

# Proverbs

## *Nahj al-Balāghah*

- 1) He said, “Be in times of political strife as a young camel of two years: neither has he a strong back to be mounted nor teats to be milked.”
- 2) He said, “He who dons the garb of avarice has belittled himself. He who reveals his hardships is pleased with lowliness. He has sold himself short who submits himself to his tongue’s command.”
- 3) He said, “Miserliness is a disgrace. Cowardice is a weakness. Poverty silences the argument of the brilliant. The poor man is a stranger in his own town.”
- 4) He said, “Weakness is an affliction. Patience is courage. Abstemiousness is wealth. Restraint from sin is a shield. Contentment is a most wonderful companion.”
- 5) He said, “Knowledge is a priceless legacy. Good manners are new garments. Contemplation is a lucid mirror.”
- 6) He said, “The heart of one with intellect is a chest full of secrets. Cheerfulness is the snare of friendship. Forbearance is the grave of faults.”

*It has also been related that he conveyed the same meaning in the following tradition:*

“Tolerance is the shroud of faults. Many are disgruntled with him who is pleased with himself.”

- 7) He said, “Charity is an effective remedy. People’s deeds in this life will be manifest before their eyes in the hereafter.”
- 8) He said, “Look with awe at man: he sees with a fat[-like substance]; he speaks with a piece of flesh; he hears with bones; and he breathes through [two] orifices.”
- 9) He said, “When the material world bestows its favors on someone, it lends him the virtues of others. When it retracts its favors from him, it strips him of even his own virtues.”
- 10) He said, “Interact with people such that if you were to die, they would mourn your death, and if you were to keep living, they would yearn for your company.”
- 11) He said, “When you gain an advantage over your enemy, show gratitude for your advantage by being clement to him.”
- 12) He said, “The weakest of people is he who is unable to make friends. And weaker than him is he who loses what friends he has made.”
- 13) He said, “When the first wisps of a blessing reach you, do not scatter the rest through insufficient gratitude.”
- 14) He said, “He who is forsaken by close relations will be provided with [the aid of] more distant ones.”
- 15) He said, “Not all who are confused are worth reprimanding.”
- 16) He said, “Everything defers to God’s decree such that death itself lies in [human] planning.”
- 17) He was asked about the Prophet’s saying, “Dye your gray hair, and do not imitate the Jews.” He replied, “The Prophet only said that when the believers were few. Now that Islam has spread like wildfire and its roots have grown deep, to each his own.”
- 18) He said concerning those who evaded the [call to] fight with him, “They deserted the truth, yet they did not aid falsehood.”

- 19) He said, "He who relinquishes the reins [of life] to his far-fetched hopes will stumble over death [unprepared]."
- 20) He said, "Forgo the stumbles of the honorable because not a one of them stumbles but God extends him his hand to lift him up."
- 21) He said, "Fear leads to failure, and shyness leads to privation. Opportunity passes like a fleeting cloud; therefore, avail yourself of every good opportunity."
- 22) He said, "We have a right [to the caliphate]. If it is given to us [we shall take it], and if not we shall ride on the backend of the camel no matter how long the journey."
- 23) He said, "He whose actions hold him back will not be sped along by his [noble] lineage."
- 24) He said, "Among the ways of atoning for one's abominable sins is to aid the downtrodden and to ease the pain of the afflicted."
- 25) He said, "O son of Adam, if you find your Lord showering you with blessings while you sin against him, beware!"
- 26) He said, "No one conceals anything in his heart without it manifesting itself in the slips of his tongue and in his facial expressions."
- 27) He said, "Live with your illness as long as it lives with you."
- 28) He said, "The most virtuous asceticism is to conceal one's asceticism."
- 29) He said, "When you are moving away from the temporal world and toward death, then how soon shall be the meeting."
- 30) He said, "Beware! Beware! For by God, he has concealed [our sins] so much that it seems he has forgiven them."
- 31) When he was asked about faith, he said, "Faith is founded upon four pillars: patience, certainty, moderation, and struggle.

From among these, patience is divided into four branches: yearning, fear, indifference, and anticipation.

He who yearns for paradise will gladly forego his lust.

He who fears the fire will avoid all that is illicit.

For him who is indifferent to the material world hardships will seem easy.

And he who lies in anticipation of death will rush toward all that is good.

Certainty is divided into four branches: intelligent thought, the discovery of truth, to heed admonishment, and the history of those who have passed.

If one thinks intelligently, the truth becomes clear to him.

He for whom truth becomes clear will heed admonishment.

And if one heeds admonishment, it is as though he has lived among the ancients.

Moderation is divided into four branches: deep understanding, perspicacity, enlightened judgment, and deep-rooted forbearance.

He who understands is perspicacious.

He who is perspicacious will issue sound judgment.

And he who is forbearing will never exceed the bounds and will live laudably amongst people.

Struggle is divided into four branches: enjoining good, forbidding evil, being truthful in every situation, and to despise the corrupt.

He who enjoins good strengthens the believers.

He who forbids evil rubs he disbelievers' noses in the dirt.

He who is truthful in every situation will have fulfilled his obligations.

And if one despises the corrupt and feels anger for God's sake, God's anger will be for his sake and he will please him on the Day of Resurrection.

Disbelief is founded upon four pillars: false zeal, argumentation, moral corruption, and rashness.

He who is falsely zealous will not turn to the truth.

He who argues much without knowledge will remind blind to the truth.

For him who is morally corrupt, good will seem bad and bad will seem good, and he will find himself in a stupor of misguidance.

And the path of him who is rash will be difficult, and his task will be hard, and no escape will be left for him.

Uncertainty is divided into four branches: argumentation, terror, indecision, and surrender.

He who makes a habit of argumentation will never come out of the darkness.

He who is terrified by what lies before him will turn on his heels.

He who is indecisive and in doubt will be trampled under the hooves of devils.

And he who surrenders to the destruction of his life in this world and the next will be destroyed therein."

- 32) He said, "The doer of good is better than his deed; the doer of evil is worse than his deed."
- 33) He said, "Be generous, but do not be spendthrift. Be frugal, but do not be miserly."
- 34) He said, "The most honorable [kind of] wealth is to abandon one's wishes."
- 35) He said, "If one hastens to that which people hate [by speaking and acting hurtfully], they will say about him what they do not know [even if it be a lie]."
- 36) He said, "He who entertains far-fetched hopes ruins his deeds."
- 37) He said, when the leaders of Anbār welcomed him during his march to Syria by dismounting and running before him, "What is this that you have done?"

*They replied, "It is a custom amongst us by which we honor our commanders."*

He said, "By God, your commanders do not benefit from this. You needlessly burden yourselves with all this in this world, and will suffer wretchedly for it in the hereafter. What a great loss is a burden followed by punishment! And how profitable is ease coupled with amnesty from the fire!"

- 38) He said [the following] to his son [Imām] al-Ḥasan: "My son, take from me and remember four pieces of advice along with four other pieces of advice such that no act you do while heeding this advice can harm you:

The most invaluable wealth is the intellect.

The greatest poverty is idiocy.

The most lonesome solitude is self-conceit.

The most honorable credential is good character.

My son, beware of befriending an idiot, or he wishes to help you, but he hurts you.

Beware of befriending a miser, for he will desert you when you need him most.

Beware of befriending a criminal, for he will sell you for a pittance.

Beware of befriending a mendicant, for he is like a mirage: he makes what is far seem near, and what is near seem far.”

- 39) He said, “No nearness is possible through supererogatory acts if they interfere with obligatory acts.”
- 40) He said, “An intelligent man’s tongue follows his heart, while a fool’s heart follows his tongue.”
- 41) He said, “A fool’s heart is in his mouth, while an intelligent man’s tongue is in his heart.
- 42) He said [the following] to one of his companions who had contracted an illness: “May God make your malady a means of effacing your sins. For there is no reward for sickness; rather, it effaces sins and makes them shed [from your soul] as leaves shed [from trees]. Reward [on the other hand] is only earned through the speech of the tongue and the actions of the hands and feet. [However,] God, the exalted, admits whom he wishes from his servants to the Garden because of pure and righteous intentions.”
- 43) He said in extolling Khabbāb ibn al-Aratt, “May God have mercy on Khabbāb ibn al-Aratt, for he accepted Islam eagerly and emigrated obediently; he was content with mere subsistence, was pleased with God, and lived fighting [for God].”
- 44) He said, “Glad tidings to him who remembers the Resurrection and works for the final Reckoning; who contents himself with mere subsistence and is pleased with God.”
- 45) He said, “If I were to strike a believer’s nose with my sword to make him hate me, he would never hate me. And if I were to heap all [the blessings] of this world on a hypocrite to make him love me, he would never love me. This is because it has been decreed in the words of the unlettered Prophet when he said, “Alī, no believer will ever hate you and no hypocrite will ever love you.””
- 46) He said, “A sin that upsets you is better in Allah’s eyes than an act of goodness that brings self-conceit.”
- 47) He said, “A man is as great as his resolve, as veracious as his humanity, as valorous as his anger, and as chaste as his jealousy.”
- 48) He said, “Victory is from sound judgment, sound judgment is from thorough consideration, and such consideration is from guarding one’s secrets.”
- 49) He said, “Beware of the assault of the magnanimous when they are hungry and the wretched misers when their stomachs are full.”
- 50) He said, “The hearts of men are wild; they will only approach him who tames them.”
- 51) He said, “Your faults are hidden [only] as long as fortune favors you.”

- 52) He said, "The one who ought to be most forgiving is he who is most capable of punishing."
- 53) He said, "Munificence is what is initiated [spontaneously]. What follows a request is embarrassment and scorn."
- 54) He said, "There is no wealth like the intellect, no poverty like idiocy, no legacy like discipline, and no support like consultation."
- 55) He said, "Patience is of two kinds: patience in the face of what you dislike, and patience in abstaining from what you desire."<sup>1</sup>
- 56) He said, "Wealth while far from home is home, while poverty at home is like being a wayfarer."
- 57) He said, "Contentment is never-ending wealth."
- 58) He said, "Worldly possessions are the source of all carnal desires."
- 59) He said, "He who warns you is like he who brings glad tidings."
- 60) He said, "The tongue is a beast that, if let loose, will mangle you."
- 61) He said, "Women are scorpions with a benign sting."
- 62) He said, "When you are greeted with a salutation, respond with one better than it. [Similarly] when a hand [of kindness] is extended to you, reciprocate with greater [kindness]. Despite this, excellence is for him who initiates."
- 63) He said, "A mediator is the wing of a seeker."
- 64) He said, "The denizens of this world are like the passengers of a caravan who are transported [to their destination] while they sleep."
- 65) He said, "To lose one's loved ones is like being a stranger in the land."
- 66) He said, "A need left unfulfilled is a lighter burden to bear than seeking it from those unworthy."
- 67) He said, "Do not feel ashamed to give [only a] little, for not giving at all is less still."
- 68) He said, "Restraint is the ornament of poverty. Gratitude is the ornament of wealth."
- 69) He said, "If what you want is not attained, do not worry about your state."
- 70) He said, "You will find the foolish to be either excessive or remiss."
- 71) He said, "As intellect increases, speech decreases."
- 72) He said, "[The passage of] time withers the body and reinvigorates aspirations. [It] brings death near and distances [the realization of] far-fetched hopes. He who vanquishes it exhausts himself, and he who is passed up wears himself out."
- 73) He said, "He who wishes to lead people must begin by teaching himself before he teaches others. He must teach [others] discipline through his actions before he teaches them through his words. He who teaches and trains himself is greater than he who teaches people and trains them."
- 74) He said, "Every breath one takes is a step toward death."
- 75) He said, "Everything finite shall end, and everything awaited shall come to pass."

<sup>1</sup> This tradition could alternatively be translated, "...patience [to do what you are commanded] though you dislike it, and patience [to refrain from what you are forbidden] though you like it."

- 76) He said, “When matters seem muddled, their outcomes can be known from their beginnings.”
- 77) It is narrated concerning Ḍarār ibn Ḍamrah al-Ḍabābī that he approached Mu‘āwiyah, and Mu‘āwiyah asked him about the Commander of the Faithful, at which he said, “I swear, I saw him at one point, in the pitch black of night, while he stood at his prayer niche, clasping his beard, shifting from foot to foot like a man stricken by a snake, weeping like one bereaved as he said, ‘O World! O World! Get away from me. Is it for me that you display yourself? Is it me you seek to seduce? May your day [of victory] never arrive. Far from me [is all that you want from me]. Seduce someone else. I have no need for you. I have [already] divorced your thrice after which there can be no reconciliation, for life with you is short; your station is meek; and contemptible is that for which one can hope from you. Ah, how bare are my provisions, and how long the road ahead! How distant the journey, and how formidable the destination!’”
- 78) Among his sayings is his answer to the Syrian who asked, “Was our journey to Syria by God’s decree?” upon which he said, “God have mercy on you. Perhaps you conjectured [God’s decree] to be inevitable. Were it so, reward and punishment would be devoid [of meaning], and promises and threats would be futile. God, the Exalted, has commanded his servants after giving them freewill, and forbidden them by warning them. He has made easy tasks obligatory on them and has not burdened them with what is difficult. He gives much for little. He is not vanquished when he is disobeyed, nor does he force when he is obeyed. He did not send the prophets in jest, nor did he send the Book to his servants without purpose. He did not create the heavens and earth and all that resides therein in vain. “This is a [mere] conjecture of the faithless. May the chastisement of fire be for the faithless.”
- 79) He said, “Grab wisdom wherever it may be, for it dwells in the heart of the hypocrite and flutters until it escapes and comes to rest among its cohorts in the heart of a believer.”
- 80) He said, “Wisdom is the believer’s holy grail, so grab it if even from hypocrites.”
- 81) He said, “A man is worth what he knows.”
- 82) He said, “I admonish you concerning five traits so important that if you were to strike your heels to your camel’s sides in pursuit of them, it would be worth it: You must not set your hopes on anyone but your Lord; nor fear anything but your sin; you must not be ashamed, when asked of a thing you do not know, to say, ‘I do not know;’ you must not be ashamed, when you do not know a thing, to learn it; maintain patience, for patience is to faith what the head is to the body. There is no good in a body without a head or in faith without patience.”
- 83) He said to a man who had praised him excessively while his motives were suspect, “I am less than what you say and more than what you think.”
- 84) He said, “Those left alive by the sword live longer and have more progeny.”
- 85) He said, “He who abandons ‘I do not know’ will meet his doom.”
- 86) He said, “The opinion of an old man is more beloved to me than the brawn of a young one.”
- 87) He said, “I am astonished by him who is despondent in spite of repentance.”
- 88) Imām al-Bāqir related that he said, “There were on earth two [paths to] amnesty from God’s chastisement. One has been lifted, so take the other, and hold fast to it. The

[path to] amnesty that has been lifted was the Messenger of God. The [path to] amnesty that remains is repentance. [It is as] God has said: “God will not punish them while you are among them. God will not punish them while they repent.”

- 89) He said, “If one improves his relationship with God, God will improve his relationship with people. And if one improves his affairs in the hereafter, God will improve his affairs in this world. And whoever finds in himself an admonisher will find in God a protector.”
- 90) He said, “The quintessential scholar is one who does not make people despair of God’s mercy and does not give them a sense of impunity from God’s punishment.”
- 91) He said, “These hearts tire just as bodies tire, so seek out for them fresh and wondrous wisdom.”
- 92) He said, “The lowliest knowledge is what stops at the tongue. The loftiest knowledge is what manifests itself in the limbs and extremities.”
- 93) He said, “None of you should say, ‘O God, I seek refuge with you from tribulation,’ for everyone must face tribulation. Rather, if you [must] seek refuge, seek it from tribulations that lead to error. For God has said, ‘Know that your possessions and your children are a trial.’ This means that he tries people with their possessions and their children to determine who is displeased with his sustenance and who is pleased with his portion. Even though he knows them better than [they know] themselves, [he tests them] to induce those actions by which reward and punishment are earned, because some love male [children] and dislike female [children], and some love it when God increases their possessions and hate hard times.
- 94) He was asked what it means to be “well off,” so he said, “To be well off is not that your possessions and children be many. Rather, to be well off is to have much knowledge, [to show] great forbearance, and [if you must boast] to boast about your worship of God such that if you do good, you praise God, and if you do evil, you seek his forgiveness. None are well off in this world except for two [types of] people: one who sins and then atones for his sins through repentance; and one who strives to do good.”
- 95) He said, “No act done with the fear of God is [in any way] insignificant. How could something be insignificant that is accepted [by God]?”
- 96) He said, “The nearest people to the prophets are those who act most diligently upon what they brought.” Then he recited, “The nearest people to Abraham are those who follow him, and this Prophet, and those who believe.” Then he said, “Muḥammad’s friend is he who obeys God, though his relation be distant. And Muḥammad’s enemy is he who sins against God though his relation be close.”
- 97) He once heard a man from the *Ḥarūriyyah* (the Khārijites) who was keeping a vigil and reading [Qur’ān], so he said, “Sleep with conviction is better than prayer in doubt.”
- 98) He said, “Collect traditions—when you hear them—with deliberation, not as a mere transmitter, for those who transmit information are many, but those who deliberate over it are few.”
- 99) He once heard a man say, “*innā lillāhi wa innā ilayhi rāji‘ūn* (We belong to God and to him shall we return).” So he said, “Our statement, ‘We belong to God’ is an admission that we are owned [by him], and our statement, ‘To him shall we return,’ is an admission of [our] mortality.”

- 100) When a group of people praised him to his face, he said, “O God, you know me better than I, and I know myself better than they. O God, make us better than others think us to be, and forgive us for what others do not know us to be.”
- 101) He said, “Your fulfillment of others’ needs will not be perfect without three conditions: your act should seem insignificant to you, for then it shall be great [in God’s eyes]; you should try to conceal your deed, for then it shall be made manifest [on the Day of Judgment]; you should hasten your act, for then it shall be sweet [to the recipient].”
- 102) He said, “A time will descend upon humankind when only gossips are befriended, when only debauchers are considered astute, when only the honest are considered weak. They shall consider charity a deficit, maintaining family ties a great favor, and acts of worship reason to feel boastful. At that time, power will come with the counsel of women, the leadership of children, and the administration of eunuchs.”
- 103) He was seen in a tattered and patched abaya. He was addressed concerning this so he said, “One’s heart is humbled by [such clothes] and one’s ego is tamed; and the faithful follow because of it. The temporal world and the hereafter are rival enemies and divergent paths. Accordingly, if one is infatuated with the world and holds it dear, he will hate the hereafter and have enmity toward it, since they are like the eastern and western horizons with a person walking between them. However much he draws near to one, he distances himself from the other. And they are like two wives of one man.
- 104) It is narrated from Nawf al-Bikālī that he said, “I saw the Commander of the Faithful one night when he had left his bed and gazed at the stars and said, ‘Nawf, are you sleeping or awake?’ I said, ‘I am awake.’ He said, ‘Nawf, glad tidings to those who are indifferent to this temporal world and eagerly seek the hereafter. They are a people who have taken the ground as their bed, earth as their pillow, water as their perfume, the Qur’ān as an intimate companion and supplication as protection. They traverse this realm as the Messiah did. Nawf, David, the Prophet, rose at this hour of the night and said “It is an hour in which every servant who prays is answered, unless he is a tax collector or a government official, or an officer or a musician or a drummer.”
- 105) He said, “God has made some duties incumbent upon you, so do not forsake them; he has set limits for you, so do not overstep them; he has forbidden you some things, so do not perpetrate them; and he has remained silent on some issues—but not out of forgetfulness—so do not burden yourself with them.
- 106) He said, “Whenever people neglect any of their religious duties to improve their world[ly disposition], God unfurls for them something more onerous.”
- 107) He said, “Many who know are killed by their foolishness while their knowledge remains futilely with them.”
- 108) He said, “A piece of flesh has been suspended by the aorta of man that is the most wondrous thing in him. It is [called] the heart. It is [wondrous] because it has ramifications in moral virtue and vice. For if hope enters it, greed demeans it, and if its greed erupts, it’s covetousness destroys it. If despair seizes it, depression kills it. If anger afflicts it, it builds into rage. If it is greatly pleased, it forgets to remain en guard [from harm]. If it is overcome with fear, it becomes preoccupied with precaution. If a sense of amnesty overtakes it, exultation carries it away. If it attains wealth, needlessness corrupts it. If a hardship afflicts it, its impatience disgraces it. If poverty sinks its teeth into it, it becomes occupied with tribulation. If hunger afflicts it,

weakness incapacitates it. And if he fills his stomach, his fullness prevents him from breathing. Thus every shortcoming is harmful to it, and every excess corrupts it.”

- 109) He said, “We are the central pillar to which the laggards must reach and to which the transgressors must return.”
- 110) He said, “Only he can uphold God’s cause who does not compromise [with anyone], does not conform [to unfit standards], and does not [blindly] pursue his desires.”
- 111) Sahl ibn Ḥunayf al-Anṣārī died in Kūfah after returning from Ṣiffīn with [Imām ‘Alī]. He was one of the most beloved people to him, so he said, “Were a mountain to love me it would disintegrate, [but not Sahl].”
- 112) He said, “Whoever loves us—the Prophet’s household—must be prepared to don a cloak [of patience] to cover his poverty.”
- 113) He said, “There is no capital more profitable than intellect. There is no loneliness more frightening than [that caused by] self-conceit. There is no [better use for the] intellect than in planning. There is no nobility like [that derived from] the fear of God. There is no companion like good character. There is no legacy like discipline. There is no guide [that leads you to your goals] like [God’s] facilitation (*tawfiq*). There is no transaction like good deeds. There is no profit like [God’s] reward. There is no better way to refrain from sin than to halt at uncertainties. There is no abstinence like abstinence from what is illicit. There is no knowledge like [that derived from] contemplation. There is no worship like fulfilling one’s obligations [to God]. There is no faith like [that which is coupled with] decency and patience. There is no virtue like humility. There is no dignity like [that derived from] knowledge. There is no cause for dignity like forbearance. There is no aid more reliable than consultation.
- 114) He said, “When righteousness prevails over the people of an era, and despite this, a man thinks cynically of another from whom no sin has surfaced, then he has wronged him. And when corruption prevails over the people of an era, and then a man thinks optimistically of another, then he has paved the way to his own destruction.”
- 115) It was asked of him, “What do you think of yourself, O Commander of the Faithful?” He replied, “How should the state be of one who perishes no matter how long he lasts, who falls sick no matter how healthy he may be, and who is struck down from where he believes he is safe?”
- 116) He said, “Many are lured [into chastisement] through blessings showered on them; and many are deceived by God’s concealment [of their flaws]; and many are beguiled by complimentary statements about them. However, God has not tested anyone with anything the likes of total abandon.”
- 117) He said, “Two men are doomed because of me: the devotee who deifies [me] and the one who loathes and detests me.”
- 118) He said, “Wasting an opportunity is [as painful as] choking.”
- 119) He said, “The temporal world is like a snake: it is soft to touch, but in its belly is potent poison. The naïve and foolish stoop to [touch] it. The wise and sensible are cautious of it.”
- 120) He was asked about [the tribes] of Quraysh. He replied, “The Banū Makhzūm are the flowers of Quraysh. We love to hear their men talk and to marry their women. The Banū ‘Abd Shams’ ideas are the furthest of all Quraysh [from the truth], and they are the most secretive with what they conceal behind their backs. As for us, we are the

most generous with what we possess, and at death, we give our souls up the easiest. They are more numerous, more deceitful, and more evil, and we are more eloquent, more sincere, and more cheerful.”

- 121) He said, “There is a vast difference between two acts: one whose pleasure vanishes and whose sin remains; and one whose burden vanishes and whose reward remains.”
- 122) He followed a funeral procession and heard a man laugh, so he said, “It seems as though death has only been written for others—as though God’s decree is only binding on others. It is as though the dead that we see are travelers who will soon return to us. We place them in their graves and devour their legacies as though we shall live an eternity after them. And in the end, we have forgotten any admonishment and [we think] we have been afflicted with every kind of burden and hardship.”
- 123) He said, “Good tidings to him who is inwardly humble, whose earnings are good [and from a legal source], whose intentions are pure, whose demeanor is affable, who gives his excess wealth [in charity], who withholds his excess words, who defrays from others any harm issuing from himself, who is infused with the Way [of the Prophet], and is never accused of introducing innovations.”
- 124) He said, “A woman’s jealousy is [tantamount to] godlessness and a man’s jealousy is [tantamount to] faith.”

[incomplete]

- 131) He heard a man denigrating the temporal world so he said: “O You who denigrate the world, yet are fooled by its guiles and taken in by its false [promises]! Do you [allow yourself to be] fooled by the world and then proceed in denigrating it? Are you its accuser or is it your accuser? When has it ever seduced you, and when has it ever deceived you? Was it when your forefathers died from old age or when your grandmothers were interred in the ground? Many [a sick person] have you treated with your hands; many have you nursed with your hands, seeking fair care, procuring prescriptions for them from doctors. The following day [you find] your medicine has not availed them, nor has your weeping sufficed them. Your concern has not benefitted them, and you have not attained your desire, and you have not protected them with your strength. The world has made of him an indicator of your disposition, and of his death, an indicator of yours.

The world is an honest abode for him who is honest with it, and an abode of well-being for him who understands it, and an abode of plenty for him who packs his provisions from it, and an abode [full] of good advice for him who will take it. [It is] The mosque of God’s beloved, and a house of prayer for God’s angels, and the place where God’s revelation descends, and the bazaar of God’s friends. In it they earn God’s mercy and gain paradise. So who can deprecate it when it has declared its mortality and announced its end and announced its own death and the death of its inhabitants? It has, through its tribulations, given them a sample of the tribulations [of the hereafter] and, through its delights, enticed them to the delights [of paradise]. It sleeps in health and awakes with hardship to encourage, frighten, and warn. People deprecate it on “the morning of regret”. Others praise it on the Day of Judgment

because it reminded them and they heeded the reminder, and it spoke to them so they affirmed it, and it admonished them so they took the admonishment to heart.

- 145) He said, “How many are those who fast and get nothing for their fasts except thirst and hunger! And how many are those who keep the night vigil and get nothing for their vigil except sleep deprivation and fatigue. How much better is it when the wise choose to sleep and not fast!”
- 147) He said...“People are of three kinds: the Godly scholar, the student on the path to salvation, and [veritable] gnats, senseless masses, followers of every shepherd; they sway with every breeze; neither have they been enlightened with the light of knowledge [like the scholar], nor have they leaned on a sturdy column [like the student]...Behold! Here in my breast lies vast knowledge. If only I could find bearers for it! Of course, I have found the occasional sharp student who, alas, cannot be trusted with it; who uses knowledge, which ought to be the means to faith, for worldly gain; who uses the blessings of God to dominate his servants and uses his proofs to dominate his friends. Or I find one who yields to the bearers of truth, while no insight is to be found in any part of his being. At the first hint of a problem, uncertainty flares in his heart. Neither is this one capable as a bearer, nor that one. Or I find one who is infatuated with worldly pleasure; who defers easily to his lusts. Or I find one infatuated with collecting and hoarding. These two are by no means guardians of the faith. The thing most similar to them is free-ranging cattle. Thus, does knowledge die with the death of its bearers...
- 200) He said when a criminal was brought before him and with him came a madding crowd, “I extend no welcome to faces not seen except at shameful occurrences.”
- 207) Imām ‘Alī says, “If you are not forbearing then act as though you are, for it is rare that one acts like a people without becoming one of them.”
- 268) He says, “Love your friend moderately, for he may one day become your enemy. And hate your enemy moderately, for he may one day become your friend.”
- 380) He said, “Many who greet a day do not [live to] bid it farewell, and many who are admired early in the night are surrounded by mourners by its end.”