in The World of Divinity.

Imam Ali (AS) cautions us the importance of a leader and remarks,

He who proceeds independently in his opinion is destroyed, and he who seeks advice of men becomes partner in their wisdom. To seek advice is the guidance itself, and he who proceeds independently with his opinion incurs the danger.

The Prophet (S) further states,

There is no solitude drearier than pride, and no support stronger than consultation.

Therefore, only after we have firmly kept The Prophet (S) and his progeny (AS) as our spiritual guides, in particular Imam al-Mahdi (AS) - may Allah (SWT) hasten his reappearance - then we can have access to their assistance. They all were indeed great and we can spend hundreds of years trying to learn and appreciate the devout and pure lives they lived.

Shaykh Rajab Ali (AR) has said,

Try to set your heart for God; when your heart is for God, He will be there; when He is there all that relates to Him will be present and evident there; whenever you will all will be with you, for God is there, the spirits of the Prophets and Awliya will be there; if you will, even Makkah and Madinah will be with you So try that your heart be just for God so that whatever is created by God be present to you!

Besides the esoteric relationship with The Infallible (AS), and in particular The living al-Mahdi (AS), which involves mostly intention, prayer and the need for his assistance, he is there for us any second we seek his help, in any way. He has even promised to help us when a knife is near one's throat and he is about to be killed, but calls The Imam (AS) for help.

The physical relationship involves the reading and familiarizing ourselves with the workings they left for us – Nahj al-Balagha, Sahifa al-Alawiyya, Sahifa al-Sajjadiyya, and the rest. We also need to contemplate on each of their traditions that we have from them. This way, we have answers about this sacred journey from their writings and there is no need for assistance from people who have not been blessed to embark on even the earlier stages of this journey. The second part of this physical journey is, therefore, to seek assistance from the leaders and highly revered scholars who have undertaken this journey and attain higher states of perfection.

It is reported by Sayyid Lavasani that, Imam al-Khui (AR), one of the greatest Shiite Mujtahid (Jurist) of his time, use to communicate with the Spiritual Community (in particular The Jinnat Community) and they often came to him so that he can answer the questions from The Jinn.

A Brief Note on Respecting The Preceptor's Opinions

About respecting the opinions and suggestions from such leaders, and what they inform us in regards to this sacred journey, Allamah Taba Tabai (AR) says,

Philosophers say that the chances of being saved in a ship without a captain from the stormy waves of ocean are brighter than those of a man being saved in an outburst of wild passion.

Allah Forbid! That we should ever become aggressive during academic discussions, in particular with our spiritual leader, the general preceptor. If you see that the other party is justified in its argument, you are expected to admit your fault and confirm what opponents say. Try not to dispute what you are advised to do unless you are right in your argument. In one long narration, The Prophet cautions his followers not to wrangle over a religious issue (although academic discussions are favored). The Prophet (S) further asked them to stop wrangling and that he would not be an intercessor to any wrangler. Unless a believer refrains from wrangling and altercation, he cannot know the truth.

Also, whatever is unknown to you ask from the learned ones, but be careful not to question them with the intention of examining their knowledge or giving them hard time, is an advice from Imam al-Sadiq (AS).

Understanding the nature of The Aimmah (AS) is what is vital on this stage. Writing about this particular stage of The Spiritual Journey, al-Taba Tabai (AR) writes in detail about The Virtues of Ali (AS) as he wants us to take this stage very seriously and learn from The Most Perfect Creation after The Prophet Muhammad (S). There is NO mistake ever when one learns from The Perfect of The Creations, including the esoteric and/or energy/spiritual relationship with The Perfect Living al-Mahdi (AS) and other Aimmah (AS).

al-Khumeini (AR) invites us to acknowledge that no path for the realization of divine existence can be undertaken unless one familiarizes himself with the apparent form of Islamic laws. Unless a person fully acquaints himself with the knowledge of the Shariah laws and follows them faithfully, he cannot attain the higher values of morality. Without adhering to the apparent teachings of Islam it is not possible that the Divine Knowledge could descend upon his heart, and the wisdom of the invisible, and the mysteries of the revered law be revealed to him.

al-Khumeini (AR) further advises us that if we hear anything, which has been reported from any thinker or scholar, we should not refute it or consider it invalid just because it is not in accordance with our taste, or does not fit in our mode of thinking. This idea may have its origin from a higher source, from even The Qur'an and Hadith. How strange it will be that a Mujtahid (jurist) issues a ruling (fatwa) regarding a certain aspect in Islam, and we reject it without examining the relevant evidences.

Virtues of The Prince of The Believers, Imam Ali (AS)

It is narrated by Allamah Majlisi (AR) that Imam Zayn al-Aabideen (AS), who relates on the authority of his father Muhammad al-Baqir (AS), reported that The Prophet (S) had once refused to say funeral prayers at the funeral of Barau, till Ali (AS), who happened to be absent at that hour, returned and prayed with The Prophet (S) the funeral prayers.

After the funeral, The Prophet (S) congratulated the family members of Barau on his happy entrance into Paradise, and The Heavenly Ladies welcoming him with pleasure. In addition, The Prophet (S) continued,

EVEN IF BARAU'S SINS HAD EXCEEDED IN NUMBER OF THE SANDS, PARTICLES OF DUST, DROPS OF RAIN, LEAVES OF TREES, HAIRS OF ANIMALS, GLANCES OF THEIR EYES, THEIR BREATHINGS, MOTIONS AND STOPS, ALL WOULD HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN AND PARDONED AT THE PRAYER OF ALI.

SEEK THE PRAYERS OF ALI (AS) AND BEWARE OF HIS CURSE, FOR EVERYONE HE CURSES WILL CERTAINLY BE DESTROYED, ALTHOUGH HIS GOOD DEEDS EQUAL IN NUMBER OF THE CREATURES OF ALLAH (SWT)!

In Uyoon al-Akhbaar from Imam al-Ridha (AS) concerning this verse,

The Trust (in Chapter 33, Verse 72) is The Wilaayat. Whoever claims it without a right has disbelieved.

Also from the same book from Imam al-Sadiq (AS),

Surely Allah (SWT), The Blessed and High, created the spirits before the bodies by two thousand years, and He made the most high and noble of them Muhammad (S) and Ali, Hasan and Husayn (AS) and the (remaining) Imams (AS).

Then he presented it (The Trust) to The Skies, The Earth and The Mountains so their light fainted. So Allah (SWT), The Blessed and High said,

These are My beloved ones, My near ones, My proofs over My Creation and The Leaders of My Creation. I have not created any creation more beloved to me then them - for them and for those who are near to them. I have created My Paradise (for them and their loved and near ones, the followers), and for those who oppose them and be inimical towards them I have created My Hell. So whoever claims their position with Me and their place in My Greatness I will punish them with such a chastisement that I will not punish anyone with a punishment the like of these persons in all the worlds, and I will place him with the hypocrites in the lowest grade in My Hell.

Whoever affirms their Mastership and does not claim their position and place with My Greatness, I will place these persons with them in the meadows of My Paradise, and they will have whatever they want from Me. I will shower unto them My Mercy and I will make them My neighbors. I will cause them to be intercessors for the sinners among My servants, male and female. Therefore, their Successorship is a Trust from Me to My creation...

From the book al-Amaali, from At-Taliqaani (AR) with his chain of narrators, from Imam al-Sadiq (AS) - The Messenger of Allah (S) said,

Surely Allah (SWT) has made for my brother, Imam Ali, son of Abu Talib (AS) virtues that none can count but He. Therefore, whoever mentions only one of his many virtues with full conviction concerning it, Allah (SWT) forgives him of his sins that which has passed and that which is to come, even if he came on The Day of Judgment with the sins of all men & jinn.

Moreover, whoever writes a virtue of the many virtues of Imam Ali, son of Abu Talib (AS) The Angels will not seize in seeking forgiveness for him as long as a trace of that writing remains. And whoever listens to a virtue of his many virtues, Allah (SWT) forgives him the sins that he committed by listening; and whoever looks to the writing of his virtues, Allah (SWT) forgives him those sins that he committed by looking.

Then the Messenger of Allah (SWT) (S) said,

To look at Ali, son of Abu Talib (AS) is worship, to remember him is worship and the faith of a servant is not accepted except by (rectification of) his mastership and being clear of his enemies.

Also from the book al-Amaali from Muhammad, son of al-Qasam al-Astarabaadi with his chain of narrators, The Prophet (S) was once asked,

Surely, this person (pointing towards a faithful servant) has climbed this day in elevation in good deeds and obedience, so much that if it was divided among the people of The Heavens and Earth, the share of the least of them would be the forgiveness of his sins and mandatory (entrance into) Heaven for him.

Therefore, the people gathered around that faithful servant and asked him as to what he did today that The Prophet (S) himself is praising the act so much. The man replied, 'I don't know whether I did anything other than that I came out from my house seeking the fulfillment of a need which its fulfillment I found being delayed, so I feared that the opportunity passed me. Therefore, I said to myself that I would replace it with a look at the face Imam Ali, son of Abu Talib (AS) for I heard The Messenger of Allah (S) say,

A look at the face of Imam Ali (AS) is worship.

So The Messenger of Allah (S) said,

Yes, by Allah! (Looking at the face of Ali (AS) is worship. In addition, which (kind of) worship. You, O' Servant of Allah (SWT), came seeking to earn some coins by which you could nourish your family and the opportunity passed you so you replaced it by looking at the face of Imam Ali (AS), and you love him and believe in his superiority. (Indeed) That is better for you than if you were in the possession of the weight of the whole world in red gold and you spent it in charity in the way of Allah (SWT). You will (thus) intercede for every breath you took in your journeying toward him 1000 necks. Allah (SWT) will free (people) from The Fire by your intercession.

From the book ar-Rawdha, it is reported that The Messenger of Allah (SWT) once exclaimed,

No people gather and mention a virtue of Imam Ali, son of Abu Talib (AS) but descend upon them The Angels of the sky until they encircle them. So when they (the people) disperse, The Angels ascend to the sky and the (other) Angels say, 'surely we smell of your fragrance that which we do not smell in other Angels. We have never sensed a fragrance more beautiful than this.' Therefore, The Angels reply, 'We were with a (group of) people who were mentioning Muhammad (S) and his Ahlul-Bayt (AS), thus do we smell of their fragrance, (and) so we became perfumed.' Therefore, the other Angels say, 'Take us to those people (on earth).' Therefore, The Angels with fragrance reply, 'They dispersed, and every one of them has gone to his place of residence.' Therefore, they say, 'Take us down so that we can at least get perfumed by that place.'

Ibn Abbas (AR) narrates that once a person asked The Prophet (S) if The Love of Ali (AS) would benefit him on The Day of Judgment! So The Prophet (S) said to that person that,

When The Day of Judgment shall arrive, Allah (SWT) will order an Angel to set The Fire ablaze, and He will order an Angel by the name of Ridhwan (AS) to bring Paradise near. Then He will extend The Bridge and establish The Scale under The Throne and a caller shall call out to Muhammad (S) and bring his followers for the Accounting.

Then He will extend on The Bridge 7 archways; and after every archway will be (the distance of) 7 thousand years, and on every archway shall be Angels who shall sweep away humankind. (By Allah!) No soul shall pass these archways but one who befriended Imam Ali (AS) and his Ahlul-Bayt (Peace be on all of them); and the one who knew them and they knew him.

And whoever didn't know them (the Ahlul-Bayt (AS)) will fall into The Fire on the top of his head, even if he had with him the worship of 70,000 servants, because, all the worship will not bear weight on The Gathering Day on The Scale and no foot of a human shall be firm on The Bridge except by The Love of Imam Ali (AS). Moreover, to this is the indication with His, Allah (SWT)'s word,

In addition, Allah shall make firm those who believe, with the firm word in this world and in the hereafter.

(Qur'an - Chapter 14, Verse 27)

Ibn Abbas (AR) further narrates that the Messenger of Allah (S) also said to Ali (AS),

O' Ali! Love of you has not become firm in the heart of any believer but his foot will be firm on The Bridge, until he enters heaven.

The author of Uyun al-Akhbar narrates,

Once Imam Ali (AS) was travelling with a Jew (who had not recognized The Imam (AS)) and passed on a path crossing across over the water. Then the Jew called out to Amir al-Mu'mineen (AS) and remarked, 'Hey you! If you had my knowledge, you would be able to cross (the water with your horse) as I have crossed.'

So Amir al-Mu'mineen (AS) said to the Jew to remain firm where he was. Then he (Imam Ali (AS)) pointed to the water so it solidified, and he passed over on it. When the Jew saw this act, he fell on his feet and said, 'O' Youth! What did you say so as to change the water to stone?'

Amir al-Mu'mineen (AS) said to him, 'So what did you yourself say so as to cross over the water?' The Jew replied, 'I called Allah (SWT) by His Greatest Name.' So Amir al-Mu'mineen (AS) asked as to what was The Great Name of Allah (SWT). The Jew replied, 'I asked Him by The Name of The Successor of Muhammad (S).' So Amir al-Mu'mineen (AS) said to him, 'I am the successor of Muhammad (S).' Then the Jew said, 'Surely it's the truth', and then he submitted (and became a Muslim).

Moreover, of that is what Ammar Yasir (AR) narrated. He said,

'I came to my Master (Ali AS) one day and he recognized feelings of sadness in me.' Therefore, he said, 'What's Wrong?' I said, 'A debt, which the debtor came to claim.' Therefore, he pointed to a rock and said, 'Take this and pay your debt off from it.' So Ammar said, 'But it's a rock.' So Amir al-Mu'mineen (AS) said, 'Call upon Allah (SWT) by my name, He will turn it (the rock) into gold for you.'

Therefore, Ammar said, 'I called upon Allah (SWT) by his name and the rock became gold (instantly).' Therefore, he said, 'Take from it your need.' Therefore, I said, 'How can I soften it?' He (AS) said, 'O' One Weak in Certainty! Ask Allah (SWT) by my name to soften the rock, for it was by my name that Allah (SWT) enabled the metal to become soft for Prophet Daud (AS).' Ammar (AR) said, 'So I called upon Allah (SWT) by his name and it became soft, and I took what I needed from it.' Then he said, 'Call upon Allah (SWT) by my name to make the rest of the rock as it was.'

Advise to The Lovers of Ali (AS)

Love of Ali comes with following his commands, The Commands set by Allah, and there is no other way to achieve higher stages in Paradise.

Muhammad ibn Marid that he said,

"I said to Imam al-Sadiq may peace be upon him, "A hadith has been narrated to us from you that you said: 'When you have acquired the ma'rifah (i.e. of the rights of The Imam's, may peace be upon them), then do whatever you want:

He replied, 'I have indeed said that.' I said to him, 'Even if one were to commit adultery and theft and drink wine?' He said, 'Inna Lillahi Wa Inna Ilayhi Raji'un! By God, they (i.e. those who have interpreted our statements in such a manner) have not been just to us.

(Is it fair for them to believe that) they would get away with whatever they do whereas we ourselves will be answerable for our acts! What I said was that when you have acquired ma'rifah perform any works you want, whether its good be great or small, for they will be accepted of you."

al-Sadiq (AS) has said,

Beware of these base people (who claim to be Shias). Verily, the Shiah of Ali (AS) is none except one who is chaste in his manner of earning his livelihood and sexual conduct. (It is one) whose diligence is intense, who works for his Creator, hoping for His reward and fearing His punishment. When you see, such people know that they are the followers (Shiah) of Ja'far.

Imam al-Baqir (AS) said,

O Jabir, do not let false doctrines and opinions deceive you into imagining that the love of Ali, may peace be upon him, is sufficient for you. Can it be sufficient for a man to declare, "I befriend Ali, may peace be upon him, I and am an adherent of his wilayah," without being diligent and without working much (good) works? Truly, were he to say that I love The Messenger of Allah (and The Messenger of Allah was better than Ali) while neglecting to follow him in his conduct (sirah) and failing to act in accordance with his sunnah, his love would not be of any avail to him .