

Tests from God and Their Relationship with Human Growth and Perfection

What Is the Philosophy of Tests from God and How Do They Foster Human Growth?

There are many questions in people's minds regarding the tests from God. The first and most common question is: What is the philosophy behind tests from God? If God already knows what is within us, why does He test us? Before answering this question, consider the following statements:

"I always thought he was modest and well-mannered, but today he behaved in such a rude way that I was shocked!"

"I thought that he was stingy and tight-fisted, but today I realized he is generous and open-handed."

"He seemed polite and respectful, but today I heard words from him that I was stunned!"

You have probably either said or heard such sentences yourself. These remarks show that our understanding of others is often incomplete. The reason lies in the hidden nature of people. Most individuals do not reveal their true character until they are placed under pressure and the animal self is challenged. As Imam Ali (Peace be upon him) said, "In the changing of circumstances, the inner essences of men are made known, and time reveals to you the hidden secrets [1]." Difficult situations, calamities, crossroads, and constraints provide the ground for the

manifestation of our inner assets and soul acquisitions. This is precisely the philosophy behind tests from God.

God's knowledge is infinite and encompasses both the past and future of every individual. Thus, the purpose of tests from God is not for God to discover our inner states—He already knows them. Rather, the purpose is for us to know ourselves better, to uncover the flaws and strengths buried deep within our being. It is much like what a fitness coach does.

When you go to the gym, your coach puts you through strenuous exercises that challenge each part of your body. It is then that you realize your lungs may not function properly, one leg might be weaker than the other, or some movements cause your bones to crack—things you would not notice under normal conditions. And under pressure, not only do weaknesses surface, but capabilities also have the opportunity to emerge. For instance, you may consider yourself physically weak, but under strain, you discover hidden strengths you never imagined you had. This is the value of the gym.

A skilled coach pays no attention to the complaints or groans of their students during workouts. What matters to the coach is the student's progress, their increasing strength, and the correction of physical flaws. The coach has a broader vision—they know what difficulties the student may face in old age if these weaknesses persist, so they begin addressing them today.

Likewise, God—as our Lord and Mentor—places us in a world full of contradictions and conflicts so that our internal assets are revealed and our strengths and weaknesses are laid bare. This way, we won't carry these shortcomings with us to *Barzakh* (Purgatory) or the Day of Judgment, risking eternal punishment.

Identifying weaknesses within us is the first and most important step in purifying the soul. The next critical step is striving to acquire sound assets aligned with eternal life—these assets are the Names of Allah. In fact, tests from God not only reveal weaknesses and strengths, but also pave the way to acquire divine names. But how?

Attaining Divine Names through Trials

As we mentioned earlier, the Hereafter is the realm where the inner reality is made manifest. Those who are “wealthy” in the next life are those who have acquired more of God’s names, and whose inner selves most resemble God and the Infallible Imams (Peace be upon them), the most perfect manifestations of God. Since our souls are of divine origin, all the names and attributes of God exist in us in potential form. Our task is to actualize and nurture them. As a result, another aspect of the philosophy of tests from God is to create the conditions for the divine names to emerge from within the souls of individuals.

God, with His complete knowledge of us, knows precisely where our weaknesses lie and what consequences they might bring in both this world and the Hereafter. Therefore, He designs tests tailored to each individual so that our behavioral and personality flaws rise to the surface. For example, someone might be overly sensitive and quick to take offense—traits that are spiritually dangerous and create hell. If these traits are not removed before death, their healing in *Barzakh* will come with immense suffering.

God knows this fact and because He loves us and does not want us to endure that suffering, He intervenes like a compassionate coach. Through carefully designed

tests, He aims to awaken us and pull us out of negligence. For instance, He may place people in our lives who constantly trigger our weaknesses—those who insult, mock, or taunt us—to help us build resilience, so much so that hearing such remarks becomes as easy as drinking water, leaving our inner peace untouched. You might think this is impossible, but the Infallible Imams and awliya' (friends) of Allah have shown that it is achievable. There are many stories from their lives that prove this.

If a person reaches this level, they attain the names *Sabur* (The Patient) and Haleem (The Forbearing). The internalization of any of God's names in the soul is like a shining sun, constantly emitting light and heaven—manifesting in the behavior, viewpoint, and words of such individuals, naturally drawing others toward them.

All of this, however, depends on how we respond to life's tests. If we face them correctly and listen deeply to the divine messages hidden within, we grow. If not, the trials only make us bitter and exhausted, bringing no benefit—and that is a complete loss.

Another important point about tests from God is their value as our capital. The afflictions we suffer in life serve as a savings fund—rescuing us in the harsh moments of *Barzakh* and the Hereafter, when our good deeds run out. God rewards every hardship with unimaginable blessings. If we view life's difficulties from this perspective, enduring them not only becomes easier—it becomes delightful.

What other insights do you have about the philosophy behind tests from God and their role in human life? Do you have any personal experiences or memorable

stories in this regard? If you have experienced growth as a result of such tests, share it with us—we would love to join in your joy.

References

[1]. Majlesi, Mohammad-Baqer. *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 77, p. 286, hadith 1