**Futuwwa (Youth and Chivalry)**



18.14. And We strengthened their hearts, (and a time came) when they rose up (against association of partners with **God** and other injustices in the society), and they proclaimed: "Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, and we never invoke any deity apart from Him; if we did so, we would certainly have uttered an enormity (a monstrous unbelief).(1)



21.60. Some said: "We heard a young man make mention of them, who is called **Abraham**. "(2)



12.36. And there entered the prison with him two young men. One of them said (to **Joseph** one day): "I dreamed that I was pressing grapes for wine. " The other said: "I dreamed that I was carrying bread upon my head, of which birds were eating. " "Inform us of their meaning. For sure, we see that you are of those endowed with the best qualities. "(3)



12.62. He (**Joseph**) said to his servants: "Put back their merchandise (with which they had bartered) into their saddlebags, so that they may find it there when they have returned home, and hence will (be more eager to) return. "(4)

**HADITH**

“God will shade seven (groups of) people under His shade on **the Day** when there will be no shade except His: the just ruler; young people who grew up in worship of God; a person whose heart is attached to mosques; two persons who liked one another for God’s sake, who came together and departed on this basis; a man who was called upon (to sin) by a woman of high status and beauty and turned down her offer, saying that he fears God; A person who gave charity in such secrecy that even his left hand did not know what his right hand had given; and a person whose eyes filled with tears on mentioning God in solitude.”
(Bukhari, Adhan, 36; Muslim, Zakat, 91)(5)

**Futuwwa (Youth and Chivalry)**

They were young men who had believed in their Lord, and We increased them in guidance. And We strengthened their hearts, when they rose up and declared: Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and Earth; we will not call upon any god beside Him, or then we had spoken an outrage.

**Futuwwa, defined as youth and chivalry, is really a composite of such virtues as generosity, munificence, modesty, chastity, trustworthiness, loyalty, mercifulness, knowledge, humility,** and piety. It is a station on the path to God as well as a dimension of sainthood, and also signifies that altruism and helping others have become one’s second nature. It is an important, indispensable dimension of good conduct and a significant aspect of humanity.

Derived from fata’ (young man), futuwwa has become a symbol of rebellion against all evil and the endeavor for sincere servanthood to God; the following verse expresses this eloquently:

They were young men who had believed in their Lord, and We increased them in guidance. And We strengthened their hearts, when they rose up and declared: Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and Earth; we will not call upon any god beside Him, or then we had spoken an outrage. (18:14)

The verse We have heard a youth talk of them (the idols); he is called Abraham (21:60) expresses the position and influence of one who has achieved perfect futuwwa in his or her community, one who has sought to guide humanity to truth. By contrast, the young men mentioned in the verses: With him there came into the prison two young men (12:36) and: (Joseph) told his young (servants) to put their merchandise (with which they had bartered) into their saddle-bags (12:62) were ordinary young men without chivalry.

As many people have written on or talked about futuwwa since the Age of Happiness, the concept has been defined in many ways: not despising the poor or being deceived by the rich and riches; being fair to everybody without expecting fairness in return; living one’s life as a pitiless enemy of one’s carnal self; being ever-considerate of others and living for them; smashing all idols or all that is idolized, and rebelling against falsehood so as to be wholly devoted to **God Almighty**; bearing whatever evil is done to oneself, but roaring when the rights of God are violated; feeling remorse for the rest of one’s life for committing the smallest of sins, but overlooking others’ sins, regardless of how large they are; seeing oneself as a poor, lowly servant while considering others as saintly; not resenting others while maintaining relations with those who resent you; being kind to those who hurt you; serving God and the people before everyone else, but putting others first when it is time to receive one’s rewards.

Some have summed up futuwwa in the four virtues mentioned by Haydar Karrar Ali, the fourth Caliph and cousin of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings. They are: forgiving when one is able to punish, preserving mildness and acting mildly and gently when one is angry, wishing one’s enemies well and doing good to them, and being considerate of others’ well-being and happiness first, even when one is needy.

Ali was one of the greatest representatives of futuwwa. When he was stabbed by Ibn Muljam while leading the morning prayer in the mosque, his children, who saw that their father was going to die, asked him what he wanted them to do to Ibn Muljam. He did not order his execution in retaliation. During a battle, Ali threw his enemy to the ground and then released him. When ‘Ali was about to kill this man, the latter spat in Ali’s face, which angered him. Fearing that his motive for killing the man was now confused and sullied, ‘Ali released him. He felt sincere grief when Zubayr ibn Awwam, a leading **Companion** and his enemy in the Battle of the Camel, was killed. Since he always considered others first, even when he was in need, he usually wore summer clothes in winter and trembled with cold (because he would give away his winter clothes). It was said about him that there could be no young, chivalrous man like Ali, and there could be no sword like Dhu al-Fiqar (Ali’s sword). Ali lived with the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, and was raised by him. He lived a perfectly honest, pure life without any stain, and embodied God’s answer to **Prophet Moses**, upon him be peace, about futuwwa: It means that you are able to return your self to Me as pure or untainted as you received it from Me.

The signs of a fata’ (young, chivalrous one) are that the individual, created with the potential to accept Divine Unity and Islam, is totally convinced of the **Divine Unity**; this urges him or her to live according to the requirements of this conviction; that, without being captivated by carnal or bodily desires, he or she lives a pure, **spiritual life**; and that he or she always seeks to please God in his or her deeds, thoughts, and feelings. One who cannot be saved from the temptations of **the carnal self**, **Satan**, appetites, love of the world, or attachment to the worldly life cannot climb upward to the peak of futuwwa.(6)

Futuwwa is a treasure obtainable by climbing high beyond
All the “highest mountains of the world”;
What business have those who fall tired
Even on a smooth road with such a treasure?

Notes
1. Ibn al-Athir, Usd al-Ghaba, 4:118.
2. Shamsaddin Sivasi, Manaqib Jiharyar Guzin, 258.
3. Al-Haythami, Majma’ al-Zawa’id, 9:150.
4. Ibid., 9:122.
5. ‘Ali al-Qari, Al-Asrar al-Marfu’a fi akhbar al-Mawdu’a (Beirut, 1986), 367.

**References**

**(1) 18:14/The Quran with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Unal**

**(2) 21:60/The Quran with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Unal**

**(3) 12:36/The Quran with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Unal**

**(3) 12:62/The Quran with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Unal**

**(5) Nawawi, Imam. Riyad As-Salihin; The Gardens of the Righteous: A collection of authentic hadiths. Tughra Books Press, Inc.**

**(6) Gulen, M. Fethullah. Fountain Magazine. Issue 78 / November – December 2010**