

**SESSION
TWO**

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SCIENCE OF ISLAMIC ETHICS

Shaykh Saleem Bhimji | saleem.bhimji@gmail.com

SUMMARY of Session ONE

1. The Science of Akhlāq is perhaps the most important study in Islam.
2. The human being can either descend to be worse than the animals or ascend to be even greater than the angels.
3. As the human is made of body and soul, just as it is important to maintain the physical body and protect it from harms, so too the soul must be protected from harms.
4. Akhlāq is not something which a person 'does', it is what they 'live' - good morals must be ingrained in the psyche.
5. Studying the Science of Ethics and then working to implement its teachings in our lives is to fulfill one of the major goals for why Allāh sent 124,000 Prophets.

INTRODUCTION to the Course

“The human being stands between two extremes of either being the lowest of the low – descending lower than the wild animals or elevating themselves to the zenith of perfection in which they surpass even the greatest of angels. The journey between these extremes takes place under the shadow of purification (*tazkiyah*) and ethics (*akhlaq*) – an obligation which all Muslims must pursue.”

INTRODUCTION to the Course

“The Islamic tradition has tens of sciences which a believer tries to master, however all other branches of knowledge a Muslim seeks will obstruct their path towards spiritual insight and reaching Allāh ﷻ if they are not carried out after having first purified and taken firm control of the soul. The theory of how this is carried out is taught in the Science of Ethics (*‘Ilm al-Akhlaq*).”

INTRODUCTION to the Course

"As akhlaq is the active practice of the virtues, morality and manners which Islam has laid down through the Quran and the life of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, the believer needs to have an excellent understanding of this discipline."

GREATER than the Angels

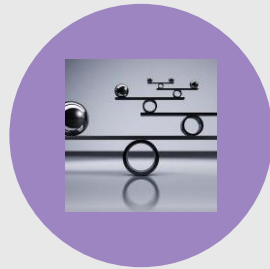
When 'Abdullah ibn Sinan asked Imam al-Sadiq عليه السلام:
"Is the human better or the angels?" The Imam
replied: "The Commander of the Faithful عليه السلام said,
'Allah, the Exalted, gave the angels **intellect**
without **desire**; He gave the animals **desire** without
intellect, and He gave **both** to the offspring of
Adam. So, a person whose *intellect* prevails over his
desire is better than the angels; while a person
whose *desire* prevails over his *intellect* is worse than
the beasts.'" (Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 60, Pg. 299, Trad.
5)

الإمام الصادق (عليه السلام) وقد سأله عبد الله بن سنان:
الملائكة أفضل أم بنو آدم؟ قال قال: أمير المؤمنين علي بن
أبي طالب (عليه السلام) إن الله عز وجل ركب في الملائكة
عقلاً بلا شهوة، وركب في البهائم شهوةً بلا عقل، وركب في
بني آدم كلتيهما، فمن غلب عقله شهوته فهو خير من
الملائكة، ومن غلبت شهوته عقله فهو شر من البهائم

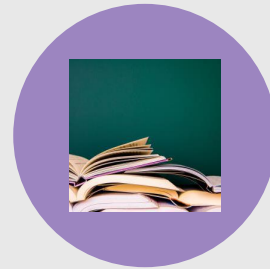
SESSION Outline



1
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE
SCIENCE OF ISLAMIC
ETHICS



2
IS ETHICS RELATIVE OR
ABSOLUTE? THE ROLE OF
RELIGION IN ETHICS



3
MORAL EXCELLENCE IN THE
SUPPLICATIONS OF THE AHL
AL-BAYT ﷺ



4
A REVIEW OF PASSAGES OF
THE SUPPLICATION
MAKĀRIM AL-AKHLĀQ

INTRODUCTORY Question

“What makes Muslims regard some attributes as **virtues** and others as **vices**? Has Allāh ﷻ identified them and thus, advanced them as the source of goodness for society or has Islam left this for society to determine, and Islam would, by default, accept?”



MORALITY:
RELATIVE
or
ABSOLUTE ?

DEFINING the Terms

Relative Morality:

The theory that truth and what is right is different for different people and cultures.

Absolute Morality:

Universal standards of right or wrong always apply to all people irrespective of culture or beliefs.

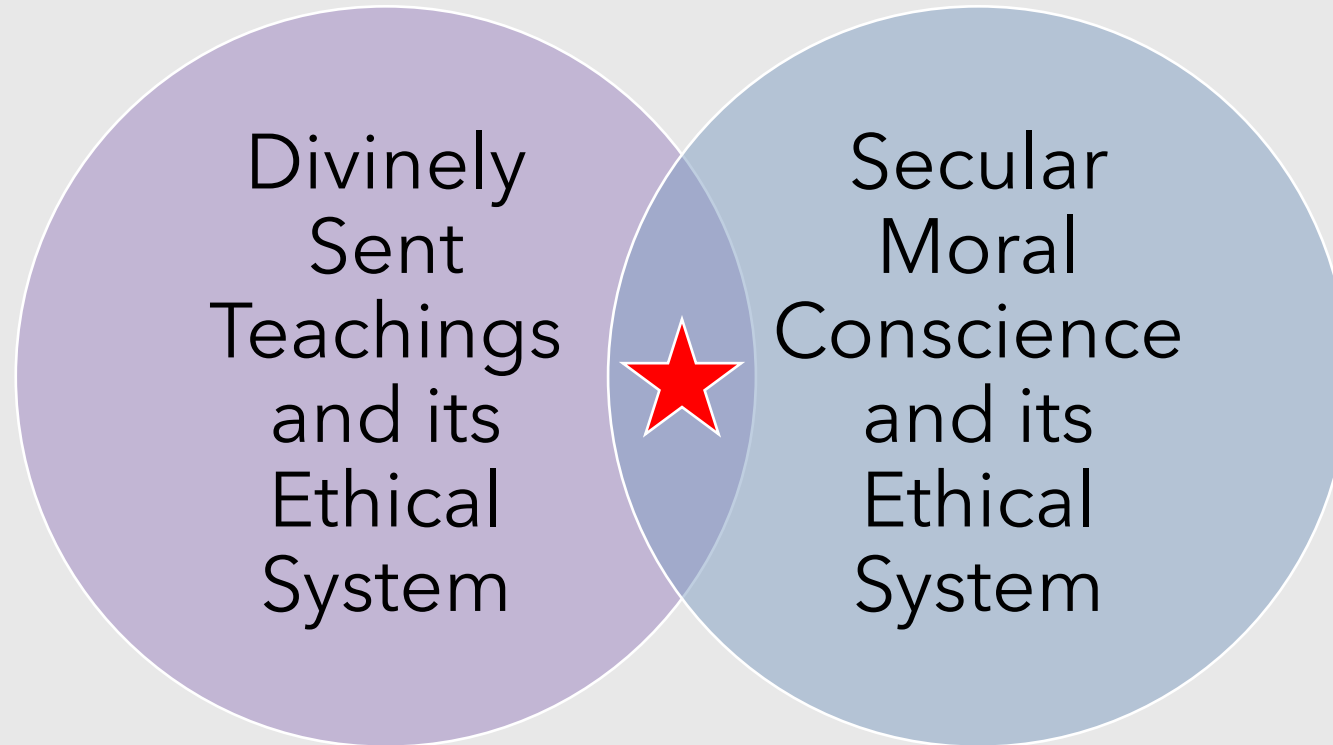
The Source of Morality in the World Today

"In the modern study of Ethics, one debate has dominated almost all others: are morals **discovered** or **invented**? In other words, whether moral values exist independently of us, whether they are entirely a product of the human mind, or whether there can be a set of moral values, universally accepted."



AS AN EXAMPLE:

“Deliberately killing another human being has been, from time immemorial, seen as an evil act which is not only reprehensible but also punishable by serious means. The fact that one can always find situations in which killing is necessary or justified (self defense, wars, etc.) does not undermine the basic fact that in general this is something human beings should not do.”



The Great Divide

“Religion is established through Divine revelation, and so moral considerations must emanate from it. If the dictates of religion and moral conscience coincide on various judgments, it is a happy coincidence; however, where there is conflict, religion claims absolute authority.”



“Moral conscience makes its own absolute claims, independent of religion. Where the judgments of moral conscience are clear and firm, if there is conflict with a religious teaching, the moral conscience demands that the religious teaching be rejected.”

The Great Divide

Divinely
Sent
Teachings
and its
Ethical
System

Secular
Moral
Conscience
and its
Ethical
System



The Great Divide

Euthanasia - "Mercy Killing"

Divinely
Sent
Teachings and
its Ethical
System

Secular
Moral
Conscience
and its Ethical
System

ISLAMIC MORAL SYSTEM

The Islamic moral system stems from its primary creed of belief in the One True God as the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe. Islam considers humanity to be a part of God's creation, and as His subjects and so He is the only One permitted to guide towards what is right.

ISLAMIC MORAL SYSTEM

As secular systems are continuously changing to suit the majority or at least the vocal minority, the norms and ethics of the day will reflect what some people want as their "personal life choices" rather than what is best for them and the overall society.

ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE ON ETHICS

The purpose of human life is to worship God, by living this worldly life in harmony with the Divine Will, and thereby achieve peace in this world, and everlasting success in the hereafter. Muslims look to the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet and his immaculate successors as their moral guides.

ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE ON ETHICS

While Islam asserts its moral teachings and compass as being the only one acceptable to God, Muslims accept that nations have their own customs and moral code and acknowledges them - although would not accept them as the norm for the Muslim community or for humanity on a whole.

ISLAMIC
PERSPECTIVE
ON ETHICS
FROM THE
QURAN



ONE CODE of MORALITY

فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَتَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

“So set your whole being upon the religion (of Islam) as one of pure faith **(hanīf)**. This is the original pattern belonging to Allāh on which He has originated humankind. No change can there be in Allāh’s creation. This is the upright, ever-true religion, but most of the people do not know.”

Quran, Sūrah al-Rum (30), Verse 30

NATURAL DISPOSITION

1. The human is inherently religious and a proponent of the truth and what is morally right.
2. Contrary to some who say that the human is born like an empty container that is filled with customs and thoughts of his parents and those around them, Islam says that each person has an ingrained system they are born with BUT that can be altered by their surroundings.
3. Human instincts and desires increase and decrease, however they do not completely disappear - they merely remain dormant for a period of time.

HONOUR AMONG THIEVES

“The sentiment that even criminals have a code of conduct among themselves. Some aspects of this code of conduct may be to not steal from each other, or to not testify against a fellow criminal to the police.”

QURAN on ETHICS

“Godliness is not that you should turn your faces in the direction of the east and west; but he is godly who believes in Allāh and the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the Prophets, and gives away of his property with pleasure, although he loves it, to relatives, orphans, the destitute, the wayfarer, and those who have to beg (or who need a loan), and for the liberation of slaves, and establishes the prayer and pays the alms. And those (are godly) who fulfill their covenant when they have engaged in a covenant, and who are patient and persevering in misfortune, hardship, and disease, and at the time of stress (such as battle between the truth and falsehood). Those are they who are true (in their faith), and those are they who have achieved righteousness, piety and due reverence for God.” (2:177)

لَيْسَ الْبِرُّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ
الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ
آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ
وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ وَآتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى
حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ
وَالْمَسَاكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ
وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى
الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا
عَاهَدُوا ۗ وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ
وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ
الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا ۗ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ
الْمُتَّقُونَ

EXCEPTIONS to the RULE



ABSOLUTE MORALITY



Universal standards of right or wrong always apply to all people irrespective of culture or beliefs.

Exceptions to the Rule

BACKBITING:

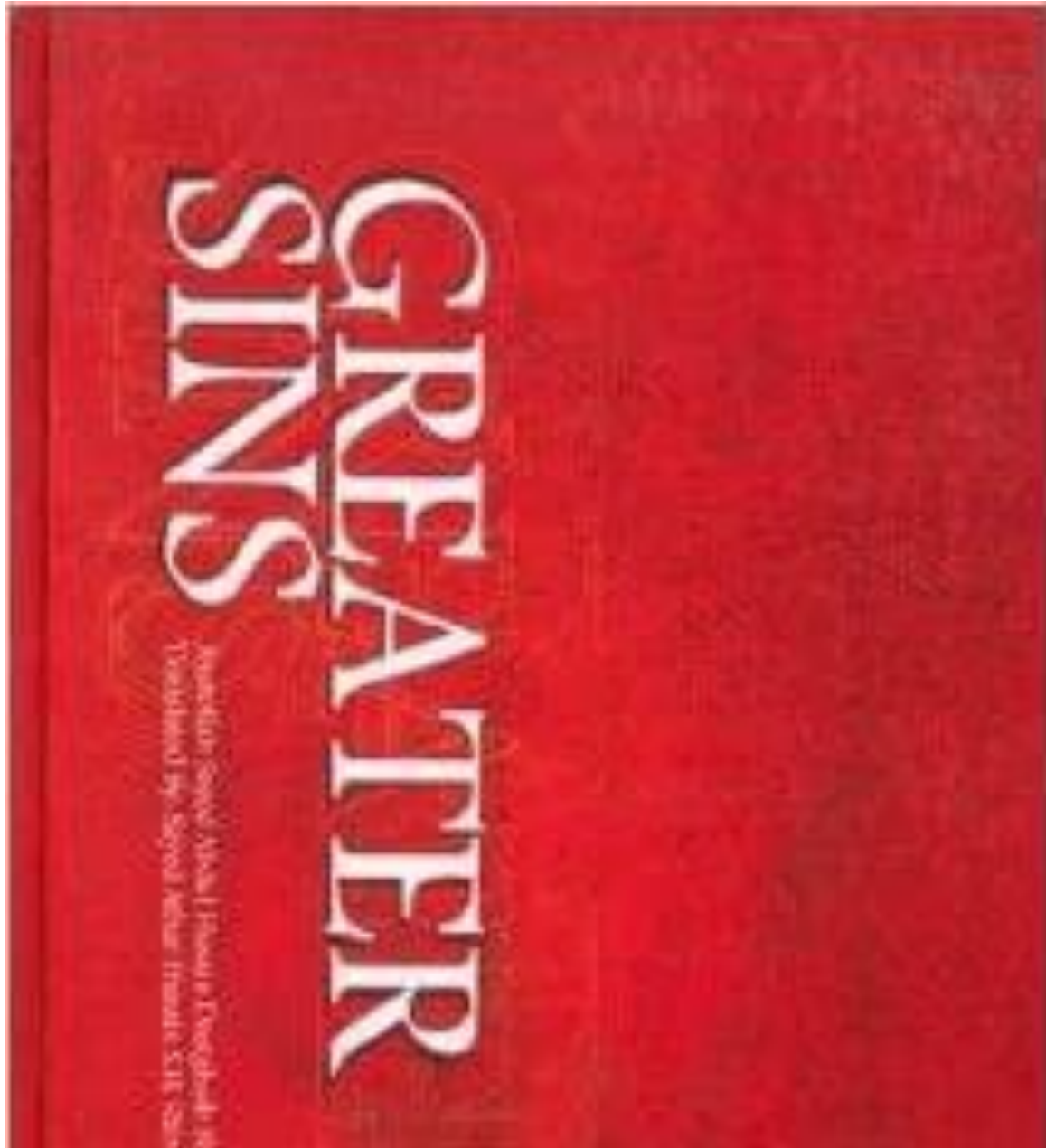
Is it ALWAYS

BAD?

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ ۖ وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا يَغْتَبَ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا ۚ أَيُحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَن يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ رَّحِيمٌ {12}

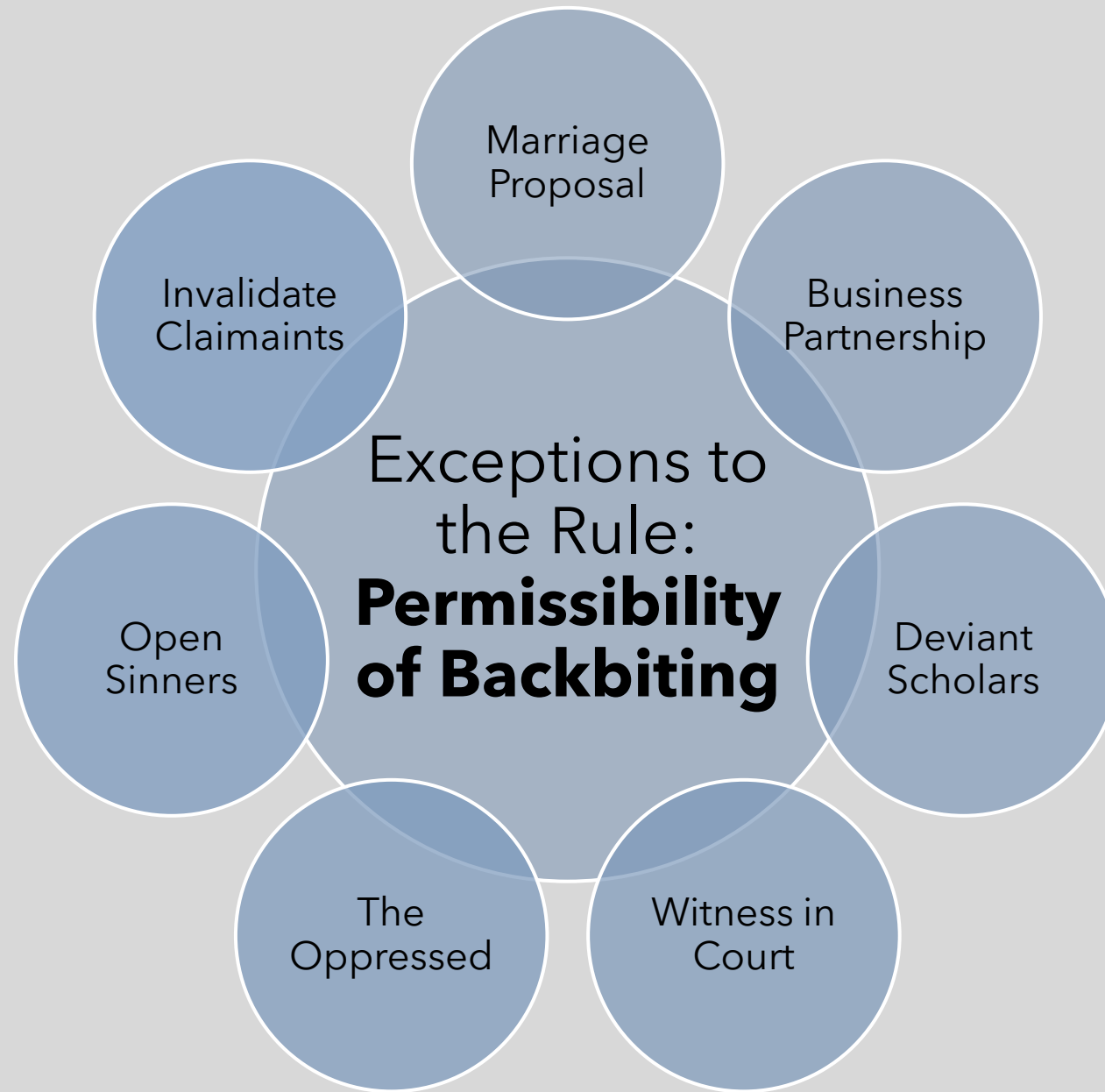
"O you who believe! avoid most of suspicion, for surely suspicion in some cases is a sin, and do not spy **nor let some of you backbite others**. Does one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? But you abhor it; and be careful of (your duty to) Allah, surely Allah is Oft-returning (to mercy), Merciful."

Quran, Sūrah al-Hujurat (49), Verse 12



BACKBITING: What is it?

Imam Mūsa ibn Ja'far عليه السلام says: "If one speaks of a person in his absence about those traits which are actually present in him and people are also aware of it, it is **not** backbiting. However, if he mentions something which is present in the person, but people are **unaware** of it, it would be *ghība*."



CONCLUSION of RELIGION in ETHICS

1. In Islam, ethical norms (akhlāq) are FIXED by the religion- the Quran and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and the Ahl al-Bayt عليه السلام.
2. Just because ethical norms are 'fixed' does not mean that they are stagnant - there **ARE** exceptions to the rule.
3. As human society is constantly evolving, what they deem to be "morally right" will also change and may contravene Divine Teachings which are fixed - in such scenarios, Divine Teachings must always take precedence even if the majority of people are opposed to it.



**THE
ISLAMIC
MORAL
SYSTEM**

A COMMENTARY OF SURAH AL-HUJURAT

WRITTEN BY AYATULLAH JA'FAR SUBHANI

TRANSLATED BY SALEEM BHIMJI

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY SAYYID MUHAMMAD RIZVI

BOOK SUGGESTIONS

<https://www.al-islam.org/islamic-moral-system-commentary-surah-al-hujurat-jafar-subhani>

Written by Ayatullah Ja'far Subhani

Translated by Saleem Bhimji

Introduction by Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi

xkp

GREATER SINS

Ayatollah Sayed Abdul Husain Dastghaib Shirazi
Translated By: Sayyid Athar Husain S.H. Rizvi.

Part 1

BOOK SUGGESTIONS

<https://www.al-islam.org/greater-sins-volume-1-sayyid-abdul-husayn-dastghaib-shirazi>

Written by Ayatullah Shaheed Dastghayb Shirazi

Translated by Sayyid Athar Husain S.H. Rizvi

Ethics and Spiritual Growth



Sayyid Mujtaba Musavi Lari

Al-Islam.org

BOOK SUGGESTIONS

<https://www.al-islam.org/ethics-and-spiritual-growth-sayyid-mujtaba-musavi-lari>

Written by Ayatullah Sayyid Mujtaba Musavi Lari

Translated by Unknown

SESSION Three: Friday December 17th, 2021



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MORAL EXCELLENCE IN THE
SUPPLICATIONS OF THE AHL AL-BAYT 