

RADIANT REALITY

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Allah
is the Light of the
heavens and the earth
Surat An-Nūr Verse: 35



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RADIANT REALITY

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This magazine is dedicated to the greatest and the last Prophet Sayyidna Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) on whom the succession of Prophethood ended and was sealed forever. Let us all follow him with utmost spirit.

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Question Answer

Question.

I married a man to be his second wife last year but due to his unfair behaviour, we decided to part ways. My husband went alone to an imaam and called me from there and handed the phone to the imaam. This is exactly (word for word) what was said -"Is this true?" to which I replied "yes it is" . That was all that was said. I have heard nothing after the call ever since from both imaam and my husband and proceeded with my idaaah and completed it alhamdulillah. But now my cousin has told me that the talaq is not valid as my husband did not on that night or after say the words "I talaq you" to me either in person, on the phone or via text. I have also not heard of him again. My question is, is my cousin correct? Do my husband need to say those words to me? And if the imaam has given him talaq papers without his saying 'I talaq you', is the papers valid?

Answer.

When a husband issues his wife a divorce it is valid whether he issued it in his wife's presence or in her absence. Thus, the Talaq may be directly issued to you or you may be informed of it. In either case, the issuance of Talaq by your husband verbally or in writing is necessary.

You should contact and clarify with your husband whether he had actually issued the Talaq to you at that time or not. If he had issued the Talaq at the time then your Iddat is in order and your marriage is over. If he did not issue Talaq, then the Iddat spent is not counted and your marriage is still intact.

Mufti Ismaeel

Question.

Is it permissible for a husband to deny his wife from intimacy after Iftar because he doesn't want to do anything for the month of Ramadan? He says that he wants to do everything right and abstain from all pleasures but the wife disagrees.

Answer.

It is extremism on the part of the husband to abstain from engaging in intimacy and conjugal relations with his wife during the nights of Ramadaan. This is not the essence of Islam. In fact, the Quran specifically permits intimacy and conjugal relations with ones wife during the nights of Ramadaan. Allah Ta'ala mentions:

"It is made lawful for you, during the nights of fasting, to have conjugal relations with your women." (Baqarah : 187)

Therefore, he should be advised accordingly to keep his practices of Ramadaan in accordance to the Shariah and not his own individual understanding.

Mufti Ismaeel

Question.

My Zakaat due date is one day after my pay day. Do I include my salary in my Zakaat calculation?

Answer.

In the enquired situation, since your Zakaat date is one day after you receive your salary, you will include your salary received in your yearly Zakaat calculation. However, you will deduct your liabilities and expenses from your salary received, e.g. light, water bills and rates of the Month; and include the remainder of your sala-

ry in your Zakaat calculation.

In addition, any amount spent from your salary received prior to your Zakaat due date will not be included in your yearly Zakaat calculation.

Mufti Ismaeel

Question.

If I bought a property without a specific intention of reselling and after a few Months or years I decide to sell the property, do I have to now pay Zakaat on the property?

Answer.

In principle, property purchased with the specific intention to resell at the time of sale is Zakaatable as the property will be considered as stock in trade. However, if there was no specific intention to resell the property at the time of sale but an intention to resell the property was made after the sale, then the property will only be Zakaatable if the intention to resell the property is tied with taking actionable steps in selling the property, for e.g. by listing or advertising the property. (Al-Fiqhul Islaami Waadillatuhu 3/1868)

By merely making an intention of selling the property without taking actionable steps in selling the property, the property will not be Zakaatable, for e.g. by having an intention to resell the property only if/when a buyer is found. (Shaami 1/128)

Mufti Ismaeel

Question.

Is it permissible to participate in the current Hunger Strikes coordinated in support and solidarity for the basic human rights?

Answer.

A hunger strike is a method of non-violent resistance or pressure in which participants 'fast' as an act of political protest, or to provoke feelings of guilt in others, usually with the objective to achieve a specific goal, such as a poli-

cy change. A hunger strike entails the refusal to consume food partially or totally.

Accordingly, a hunger strike is a political method implemented to achieve a specific goal. In terms of the current hunger strikes taking place across South Africa, it has been coordinated with the goal and objective to defend and demand the basic human rights of Palestinians held in prisons in Palestine.

In terms of Shariah, there is no prohibition in coordinating and participating in such hunger strikes. It will be permissible (Mubaah) if there is no fear of putting one's life in danger or leading to suicide. (Fataawa Fareediyah 1/554, Fataawa Haqqaaniyyah 2/358, Kifaayatul Mufti 3/491, Fataawa Mahmoodiyyah 4/614, Shaami 6/338)

Note: A hunger strike does not constitute a Shari' fast. Hence, all the laws of Shari' fasts will not apply in this regard. A person may suffice as a participant in a hunger strike by not consuming food for even a few hours.

Mufti Ismaeel

Question.

A husband committed apostasy-left the fold of Islam. His now ex-wife was observing Iddah. During the period of Iddah, the ex-husband passed away. Does the Iddah period of the ex-wife change? Does she inherit from the ex-husband?

Answer.

In the inquired case, the marriage between husband and wife immediately terminated (Faskhun Aajil) when the husband committed apostasy (Irtidaad) and left the fold of Islam. (Shaami 3/193)

In the case of the husband committing apostasy and leaving the fold of Islam, the ex-wife will observe the Iddah period of three menstrual cycles if she experiences menses or three lunar months if she does not experience menses or till birth if she is pregnant. (Shaami 3/194)

If the ex-husband (apostate) dies during the Iddah period of the ex-wife as in the enquired case, the Iddah period of the wife will not change. She will complete the Iddah period as she had commenced it i.e. three menstrual cycles/three Months or until birth respectively.

Furthermore, the surviving Muslim heirs of the deceased (apostate) will inherit from his earnings prior to committing apostasy and leaving the fold of Islam. The ex-wife of the deceased (apostate) will also qualify as an heir and inherit from the deceased (apostate) on condition that she was still in Iddah when the ex-husband (apostate) passed away as in the enquired case. Any earnings of the deceased (apostate) gained after committing apostasy, will form part of the Baitul-Maal (National Treasury in Muslim Lands) or be distributed amongst the poor and needy. (Al-Lubaab Fi Sharhil Kitaab 4/149/150)

Mufti Ismaeel

Question.

I have been having some issues with my wife and she filed for Khula. I was summoned for a meeting and did not agree with the Moulana who was present and decided to leave the meeting room. The Moulana had advised my wife to sit for Iddat as he would be granting Khula which I have not agreed. So she sat for Iddat and not advised that she is a free woman. I need to find out:

- 1) If I did not agree the Khula, can they issue it.
- 2) If they issued it, am I not entitled to receive a copy of the Khula.

Answer.

Khula refers to the wife giving her Mahr or something of monetary value to her husband in exchange of a divorce. For the Khula to be valid, the husband's acceptance of the Khula is necessary. Hence, if you have not consented to the Khula, the Khula will not be effective and your marriage will remain intact.

We advise you and other couples to seek advice and counsel from reliable and reputable Ulama/Ulama Bodies in all aspects of life especially for such sensitive issues.

Mufti Ismaeel

Question.

My uncle gave me his Zakaat to discharge. But before I discharged it, he passed away. Can I still discharge his Zakaat?

Answer.

If the deceased made a bequest in their will stating that any outstanding Zakaat must be paid from their estate, then the executors/surviving heirs are duty bound to ensure that the deceased's outstanding Zakaat is discharged up to one third of the estate.

Hence, in the enquired situation, if the deceased had made a bequest as stated above, then you must discharge his outstanding Zakaat up to one third of the estate. (This should be done with the consultation of the executors/heirs to avoid any dispute).

On the other hand, if the deceased did not make a bequest for payment of outstanding Zakaat, then the money given to you (Wakeel) to discharge on behalf of the deceased (Muwakkil), will form part of the estate and distributed amongst the surviving heirs of the deceased.

In an event that the deceased did not make a bequest for outstanding Zakaat or they did make a bequest but it is over and above one third of the estate, then the executors/heirs are not obliged to discharge the outstanding Zakaat from the estate. However, the heirs should consider the outstanding Zakaat of the deceased and as a form of goodwill, discharge it themselves.

Mufti Ismaeel

Question.

I received a message today that has gone viral and it said the following (can you please verify if this a fake or an actually sign of Qiyamah), it came with a video included :

In Mecca there was a spring from which the water runs simultaneously and comes fire, it is written in the Quran that one of the signs of the end of the world will be the appearance of the spring, That is the compatibility of the two incompatible elements

Answer.

While it is unusual for a spring to simultaneously emit fire and water, it is not a new phenomenon. There is a similar spring in Guanziling, Taiwan from which fire emits due to the high percentage of methane in the water. This fire-spring is in existence for over 300 hundred years. There is also a pool of water that you can set alight in Jamaica and even cook food above the burning water. A high concentrate of sulphur is the reason given for this phenomenon.

The message, "In Mecca there was a spring from which the water runs simultaneously and comes fire, it is written in the Quran that one of the signs of the end of the world will be the appearance of the spring, That is the compatibility of the two incompatible elements" is false. It is also a very serious fabrication against the Qur'aan as there is no such sign mentioned therein.

Rasulullah Sallallahu Alayhi wa Sallam has warned us, "Whoever speaks in regards to the Qur'aan without knowledge, then let him prepare for his abode in the Fire." (Tirmizi)

Mufti Moosa

Question.

On Sunday Morning, I woke in the state of Janabat. I thought of first going to the barber for a haircut before making Ghusal. Was I correct in thinking so?

Answer.

It is Makrooh (disliked) to cut ones hair or nails in the state of ritual impurity (Janaabat) i.e. a state in which Ghusal is necessary for one to attain purity. It is better to take a Ghusal and

gain purity before cutting ones hair or nails. (Fataawa Mahmoodiyya 5/115)

Mufti Ismaeel

Question.

Our elders use to forbid us from cutting nails after evening or in dark hours. Is there anything as such according to Quran and Sunnah or this is only an assumption by old people?

Answer.

In terms of Shariah, there is no prohibition or restriction of cutting ones nails during the night. It is permissible to cut ones nails during any hour of the day or night.

Note: In the past, it is possible that people were advised not to cut their nails during darkness or at night due to the lack of brightness or light, which could result in harming themselves in the process. However, this holds no legal bearing in Shariah.

Mufti Ismaeel

Question.

If a person does not have the full amount to do his Hajj, is he obligated to sell his basic necessities in order to perform Hajj?

Answer.

One is not required to sell his basic necessities in order to perform Hajj.

N.B: Hajj is fardh upon one who possesses sufficient wealth which will cover his transport, accommodation and food expenses during the journey of Hajj (i.e. from the time he leaves till he returns) apart from his basic necessities (e.g house, car, furniture, clothing etc.) and the wealth he leaves behind for maintaining his dependants in his absence.

Mufti Zakaria

Question.

Are Overdraft Facilities in Bank Accounts Permissible.

Answer.

If you withdraw more money than you have in your bank account, the extra money you take out after your bank balance reaches zero is called an overdraft. An overdraft will allow you to borrow money through your current account. You might request one from your bank or your account may automatically offer you an overdraft (with your agreement).

Hence, overdrafts are loans from the bank to the customer. If the overdraft facility comes with a fee, such a facility will not be permissible as the fee is interest. If the overdraft facility is free, it is permissible to avail of such a facility.

If one has an account with an overdraft facility which charges, one should deactivate or cancel such a facility or switch to an account which does not have such a facility.

Mufti Faraz

Question.

What should be done when a baby is born?

Answer.

After childbirth, once the child has been cleaned, Azaan will be called out in the right ear of the child and iqamat in the left ear. It is also advisable to perform tahneek, i.e. get a pious person to chew or suck on a khajoor (date), etc. and thereafter place a small piece of the same into the mouth of the child to suck upon it. A good name should be chosen for the child. On the seventh day, aqeeqah will be performed for the child if the parents can afford to do so.

Mufti Zakaria

Question.

1. Once a shopkeeper returned to me more than what he should have. I was going to return the difference but for some reason, I did not. So, does it become a debt now and should I return the difference?

2. If they refuse to take the money, any other way to clear it?

3. If the person I owe money dies, how should I repay it?

Answer.

1. Yes, you should return it.

2. If they refuse to take the money from you and overlook it, then you may keep it.

3. It should be returned to the estate of the deceased and distributed among the heirs according to the stipulated shares of inheritance.

Mufti Zakaria

Question.

Can a woman sleep with her hair untied at night?

Answer.

Yes. However, it is better for her to cover her hair even at the time she retires to bed, so that she is not deprived of the company of the malaikah of rahmah (mercy).

Mufti Zakaria

Question.

Is there any basis for the famous practice of cutting the hand nails starting from the index finger of the right hand and finishing on the thumb of the left hand? In addition to the cutting of the toe nails starting from the baby toe of the right foot and ending on the baby toe of the left foot?

Answer.

There is no specific procedure in cutting the hand and toe nails as mentioned above. More so, to consider it to be Sunnah or Mustahab has no basis in Shariah. A person may cut their hand and toe nails in any way that is convenient.

However, it was the Sunnah of Rasulullah Sallallahu Alayhi Wa Sallam to begin from the right in every good action. As such, a person may suffice by beginning to cut his hand and toe nails from the right. (Ahsanul Fataawa 9/82)

Mufti Ismaeel

The Messenger's Language

And We did not send any messenger but (speaking) in the tongue of his people, so that he might clearly speak to them.....(14:4)

The above sentence of verse (14:4) mentions the particular blessing and convenience granted by Allah that whenever He has sent a messenger to a people, He has sent him speaking their language, in order that he would convey Divine injunctions to them in their language and usage whereby understanding these becomes easy on them. If the language of the messenger had been different from that of his addressees, it is evident that his people would have to undergo the burden of having to translate the injunctions before they could understand them and, still, the understanding of injunctions correctly would have remained doubtful. Therefore, when a messenger was sent to the speakers of the Hebrew language, the language of the messenger was also Hebrew. The language of the messenger sent to the Persians was also Persian. The language of the messenger to the Berbers was appointed to be Berberi. It is possible that a person who was assigned to be a messenger would be an individual from among the same people to whom he was sent and his mother tongue would have been the language of those people, and it is also possible that the language into which he was born may have been other than that of the people he was sent to, but as Allah would have it, He had things arranged in a manner that the

messenger learnt the language of the people he was to work with - as it was in the case of Sayyidna Lut (A.S). Actually, he was a citizen of 'Iraq where the language spoken was Persian. But, after his migration to Syria, he married among the people there and the language of the Syrians became his own language. Then, Allah made him the prophet of a region of Syria.

As for our noble Messenger (SAWS), his mission is, in terms of the area of operation, for the whole world and, in terms of the time duration, it is universally applicable right upto the last day of Qiyamah. No nation or group of people in this world, no matter which country they belong to and what language they speak, could be outside the circle of his mission as a messenger and prophet. And every new nation and every new language which comes into existence upto the day of Qiyamah shall all be counted among the community to which the Da'wah (call) of the Holy Prophet (SAWS) will reach. This is expressly mentioned by the Holy Qur'an: (O people, I am the messenger of Allah [sent] to you all - 7:158). According to a narration of Sayyidna Jabir (A.S) appearing in the Sahih of Al-Bukhari and Muslim, the Holy Prophet (SAWS), while pointing out to his five distinctions among the universal community of prophets, has said: Be-

fore me, every messenger and prophet was sent to his people and community. Allah sent me to all peoples who are the children of Adam (on this earth).

Allah willed that humankind on this earth should originate from Sayyidna Adam (A.S) whom He made the first prophet of human beings. Then, in proportion to the increase in human population in terms of its social and economic status, arrangements to convey the right guidance to them through messengers and prophets kept being made by Allah. Injunctions, laws and religious codes relevant to every period of time and to the needs of every people continued coming. Finally, when the development of the human scene reached the stage of maturity, Allah sent the foremost among the line of prophets, Sayyidna Muhammad al-Mustafa (SAWS), as the Rasul of the whole world, and the Kitab and Shari'ah He gave to him was given in its most complete and workable form which was valid for the whole world and for all times right upto the Last Day of Qiyamah. It was said in the Qur'an: (That is, 'Today, I have perfected your religion and made My favour complete for you - 5:3).

The religious codes of past prophets, may peace be on all of them, were also perfect and complete in terms of their time and region. They too cannot be called imperfect or wanting. But, the perfection of the Shari'ah brought by the Holy Prophet (SAWS) is not restricted to any specified time and region. It is absolutely perfect (that is, without restrictions or exceptions in any respect, or circumstances) and seen from this angle, the perfection of religion is exclusive to this Shari'ah, and this is the reason why the chain of prophethood was discontinued after the appearance of the Holy Prophet (SAWS) who is the Last among the blessed prophets, may peace be upon all of them.

Excellence of Greetings

Abdullah bin 'Amr bin Al-'as (RA) reported: A man asked the Messenger of Allah (SAWS): "Which act in Islam is the best?" He (SAWS) replied, "To give food, and to greet everyone, whether you know or you do not." [Al-Bukhari and Muslim].

Commentary: Feeding poor and destitute is an act of goodness, and so is fulfilling the needs of the indigent. Greeting everybody (saying 'As-Salamu 'Alaikum'), whether an acquaintance or a stranger, is a good manner too. Both of these acts generate mutual love and remove hatred and ill will from hearts. All other forms of greetings do not substitute for Islamic greeting.

Abu Hurairah (RA) reported: The Prophet (SAWS) said, "When Allah created Adam (SAWS), He said to him: 'Go and greet that company of angels who are sitting there - and then listen to what they are going to say in reply to your greetings because that will be your greeting and your off-spring's.' Adam (SAWS) said to the angels: 'As-Salamu 'Alaikum (may you be safe from evil).' They replied: 'As-Salamu 'Alaikum wa Rahmatullah (may you be safe from evil, and Mercy of Allah be upon you).' Thus adding in reply to him: 'wa Rahmatullah (and Mercy of Allah)' to his greeting." [Al-Bukhari and Muslim].

Lessons from Sahih Bukhari

Dr. Rafiq Ahmad

Chapter 49 : (To offer) Salaah in sheep-folds.

Purpose of Tarjamatul Baab

Here Imam Bukhari wants to convey the permissibility of offering Salaah in a sheep fold.

Hadith No. 418

Comments

One of the peculiarities of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) is Allah's permissibility to his Ummah of taking the whole earth as mosque i.e., the permissibility of offering prayers anywhere on the land provided the area is ritually clean. According to Sayyiduna Anas bin Maalik, before the construction of Masjid-i-Nabawi, Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) would offer Salaah anywhere, even in places like sheepfold. Since sheep are harmless animals, therefore, one can offer prayers in a sheepfold in a carefree state. However, camels, by nature, are mischievous, therefore, if someone tries to offer prayers in a camel-yard, he may feel unsafe there and lose his concentration. Ibn Maajah has quoted a hadith which reads:

"Abdullah bin Magfal al-Muzni narrates that Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said "offer Salaah in sheepfolds, and do not offer Salaah in camel-yards, for camel has been created from Shaitan". (Ibn Maajah)

The last part of the statement 'the camel has been created from Shaitan', refers to its mischievous nature.

Chapter 50 : (To offer) Salaah in camel-yards.

Purpose of Tarjamatul Baab

According to Imam Ahmed bin Hambal, the Salaah offered in a camel-yard is invalid in view of the statement 'the camels have been created from Shaitaan' in the above quoted Hadith. Imam Bukhari seems to concur with the majority of the jurists like Imam Abu Haneefa, Imam Shaafa'ee, Imam Maalik and others, who consider it valid to offer Salaah at such places.

Hadith No. 419

Narrated Nafi

"I saw Ibn Umar praying while taking his camel as a Sutra in front of him and he said, "I saw the Prophet doing the same."

Comments

Referring to the hadith of Ibn Maajah quoted above in the previous chapter, Imam Ahmed and some others have deduced that it is not permissible to offer Salaah at such places. Imam Bukhari, by quoting this hadith here says that Ibn Umar held a camel's leg as 'Sutra' and

offered prayers. Further, it is also permissible to offer Salaah while mounted on a camel. So, the statement that the camel has been created from Shaitan, refers only to his mischievous nature.

Chapter 51 : One who offers Salaah towards an oven, fire, or anything else which people worship, while intending to worship Allah

Az-Zuhri said that Anas informed him that the Prophet, (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said, "The Fire was displayed before me while I was praying."

Purpose of Tarjamatul Baab

There is a general notion that it might not be permissible to offer Salaah while fire is burning in front, as people of some particular faiths worship it. Imam Bukhari rejects this view and adds that if someone offers prayers while fire or some other thing taken as deity by people of certain faiths is in front of him, but his intention is to worship Allah alone and not the fire etc., his prayer is valid. For example, on a cold day, if someone offers Salaah while keeping fire in front to get warmth, and at the same time he does not believe in fire worshipping, his prayer is valid as per Imam Bukhari.

Hadith No. 420

Narrated Abdullah bin Abbas

The sun eclipsed and Allah's Apostle offered the eclipse prayer and said, "I have been shown the Hell (now) and I never saw a worse and horrible sight than the sight I have seen today."

Comments

Once Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), while offering Salaah, moved a few steps forward and after a while, retreated back. On being asked about the act, he said that Jannat was brought before him and he moved towards it to cut a bunch of grapes from it, but due to some reason he dropped the idea; afterwards Jahannum was brought before him, the horri-

fyng nature of which he had never seen before, and he retreated back. According to the scholars the wall of the mosque in front worked as a mirror and Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) saw the reflection of Jannat and Jahannum in it. Since the hellfire was brought before Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) during Salaah and it had not invalidated his Salaah, Imam Bukhari by this incident substantiates his argument that if Salaah is offered while fire is burning in front, the prayer is valid. (Allah knows the best).

Chapter 52: The undesirability of praying in graveyards.

Purpose of Tarjamatul Baab

This topic has been discussed earlier as well, and here Imam Bukhari is coming out with a categorical statement that it is disliked by the Shariah to offer Salaah in a graveyard.

Hadith No. 421

Narrated Ibn Umar

that the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said, "Perform some of your prayers in your houses and do not turn them into graves."

Here Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) exhorts the believers to offer Sunnah and Nafl prayers at home. The Fardh or compulsory prayer is to be offered necessarily in the mosque in congregation, and one should try to offer rest of the prayers (Sunnah or Nafl) at home as it brings lot of blessings. He further advised the believers to perform some of their prayers in their houses and not to convert their homes into graves. This may also mean that it is not permissible to offer prayers in a graveyard. Offering prayers in a graveyard resembles idol worshipping, and hence needs to be avoided.

Chapter 53 : Praying in places where the earth has caved in or on which punishment has fallen.

It is said that Ali disliked praying at Babylon where the earth had caved in.

Purpose of Tarjamatul Baab

In previous chapter the disapproval to offer Salaah in a graveyard was mentioned, and here in this chapter Imam Bukhari mentions that it is strongly disliked to offer Salaah at places where Allah's punishment had fallen on the people because of their misdeeds.

Hadith No. 422

Narrated Abdullah bin Umar

Allah's Apostle said, "Do not enter (the places) of these people where Allah's punishment had fallen unless you do so weeping. If you do not weep, do not enter (the places of these people) because Allah's curse and punishment which fell upon them may fall upon you."

Comments

It is narrated that during his return from the battle of Sufayn, Sayyiduna Ali (RA) came across a famous old city—Baabil (Babylon in Iraq). In older days the people of Babylon were punished by Allah for their misdeeds and buried alive with the earth caving in. Sayyiduna Ali avoided to offer his prayers there and quickly crossed the place. It is only after covering some distance that he offered his prayers.

This was similar to the incident when Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) while on an expedition to Tabuk came across the places inhabited by the people of Thamud five thousand years before. These people were also punished by Allah for their misdeeds and opposition to Prophets. Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) advised his companions to cross the places quickly contemplating the fear of Allah for these were the places where one could observe His wrath.

Lessons from the Hadith

1. If Allah's punishes a place, its effects con-

tinue to prevail.

2. Inversely, it can be inferred from the hadith that if Allah showers His blessings on a place, the effects of the blessings also continue to prevail.

3. It is better to live in places blessed by Allah, and remain away from those where Allah's punishment has befallen.

Praising the Deceased

Anas (RA) reported: Some Companions happened to pass by a funeral procession (bier) and they praised him (the deceased). The Prophet (SAWS) said, "He will certainly enter it." Then they passed by another funeral procession and they spoke ill of the deceased. The Prophet (SAWS) said, "He will certainly enter it." Umar bin Al-Khattab (RA) said: "(O Messenger of Allah,) what do you mean by 'He will certainly enter it?'" He (SAWS) replied, "You praised the first person, so he will enter Jannah; and you spoke ill of the second person, so he will enter Hell. You are Allah's witnesses on earth." [Al-Bukhari and Muslim].

Commentary: The remarks of true believers reflect their righteousness and integrity of character. If they bear witness to the purity of heart of a man, he is sure to go to Jannah. And if they comment on the evil-mindedness of somebody, he is likely to be consigned to Hell-fire. Indeed, a believer never utters anything out of malice or self-conceit. There are some Ahadith which forbid us to speak ill of dead people. This rule applies to the true believers only. The Shari'ah argument is against it. However, we are allowed to talk about the misdeeds of the infidels and people who commit sins openly, disregarding the Shari'ah so that others may abstain from imitating a bad example.

Evolution and its Adversaries - 1

The infusion of philosophy into scientific disciplines results in a situation leading to chaos in scientific studies. The theory of evolution is the first discipline to suffer this infusion, and biology is a victim that may not recover from toxic treatment writes SYED IQBAL ZAHEER.

A human is a strange package of contradictions. And he is at the tilting point. That is, the contradictory traits, whether physical, mental, or psychic, are so precariously balanced within him that any serious disturbance can send him to the abyss. By surviving at the pinnacle, he is a walking miracle.

Talking of contradictions, it is interesting to see how it is played out at the level of high-level scientists. The famous British scientist, Fred Hoyle, who differed with many of his contemporary scientists over several issues, and had good reasons for doing so, illustrated it in simple words. To quote:

“The odd thing about modern scientific dogma is that to be respectable you must be a half-believer in creationism. You must believe matter to have arisen in a Big-Bang Universe by special creation, but you must not believe that biological species arose by special creation.” (Our Place in Cosmos, Phoenix, 1993, p.13)

So, to be self-contradictory, and yet stay respectable to oneself and to others, seems to be an

inheritable trait prevalent among the scientists too.

Another of the interesting traits of the humans is their habit of arguing over the inarguable, time and again. That is, they can argue over the same issue, thought to have been settled the last time, whenever a new occasion arises. For example, that there can be no more than one deity, assumed that He exists, is argued by those who have been fed with their mother's milk a dogma different from that. It will take two hours of precious life to corner a believer in multiple gods and to make him admit, “Of course, I am not denying that the Supreme Being can only be one.” But following the admission, he is back to the dogma of multiple deities, as soon as you are out of sight. Now, if you encounter him again, you will need another two hours to corner him and make him admit oneness of the deity.

Like the half-believers in creationism, this trait is manifest at the highest intellectual levels too; and, given sufficient numbers, though not necessarily in majority, they can manage to domi-

nate and suppress any opposition. The phenomenon is the same: abizarre habit of the intellectuals to recognize the truth and then deny it. Given certain conditions, an entire society can behave like that. Hoyle & Co. touched on this problem under the heading: "The tendency of human societies to depart indefinitely from the objective truth." They wrote:

"Some succeed (to become a household name in science) by ability, others by luck, and still others, unhappily, by design and deception. The trick is to pretend that a major advance has been made, when in fact there has been none. To achieve such a deception a cabal of scientists, rather than a lone individual, is usually needed. Speaking with one voice, a cabal is usually able to shout down lone individuals working in other directions and eventually, by gaining control over what material is published in scientific journals and what is not, a cabal in the end can wipe out all opposition." (Ibid, p.15)

Darwinistic evolution is one such case in science which snug-fits the above description. The idea of evolution as a result of natural selection, following random mutation, and, consequently, survival of the fittest, has always been suspected as a way to get rid of belief in Christianity, its gods and its Church, which had, in yesteryears of Darwin's presentation, done so much mischief to the Western world that it wanted none of them. (A cool 50 million done to death by the Inquisition-operated by the Church, was the most the West could take from the infallible Church).

"Darwinism had come to fight dogmatism. Professor Tyndall pointed out in 1874: '... the basis of the doctrine of evolution consists not in an experimental demonstration – for the subject is hardly accessible to this mode of proof – but in its general harmony with scientific thought ... We claim and we shall wrest from theology, the entire domain of cosmological theory. All schemes and systems which thus infringe upon the domain of science must, in so far as they do this, submit to its control ... Acting otherwise has always proved

disastrous in the past and it is simply fatuous today.'" (Evolution, Michael Denton, p. 72)

In this case, Darwin pretended that his was a ground-breaking theory, which it was, and a major advance in science, which it was not. It was, and is, after all, a theory; a hypothesis, albeit scientific hypothesis. But science does not advance with theories. Theories must be converted to facts, which in this case, stubbornly refused to happen. But with the help of a cabal of scientists and non-scientists moved by atheistic ideas, who were able to shout down the dissenting voice, Darwin became a household name.

Just who had disagreed with him anyway? Was it the Church and the Inquisitionists? None. It was Darwin's cotemporary biologists who disagreed with him, the leading ones for that matter. And they were talking science, with scientific facts; facts such as Darwin admitted as facts that were shored up against his theory. But he stuck to his guns and gradually, a cabal was recruited, to plant it soundly in school text books: equivalent of mother's milk for feeding dogmas.

We propose to look into what has been the standpoint of those biological scientists who disagreed with Darwin's theory, and still do, some of whom being internationally known figures. We shall be dealing with their objections, as they appear in their books. Being non-scientists, we cannot, and, should not, add any of our own reasons and arguments. If we attempt that anywhere, it will be because Darwin's theory is not pure science; nor its newest version called Neo-Darwinism, is. By and large, it is philosophy which uses biological information to build its case. The presence of biological information makes it sound like science. But biological research and experimental data are largely missing in arguments presented by the evolutionist, in contrast to the approach adopted by those who disagree with them who offer technical reasons.

Let us illustrate the philosophical methodology adopted by the evolutionists with an example. They claim, for instance, that that the domination

of a single male among some apes (e.g., baboons, langurs, gorillas) over the rest of the males in a group should be looked into the laws of natural selection for explanation. The leader of the group, usually the most powerful among them, disallows any male to mate with the several females of the group, reserving the rights to himself. He will fight off and chase away any contender. The Neo-Darwinists explain that the genes tend to propagate the strongest to increase the chance of survival of the fittest. This is how natural selection works.

But, it could be contended that the phenomenon should be understood in the light of the universally noticed male's desire to dominate and possess for himself as many, all, and everything. The phenomenon can be observed in children too: the stronger one of a pair of male children fights and takes the best of toys denying the other, even if his brother, any. Female children do not seem to behave in this manner, but weakly. Competition among males is intense. Gene-propagation of the most powerful seems to have little or nothing to do with this.

A husband, no matter how weak, disagrees that his wife should have sexual relations with another. It is not because he wants his genes alone to propagate, (as the Neo-Darwinists often assert) but simply because he desires to possess the female all by himself. Now, if allowed, he would take a second wife, a third etc. all following the said desire, even if he happens to be physically weak and diminutive, promising that his offspring will also be weak and diminutive. He will still disagree that his several wives should have sexual contacts with any other male.

So, looking at it from this perspective, viz. the male's desire to possess and dominate, it appears to be the reason why a single male chimp dominates a group, cutting out rest of the males.

That said, we admit that the absence of hard facts, anytime demonstrable, reduces both the arguments to philosophy. Neither position is scientific.

Interestingly, Darwin's view (now discarded

by neo-Darwinists) was quite different. He did not consider brute power and strength of the male as the deciding factor as to who counts for the choice of a mate. In the words of a scientist:

"Darwin's view was that, by and large, it is the female of the species that does the choosing. He went so far as to postulate that animals have an aesthetic sense, and tend to choose the most beautiful of the potential mates." (Lifelines, Steven Rose, 1997, p.197)

So, now we have three theories. Dawkins (a prominent neo-Darwinist) offers a fourth, bringing in 'genetic control' as a factor:

"It was that leader among twentieth-century Darwinians, R. A. Fisher, who put the idea on a sound theoretical foundation by suggesting that female preference could be under genetic control and therefore subject to natural selection, in just the same way as the male qualities preferred. The interaction between selection on female preference genes (inherited by both sexes) and simultaneously on male advertisement genes (also inherited by both sexes) provides the co-evolutionary driving force for the expansion of ever more extravagant sexual advertisements." (Richard Dawkins, *A Devil's Chaplain*, p.65, Mariner Books, 2004)

There can be as many views as there are biologists with philosophical turn of mind. And the matter does not end there. Darwinism, the theory of evolution, natural selection, genetic influences, etc. are taken to such extremes as to border with mythology. Steven Rose, a professor of biology and Director of the Brain and Behavior Research group at the Open University, criticizes this attitude:

"There has been no lack of those who have sought to take the theory, in whichever version, and press into service to provide an evolutionary 'Darwinism' explanation for human sexual preferences. The general procedure, in this as so much in reductive approach offered by the new genetics and sociobiology, is to treat metaphor as if it were homology. For example, competition

for mates among human males is discussed as the macro-version of what is said to be the micro-level competition among the individual sperms to be 'the one' to successfully penetrate and fertilize the egg. Males and their sperms compete, females and their ova quiescently await their fate." (Lifelines, Steven Rose, 1997, p.198)

But things have gone even worse than this. Here is an example from *Not In Our Genes* to demonstrate (right in Dawkins' style and approach) how genes are the 'master conductor' behind everything that the humans choose to do, whether serious or mundane:

"An amazing but not atypical example is a teaching exercise contrived by three prominent sociobiological anthropologists in order to teach secondary school students the elements of sociobiological reasoning. They ask, 'Why do children so often dislike spinach, while other people usually like it?' First the students are told how to establish the generality of this bit of human nature by asking their parents and their friends whether it is true. Then they are given the adaptive story. Spinach contains oxalic acid, which prevents the absorption of calcium. Children have growing bones and need calcium. Adults' bones are no longer growing, so the lack of calcium is not so important. Thus any gene that had the effect of making children dislike spinach, but adults like it, would be favored. The reader should not be put off by the silliness of the case. It has all the necessary elements: (1) the appeal to everyday ethnocentric experience as evidence for universality; (2) the unstated assumption as evidence that genes may arise with any arbitrary complicated action needed by the theory; (3) the invention of an adaptive story without any quantitative check on whether there is indeed an effect of eating spinach on reproduction rates." (*Not In Our Genes*, Steven Rose, R.C.Lewontin and Leon J.Kamin, Penguin, 1990, p. 259)

This then is the result of infusion of philosophy into scientific disciplines, a situation leading to chaos in scientific studies. The theory of evo-

lution is the first discipline to suffer this infusion, and biology is a victim that may not recover from toxic treatment; for, the gates of speculations are now wide open for anyone who can combine biological knowledge with skillful rhetoric, and manage some manipulation with dexterity.

We can now take up the issues stated above. However, it would be apt to familiarize our readers with some basic knowledge of biological facts related to the topic, without which they may find it hard to make out what exactly was going on. But this will attempt in the next issue, Allah willing.

(to be continued)

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When will you put the hereafter before your worldly interests? When will you put the Creator before the creatures? When will you put the beggar before yourself? When will you put obeying the commandments of Allah, observing His prohibitions, and enduring with patience the tribulations that come from Him before your passion and habitual practice? When will you put answering Him before answering His creatures? O young man, be sensible! You are in sheer illusion. You are a falsehood with no truth, an outward with no inward, and a show of publicity with no substance. Come to me since the acts of disobedience are still on your outward, before they reach your heart and you become persistent and then persistence develops into disbelief. Do something before it is too late. Use the little that you have to get the great amount that you lack. Do something since the rope is still in your hand. The Prophet (SAWS) has said: "The repentant sinner is like one who has never committed any sin, even if he kept sinning seventy times a day." If you listen to the Prophet (SAWS), act in accordance with his words, and behave well in his company by following his companions, he will introduce your heart to your Lord (mighty and glorified is He) and let you hear His words. When someone's obedience to Allah and his servitude to Him

MAKING TIME TO ENJOY ISLAM

“Indeed, these people love the immediate and leave behind them a grave Day.” [76:27]

Many times, the vicious rat-race of the modern lifestyle cheats the Muslim of their greatest resource; a meaningful connection with Allah. Even when we stop to squeeze in the prayer before its time expires, or resort to duâ’ (supplication) after all else fails, the enjoyment and transformative force of these devotions is largely non-existent in our lives. Even those who notice how tasteless life has become due to superficial connectivity (read: social media), their resolutions end at reconnecting with their family and loved ones. Although important, can family ever love you, rescue you, deter you, heal you, appreciate you, understand you – as Allah can?

For this very reason, Allah made it crystal clear that we should celebrate the rope He extended from the heavens, and the fact that He made you of its people solely by His grace, and that these two are greater than everything life has to offer.

“Say, In the bounty of Allah and in His mercy – in that let them rejoice; it is better than all they accumulate.” [10:58]

Several companions of the Prophet (SAWS) would say, “The bounty of Allah [referred to here] is the Quran, and His Mercy is Islam.” Those two are better than everything humanity can accumulate. It’s the life money cannot buy, the clarity that no genius can discover, the

strength that vanquishes armies and anxieties, and the inner-peace that no tragedy can undermine.

Honestly speaking, who finds fulfillment in their servitude of Allah?

Who lives that feeling of privilege which Bakr al-Muzani (ra) expressed when saying, “Who is like you, O son of Adam? You have been given unrestricted access to [your ablution] water and the prayer?”

When al-Husayn b. ‘Ali (RA) would wash up for salâh, they would ask him why his face would always go flush, to which he responded, “Don’t you know who I am about to stand before?” Can we identify the last time such an awe overtook us?

As we fulfill our “needs” for gizmos, gadgets, likes, and shares – do we pity ourselves like ‘Abdullâh b. al-Mubâarak (ra) pitied us when he said, “How tragic [is the condition] of those addicted to this world; they left it without tasting the most delightful thing in it.” They asked, “What is that?” He said, “Being acquainted with Allah, the Exalted.”

Shaykh al-Islâm Ibn Taymiya (ra) says, “Whoever becomes accustomed to isolating himself [at times] for intimately conversing with his Lord, the Mighty and Majestic, he tastes such a sweetness in being acquainted with his Lord, and such a bliss in speaking to Him, that the world and everything in it becomes petty in his

eyes. For this reason, one of the early Muslims said, ‘I could have a need from Allah, so I call upon Him, then find such a delight in knowing Him and a sweetness in conversing with Him that I don’t wish that my need be immediately fulfilled – out of fear that this [feeling] would leave me, for the self only cares for its share, and it turns away upon receiving it.’[1]

Another early scholar said, “I supplicate to Allah for a need, and if He fulfils it, I become overjoyed. If He does not, I am overjoyed tenfold. This is because the former is solely my preference, and the latter is the choice of Allah, Knower of the Unseen.”

Are these stations actually attainable? Absolutely, so long as you are committed to changing your lifestyle – albeit gradual – and fighting to remain protective of that commitment. It may sound like a grind, and it might be, but be certain that your compensation – in both worlds – will factor in your degree of difficulty. After all, Allah is ash-Shakoor (the Most Appreciating). He will appreciate your attempts even if you falter, and make it worth your while in ways unimaginable. He will infuse you with strength from the moment you decide to try and climb, and He will lace the cuts and bruises with a sweetness that carries you forward till you meet Him.

Also, be sure that avoiding this “grind” is a façade. Our dunya (material world) offers little comfort with much rigour, while our deen (religious commitment) demands some rigour for much comfort in return, even in this life. Many of us believe, even if we dare not speak it, that an upgrade in our religiosity means embracing a restrictive lifestyle. The Quran, however, tells a different story. At the onset of Surat TâHâ, Allah says,

“We have not send down to you the Quran that you become distressed.” [20:2]

And at its conclusion, the Most High reiterates, *“And whoever turns away from My remembrance – indeed, he will have a constricted life, and We will gather him on the Day of Resur-*

rection blind.” [TâHâ (20): 124]

Though this stands true for this world, the Prophet (SAWS) adds that they will be constricted in their graves as well, to the point that their ribs intertwine, before being resurrecting blind on the Last Day. Such a fate was only suitable, for they chose the tight life in this world, and never made time to appreciate the light Allah shined with His Prophet (SAWS).

Therefore, Allah chose you, by guiding you to Islam, because He wants prosperity for you and an eased life sheltered in faith, while most people live empty, vulnerable lives. When was the last time you stopped to consider this immense privilege Allah has favoured you with?

“Look how We have favoured [in provision] some of them over others. But the Hereafter is greater in degrees [of difference] and greater in distinction.” [17:21]

Others were smarter than you, some had better resources than you, but it was you He chose to guide. Will that not give you pause, and a fervent to capitalize?

You may think that enhancing your spirituality is a lonely pursuit. Luckily, and unlike college, Allah also allows you to plagiarize your spirituality! He even encourages you to imitate others – beginning with the Prophet (SAWS), then his matchless Companions, then the righteous scholars and dedicated worshippers who toiled throughout history to recalibrate their hearts and minds for the better. This is also why the Quran calls us to keep good company, all because inculcating these spiritual values requires mentorship, and a diffusion of faith from one heart to another. Reading their legacies definitely qualifies, or else the Prophet (SAWS) would have only been an inspiration for a single generation, and we all know how his story never falls to infuse us each time.

Finally, “It’s not about how good you are, it’s about how bad you want it.” In high school, we wrote that line on our game-sneakers, only realizing later that much worthier ambitions than

basketball deserved that tunnel-vision determination. But the statement certainly stands true in deen: your survival depends on that heightened sense of urgency within you, as the Prophet (SAWS) said,

“Whoever fears will begin his journey [extra early] in the middle of the night, and whoever begins his journey in the middle of the night will surely reach the destination. Indeed, the merchandise of Allah is precious. Indeed, the merchandise of Allah is Paradise.”[2]

Did you get the message? Keep the flame on. Focus on it. Hover over it. Protect it. Don't let the raging storm around you distract you from it. You have no idea how many folks – starting with Shaytan himself – thought it depended on how good you are, or how many books you've read, or talks you've heard, or fans you've secured. It's not about any of that; it's about that burning flame inside you sincerely longing for Allah.

That longing and urgency for Allah is what will ultimately fuel your course of action, and make the sacrifices enjoyable. As the earliest Muslims said, “The most delightful thing in this world is knowing Him and longing for Him, just as the most delightful thing in the hereafter is meeting Him and looking at Him.”

Make time to nourish that longing through routine devotion, regularly reflecting on the Quran, and by asking Allah for it, as your Prophet (SAWS) used to do:

“...and I ask You for the delight of looking at Your face, and [for] the longing to meet You (wa asa'aluka ladhat an-nadhari ilâ wajhik, wash-shawqa ilâ liqâ'ik).”[3]

Salutations and peace be upon our beloved Muhammad, and all praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds.

[1] See: *Majmu' Fatâwâ Ibn Taymiya* (10/334, 22/385)

[2] Collected by at-Tirmidhi (2450) from Abu Hurayra (ra)

[3] Collected by Ahmad (30/265) from Ammâr b. Yâsir (ra)

Introduction to God

by God Himself

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds;

Most Gracious, Most Merciful;

Master of the Day of Judgment.

Thee do we worship, and Thine aid we seek.

Show us the straight way,

The way of those whom Thou hast bestowed Thy Grace,

Those whose (portion) is not wrath, and who go not astray.

The Fruit of Knowledge

Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jeelani (ra)

O knowledgeable scholar! If you were in possession of the fruit and blessing of knowledge you would not go to the doors of sultans seeking shares for your lower selves and lustful desires. The knowledgeable scholar has no legs with which he goes to the doors of the sultans and the creatures, and the ascetic has no hands with which he takes people's property.

O young man, do not behave like a grown-up cock when you are still a young chick inside an egg. You have no right to speak until your body has fully developed, your egg has cracked and released you, and you have become a young chicken beneath the wing of your mother, beneath the wing of the Law of your Prophet (prayer and peace be on him and on his family), until he feeds you so that your faith becomes strong and complete. When righteousness has flowed into you, you will start to pick your sustenance from the grains of the favor of your Lord (mighty and glorified is He). At this stage, you will become a rooster for the hens. You will comfort them, love them, become a guardian for them, deal with the tribulations, and sacrifice yourself for them. Once the servant has become sound, he will carry the burdens of the earth and the creatures and become a spiritual pivot for them. The Prophet is reported to have said: "The person who acquires knowledge, puts it into practice,

and teaches others will be called 'great' in the kingdom of heaven." I say about you what the Commander of the Believers 'Alī bin abī Tālib (may Allah be satisfied with him and ennoble his face) has said: "I have within me so much Knowledge. If I could find those who can carry it and who are its real people, I would not have locked up the door of secrets and would have opened its gates and manufactured its keys, but [I say] 'O my innermost being keep the secrets hidden until its people come'"! Keep what you have as a secret, but if you are asked for it, disclose it. I cannot reveal all that I have, because some spiritual states should be kept secret. Ibn Sam'ūn (may Allah, high is He, show mercy to him) used to say: "Believing what I say merits the degree of sainthood. If the person is already a saint, he will further rise in ranking." Such words are accepted, believed, and put into practice only by someone who serves the Law, acts in accordance with it, and sincerely complies with it. It is the guidance of the Book and the Sunna. He has succeeded, by Allah, the person who is brought up according to their teachings, who grows up while complying with them, and who never exceeds their limits; he has succeeded indeed. I am afraid that your practice of Islam and your faith are mere façade. Perfect your practice of Islam and your faith. This way your fear,

fasting, prayer, and night vigil will increase. The people of Allah went wandering, joined the wild animals, and competed with them for the herbs of the earth and the water of the springs, with the sun becoming their sunshade and the moon and the stars their lamp. Exert strenuous efforts in performing works of obedience and acts that draw you near before you arrive in His presence. Do not wrong yourselves by disobeying Him and being impudent to Him. O Allah, grant us success in obeying You, keep us away from the acts of disobeying You, and “give us good in this world and good in the hereafter and protect us from the torment of the Fire.”

By Allah, you are a liar under all circumstances. You do not know the way to the door of Allah (mighty and glorified is He). How can you point to it when you are blind? How can you guide others when you are blinded by your passion, natural inclination, and pursuit of your lower self, love for this world, superiority, and lustful desires? Woe to you! You love to stay in this world, therefore you will achieve nothing. When will you find the door of your Lord (mighty and glorified is He)? When will you put prayers before the business of your shop and your profits? When will you put the hereafter before your worldly interests? When will you put the Creator before the creatures? When will you put the beggar before yourself? When will you put obeying the commandments of Allah (mighty and glorified is He), observing His prohibitions, and enduring with patience the tribulations that come from Him before your passion and habitual practice? When will you put answering Him before answering His creatures? O young man, be sensible! You are in sheer illusion. You are a falsehood with no truth, an outward with no inward, and a show of publicity with no substance. Come to me since the acts of disobedience are still on your outward, before they reach your heart and you become persistent and then persistence develops into disbelief. Do something before it is too late. Use the little that you have to

get the great amount that you lack. Do something since the rope is still in your hand. The Prophet (SAWS) has said: “The repentant sinner is like one who has never committed any sin, even if he kept sinning seventy times a day.” If you listen to the Prophet (Allah’s prayer and peace be on him), act in accordance with his words, and behave well in his company by following his companions, he will introduce your heart to your Lord (mighty and glorified is He) and let you hear His words. When someone’s obedience to Allah and his servitude to Him their teachings, who grows up while complying with them, and who never exceeds their limits; he has succeeded indeed. I am afraid that your practice of Islam and your faith are mere façade. Perfect your practice of Islam and your faith. This way your fear, fasting, prayer, and night vigil will increase. The people of Allah went wandering, joined the wild animals, and competed with them for the herbs of the earth and the water of the springs, with the sun becoming their sunshade and the moon and the stars their lamp. Exert strenuous efforts in performing works of obedience and acts that draw you near before you arrive in His presence. Do not wrong yourselves by disobeying Him and being impudent to Him. O Allah, grant us success in obeying You, keep us away from the acts of disobeying You, and “give us good in this world and good in the hereafter and protect us from the torment of the Fire.”

By Allah, you are a liar under all circumstances. You do not know the way to the door of Allah (mighty and glorified is He). How can you point to it when you are blind? How can you guide others when you are blinded by your passion, natural inclination, and pursuit of your lower self, love for this world, superiority, and lustful desires? Woe to you! You love to stay in this world, therefore you will achieve nothing. When will you find the door of your Lord (mighty and glorified is He)? When will you put prayers before the business of your shop and your profits?

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Parents, Just Don't Understand

Habib and Saád Quadri

“Man, my parents are stubborn and old school – they don’t understand society.” Sound familiar? Yes, it is true that many of our parents are immigrants who, while growing up, did not face these temptations: clubs, TV, internet, dating, and so on. In many of their countries, these vices only exist discreetly. As for this society, these troubles might actually come to us rather than us having to seek them out. Parents are scared about what will happen to us and, as parents ourselves, we can attest to the fact that their fears come only from a deep love and concern. Sure, it may feel annoying to hear our parents’ complaints on what is haram or not, but remember, it is their duty to raise us correctly, and we become a test for them as well.

Know that your wealth and your children are a test. (8: 28)

Every kid at one time or another feels annoyed, angry and even impatient with their parents. But being angry gets us nowhere. Communication, on the other hand, can be the key. Why not try explaining to them what is going on? We know you must be thinking, “What do you want me to tell them? That I like girls or I was asked to go to a party? Are you crazy?” We know this may be asking too much, but at least let them know that you understand they are worried and know what they want is the best for you. Once we connect with our parents in this manner,

they will be more inclined to understand our reasons to want to do various things. The more we fall out our parents, argue with them, or try to hide things from them, the less they will trust us, which will lead them to be more reluctant to allow us the freedom to make choices.

For example, what is the one thing parents insist upon most when their kid goes out? Call! If we’re running late, all they want is a phone call. If we have arrived safely to our destination, they just want a simple phone call telling them so. When he was younger, Habeeb had the opportunity to travel to California and Arizona with an all-star traveling team for basketball. One of the conditions his parents made before they would approve the trip was that he would have to call in the morning and at night from his hotel room. This agreement helped relieve his parents’ concerns for his wellbeing and, at the same time, gave him the opportunity to play in the tournament and have a great time. Here we have a win-win situation.

Also, talking with our parents allows them to ask questions as well: “Who are the people you are hanging out with? What are their names? Who are their parents? Do they go to the masjid?” These questions may be annoying but are legitimate questions that parents have the right to ask. They need to know how and with whom we are spending the majority of our free time.

Remember,

“You will be (in the hereafter) with those whom you love.” (Hadith)

Allah says in the Qur’an:

Your Lord has decreed to you that you worship none other than Him, and that you show kindness to your parents. (17: 23)

The reason why this is important is that such an order is not restricted to only Surah al-Isra’, the seventeenth chapter of the Qur’an. If we look at Surah al-Baqarah, the second chapter of the Qur’an, alongside other chapters, Allah is constantly reminding the believers to worship Him and then to act with kindness towards their parents.

There is a concept in Islam known as tartib (order). Tartib exists in all acts of worship. For example, people are not permitted to perform a sajdah (prostration) prior to qiyam (standing) in prayer. Also, people are not supposed to wash their feet prior to their hands in wudu’ (ablution). In that regard, whenever Allah gives a command in the Qur’an, paying close attention to it is crucial for us. When Allah tells man to obey Him and then follows this with another command, directing us to show kindness to our parents, it shows that Allah requires our obedience and loyalty to be first and foremost towards Him and secondly towards our parents. This is the elevated status that Allah has given parents in Islam.

There is a story of a Sahabi who came to the Prophet and told him that he had performed the entire act of Hajj, the pilgrimage to Makkah that every believer is required to do once in a lifetime, with his mother on his back because she was too old and weak to walk. He then asked the Prophet if he had fulfilled the right of his mother. The Prophet responded by telling him he had not even compensated for one contraction that his mother suffered while giving birth to him.

We have commanded man to treat his parents kindly. His mother bore him with hardship and gave birth to him with hardship. (46: 15)

Subhanallah, imagine the Hajj 1400 years ago. There were no buses taking people back and forth from Makkah to Mina, then to Arafat and Muzdalifah, the various places that need to be visited when performing Hajj. Nor were there air-conditioned tents or masajid (mosques). The two hillocks of Safa and Marwa that Hajra ran up and down when searching for water to quench her thirst and enable her to feed her son, Isma’il, were not shaded from the sun as they are today. In those testing conditions, the Sahabi carried his mother through the entire Hajj. And, even after all of this, he still did not return the sacrifice she had made by giving birth to him and raising him.

We chose to include this story because, while parents can and will be difficult, we still must always remember the position Allah has given them in our lives. Sometimes asking them to understand us and for us to understand them will not be easy. If we can recall Allah’s command upon us we will realize our parents possess a key to Jannah (heaven) for us. After all,

“Paradise is under the feet of your mother.”

(Hadith)

So let us try to grow closer to them and be of greater service to them in order to attain Allah’s pleasure.

We should sympathize with our parents: they may not understand our struggle as second or third-generation Muslims in America or Britain, but also we do not understand their difficulties in raising children in a foreign land. Our parents are faced with the fear of losing their heritage and culture in this nation and the effects that will have on our din. What can we do to give our parents comfort regarding this matter? Remember that

“The pleasure of your father is the pleasure of your Lord, and the anger of your father is the anger of your Lord.” (Hadith)

We can simply talk to them. For example, when we were in elementary school, we used to tell our parents everything from what we did

during our free time to what our teachers said in class to what happened at lunch, what we had for homework, and so on until our parents wished we would stop talking. Then, all of a sudden, when we reach junior high or secondary school, our conversation went more like the following:

Parents: "How was your day?"

Us: "Good."

Parents: "How was school?"

Us: "Boring."

Parents: "What did you do today at school?"

Us: "Nothing."

Parents: "What would you like for dinner?"

Us: "Anything."

This sudden, drastic change from being extra-talkative to not saying anything beyond one or two words naturally raises the concern and curiosity of our parents. We may think, "What's the difference?" or "It's none of their business anyway." But we need to be realistic and recognize how suspicious this uncommunicative behavior may look to our parents, especially

since most of them did not come from a culture where young adults could go into their own room and close the door on the rest of the family. A person's culture and lineage is their identity, and when it does not conflict with Islam, it should be honored. Needless to say our Muslim identity is preferred over all others. As for our parents, they left their homes and countries in order to give us a better life. Out of a concern to hold on to the security they had back in their homelands, parents begin to enforce the rules and ways they had experienced and were taught. It's understandable: after all, as they have never experienced another kind of upbringing. Thus, we need to be understanding of them, and, inshaAllah, Allah will also make them understanding towards us.

For such people there is great reward. Such are the people from whom We shall accept the best of their deeds and overlook their wrongdoings.

(46: 16)

Obligation of Hajj

Abu Hurairah (RA) reported: The Messenger of Allah (SAWS) delivered a Khutbah and said, "O people! Hajj (pilgrimage to the House of Allah) has been made incumbent upon you, so perform Hajj." A man inquired: "O Messenger of Allah, is it prescribed every year?" He (SAWS) remained silent till the man repeated it thrice. Then he (SAWS) said, "Had I replied in the affirmative, it would have surely become obligatory, and you would not have been able to fulfill it." Afterwards he said, "Do not ask me so long as I do not impose anything upon you, because those who were before you were destroyed on account of their frequent questioning and their disagreement with their Prophets. So when I order you to do something, do it as far as you can; and when I forbid you from doing anything, eschew it." [Muslim].

Commentary: This Hadith brings out the following points:

1. Hajj is compulsory once in a lifetime for those who have the means for it.
2. Unnecessary questioning is disliked.
3. Those who believe in Allah and His Prophet (SAWS) are required to do what they are ordained and abstain from what they are forbidden.

Hundred Ways to Win Hearts

Dr. Muhammad bin ‘Abd al-Rahman al-‘Arifi

Anyone involved in a particular activity wishes to excel in order to achieve his objectives. The one who loves wealth specialises in accumulating it and further aspires to learn the tricks of his trade. Satellite television channels specialise in attracting viewers by airing a variety of shows using the latest technology. They also train their presenters in attracting viewers for current as well as forthcoming programs. The same can be said of newspapers, radio and television. The same applies to those who market various products, whether halaal or haraam. All these people endeavour to specialise in techniques that are needed in order for them to excel in their respective fields.

Winning hearts is also an art with its own ways and means.

Suppose you enter a gathering of forty men, and as you pass by each of them, shaking everyone’s hand, the first shakes your hand indifferently and says very coldly, “Welcome”; the second is busy speaking to the next person, and as you greet him by surprise, he responds to you very impersonally and without even looking at you, then continues with his conversation with the next person; the third person is speaking on the phone, so he simply stretches out his hand

without saying a word or showing any respect. However, when you get to the fourth person, he sees you and immediately stands up to greet you. When your eyes meet his, he smiles and demonstrates that he is glad to meet you. He shakes your hand warmly and welcomes you, even though you don’t know each other at all! You then greet the rest of the people and take a seat. Do you doubt that your heart will have the most respect for the fourth person? No doubt it will, even though you do not know his name, nor his status or profession. Despite that, he successfully captures your heart, not with wealth, status, or lineage, but merely by his interpersonal skills.

Hence, hearts are not won by force, wealth, beauty or status. They are won by much less of a sacrifice, yet few are able to win them.

I recall one of my students at university who had become physiologically ill due to severe depression. His father held a high position in the police force and had come to visit me at the university quite a few times, asking me for my help with his son. I would visit his house every now and then, which was a towering mansion. I would notice that his house would always be full of guests. I was amazed at how much this family was loved and respected.

Years went by and the man retired. I went to his house for a visit. I entered his mansion and went into the guest room to notice more than fifty chairs, but only one person watching television and a servant offering him coffee or tea. I sat with him for a while. When I left, I began to compare his situation while the man was working with now that he had retired. What was it about him that had attracted the people then? I realised that the man did not win people over by his manners, kindness and good treatment of others. Rather, he had only attracted them by means of his status, position and the fact that he was well-connected. When he lost his position, he also lost the love people had for him.

Therefore, learn a lesson from this man. Deal with the people so skilfully that they love you for who you are and what you say, and for your smile, gentleness and generosity. They will love the fact that you overlook their faults and stand by them at times of hardship. Do not allow their hearts to be attached merely to your status and your purse!

The one who provides his children and wife with wealth, food and drink only does not win their hearts by doing so, but only their stomachs! The one who showers his family with wealth while he mistreats them does not win their hearts; rather, he only wins their pockets.

For this reason, do not be surprised if you see a young man who faces a problem and therefore complains to his friend, teacher, or the Imam of a mosque, but not to his own father. This would be because the father has failed to win over his heart and break down barriers. On the other hand, it is the teacher or the friend, who has managed to win his heart.

Another important point: Have you ever noticed that when certain people visit a gathering packed with people and look left and right for somewhere to sit, there always seems to be no shortage of people calling them over to sit next to them. Why?

Or at a buffet, where everyone serves them-

selves food and then looks for somewhere to sit, have you noted that such people, as soon as they have filled their plates, are subject to large numbers of people calling them over in order to eat with them? Whereas, others may fill their plates and have nobody taking any interest whatsoever, so they have a very lonely meal?

Why are people so eager to sit with one type but not the other? Is it not the case that certain people have the ability to attract hearts wherever they may be, as if they are magnets? How extraordinary!

How did they manage to win over people? By using clever techniques to capture people's hearts.

Resolution...

Our ability to capture people's hearts and win their love brings us great happiness in life.



Cont'd from page 46
small and will be forgotten,
And he who lives for others, lives big, and dies
big and will be remembered

Our function in life is not merely to have and to hold, but to give and to serve, to get and not to forget. "The service we render to others is really the rent we pay for our room on this earth." (Dr Wilfred Grenfell) Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) said: "Allah is at the assistance of a person as long as that person is of help to another."

Remember the promise, people will enter Paradise; by the Mercy of Allah, through the generosity of their spirits and the soundness of their hearts. (Prophet Muhammad (SAWS))

O Allah! I seek refuge in Thee from anxiety, grief, incapacity, laziness, stinginess, cowardice; from the burden of debt and from the domination of people.

Islam and Justice

Khalid Baig

There is one word that captures the essence of all Islamic laws and all Islamic teachings; one word that describes the overriding value that permeates all Islamic values. Justice. The Qur'an says:

"We sent aforetime our messengers with clear Signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance, that men may stand forth in Justice." [57:25]

The sole purpose of sending the prophets was to establish Justice in the world and end injustice. Broadly speaking, doing justice means giving everyone his due. But this simple statement camouflages all the complexities of life in their myriad and ever-changing relations; all the temptations; all the apprehensions and concerns; all the conflicts and dilemmas. To guide the people, Allah sent down the prophets with clear signs, the Book, and the Balance. The Book contains the revelations that spell out what's fair and unfair or right and wrong. The Balance refers to our ability to measure and calculate so we can follow the path shown by the Book and explained by the Prophets.

Together these sources taught us what are the rights of Allah, of other people, and of our own persons on us and how to balance them. A

life lived in obedience to Allah, then, is a continuous balancing act, both individually and collectively.

Under normal circumstances many people can be just. But Islam commands its followers to be just even in the face of strong conflicting emotions. In dealing with other human beings, two major impediments to justice are love and hatred. See how the Qur'an teaches us to overcome the first impediment when we are dealing with our closest relatives or even ourselves.

"O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor: for Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest ye swerve, and if ye distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do." [4:135]

Here is the resolution from the Qur'an of the perennial conflict between self-interest and justice. Be just, even if it is against your narrowly defined self-interest or of those very close to you. Ignorant people think they are protecting their self-interest by being unjust to others. Their decision to be just or unjust may be based on a cold calculation of self-interest. But

real faith in Allah elevates one beyond that narrow-mindedness. These verses remind us that the real protector of interests of all people is also Allah and He will protect us when we follow His command to be just. The justice demanded by Islam permits no favoritism.

The other equally potent impediment is hatred. Here again Qur'an commands:

“O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for Allah, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to Piety: and fear Allah. For Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do.” [Al-Maidah 5:8]

In other words you cannot do injustice even when you are dealing with the enemy. The natural, uneducated, and uncivilized tendency is to treat the enemy as less than a human being; one who has no rights and deserves no justice or fairness. It was as true in the pre-Islamic tribal jahilya (based on ignorance) society as it is today. See how Islam directly curbs it. It is a command to the believers, with a reminder that Allah is watching you, that enmity of others cannot be used as an excuse for committing injustices against them.

Justice does require retribution and Islam does call for, “an eye for an eye.” But it does not mean an innocent eye for an innocent eye; it means the eye of the perpetrator for the eye of the victim. It is amazing how those who call the latter as barbaric, actually rally for the former when a real crisis develops.

Fourteen hundred years ago these commands created a society where rich and poor, friend and foe, Muslim and non-Muslim, the ruler and the ruled, were all treated equally and all of them could count on receiving justice. The qazis (judges) were independent and no one, including the khalifah was above the law. If a dispute arose between the Khalifah and an ordinary person, both had to appear in court and provide their evidence. Islamic history is full of

stories of this justice that filled the earth wherever Muslims ruled in their golden era.

Even during their period of decline, we find sporadic incidents that are just unparalleled. One example from recent history may suffice here. During the British Rule in India, once a dispute arose between Hindus and Muslims over a piece of land. Hindus claimed it belonged to a temple while Muslims claimed it to be mosque. Emotions were high on both sides and the possibility of a riot was real. The English judge could not find any means of ascertaining the truth. It was one group's words against the other's. Finally the Judge asked both groups if they could trust the testimony of any person. They could. It was a particular Muslim imam (religious leader) who was known for his piety. The person was requested to come to the court as a witness in a very charged atmosphere, with the entire community urging him to help them win the case through his testimony. His testimony was brief. “The Hindus are right,” he said. “The Muslim case is baseless.” He had not betrayed the community. He had once more affirmed its unflinching commitment to truth and justice above all else.

That is the justice the world needs today.

“Allah doth command you to render back your Trusts to those to whom they are due; and when ye judge between man and man, that ye judge with justice: verily how excellent is the teaching which He gives you! For Allah is He Who hears and sees all things.” [4:58]

“Envy is permitted only in two cases: A man whom Allah gives wealth, and he disposes of it rightfully, and a man to whom Allah gives knowledge which he applies and teaches it.”

[Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

Warm Whispers

Madiyah Rana

I am in love with Istighfaar.

Every time I hear this term, torrents of words instantly flow in my mind:

Forgiveness, Comfort, Opening, Hope, Broken, Needy, Du'aa, Abundance!

These words, then, help me to reflect deeply upon the beauty of istighfaar and on its constant companionship during the highs and lows of life. Thus, I want to share a few of those reflections with the hope that perhaps it may inspire and motivate us to increase in this beautiful act, an act so beloved and pleasing to Allah!

What is Istighfaar?

Before I delve into the gems, I want to begin by defining what Istighfaar is. What does it mean?

The word Istighfaar means 'seeking forgiveness' and is often coupled with the word 'Tawbah' (meaning 'repentance') in the Qur'an. Though both allude to the same concept, when you dig deeper, 'istighfaar' branches out to many other meanings and concepts, such as 'a cover or shield', or 'safety and protection.' So when one seeks forgiveness, he is, in essence, not only asking Allah for forgiveness but also for safety from the evil of what his own hands have earned and from the consequences of those actions. On the other hand, Tawbah is more general and relates to begging Allah for mercy in a fear of repetition

of the sin in the future. When these words are used together, they are emphasized individually, but when they are used alone, one word can imply the other.

This fact alone helps us to appreciate that istighfaar is not only about the tongue repeating words, but the heart being engaged and worried for what wronged its own soul.

Warm Whispers Of Istighfaar

So what gems does this act of turning back to Allah and keeping our tongues moist with the warm whispers of repentance teach us?

We are all broken: There are times in all our lives when we are betrayed, heartbroken or simply in a ball of mess due to our own sins and mistakes. Yet, in these moments, one of the best things we can do is to seek forgiveness. When we are broken or hurt by the Creation, we are instantly reminded of our weakness and our self-esteem drops. We feel weak and in need of help. The beauty of istighfaar, or turning back to Allah, is that we are constantly reminded that although we are frail and broken, whether through hardship or through sin, His Mercy is always there, awaiting us. It is there to strengthen us and to fill those empty cracks so that we regain our courage and strength. We are reminded of our lowly position and of how weak we really are.

When we utter the words, ‘O Allah, forgive me!’ it is a call to Allah to mend our broken hearts. Perhaps our affliction is a consequence of our own sins and wrongdoings, and the only way to mend our ways is by turning back to our Maker with the hope that He will wipe away our faults and protect us from its consequences. An example of this is the story of Adam and Hawwa (AS) – when they wronged themselves, they felt broken and ashamed, yet their words helped them regain strength, trust and faith in Allah. Adam’s call was:

“Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and have mercy upon us, we will surely be among the losers.” (7:23)

It is a means for an Opening: Have you ever found yourself lost in a situation where you can’t see anyway out? Or stuck on a problem you just can’t seem to solve? Or find an issue weighing heavily on your heart, blocking feelings of peace and contentment? Istighfaar is the means of finding a way out. It comforts the heart and brings peace of mind. When you sit on your prayer mat, silently asking for forgiveness, eyes clenched tight whilst tears stream down your face, you are asking Allah for His treasures – mercy, to cleanse your heart, mind and soul from the sins that pollute them, so that perhaps you may find solace amidst the storm and that due to your sincere and humble plea, He will pave for you an opening. This was also a habit of the great scholar Ibn Taymiyyah who narrates:

“Indeed whenever I waiver and become indecisive in my mind about an issue, or about something or a situation [which is problematic for me], then I ask forgiveness of Allah the Most High, a thousand times or more or less, until He opens my chest for me and solves the problem which I was confused about. Even if at that time I was in a market place, or in a masjid or in a mountain pass or a school, that does not prevent me from the remembrance [of Allah] and asking for forgiveness until I achieve my objective.”

[al-Uqood ad-Durriyyah min Manaaqib Shaykhil Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah, by ibn ‘Abdil-Haadee (d. 748), pg. 5]

He will Increase You: Istighfaar is a means of receiving the abundant gifts of Allah. You want to get married? Having difficulties conceiving? Going for a job interview? Make Istighfaar. Allah, if He wills, will enrich you out of His bounty and gift you in a way that you never imagined. The evidence for this is in the Qur’an itself where Allah tells Nuh (as) to increase in Istighfaar and that in doing so He would grant Him of His abundant bounty. Allah says:

“Ask forgiveness of your Lord. Indeed, He is ever a Perpetual Forgiver. He will send [rain from] the sky upon you in [continuing] showers. And give you increase in wealth and children and provide for you gardens and provide for you rivers.” [71:10-12]

Aversion from Calamities: Istighfaar is a means of gaining Allah’s protection, not only from the evil of our own deeds but also from unforeseen hardships and calamities. It was said by Muhammad ibn Ja’far that if a lightning bolt was to strike all the people, it would not strike the people who frequently ask Allah to forgive them, because of the Words of the Creator,

“... Allah would not punish them while you (O Prophet) are amongst them, nor would He punish them while they are asking Him for His Forgiveness.” [al-Anfaal: V.33]

These are just few of the gems from the vast ocean of Istighfaar. They have been highlighted specifically because I have personally witnessed these miraculous effects whenever I have made Istighfaar, especially in desperate situations. Many are those who think that Istighfaar is only for the sinners, only for those who have committed big mistakes; yet they fail to understand that seeking forgiveness is a teacher above and beyond that – it teaches us humility and hope, it teaches us weakness and strength and it grants us solace amidst the turbulent storms of life.

The Ultimate Goal

Mansoor Ahmad

We live in a unique era. Our lifestyle today is not what it was for people who lived a century ago. Now, our daily lives are filled with so many preoccupations that when we complete one task we immediately are thrown into another. We have so many commitments, appointments, responsibilities, priorities and tasks that our lives are revolving around the struggle to give each commitment, each responsibility, each priority its due. We struggle to find the balance in our lives because of our work, school, family, spouses, friends and our selves pulling at us from different directions. As if this wasn't enough, due to technology such as Facebook, Twitter, and email we are constantly fed an overflow of information, some of it important, but a lot of it useless.

In such a reality, it becomes very easy for us to get caught up in a rat race and forget the reality of who we are, why we are here and what we are meant to do in our relationship with Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala (exalted is He). We are

constantly moving from one stage in our life to another. We were once kids, carefree, and life was easy. We then moved on to school and eventually made it to and through college. We started our careers, we entered into marriage and eventually parenthood and so on. All of these are stages of our lives; some we might have experienced, some we might be experiencing, and some we might have yet to enter. Allah alludes to this constant movement from stage to stage in the Qur'an:

"[...] you will surely experience state after state," (84:19).

What are we doing if not experiencing one state and then another and another constantly? Our busy lives cause us to forget to take a step back and evaluate the

reality of our situation and where we stand in our relationship with Allah. It is very important that in the midst of everything, we engage in self-reflection so as to evaluate ourselves and our standing with Allah through the lens of the Qur'an. This will help us to see our lives according to the Qur'anic reality and we will be able to prioritize our days by seeing through the Divine perspective given to us in the Qur'an. It is very easy for us, as flawed and imperfect human beings, to overlook the reality of our lives and incorrectly assess our situations thus leading us to give importance to secondary matters while neglecting more important ones such as our relationship with Allah, our families, our parents and our children.

In another place in the Qur'an, Allah gives a description of the life of this world:

"Know that the life of this world is but amusement and diversion and adornment and boasting to one another and competition in increase

of wealth and children – like the example of a rain whose [resulting] plant growth pleases the tillers; then it dries and you see it turned yellow; then it becomes [scattered] debris. And in the Hereafter is severe punishment and forgiveness from Allah and approval. And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion?”
(57:20)

This is one of the most amazing verses of the Qur’an. In it, Allah defines the human experience—from Adam (AS) to us. If we were to examine the different descriptions given to the ‘life of this world’ in the verse, we can see that each very clearly defines certain periods in our lives. We are always in one of these states no matter how old we are or how young. There was a time when we were children that our main concern was amusement—we wanted to have fun and we sought to spend our days playing with toys, games and cartoons. Eventually we grew out of that and moved into our high school and college years where we started noticing the opposite gender and were distracted by our studies. After this, we began to think about our careers and marriage and we focused completely on seeking them. We then proceeded to buy a house, move into a new place, begin our new lives and seek to build a family. We moved ahead to building our family and speaking to each other about how we secured a promotion, or bought a new car, or how our son or daughter spoke their first words. Finally we reach our final state that stays with us to the end where we begin to compete with our peers in our wealth and kids; the time when we tell our kids, “His daughter got into Harvard, you need to get into Harvard as well!” or “He just got a raise to six figures, I have to get that too!”

Allah draws a profound parallel between these states of our lives and the yearly cycle a farmer experiences. A farmer plants the seed, waits for the rain or waters it constantly, cares for it as it grows and blossoms into a plant, reaps the benefit from it and eventually the plant

grows old, turns yellow, dies and turns to dust. Is it not the case that we do this in our life? Don’t we plant the seed for something we desire so it becomes a reality? And then we tend to it and preoccupy ourselves with it so as to enjoy the blessings it offers until eventually it grows old and turns yellow and is no longer valuable—and we look forward to the next big thing. Isn’t this exactly how our lives are passing us by? We buy the latest model car or mobile and we love it until next year when the new model comes, and this model that was so new and amazing just yesterday ‘turns yellow’ and loses value.

Immediately after micro-assessing our life and eloquently summing it up for us, Allah forces us to see it in the perspective of the Hereafter, the way He sees it, and the way the Qur’an wants us to understand it. In the same verse, He says,

“And in the Hereafter is severe punishment and forgiveness from Allah and approval. And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion?” (57:20).

There are many subtle things happening here that we can easily overlook at first glance. The first is that Allah mentions punishment first, and second His forgiveness and approval. It’s as if to say that if we were to allow ourselves to forget about the Hereafter and our relationship with Allah, then we are liable for the punishment in the Hereafter because we have strayed from the purpose of our creation. The second very profound thing is that out of His Mercy, Allah does not couple punishment with Himself but instead couples Himself with His Mercy and His Pleasure. It is as though He is telling us, that He does not desire to punish us so He does not even mention Himself with punishment in His Speech. By distancing Himself from punishment, He is asking us to do the same by taking heed of His warnings. Allah says in another place in the Qur’an,

“Allah wants to accept your repentance [...]”
(4:27).

Finally, the question comes in a rhetorical fashion, concluding for us the reality of this life as a deluded sense of enjoyment when compared to the Hereafter. This reminds us that the Hereafter is very close to us and that we only need to view our lives through the perspective of its relation to the Hereafter so as to understand its reality. It is narrated by Abdullah (RA) that the Messenger (SAWS) said, “Paradise is nearer to any of you than the strap on his shoe, and so is the (Hell) Fire.” (Bukhari)

Allah then changes the conversation slightly, saying:

“Race toward forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden whose width is like the width of the heavens and earth, prepared for those who believed in Allah and His Messengers. That is the bounty of Allah which He gives to whom He wills, and Allah is the possessor of great bounty.” (57:21)

We are told to race towards Allah’s forgiveness and Paradise as opposed to running towards this life. As humans we always need something to look forward to, a goal—it gives us hope and allows us to see past difficulties and tough times. Allah knows this about us and because of this, He gives us His forgiveness and Paradise as the ultimate goal worth seeking, thereby allowing us to see our temporal problems and difficulties as just that: temporary. It does not mean that we let go of our numerous responsibilities and commitments and isolate ourselves, but it means that we see them as a means towards something greater and that we work towards Allah with moderation and establish a balance between what our lives demand from us and what Allah requires from us. We do not make this life the goal, but rather the means towards the higher objective—the forgiveness of Allah and Paradise.

Abu Hurayra (RA) narrated that the Messenger (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said, “Do good deeds properly, sincerely and moder-

ately, and worship Allah in the forenoon and in the afternoon and during a part of the night, and always adopt a middle, moderate, regular course whereby you will reach your target (Paradise).” (Bukhari)

We seek Paradise by utilizing our busy lives and doing good deeds sincerely and moderately as a means towards the Mercy of Allah and His pleasure. Allah asks us to see past the temporal nature of this life and see it for what it is and what it was always meant to be—a means towards Him and Paradise.

The verse goes on to give us a description of Paradise, not what is within it as in other places in the Qur’an, but rather of its size and vastness. This is interesting because firstly we cannot quantify in our minds the width that is being spoken of; and secondly, if we take a look at the previous verse—keeping in mind our context—we see a subtle comparison between the constricted nature of this life and this world to the vast expanse and pleasure of the Hereafter. Allah wants us to know that Paradise is huge, much greater and much longer lasting than anything we think is great in this life. He wants us to keep that in mind so that we don’t get disillusioned and so entrenched in our daily lives that we forget of the Home that is waiting for those who believe in Allah and His Messengers (AS). This allows us to view our daily problems, challenges and responsibilities as the path towards Him and the everlasting Home.

“[...] the Hereafter is better and more enduring,” (87:17).

The verse concludes with a reminder that, in the end, the blessing of Paradise belongs in its entirety to Allah. He is the Owner of everything and the blessings we get are from Him. He has invited us to Paradise, so the question we need to ask ourselves is: Do we accept the invitation and work to enter the Home of Peace?

Heavenly Breeze

This a lesson for all of us to keep the hope in Allah (swt) when we suffer in relationships and in moments of separation that Allah will find an exit for us with His mercy.

Uthman Muhammad

It is a hallmark of depressed people that they give up on hope. Life for these people can seem void of color, so mundane that it is not worth living any more. Any energy spent on the face of earth seems such a waste for them. Hence, depressed people seem to care less about putting an effort to change, or to make meaning of their existence. Many of them lose track of the whole purpose of life and extinguish into demise or willfully end their lives. It is my belief that the same cascade of misery that applies to an individual also applies to a community or even a nation at large. Think about that as you read this paragraph again and think about the blessing of having hope.

We often refer to Islam as a life style (as opposed to just-a-religion). I would like to add another alteration for the way we understand Islam and say, that Islam is also an art of living. I say that, because of the ornamentation Islam allows us to solicit to give meaning to life, while at the same time remaining within the scope of worship and religious rituals. One of the hallmarks of this deen (religion) that Allah asked us to practice, and has become to many of us a forgotten ibada (worship), is the ibada of hope. Yes, hope can be an ibada, and arguably, one of

the noblest and most honored in the eyes of Allah. It is also no surprise that the holy Qur'an and the seerah (life) of the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) have an abundance of parables and stories that are hope-enriching, I shall mention a few:

The story of Yusuf (AS) is a remarkable ode to hope that the Qur'an beautifully captures. One great verse in this chapter talks about the prophet Yaqub (AS), Yusuf's (AS) father, sending his sons back to Egypt to get back their little brother Benjamin who was captured by the Aziz whom they will get to know as none other than Yusuf (AS). Yaqub (AS) had lost Yusuf before Benjamin some 25 years earlier and when he sends his other children to look for Benjamin, this is what he says:

"O my sons, go and find out about Yusuf (AS) and his brother and despair not of relief from Allah. Indeed, no one despairs of relief from Allah except the disbelieving people." (12:87)

He kept hope in finding his son Yusuf (AS) for a quarter of a century until Allah brought them back together. This a lesson for all of us to keep the hope in Allah when we suffer in relationships and in moments of separation

that Allah will find an exit for us with His mercy: "... despair not of the mercy of Allah ..."

During the battle of Al-Ahzab (also known as the battle of the trench) the tribe of Quraish had not yet embraced Islam and had formed a coalition against the Muslims in Al-Madina. The coalition included Quraish themselves, Jewish tribes near al-Madinah, and other strong Arab tribes such as the tribe of Ghatafan. The Muslims felt at loss until they decided to adopt a military strategy borrowed from Persia. They decided to dig a trench around al-Madinah so that their enemies might not get to them. It was not an easy chore, and the Muslims worked on the trench through the cold nights of the desert and through the burning hot days. The Qur'an describes those times as times of great fear and despair. They were seeing the armies gather around Al-Madinah in camps from a distance with horses, weapons, swords and spears. These were times of great tribulation where some Muslims started questioning their own faith. One very cold night as the Muslims were digging the trench, they faced a huge white rock that they were unable to break. They turned towards the Prophet asking him for advice. He then took it upon himself to break this stone with his own blessed hands. He grabbed the sledgehammer of Salman Al Farsi and hit the rock thrice, shattering it into pieces. With each strike, there was a spark and with each spark, the Prophet said Allahu Akbar and gave the Muslims glad tidings. "Bismillah." One third of the rock was broken. He said, "Allahu Akbar! I was given the keys of Damascus. I swear by Allah that I see the red manors of Damascus now!" Then, he said, "Bismillah!" again and hit the rock with the sledgehammer again. One third of the rock was broken. The Prophet said, "Allahu Akbar! I was given the keys of Persia. I swear by Allah that I see the city of Madayin of the Chosroes and his white manors!" Then, he said "Bismillah!" again and hit the rock with the sledgehammer; the remaining part of the

rock was broken into pieces. The Prophet said, "Allahu Akbar! I was given the keys of Yemen. I swear by Allah that I see the gates of Sana now!" (Narrated by Imam Ahmad in his Musnad). All of these cities were given to the Muslims in conquest during the times of Omar and Othman. This is a great lesson from our Holy Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) that even during the times of difficulty where there might not seem to be any string of hope, we should not give up on the promise of Allah.

After the battle of Uhud, the Muslim were exhausted and defeated as they retreated to the mountains. They had lost some of their greatest men in this battle, including the uncle of our Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), the brave and noble man, Hamzah. He was savagely killed and mutilated, causing the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) himself to cry for him on that day. Their wounds were still open and their souls were shaken and defeated. They feared that this would be the end of their nation and that the Quraish would have the upper hand afterwards. They felt ashamed that they had made the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) go out for war when he felt that it was not wise to do so. The Prophet's (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) life itself was endangered and he was beaten so savagely that the metallic sheaths of his helmet penetrated into his holy face. In the midst of all this turmoil, Allah revealed these blessed verses from Surat Aal-'Imran: "So do not weaken and do not grieve, and you will be superior if you are [true] believers."

If a wound should touch you - there has already touched the [opposing] people a wound similar to it. And these days [of varying conditions] We alternate among the people so that Allah may make evident those who believe and [may] take to Himself from among you martyrs - and Allah does not like the wrongdoers," (3:139-140).

The only analogy I can think of as I read the context of these touching verses is that of a

mother who meets her child who has been beaten and humiliated in school. She dusts the dirt of his clothes, gives him a hug, and tells him that she loves him, and that he will always be great in her eyes. A great lesson, that despite the defeat of our ummah, if we are true believers, we should not feel demoralized and we are to hold onto the rope of hope in Allah .

In the Musnad of Imam Ahmad, there is a story that people came complaining to the Prophet (SAWS) that a youth was a hypocrite because he prays all night (or prays qiyam at night), and when he wakes up in the morning, steals from people. It seems that the sahaba felt uncomfortable that someone with such a great honorable deed such as qiyam, would still live a double life and would commit a kabirah (a major sin). The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) planted the seeds of hope for people like this young man when he said: "His prayer will eventually forbid him from committing this sin." In this story, there is a great lesson that we are all human and that we have our shortcomings. We sin in the day and during the night, in private and in public, so much so that some of us have lost hope in ourselves that we will ever repent to Allah . Just like this young man, we all have hope that one day we will be granted the precious gift of repentance and steadfastness. This is a great lesson that we should never lose

hope, that Allah will accept us, that His mercy is greater than our sins.

We need hope to live our spiritual life and to make sense of the challenges that face us on the road to Allah . We need hope as an Ummah when we witness what is happening in Syria and the rest of the Muslim world, we need hope as a community when we feel estranged and alienated on the road of improving or surroundings and making da'wah, we need hope as individuals to keep the energy for reformation alive, we need to learn how to instill hope in our children and in people around us, and we need hope when treating our own selves. We should never lose hope on our Ummah, never lose hope on the validity and uniqueness of our Islam or our Muslim identity. If we lose hope, we will get depressed as individuals and as a nation, and we will not be able to achieve the role that Allah has allocated to us in the Holy Qur'an, a mercy to mankind, like our Prophet was:

"And thus we have made you a just community that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you."
(2:143)

"You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah..." (3:110)

Hudhaifah (RA) reported: Whenever the Prophet (SAWS) lay down for sleep at night, he would place his (right) hand under his (right) cheek and supplicate: "Bismika Allahumma amutu wa ahya [O Allah, with Your Name will I die and live (wake up)]." And when he woke up, he would supplicate: "Al-hamdu lillahil-ladhi ahyana ba'da ma amatana, wa ilaihin-nushur (All praise is due to Allah, Who has brought us back to life after He has caused us to die, and to Him is the return)."

Blaming God

Dr. Muzammil H. Siddiqi

Natural disasters are perhaps the most frightening phenomenon for human beings, because humans have no power to prevent them. Every time this happen, many people rise question: "Is this a punishment from God?"

In this regard, Dr. Muzammil H. Siddiqi, Director of the Islamic Society of Orange County and former President of the Islamic Society of North America, states:

"Indeed Allah is All-Powerful (Al-'Aziz) and He is able to do all things ('ala kull sha'in qadir). The Qur'an has mentioned this hundreds of times. It is also mentioned in the Qur'an that Allah is the Creator and He is the Best Creator.

"...Glory be to Allah, the best Creator." (Al-Mu'minun: 14)

But then the question comes why do pain and sufferings exist in the world. We find sickness, old age and death. We see things that are ugly, people who are insane and foolish. There are storms, earthquakes, floods, draught and famine. We also see people commit sins, show disloyalty, unfaithfulness, greed and insincerity. We see people commit rapes, murders; they fight and make wars. We know all these and many more problems. There are evils caused by human beings and there are natural disasters. There are suffering for individuals and there are those that involve a large number of people.

But we also know that this is not the whole story. Besides all these negative things,

we also see beauty, health, prosperity, life, birth, wisdom, intelligence, growth and progress. We also see goodness among people, faith, sincerity, charity, love and the spirit of sacrifice. We also see a lot of virtue and piety. It is wrong to see one side of the coin and not to see the other side. Any philosophy that concentrates on one aspect of the creation and denies or ignores the other side is partially true and partial truths are no truth at all.

It is also the fact that the element of good is more in the creation than the element of evil. We all see that there are more people who are healthy than those who are sick. There are more that eat well than those who starve.

There are more that lead decent life than those who commit crimes. Goodness is the rule and evil is the exception. Virtue is the norm and sin is the aberration. Generally trees bear fruits, the flowers bloom, the winds move smoothly.

But then the question is why does Allah allow these exceptions to the rules?

Let us ask this question to understand Allah's ways in His creation. The Qur'an tells us that good, evil and whatever happens in this world happens by Allah's Will (mashi'at Allah). Only Allah knows fully His Will. We finite beings cannot grasp fully His infinite Will and Wisdom. He runs His universe the way He deems fit. The Qur'an tells us that Allah is Wise and everything that Allah does is right, just,

good and fair. We must submit and surrender to His Will. The Qur'an has not given us all the details about Allah's Will, but it has enlightened us with the guidance that is useful and sufficient for us. There are several points that we should keep in our mind to understand this issue:

1. First of all, Allah did not make this world a permanent world. This is a temporary world and everything here has a time limit. When its times comes it will die, come to an end and finish. Neither the good things of this world are forever, nor the bad things eternal. We are here for a short time and we are being tested. Those who will pass this test will find an eternal world that is perfect and permanent. Those who will fail this test shall see the evil consequences of their sins and corruption.

2. Allah has placed a physical law and a moral law in this universe. Allah allows suffering to occur when one or more of these laws are broken. The physical law is based on cause and effect. Sickness comes if one does not take care of one's health or is exposed to infections. A car accident occurs when one is not alert, or drives in a careless manner, or if the cars are not checked, roads and freeways are not made and kept in right shape, or the traffic laws are not right or not properly enforced. Study of causes and effects is very important to facilitate safeguards. Even here we should keep in mind that Allah often saves us and He does not let us suffer from every negligence. How many times it happens that we are not careful and still we reach safely to our destinations. The way people drive in some cities, it is a miracle that more accidents do not happen and more people do not suffer. Allah says:

"(Allah) Most Gracious! It is He Who has taught the Qur'an. He has created man: He has taught him speech (and Intelligence). The sun and the moon follow courses (exactly) computed; and the herbs and the trees both (alike) bow in adoration. And the Firmament has He raised high, and He has set up the Balance (of

Justice), in order that you may not transgress (due) balance. So establish weight with justice and fall not short in the balance. It is He Who has spread out the earth for (His) creatures."

(Ar-Rahman:1-10)

The way we exceed the measures set by Allah and violate His laws of cause and effect is incredible. It is really the mercy of Allah that we are saved. Strictly speaking, the question should not be why does Allah allow suffering, but how much Allah protects us and saves us all the time in spite of our violations and negligence. The Qur'an says:

"If Allah were to punish people according to what they deserve, He would not leave on the back of the (earth) a single living creature: but He gives them respite for a stated Term: when their Term expires, verily Allah has in His sight all His servants." (Fatir:45)

But sometimes Allah does punish people because of their violations of His laws whether they are physical or moral. The Qur'an tells us that many nations and communities were destroyed because of their sinful lifestyles:

"If they treat thy (mission) as false, so did the Peoples before them (with their Prophets), the People of Noah, and Ad and Thamud. Those of Abraham and Lut; and the Companions of the Madyan people; and Moses was rejected (in the same way). But I granted respite to the Unbelievers, and (only) after that did I punish them: but how (terrible) was My rejection (of them)! How many populations have We destroyed, which were given to wrong-doing! They tumbled down on their roofs. And how many wells are lying idle and neglected, and castles lofty and well-built?" (Al-Hajj: 42-45)

3. Suffering can also be a test and trial for some people. Allah allows some people to suffer in order to test their patience and steadfastness. Even Allah's Prophets and Messengers were made to suffer. Prophet Ayyub (Job) is mentioned in the Qur'an as a Prophet who was

very patient. Good people sometimes suffer but their sufferings heal others and bring goodness to their communities. People learn lessons from their good examples. Martyrs die for their faith, soldiers give their lives for their nations and this brings liberation and freedom for their people.

4. Allah sometimes allows some people to suffer to test others, how they react to them. When you see a person who is sick, poor and needy, then you are tested by Allah. Allah is there with that suffering person to test your charity and your faith. In a very moving Hadith Qudsi (Divine Hadith) the Prophet (SAWS) said:

“Allah will say on the Day of Judgment, ‘O son of Adam, I was sick and you did not visit Me.’ He will say, ‘O my Lord, how could I visit You, when you are the Lord of the Worlds.’ Allah will say, ‘Did you not know that My servant so-and-so was sick and you did not visit him? Did you not know that if you had visited him, you would have found Me there?’ Allah will say, ‘O son of Adam, I asked you for food and you fed Me not.’ He shall say, ‘O my Lord, how could I feed you and you are the Lord of the Worlds?’ And Allah will say, ‘Did you not know that My servant so-and-so was in need of food and you did not feed him? Did you not know that if you had fed him, you would have found that to have been for Me?’ ‘O son of Adam, I asked you for water and you did not give Me to drink.’ The man shall say, ‘O my Lord, how could I give You water, when You are the Lord of the Worlds?’ Allah will say, ‘My servant so-and-so asked you for water and you did not give him to drink water. Did you not know that if you had given him to drink, you would have found that to have been for Me.’

(Muslim, Hadith no. 4661)

Prophet ‘Isa (Jesus) (SAWS) is also reported to have said something similar. (See Matthew 25: 35-45)

So to summarize, we can say that sufferings occur to teach us that we must adhere to Allah’s natural and moral laws. It is sometimes to punish those who violate Allah’s natural or moral laws. It is to test our faith in Allah and to test our commitment to human values and charity. Whenever we encounter suffering we should ask ourselves, “Have we broken any law of Allah?” Let us study the cause of the problem and use the corrective methods. “Could it be a punishment?” Let us repent and ask forgiveness and reform our ways. “Could it be a test and trial for us?” Let us work hard to pass this test.

Believers face the sufferings with prayers, repentance and good deeds.

May Allah keep us on the right path, Amen! Allah Almighty knows best.

Excerpted from “Blaming God” by Abo Muhammed Samir Faid, he is a muslim expert volunteer on allexperts.com.

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cope under such circumstances, the next best thing for them to do is keep their distance and protect themselves. This does not mean that they cut themselves off from society completely. They are not supposed to leave off congregational prayer in the mosque, or places of learning, or family gatherings that they must attend to maintain proper ties of kinship, or live without friends. What it means is that they stay away from superfluous activities which will expose them unnecessarily to sin and distress.

In this context, the Prophet (SAWS) said: “Soon there will come a time when people’s state will become confused and entangled, and the worst of them will endure, their affairs and trusts will be indistinguishable, like this.” and he interlaced the his fingers of his two hands.

The People asked him: “What should we do when that happens?”

He answered: “Hold firmly to what you know, eschew what is condemnable, stick closely with one another (on the truth), and avoid the general masses.” [Musnad Ahmad]

The Man We Love and Follow

A. Mohiuddin

The more one reflects on Muhammad (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam), the more one is bound to marvel at this noble Messenger of Allah and to grasp the truth of these words in the Qur'an: "Surely you have been created in an exalted stature." (Al-qalam, 68:4) Let us consider just five aspects of our beloved Prophet's character.

First, we see in Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) a perfect integration of words and deeds, of all aspects of his inner and outer life. He practiced what he preached. There was no discord in his character. His speech and actions perfectly reflected his true nature. This is why his keenly observant and sensitive wife Ayesha (RA), when asked years later what he had been like, could say without a moment's hesitation that the character of Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) was the Qur'an itself.

Muhammad's (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) life was a seamless and rounded whole. His entire life was one of worship. Yet this life of intense worship never stood in the way of his everyday life. He had a unique capacity to transform the minutest mundane activity into an act of worship. He saw every activity of life in its proper perspective, as part of a divinely

ordained scheme. With perfect ease and grace he fulfilled all his roles as a man as well as those of his divine destiny. Thus his life was one of unimaginable beauty and harmony.

In real life we see people who are painfully fragmented and full of irreconcilable contradictions. Our beliefs clash with our actions. Our emotions and desires are in conflict with each other and repeatedly overthrow our best instincts. We make solemn pledges to ourselves only to break them. We are a hodgepodge of ideas, impulses and actions that make very little or no sense. We hardly know what we want and where we are heading. Nothing in us is in its place. Inside us is a huge boiling cauldron endlessly cooking strange broths.

A second feature of the character of Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) is the combination of tenderness and firmness. Many direct and personal accounts testify that he was a very gentle and shy person. At the same time he was a man of resolve, never lacking in courage and will. Time after time he demonstrated this; take Hudaibiyah, for example. What is hard to fathom is how his tender heartedness could never shake that resolve or weaken the call of duty. While making hard decisions and taking firm action he was never harsh or vin-

dictive. He felt no joy in the pain and suffering of even his fiercest opponent. His tenderness always tempered and mitigated the hardness the situation imposed on him. The rareness of such a blend of softness and firmness can be gauged if we look around us. On the one hand we find people who are gentle and kind but who lack strength of will, and on the other, people who are resolute but show no tenderness or sympathy.

Thirdly, Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) presents the unique sight of a man of both contemplation and action. The tumult and bustle of action could not prevent him from reflection. His contemplative nature was never put on hold. In our world this is hardly ever the case. While men of contemplation are found deficient in action, the men of action are seldom given to much reflection. Even if we can recall a few rare cases in history of men with both qualities, exercising those qualities simultaneously in any given moment, as Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) did, is unheard of.

A fourth quality worth noticing is how unobtrusively and gracefully Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) wielded his authority. He had unparalleled power and influence over his followers; they would have given their leader anything to earn his satisfaction. Yet he was never aloof, overbearing or impatient with his followers, and never imposed himself or encroached on their rights. Without any of the well known trimmings of power he led men and women in every kind of situation. To the end he remained one of them, absolutely humble, approachable and affectionate. His care and concern for their welfare, his love and sympathy for them never diminished. He was ever ready to serve them and attend to their multifarious needs and demands. At times he was even indistinguishable in the company of his followers. Any child could take him by the hand in the streets of Madinah. Great leader though he was, he treaded Allah's earth softly and humbly, ever

as His most obedient servant.

Finally, let us consider Muhammad's (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) use of language. He was always brief, clear and to the point; anyone could understand him. He expressed the weightiest of matters in the simplest of words. Yet nothing of substance was ever lost. His words were the most appropriate and appeared in their most fitting order. Not a single word could be replaced or rearranged. On his tongue words followed smoothly in natural succession. He never tried to be witty or attempted to impress. Yet he was marvelously eloquent, expressive and deeply moving. One needs just to take a look at some of his du'a to see how high language can soar and what feelings it can arouse. The most consummate of writers have not yet been able to attain what this 'unlettered' man of seventh century Arabia did with language.

These five qualities are by no means the only features of Muhammad's (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) character. But they unmistakably show how unparalleled he was as a human being, how he climbed the summit of human perfection. Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) was guided and shaped by Allah in such a way that he could function as the best model for human beings. Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) was like perfect yielding clay that Allah moulded and shaped to fulfill His design for mankind.

Allah has given mankind three signs through which we can recognize His power and glory and accept Him as the only one worthy of worship. The physical world of nature around us, with its beauty and harmony, is the earliest sign. The two other signs came together: the Qur'an, His glorious Book, and the Messenger who received, followed and taught it, Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam). Like the other two signs, nature and the Qur'an, Muhammad's character is also a wonder and a sign. Thus as Muslims we admire, love and follow him.

Less than Ideal Conditions

Sheikh Salman al-Oadah

Anyone who studies the present day in careful detail and considers it in conjunction with the many Prophetic reports that talk about future times will notice many things about the state of the world around them that escape other people's attention. The Prophet (SAWS) only spoke about the future so that later generations would be forewarned and avoid the pitfalls that awaited them. Also, by being forewarned that circumstance will be less than ideal, people will be more mentally prepared to cope with those circumstances when they happen, and less likely to succumb to frustration and despair.

For instance, Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) said: "You will follow in the ways of those who came before you, inch by inch, yard by yard, so that even if they were to go into a lizard's burrow, you would follow them into it."

His Companions asked him: "You mean the Jews and Christians?"

He replied: "Who else?" [Bukhārī, Muslim]

Here Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) is foretelling how Muslims will gradually start acting contrary to Islamic teachings more and more as time goes on. By doing so, he makes that eventuality less difficult for the people who live to witness it, and easier to cope with. They

will understand what is going on, and therefore suffer less from stress and anxiety. They will, as a result, act sensibly, appreciating that they do not live in the Prophet's time and properly gauge how much they can expect from the people. This does not mean that they will accept the falsehood going on around them, but rather that they will be gentle and patient in the way they work to correct things, and not insist upon an idealistic vision that is out of touch with reality.

Moreover, they will appreciate that what they are witnessing, since it was accurately foretold by the Prophet (SAWS), is actually a sign of his prophethood. Allah says:

"When the believers saw the confederate forces (assembled against them), they said: 'This is that which Allah and His Messenger promised us. What Allah and His messenger told us is true.' It only confirmed them in their faith and submission." [Sūrah al-Ahzāb: 22]

Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) used to inform his secretary, Hudhayfah b. al-Yamān (RA), of the tribulations that were to come. Hudhayfah (RA) later recalled: "When one of those things happened, I would recognize it after having forgotten all about it, just like when you see the face of someone you have forgotten about, you immediately know who that person

is.”

Hudhayfah (RA) would say on those occasions: “My dear friend had spoken truly.” Other Companions had similar experiences.

We need to understand the difference between what Allah’s decrees will take place in the word and what Allah has prescribes for us to do when it happens. They are two different things. This is why a believer never uses Allah’s decree as an excuse to avoid responsibility or to be heedless of the wrongdoing that goes on in the world. A believer knows that the Prophet (SAWS) meant to warn us against that wrongdoing, and this will make the believer all the more steadfast.

Therefore, the Prophet’s foretelling of these events has a two-fold benefit. On the one hand, it gives us fortitude in the face of adversity. We do not grow despondent or feel the need to retreat from the world and its people in order to avoid their ills. We will, instead, see the best in the people around us, recognise the situation for what it is, and work to make things better. On the other hand, we will be able to avoid the pitfalls that the people have stumbled into, because we have been forewarned. This is why the Prophet (SAWS) promised such a great reward for those who are able to hold fast to the true path at the time when the community becomes corrupted.

This provides a further, crucial lesson for those who wish to engage in reform and the betterment of society. That is the importance of understanding the world around us, its political, economic, and social realities, on the local, regional, and global levels. If we attempt to institute hasty reforms without properly considering the people’s culture, level of understanding, and tolerance for change, we are going to make a mess of things. Furthermore, we will make an unfair assessment of the people, assuming that they are simply hostile and governed by base self-interest, and fail to see the considerable goodness that they have within them. In turn,

we will become unjust in the way we treat them. This is why sensitivity to the circumstances and culture of the people is inseparable from the task of calling them to what is right.

Speaking to his Companions about the difficult days that future generations will face, Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) said: “Those who work for good in those times will have the reward of fifty people doing the same work.”

They said: “Do you mean they will get the blessings of fifty people from their time, or the blessings of fifty of us?”

He answered: “I mean they will get the blessings of fifty of you.” [Sunan al-Tirmidhī (3058), Sunan Abī Dāwūd, and Sunan Ibn Mājah]

Likewise, he said: “There will come a time when being steadfast in faith will be as difficult as holding a burning coal in your hand.” [Sunan al-Tirmidhī]

Here the Prophet (SAWS) is encouraging patience and fortitude for those who live in a time when most people will be acting contrary to what is right. This is the most that can be hoped from a believer. Personalities differ, and many people find it very difficult to remain aloof to what is going on around them while remaining actively engaged in society.

This is why, when the Prophet (SAWS) was asked what kind of people are better, he replied: “The believers who strive with their persons and wealth for the sake of Allah.” Then, when they asked him who was next in rank, he answered: “Those who withdraw from society to worship their Lord, and eschew their people’s wicked ways.” [Bukhārī and Muslim]

Here, the Prophet (SAWS) gives preference to those who strive with their persons and their wealth for Allah’s sake while actively engaging in society: calling people to the truth, imparting knowledge, helping the poor and indigent, and redressing injustice.

Then, for those whose hearts cannot

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A Celebration of Peace

Aisha Stacey

Where am I?

More than 2 million people surround me. We all have one common goal, one purpose for being here together. I do not stand out from anyone else. There are no signs of wealth or greatness upon me. No Rolex watch or Nike shoes to mark me as a rich person. I am one person alone, in a sea of humanity. I am black or white, yellow or brown, the colour of my skin is not important. I am from Europe or Asia or South America, my homeland is any corner of this wide earth. The people around me are young and old, male and female, rich and poor. We represent humankind in our diversity, yet we are united. We are unity in diversity.

I am at Hajj

Hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam. Muslims declare that there is no god worthy of worship but Allah and that Muhammad is His messenger; they pray, they fast, they pay obligatory charity, and they go to Hajj. Hajj is a pilgrimage to the city of Makah in Saudi Arabia. At the mosque and in the surrounding area, Muslims perform prayers and rituals. Hajj is an obligatory act performed once in a lifetime by all mentally, physically, and financially able Muslims.

“And Hajj (pilgrimage to Makah) to the House (Kaba) is a duty that mankind owes to God,

those who can afford the expenses (for one’s conveyance, provision and residence) ; and whoever disbelieves then God stands not in need of any of mankind, jinn and all that exists” (3:97)

Muslims from all over the world will gather to worship God. They arrive in Saudi Arabia, by plane, bus, car, etc. Some endure great hardship, others merely buy a first class ticket, but they come as equals. People make this journey prepared to stand at the House of God (or Kaba) and affirm their love for God and His religion of Islam.

“And proclaim to humankind the Hajj (pilgrimage). They will come to you on foot and on every lean camel, they will come from every deep and distant (wide) mountain highway (to perform Hajj)” (22:27)

The Hajj is several days of total devotion to the One God. Muslims come together to celebrate His praises, ask for His forgiveness and demonstrate unity for His sake alone.

Throughout the Muslim world, Hajj has come to symbolise unity. Although Muslims may be disunited due to many outside influences, such as money, politics, border disputes or other worldly concerns. Hajj is the great leveller. At Hajj, all Muslims are equal; nothing about the rituals they perform makes one person better than another.

Millions of Muslims stand in one place, wearing the same simple clothing, following the same rituals and saying the same words. They are united in their devotion to God. The black man stands next to the white man and they call on God with one voice. The king stands beside the pauper and they declare their submission to the will of God using the same words.

Muslims from every corner of the globe are united in their submission to the will of God. They cry out as if with one voice, "Here I am O God, here I am at your service, and You have no partner. Here I am. All praise, grace, and dominion belong to You. You have no partner". This supplication is said repeatedly by the pilgrims. It is their answer to God's call for the Muslims to perform Hajj.

These words are repeated with joy and reverence by all, regardless of status or class. Some people are so overcome with emotion that they weep, others feel elated and happier than they have ever felt before. Every person there feels that he is one person, alone among millions answering God's call and God hears his supplication and sees his arrival. The pilgrims feel amazed that they are the guest of the most Merciful God. He or she attends this gathering by the invitation of God, not at the invitation of a government or an organisation, nor at the request of a family member or friend.

Hajj is performed because God has invited the believers to congregate together. Regardless of place of birth, nationality, ethnicity, gender, or status, all are welcome, and all are equal in the sight of God. The Muslims gather to meet one another and demonstrate to each other, and the world that they are united. Unity in diversity. They are united by their worship of One God.

"O humankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honourable of you with God is that (believer) who has At-Taqwa (piety, God consciousness). Verily, God is All-Knowing, All-

Aware." (49:13)

Islam is the religion of unity. Repeatedly throughout the Quran God reminds the believers that they must remain united and seek strength through unity. Hajj epitomises this unity. People from every race and colour come together in submission to the will of God. Muslims are one brotherhood and they come together with a sense of purpose and a desire for peace.

"The believers are nothing else but brothers (in Islam). So make reconciliation between your brothers, and fear God, that you may receive mercy." (49:10)

"And hold fast, all of you together, to the Rope of God (this Quran), and be not divided among yourselves, and remember God's Favour on you, for you were enemies one to another but He joined your hearts together, so that, by His Grace, you became brethren (in Islam), and you were on the brink of a pit of Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus God makes His Ayat (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) clear to you, that you may be guided."

(3:103)

Hajj is the largest annual gathering of Muslims; it is the largest gathering of people united by the peacefulness and serenity that is Islam. Anything that disturbs the peacefulness of Hajj is prohibited. No matter what is happening in the material world at Hajj, peace prevails.

Muslims gather together and their diversity is a wonder to behold. The old stand with the young, the rich stand with the poor, people of all colours and nationalities stand shoulder to shoulder in prayer, and perform rituals side by side. Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) said, "In their love, kindness, and compassion for each other, the believers are like a human body. Muslims at Hajj are one people, they are a soothing sea of humanity, gathered together to worship One God. Muslims turn their faces in one direction and submit to the will of God. They are united by their love of God, and united in their diversity.

It is in the Heart, Not in the Money

Sadullah Khan

The way people relate to wealth influences most aspects of their personal lives. For many people, where there is wealth there is attention.

If you became wealthy overnight...

What will the first thing you would do?

Is charity one of your primary focuses?

How much more charity will you give? ... and what is your proof?

Biblical text encourages each person to give in proportion to the way God has blessed them [Deuteronomy 16:17] Many believe that the more they have, the more generous they'll become; but is that really the case. To become more generous, you have to have a spirit of generosity in the first place.

It's Not really about the Money, It's actually about the Heart

Real generosity is not dependant so much on income as it is on the capacity of the heart. There are many who have the means to give, but not the heart to give. And there are many, who, the more they have the less they give. Henry Ward Beecher warned; "watch, lest prosperity destroy generosity".

Father, Unlike Son

In the 1950s J.P. Getty was the richest man

in world. He is known to have disliked the attention his wealth brought, but not because of his humility but because of people's request for donations, he "despised passive acceptance of money"; had a pay-phone installed in his house for guests; delayed ransom for his grandson's kidnapping for 6 months and only paid a fraction of the ransom after his grandson's ear was cut off and sent to him.

J.P. Getty Jr. inherited relatively a small part of his father's estate yet gave millions in charity saying, "I am privileged to be the heir to huge wealth and I regard myself as custodian of that money for the benefit of people who need it more than I do."

Even when you do give of your material wealth, do not give merely from the top of your wallet, but rather give from the bottom of your heart. Also, it is not material help only. Whatever one can do to enhance the situation of others is considered generosity. Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) said; "There is charity due on every part of the body every day." He went on to say: "to bring justice between people is charity, to help a person with transport and helping with baggage is charity, a good, kind word is charity, every step towards prayer is charity, removing harmful things from the way is charity and giv-

ing water to the thirsty is charity. A person's true wealth lies in the good they accrue for the Hereafter through good deeds in this world. When a person dies people say 'what has he left behind?' while angels say 'what has he sent forth?' "

To give of your self is the best kind of giving. Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) said: "When you give of yourself then you truly are a Believer".

The great Lebanese poet and writer Khalil Gibran echoed the same sentiments when he said: "You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give."

So, if you genuinely desire to become a generous person, don't wait for your income to change; change the attitude of your heart.

Stinginess

As for those who are stingy due to fear that generosity will deplete their wealth, Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) said: A person says, "this is my wealth, my things" but all that he really has is three; What he consumes and digests, what he wears and wears out, or what he gives in charity and it continues to benefit; The rest you leave behind when you depart from this world."

Martin Luther King Jr. said: "Every person must decide whether he will walk in the light of creative altruism or in the darkness of destructive selfishness."

Note that the stingy person is far from people, far from Allah, far from paradise and closer to the fire of Hell. (Prophet Muhammad)

Positive Aspects of Giving

The Company of the generous is delightful. The generous focus on other than themselves, and their generosity not only makes them likeable but also makes the world a happier and better place.

Life should not really be about how much money we accrue, but rather how many people we serve; because the greater your giving, the greater your living. Giving does not devalue

your worth and the Prophet said that "charity does not decrease wealth". Remember, we are here to enrich the world, and if we ever forget that we impoverish ourselves.

In helping others we enhance ourselves, for when you light another's path you can't help but cast light on your own path. Realize that no one stands taller in success than the one who bends down to help those in need. We become enriched by enriching the lives of others. The Prophet said that a Believer feels good doing good. So do not do good merely to feel good, but rather feel good doing good.

In a humorous incident, a beggar asked a woman for money and she said; "I'll give you a dollar, not because you deserve it but because it pleases me". So the beggar said; "Thanks Maam, why don't you give me \$100 and you could feel really, really good about it."

By living a life that is helpful, one's life becomes significant. "Life's most persistent and urgent question is ... What are we doing for others?" (civil rights leader, Martin Luther King Jr.) How we answer that question is in a way a good measure of our spirit of generosity.

Spirit of Generosity

Characteristic of a true Believer: When asked about the characteristics of a Believer, Imam Zainul 'Abideen said: "Righteousness in privacy, generosity even when needy, patience during misfortunes, sense of control when angry and truthfulness even when fearful."

Kindness: Giving requires compassion, mercy, and love. Each person should give what he has decided in his heart to give; not reluctantly nor under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. [2 Corinthians 9:7]

Selflessness: Eventually, what we do for ourselves alone dies with us, but what we do for others outlives us. Wise are the words that reminds us:

He who lives for himself, lives small, and dies
Cont'd on page 25

Appeal

'Radiant Reality' is the only Islamic monthly in English published from Srinagar since almost two decades now. It is only by the Grace of Almighty Allah and the blessed supplications of our esteemed readers that it continues to remain in print without fail. Apart from its regular subscribers, the magazine is distributed among the student community in and outside the state free of charge, the cost of which is borne by some dedicated individuals. With unprecedented escalation in the cost of paper and printing, it is becoming somewhat difficult for us to meet the expences incurred thereof. The esteemed readers are, therefore, requested to subscribe for the magazine and also encourage others for the purpose. Besides, those who would like to join us in spreading the message of Islam far and wide, may contribute by way of voluntary donation starting from at least Rs.100/- a month.

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