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Excerpted from Volume 3 of my translation of Nahjul-Balagha (ISBNs: 9781481747882 (softcover), 9781481747875 (E-book) and 9781481747868 (jacket hardcover) which is also available with the Kindle store: Click on this Link:

http://www.amazon.com/s?ie=UTF8&field-author=Yasin%20al-Jibouri&page=1&rh=n%3A133140011%2Cp_27%3AYasin%20al-Jibouri

Chapter 1

A WOMAN WHO DISOWNED HER SON

In a chapter about amazing rulings of the Imam, Ibn Shahr Ashub narrates the following in his book *Manaqib Ali ibn Abi Talib*, and the same text exists in *al-Kulayni's Al-Kafi* and in *Abu Ja'far's Tahtheeb al-Tahtheeb*, all quoting Asim ibn Damrah, a companion of the Imam, as saying the following:

“A young man in Medina was heard calling out thus: ‘O most just of all Rulers! Do judge between myself and my mother in truth.’ Omar ibn al-Khattab asked him, ‘Young man! Why are you making an invocation against your own mother?!’ The youth said, ‘O Commander of the faithful! She carried me in her womb for nine months and breast-fed me for two full years. When I grew up and came to distinguish between goodness and evil, right and left, she expelled me and disowned me, and she even claimed that she did not know me.’”

Omar said, “Where is your mother?” He said, “She is at the shed of so-and-so.” Omar ordered his men to bring him the young man’s mother. She was brought to caliph Omar accompanied by four of her brothers and forty men swearing in testimony that she did not know who the young man was, and that he was a pretender, an unfair and an oppressive individual who wanted to scandalize her in her tribe, that the woman belonged to Quraish and was never married, that she was sealed (a virgin) just as her Lord created her. The young man, seeing his mother, said, “O Commander of the faithful! This by Allah is my mother who carried me in her womb for nine months and breast-fed me for two full years. Once I grew up and came to distinguish between goodness and evil, right and left, she

expelled me and disowned me. She even claimed that she did not know me.” Omar said, “You, woman, what do you say about this youth’s statement?” She said, “O Commander of the faithful! I swear by the One Who is veiled by noor and Whom no eye can see, and by the righteousness of Muhammed and of his Progeny, I do not know him, I do not know who among the people he is. He is a youth who makes a claim desiring to scandalize me in my tribe. I am a woman from Quraish, and I never got married. I am sealed (with virginity) by my Lord.”

Omar asked the woman, “Do you have witnesses?” She said, “Yes, here they are.” The forty swearing men stepped forward and testified to Omar that the youth was a pretender who wanted to scandalize the women in her tribe, and that she was a woman from Quraish who was virgin and was never married. Omar said, “Take the youth by the hand to the prison so we may inquire about him and about the witnesses. If their testimony is just, I shall whip him as one who has committed calumny.”

The youth was taken by the hand to the prison. On the way, they were met by the Commander of the Faithful Ali ibn Abu Talib to whom the youth cried out, “O cousin of Muhammed! I am an oppressed young man, and this Omar has ordered me to be jailed.” The Commander of the Faithful said to them (to the escorting policemen), “Take him back to Omar,” so they took him back. Seeing them, Omar said, “I ordered him jailed, yet you bring him back?!” They said, “O Commander of the faithful! Ali ibn Abu Talib ordered us to send him back, and you yourself had told us not to disobey any order of Ali.”

As they were thus engaged, the Commander of the Faithful came. He said, “Bring me the youth’s mother.” She was brought to him. He asked the youth, “Young man! What do you have to say?” The youth repeated to Ali what he had said to Omar. Ali said to Omar, “Do you give me permission to rule in their regard?” Omar said, “Subhan-Allah (Praise is due to Allah)! Why not, since I have heard the Messenger of Allah say, ‘The most knowledgeable man among you is Ali ibn Abu Talib’?!” Ali asked the woman, “Do you have witnesses?” She

said, "Yes," whereupon the forty witnesses pronounced their oath as they had done the first time. Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, said, "By Allah, I shall rule between you in a case wherein there is Pleasure for Allah from above His `Arsh and which the one I love, the Messenger of Allah, taught me." He asked the woman, "Do you have a guardian?" She said, "Yes, these are my guardians, my brothers."

Ali said to them, "Is my command regarding you all and regarding herself permissible?" They said, "Yes, O cousin of Muhammed; your command is obeyed by all of us and by our sister; it is permissible." Ali said, "I invoke Allah to testify, and I invoke His Messenger to testify as well as the Muslims who are present here, that I have married this woman off to this youth for (the dower of) four hundred dirhams, and the cash is of my own money. O Qanbar, bring me the dirhams." Qanbar brought the Imam the cash which the Imam emptied in the youth's lap saying, "Take these dirham and place them in the lap of your woman, and do not come back to us except so we would see the wedding's sign," meaning his having performed the ghusul (ceremonial post-intercourse bath).

The young man went out to the woman and dropped the dirhams in her lap, took her hand and said, "Stand up." The woman screamed, "Security! Security (against the fire of Hell)! O cousin of Muhammed! Do you want to marry me off to my own son?! This by Allah is my son. They married me off to a non-Arab man, so I gave birth by him to this youth. When he grew up and became an adult, they ordered me to disown him and to expel him. This, by Allah, is my son, and my heart is burning in sorrow for my son." She then took the youth's hand and went away.

It was then that caliph Omar called out, "O Omar! Had it not been for Ali, Omar would have perished!"

This incident is also documented and traced, in addition to the above, by the author of *Hada'iq Abu Turab al-Khatib*.

Chapter 2

A BAFFLING MATHEMATICAL PROBLEM SOLVED BY ALI

The following incident is included among judicial issues involving Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib :

Three men owned 17 camels in varying percentages. The first owned half of them, the second owned a third of them and the third owned a ninth of them. They found no way to divide those camels among them. According to the ratios, the distribution would be as follows:

The first owned $17 \div 2 = 8.5$

The second owned $17 \div 3 = 5.67$

The third owned $17 \div 9 = 1.89$

Imam Ali said to them, "May I add my own camel to the herd?" They agreed though with extreme amazement. The total number of the camels became 18 which the Imam distributed as follows:

The first owned $18 \div 2 = 9$

The second owned $18 \div 3 = 6$

The third owned $18 \div 9 = 2$

What is amazing in this regard is that the final total, after the distribution is made, totals 17 camels thus: $9 + 6 + 2 = 17$. The Imam, therefore, took his camel back.

Chapter 3

A MAN HITS ANOTHER ON THE HEAD

A man who had hit another man on the head was brought to the Commander of the Faithful . The assaulted man claimed that he could neither see nor smell anything, and that he had lost his ability to speak. The Commander of the Faithful said, "If he is truthful in his claim, he should be compensated with three times the sum of blood money." He was asked, "How can this be verified, O Commander of the Faithful , so we may know that he is truthful?" Ali said, "As regarding his eyes, his claim that he sees nothing, it is verified by his being told to raise his eyes towards the sun. If his claim is true, he will involuntarily have to close his eyes. But if he, as he claims, has lost his eyesight, his eyes will remain open. As regarding his claim that he has lost the ability to smell, he is to be tested by something burning brought near his nose. If he is healthy, the smell of burning will reach his head, so his eyes will be tearful and he will bend his head. As regarding his claim about having lost the ability to speak, he is to be tested by a needle hitting his tongue: If he does speak, red blood will come out. If he, as he claims, cannot speak, the color of the blood that will come out will be black."

Chapter 4

CONFLICT OVER A BOY

We read this incident on p. 367, Vol. 2 of Ibn Shahr Ashub's work titled *Manaqib Al Abi Talib*:

Two women disputed with each other about two suckling babies one of whom was a male and the other was a female. Each woman claimed that the boy was her son. They went to caliph Omar ibn al-Khattab in order to judge between them, but he was unable to solve the issue. Omar said, "Where is the father of al-Hassan, the one who removes the worry and the concern?"

Imam Ali was informed about the matter and he was requested to go to solve this issue. The Imam went and said, "Bring me two (empty) bottles." Two empty bottles were brought to the Imam which he weighed. He said, "Give each of these bottles to one of these women to fill with the milk of her breast." The women filled the small bottles with their breast milk, and the bottles were handed over to Imam Ali who weighed each of them again, noticing that the milk in one of the bottles was heavier than that in the other. He said, "The son belongs to the woman who filled this bottle and whose milk is heavier, while the girl belongs to the woman who filled the other bottle with lighter weight milk."

Omar then said, "What is the evidence which requires you to judge like that, O Ali?" Imam Ali said, "Allah has assigned for the male twice the inheritance which He assigned for the female."

Muslim doctors have since this incident used this criterion to identify the gender of a fetus.

Chapter 5

THE TWO WOMEN DISPUTE OVER A CHILD

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib used quite often to follow the psychological route in order to distinguish between truth and falsehood. The Imam has said, "Nobody hides anything except that it comes out in slips of his tongue or it appears on his face."

The following incident is recorded in a book by Labeeb Baydoun titled *Al-I`jaz al-`Ilmi `Inda al-Imam Ali* (scientific miracles by Imam Ali) which the A`lami Foundation of Beirut, Lebanon, published:

Mentor al-Mufid has said that two women disputed during the time of caliph Omar ibn al-Khattab over a child: Each of them claimed him, but neither produced any evidence. The matter confused Omar, so he sought the advice of Commander of the Faithful Imam Ali . The caliph ordered the two men and the child to be sent to the Imam's house so he would judge between them. Imam Ali questioned each woman separately, but this was to no avail since the answer of each of them was the same.

The Imam ordered his servant to bring him his sword. Then the Imam said, "Give me the child." One of them asked him, "What do you want to do, O Commander of the Faithful?!" Imam Ali said, "I want to divide the child into two portions in order to give each of you her own share of him." Hearing this, one of them screamed, "O Allah! O Allah! O father of al-Hasan! If this measure is unavoidable, I have relinquished my share of him to her." It was then that Imam Ali said, "It is now confirmed to me that the child is your son on account of your

compassion and fear that he might be killed with the sword.”
The other woman then admitted that the child was not her son,
and that he had treated her as his mother because she had
compassion for him, and she was feeding him.”

Chapter 6

TOUGH QUESTIONS, MORAL BOOK

This incident is recorded in the famous *Al-Irshad* book:

Ja`far ibn Shurayh al-Hadrami quotes Malik ibn A`yan al-Juhni quoting Imam Abu Abdullah (al-Sadiq) as saying that when Omar ibn al-Khattab became the caliph, a Jew went to meet him. He entered the (Prophet's) Mosque as Omar was sitting in the company of Abu Ayyub (al-Ansari). The Jew asked Omar, "Are you the one who questions people without being himself questioned, the Commander of the Faithful who rules and is not ruled?" Omar said, "Yes."

The Jew said, "Tell me about one who has no second, two who have no third, three who have no fourth, four who have no fifth, five who have no sixth, six who have no seventh, seven who have no eighth, eight who have no ninth, nine who have no tenth and ten who have no eleventh?!"

Omar could not answer. He lowered his head. Abu Ayyub said to the Jew, "He is busy now, so go to that man who is sitting over there," pointing at the Commander of the Faithful Ali ibn Abu Talib . The Jew went to the Imam and asked him just as he had asked Omar. Ali ibn Abu Talib said, "As for the one who has no second, it is Allah, the One and only, glorified and exalted is He. As for the two who have no third, they are the sun and the moon. As for the three who have no fourth, they are the three pronouncements of divorce. As for the fourth who have no fifth, they are women (since Islam, starting in the 8th Hijri year, which coincided with 629 A.D., restricted the number of women one man can marry to a maximum of four,

putting conditions to be met for marriage with more than one wife). As regarding the five that have no sixth, they are the periods of the daily prayers. As for the six that have no seventh, they are the days (periods) during which Allah created the heavens and the earth. As regarding the seven that have no eighth, they are the seven heavens (spheric strata). As regarding the eight that have no ninth, they are the bearers of the Arsh. As regarding the nine that have no tenth, they are the months of a woman's pregnancy. As regarding the ten that have no eleventh, they are the days during which Allah completed the term for Moses." When the Jew heard all of this from al-Hassan's father , he immediately converted to the Islamic faith.

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IN THE AGE OF INFORMATION

IGNORANCE IS A CHOICE

*"Wisdom is the lost property of the Believer,
let him claim it wherever he finds it"*

Imam Ali (as)