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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.

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Question

Is it permissible to wear glasses whilst in the state of Ihraam? I cannot make Umrah without my glasses on my face.

Answer

The general rule is that it is not permissible to cover one's face in the state of Ihraam. In doing so, an expiation for a violation in Ihraam will be necessary.

However, the wearing of glasses/spectacles in the state of Ihraam is an exception to the general rule. The purpose of wearing the glasses is not to cover one's face. Glasses are worn due to need and necessity.

Hence, it will be permissible for one to wear glasses in the state of Ihraam in which case there will be no violation to the state of Ihraam. (Badaai-us-Sanaai 2/185-Fataawa Fareediyah 4/338)

Mufti Ismaeel

Question

In some masjids, Muazzins call out the Fajr Azaan over the loudspeaker, which disturbs the non-Muslim neighbours who complain of Muslims being inconsiderate. What is the status of calling out the Azaan especially the Fajr Azaan over the loudspeaker? Is it compulsory to call out the Azaan over the loudspeaker?

Answer

Giving Azaan on a loudspeaker is considered a permissible act. At most, it can be said that it is a good act (Mustahsan) as it allows for the Azaan to reach further and thereby alert more Musallis for Salaah. The use of the loudspeaker is neither compulsory nor Sunnah. This is because the actual practice of the Azaan as prescribed by Rasulullah (saws) is to proclaim it by the voice alone. (Khairul Fataawa Vo. 5 pg. 205)

To cause disturbance and inconvenience to others especially those of one's neighbourhood is not allowed in Islam.

Rasulullah (saws) has stated, "The best Islam belongs to those from whose tongue and hand people are safe." (Musnad Ahmad)

"Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him not harm his neighbour." (Bukhari)

The time of the Fajr Salaah is a time when most non-Muslims are asleep. It is a great inconvenience to a person to unnecessarily disturb their sleep. While the use of the loudspeaker may be considered as a good act, that goodness falls away if it becomes a means of disturbance and inconvenience to others.

As Muslims, it is our duty to be sensitive to the feelings of our non-Muslim neighbours within the limits set by Islam. Islam has not commanded the use of the loudspeaker. Hence, in areas where the use of the loudspeaker for the Fajr Azaan will be a means of disturbance, then its

usage should be discontinued.

Mufti Moosa

Question

Is it permissible to recite Quran by the deceased when he/she is being given Ghusal in the Ghusal Khaana?

Answer

It will be disliked (Makrooh) to recite Quran, make Zikr or Dua besides the body of the deceased if the body of the deceased is in a room or cubicle like the Ghusal Khaana, which is specifically meant for the cleaning of impurities of the deceased body.

One may recite Quran, make Zikr or Dua outside the Ghusal Khaana or after the Ghusal of the body. (Shaami 2/193/194-Fataawa Darul Uloom Zakariyya 1/660/661-2/782/783)

Mufti Ismaeel Bassa

Question

If a person recites Surah Fatihah mistakenly in place of reciting Tashahhudd, will the Salaah be valid and does it have to be repeated?

Answer

If one mistakenly recites Surah Fatiha in place of reciting Tashahhud whilst in the sitting posture (Q'adah), it will be necessary to perform a Sajdah-e-Sahw to compensate for it. In doing so, the Salaah will remain valid and it will not have to be repeated. (Hindiyyah 1/127)

Mufti Ismaeel

Question

When reciting Surah Saad in Salaah, does one make Sajdah Tilaawat after reciting the 24th verse or after reciting the 25th verse? On Anaab or Ma-aab? The 13 line Quran of the Waterval Islamic Institute - 11th edition has the Sajdah Tilaawat marked on the 24th verse but verse 25 is indicated as the verse of Sajdah. Please clarify.

Answer

The performance of Sajdah Tilaawat becomes necessary (Wajib) upon the recital of any of the verses of Sajdah Tilaawat in the Quran. In total, there are fourteen (14) verses of Sajdah Tilaawat in the Quran. Verse 24 of Surah Saad is a verse of Sajdah Tilaawat. Upon its recital, the performance of Sajdah Tilaawat becomes necessary. Therefore, a Sajdah Tilaawat should be made upon the recital of verse 24 instead of at the end of verse 25 of Surah Saad. However, if Sajdah Tilaawat is made upon the recital of verse 25 of Surah Saad, the performance of Sajdah Tilaawat will still be valid. (Fataawa Mahmoodiyyah 7/471)

Mufti Ismaeel

Question

Can a woman travel with her sister's son-in-law as her Mahram for Umrah or Hajj?

Answer

It is not permissible for a woman to travel with her sister's son-in-law as a Mahram for Umrah or Hajj. He is a non-Mahram (stranger) to her. (Surah Nisa Verse 23)

Mufti Ismaeel

Question

What is the meaning of this word Tirmidhi?

Answer

Tirmidh is a city in the southernmost part of Uzbekistan. It is from here that one of the famous scholars of Hadith, Abu Isa Muhammad ibn Isa at-Tirmidhi (Rahimahullah) hailed from. He is commonly known as Imaam Tirmidhi in attribution to his home town. He passed away in the year 279 AH.

The most famous of his Hadith works is Sunan at-Tirmidhi which is commonly referred to, simply as Tirmidhi. Sunan at-Tirmidhi is one of the Kutub al-Sittah (six major hadith collections) which have gained global prominence and have been accepted by the Muslim Ummah throughout the ages. It contains approximately

4400 hadiths (with repetitions) in 46 chapters. The Kitab, Tirmidhi, is part of the curriculum of the final year of the Aalim course in Darul Uloom and is a very often quoted source of Ahadith.

Mufti Moosa

Question

I put on mozas at home on Friday morning at 10am.

I travelled to a town 160km away. I returned home the next day at 1.5pm.

Does the three days validity continue at home or must the mozas be removed and the feet washed before performing Asar Salaat on Saturday.

Answer

The three days allowance for Masah on mozas (leather/waterproof socks) only applies to a Musaafir (traveller). Once a person becomes Muqem (resident), the three days' allowance ends immediately and only one day's allowance is permitted.

Hence, if a Musaafir wore his mozas for more than 24 hours, the Masah ends immediately upon becoming Muqem; and if he wore it for less than 24 hours, then he can complete the 24 hour period upon becoming Muqem. (Nurul Iedah pg. 36)

Mufti Moosa

Question

I have read the Q&A of the Jamiat a few days ago of the heirs in a deceased partners estate not automatically becoming partners in the business. Can the heirs claim the assets in the business instead of receiving a payout of it?

Answer

The heirs of a deceased partner are actually entitled to the deceased's assets in the business and not a pay-out. Hence, it is their right to claim the deceased's assets from the business.

At times, it may not be practical to take possession of the assets in the business. In such

instances, the heirs and the remaining partners may agree on a pay-out if they so wish.

Mufti Ismaeel

Question

An eight-year-old child is in school. The parents cannot afford the school fees for the child. Can we assist them by paying their child's school fees with Zakaat money?

Answer

In normal cases, parents enrol their child at a school and are responsible for paying the school fees on their behalf. The payment of the school fees are not levied on the child. Rather, it is levied on the parents.

Therefore, if the parents of the child are eligible recipients of Zakaat, the parents may be assisted with Zakaat to pay their child's school fees. If the parents of the child are not eligible recipients of Zakaat, they cannot be assisted with Zakaat to pay their child's school fees. They may only be assisted with Lillah.

Mufti Ismaeel

Question

1. In witr salaah in the month of Ramadhaan, how should a masbooq complete his salaah?
2. Is it wajib for the masbooq to recite dua-e-qunoot when he stands up to complete his salaah?
3. In which rakaat will the masbooq recite dua-e-qunoot?

Answer

If he performed the last rakaat with the imaam, then he will recite the dua-e-qunoot with the imaam. After the imaam completes the salaah, he will stand up, recite the sana, ta'awwuz, tas-miyah, qiraat of surah faatiha and surah and will thereafter complete the first rakaat and sit in tashahhud. Thereafter, he will stand up and perform the last rakaat with surah faatiha and a surah and complete the salaah as normal.

In the case where he joined the salaah after the

imam came up from rukoo of the third rakaat or when the imaam was in the last qadah of the third rakaat, then after the imaam completes the salaah, he will stand up and perform his three rakaats in the normal manner that the witr salaah is performed (i.e. he will perform two rakaats, sit in tashahhud, thereafter stand up and perform the third rakaat. In the third rakaat, he will recite the dua-e-qunoot and complete the salaah).

Mufti Zakaria

Question

1. I purchased a business and wish to insure it. What is the Shar'ee ruling regarding insuring one's business? Similarly, explain the law of insuring one's vehicle.
2. Could you also explain to me what is the Shar'ee ruling regarding medical aid and hospital plan?

Answer

1. Insurance is haraam in Islam due to the elements of interest and gambling being found in it. One is uncertain as to whether one will be burgled in the future or not. Any transaction wherein one pays for something which is suspended upon an uncertain event is in actual fact gambling. This is the definition of gambling according to all the Ulama. In the case of gambling, one spends a certain amount of money in the hope of gaining something which is uncertain. One might lose all one's money and get nothing or one might get something more or less than what one had spent. Hence, we see the element of gambling found in an insurance policy. Further, if the insurance payout that one receives is more than the amount that one had paid to the insurance company, then in this case the extra amount that one has received is riba (interest). Hence, taking out an insurance policy is impermissible in Shari'ah.

2. There is no difference between the workings of a medical aid scheme, hospital plan and an

insurance policy. The common factor in all three companies is that they do not provide any service to the client, but rather they settle the bills of the client at the time he is faced with a problem. In the event of an accident, the insurance company will settle the bills either more than the invested amount or less. Similar is the case with regard to the medical aid schemes and hospital plans, at the time the patient falls ill, they settle the bills with the doctor or hospital. Hence, since the elements of qimaar (gambling) and interest are found in all (medical aid scheme, hospital plan, and the insurance policy), it is impermissible for one to involve himself in it.

Mufti Zakari

Question

Is it Sunnah for males to wear a kurta? Can men wear casual clothing or unisex clothing?

Answer

The kurta conforms to the Sunnah attire. It was the clothing of the pious in all eras of Islam from the time of Rasulullah (saws). It is reported in Sunan Tirmizi that from all clothing, the kurta was the most beloved clothing to Rasulullah (saws). As far as casual clothing is concerned, it is permissible provided that it is plain, loose, unrevealing and unfashionable clothing that is worn by people in general, Muslims as well as non-Muslims. However, if the clothing is exclusive to any other religion or any sect or group, then it will be impermissible for a Muslim to wear such clothing. Men should refrain from wearing tight fitting clothing which reveals the shape of the entire body, especially between the navel and the knee. Similarly, men should refrain from wearing "unisex" clothing. This is against Islamic culture.

Mufti Zakaria

Question

What is the status of making Salaah on a chair? If a person who is not able to sit on the floor,

and he cannot do the sajdahs, should he perform Salaah while doing Qiyaam and sajdahs by sign or can he do it directly on the chair? What would be the best way? And if he makes the Salaah while standing, will his Salaah be valid?

Answer

It is not permissible for one who is able to perform Salaah standing, together with making ruku' and performing the sajdah on the ground, to sit on a chair. If the one who is able to perform the Salaah in this manner sits on a chair and performs Salaah, the Salaah will not be valid. However if a person cannot manage standing and is unable to perform sajdah on the ground, then it will be permissible for him to sit on a chair and perform the Salaah with signs. He will lean forward and make ruku and he will lean forward a little lower to make the sajdah.

Mufti Zakaria

Question

Who was the Nabi ((saws))'s favourite amongst all of his blessed wives?

Answer

All his respected wives were beloved to him and he fulfilled the rights of each wife equally. However, Hazrat Aaisha (ra) held a special position by him. Once Rasulullah (saws) was asked as to who he loved the most. Rasulullah (saws) replied that he loved Hazrat Aisha (ra) the most. Thereafter the questioner asked Rasulullah (saws) as to who he loved most from the men. Rasulullah (saws) replied that he loved Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddeeq (ra) the most. (Tirmidhi)

Mufti Zakaria

Question

Can a lady travel with her father-in-law or son-in-law? Please explain.

Answer

A woman's father-in-law and son-in-law are her

mahrams, hence it is permissible for her to travel with them. Our Ulama explain that though it is permissible for her to travel with her father-in-law or son-in-law as they are her mahrams, on account of the abundant and overwhelming fithna found nowadays and the suspicions and doubts that are created in the minds of people, it is not advisable for her to travel alone with her father-in-law or son-in-law.

Mufti Zakaria

Question.

If I am a few minutes late on the dinner table, do I have to make Salaam to all those already on the dinner table? And is it necessary for all of them to reply to my Salaam?

Answer.

It is disliked (Makrooh) to make Salaam to a person whilst they are eating. If Salaam is made to a person whilst they are eating, it will not be necessary to respond to such a Salaam. (Fataawa Mahmoodiyyah 19/81)

This is specific to a time that one has a morsel of food in one's mouth, which makes it difficult for one to reply to a Salaam. If this is not the case, then Salaam may be made before or after such a time. (Shaami 6/415)

Mufti Ismaeel

Question.

Is it a necessity to change your name when you embrace Islam please explain

Answer.

A person's name bespeaks his religion. Therefore, a revert to Islam should take an Islamic name to identify themselves with Islam. To keep such names which suggest adherence to any culture and creed other than Islam is not permissible.

However, it is not prohibited to keep a non-Arabic name, so long as it does not have a bad meaning or anything un-Islamic about it.

Mufti Ismaeel

Lesson from
The Qur'an



The Issue of Magic

And they followed what the devils used to recite in the reign of Sulayman (Solomon) - it was not Sulayman who became an infidel, but the devils did become infidels, teaching people magic, and what had been sent down to the two angels, Harut and Marut, in Babylon. And these two did not teach anyone without having said, "We are nothing but a trial, so do not go infidel." Then, they used to learn from them that with which they could separate man from his wife. But they were not to bring harm through it to anyone, without the will of Allah. And they used to learn what harmed them and did no good to them. And they certainly knew that he who buys it has no share in the Hereafter. And, indeed, vile is the thing for which they sold themselves away. Only if they knew! And had they accepted the faith, and been God-fearing, the reward from Allah would have always been far better. Only if they knew! (2:102-103)

In connection with these two verses, some commentators have reported certain Judaic traditions, which have given rise to a number of doubts, especially in the minds of Muslims with a Western orientation. Maulana Ashraf 'Ali Thanavi has provided very simple and clear solutions to these exegetical problems, and we shall reproduce them here:-

1. The Jews were impertinent and senseless enough to attribute magic and sorcery to a prophet -- namely, Sayyidna Sulayman (Solomon (A.S)). So, in saying that they used to learn the black arts of the devils (Shayatin), the Holy Qur'an takes care to deny, as a parenthesis, such a vile allegation against Sayyidna Sulayman (A.S).

2. These verses condemn the Jews for indulging in black magic. In connection with the verses, some commentators have reported a long and well-known story about a woman called Zuhrah, which is not based on any authentic Islamic tradition. Those scholars who have found the story to be infringing the regulations of the Shari'ah, have rejected it as mere fiction; but those who believe that it can be interpreted so as to come in line with the Shari'ah, have not dismissed it totally. For the moment we are not concerned with the question whether the story is true or false. But what we would like to insist upon is the fact that a proper understanding does in no way depend on this story.

3. The Jews knew very well that their indulgence in black magic was not only a sin, but also involved infidelity (Kufr). They could also see that such activities would do them no good even in this world, for their sorcery could not harm anyone except when Allah willed it so. Thus their practice went against their knowledge, and they made no use of their understanding to see this discrepancy. That is why the Holy Qur'an, to begin with, states that they "knew", and then goes on to negate this 'knowledge' by saying, "Only if they knew!" For, if one does neither act upon what one knows nor tries to understand it properly, one's knowledge is no better than ignorance.

4. There was a time when black magic had grown very popular in the world, particularly in Babylon. Seeing its astonishing efficacy, ignorant people began to confuse its effects with the miracles of prophets,

and to suppose that the two were identical in nature. Some even looked upon magicians as being holy men, and worthy of being obeyed; still others actually started learning and practising black magic as if it were a good deed bearing a divine sanction.

In short, this extraordinary veneration for magic and magicians had become a potent source of misguidance. In order to eradicate this misunderstanding, Allah sent down to Babylon two angels, Harut and Marut, for informing the people as to the true nature of magic and as to its different forms, so that they should distinguish it from the miracles of prophets, and keep away from obeying magicians and practising magic themselves. Just as the prophethood of prophets is divinely confirmed through miracles, signs and rational or other arguments, in the same way the angelical nature of Harut and Marut was confirmed on the basis of different signs and arguments, so that people should listen attentively to them and follow their guidance.

This particular function was not assigned to the prophets for two reasons. Firstly, the need of the hour was to establish a distinction between the prophets and the magicians, and, the prophets being in a way a party to the dispute, it was proper that a third party should be the arbitrator. Secondly, the necessary distinction between the two could not, in a normal course, be defined without citing and reporting the verbal formulas employed in magic. Merely to report heretical speech is not in itself a heresy - this is a logical and rational principle, and the Shari'ah too accepts it. So, the prophets could have been allowed to cite these formulas; but, they being a manifestation of divine guidance, Allah did not ask them to perform such a function, and chose two angels for the purpose. For, Allah's commandments are of two kinds -- those pertaining to Takwin (creation and the cosmic order), and those pertaining to Tashri' (legislation) -, and it is quite possible that sometimes the two may not seem to accord with each other. The order of creation is made up

of good and evil both, and it is the angels through whom divine commandments are enforced in this sphere. So, the angels are made to do things which, in the perspective of the cosmic order, always lead to general good, but which, in so far as they necessarily involve some kind of partial disorder, are seen to be evil -- for example, the growth and upkeep of a human tyrant, or of a harmful beast, each of which is right in the context of the order of creation, but wrong from the point of view of the order of legislation. On the other hand, the prophets are entrusted only with the functions of the legislative order, which are, in their general as well as particular applications, nothing but good.

Although, in view of the ultimate purpose, this reporting of the formulas of magic too was related to the legislative order, yet there was probability -- which even materialized - that a reporting of such formulas could give an incentive to the practice of black magic. So, Allah preferred not to make the prophets even an indirect means of such reprehensible activities. All the same, the prophets too were made to serve the main purpose by announcing the basic regulations of the Shari'ah with regard to magic, though not the details pertaining to the minor rules derived from them, for that could have possibly given rise to temptation. We shall explain it through an analogy. The prophets have, for example, told us that it is forbidden to accept a bribe, and have also explained the nature of bribery, but have not given us the details as to how a bribe is given or taken, for a delineation of such minute details would have served only to teach men the different methods of giving or taking a bribe. Or, take an example from different branches of magic. If one utters a certain formula, one would, on getting up from the bed in the morning, find money under his pillow or in his pocket. The Shari'ah makes it quite clear that such a practice is not, in principle, legitimate, but does not specify what that formula is.

In short, the two angels came down to Baby-

lon, and started the work assigned to them ~ that is to say, they used to explain the basic principles of magic, its different forms and the specific formulas, and then used to dissuade the people from getting themselves involved in these activities or with the magicians. Their work was exactly like that of a scholar who, finding that illiterate people sometime fall into uttering heretical words or phrases on account of their ignorance, should collect in his speeches or writings all such phrases that have gained currency, and inform them as to what they must carefully avoid.

Now, all sorts of people started coming to the angels for seeking information about the nature and the specific formulas of a magic lest ignorance should lead them into error, in the matter of doctrines or that of deeds. In order to provide the correct teaching on this subject and to protect the people from error, the angels were scrupulous enough to make it a point to warn them of possible dangers in giving them the information. They insisted on making it quite clear that in allowing them to provide this kind of information to the people in general, Allah intended to put His servants through a trial, for He would see who uses this knowledge for protecting his 'Iman (faith) by recognizing evil and avoiding it, and who falls into misguidance by adopting evil that he has come to recognize as evil -- a choice which can easily lead one into Kufr (infidelity) in the matter of deeds or in that of doctrines. The angels repeatedly advised them to seek this dangerous information only with a good intent and to remain steadfast in this good intent, and not to misuse the knowledge so as to earn perpetual damnation.

The angels could not be more honest and forthright. So, they explained the basic principles of magic and even the subsidiary details to all those who were ready to take the pledge to remain steadfast in their faith. Of course, if anyone broke the pledge and fell into transgression or infidelity, it was his own business, and the angels could not be held responsible for it. Some were true to their

promise, while many did not fulfil the pledge, and made their knowledge of magic a means of doing harm to people - this in itself is sin and transgression, while some modes of magic actually involve infidelity (Kufr). Thus, through a misuse of their knowledge of magic, some turned into sinners and others into infidels.

Let us repeat that the angels had taught magic for the purpose of reforming the people and helping them to keep to the straight path, but those who misused this teaching did so out of their own perversity. An example would make the situation still more clear. Let us suppose that a man goes to a master of the Islamic sciences, who is an expert in the traditional branches of learning and in philosophy as well, and who also acts upon his knowledge, and this man requests the master to teach him philosophy, ancient or modern, so that he may protect himself against the doubts raised by the philosophers with regard to Islamic doctrines, and may also be able to give a satisfactory reply to those who raise such doubts. Apprehending that he might turn out to be insincere, and might finally bring the knowledge of philosophy to the aid of false and anti-Islamic ideas, the master warns him against such an eventuality, and the man takes a pledge that he would not misuse his knowledge. Having satisfied himself, the master gives him a thorough training in philosophy. But the man, contrary to his promise, begins to accept the anti-Islamic and false theorizing of philosophers as the truth. Obviously, in such a case, the teacher can in no way be held responsible for the way the pupil behaves. Similarly, there can be no room for doubting the integrity of these two angels.

Although Allah Himself knows how things were, yet one can suppose that once the angels had done the work assigned to them, they must have been recalled to the Heavens. (Bayan al-Qur'an)

*Adapted from Ma'ariful Qur'an
By Mufti Muhammad Shafi (ra)*

Lessons from Sahih Bukhari

Dr. Rafiq Ahmad

The Book of the Times of Salah

Chapter 5 : The excellence of offering the salāh at its proper time.

Purpose of Tarjamatul Bāb

We have come to know that salāh expiates sins, but it is highly effective and profitable if it is offered at its proper time, and it loses much of its effectiveness and reward if offered otherwise.

Hadith No. 499

Narrated Abdullah

I asked the Prophet “Which deed is the dearest to Allah?” He replied, “To offer the prayers at their early stated fixed times.” I asked, “What is the next (in goodness)?” He replied, “To be good and dutiful to your parents” I again asked, “What is the next (in goodness)?” He replied, “To participate in Jihaad (religious fighting) in Allah’s cause.” Abdullah added, “I asked only that much and if I had asked more, the Prophet would have told me more.”

Comments

As per this hadith, once Abdullah bin Mas’ud asked Rasulullah (saws) three questions. 1. Which deed is dearest to Allah, Rasulullah (saws) said, “To offer salāh at its proper time”. 2. What next, Rasulullah (saws) said,

“To be nice to your parents”. 3. What next, Rasulullah (saws) said, “Jihaad in the way of Allah”.

1. To offer salāh at its fixed time

Islamic jurists differ in their opinions regarding the proper time of salāh, i.e., whether it is at the beginning of a particular salāh time or something else? According to Imām Shafā’ee, a salāh should be offered at the very onset of its proper time, e.g., if the time of fajr salāh starts at 5 am, it should be offered soon after 5 am, and this standard is to be maintained in all the five prayers in a day. The Hanafite scholars don’t consider this criterion, and according to them it is preferable to delay some salāhs. For example, it is preferable to offer zuhr salāh at a delayed time during summers. Also, they say that fajr salāh should also be offered a little delayed till early dawn as it will lead to an increase in the attendance of the devotees. But, to be noted, all the scholars concur that the delay should not be so much that the preferable time expires. Imām Bukhāri in the title of the chapter under discussion has not used the word ‘Awwal Waqt’ i.e., the inception of the time’ but mentioned ‘proper time’ unlike Imām Tirmidhi, who, while supporting Imām Shafā’ee’s view, has established the chapters with the heading:

‘The excellence of salāh at its starting time.’

2. To be nice to your parents

This point has been strongly stressed in both Holy Qur’an as well as hadiths. Allah says in the Qur’an:

Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and do good to parents. If any one of them or both of them reach old age, do not say to them: uff (a word or expression of anger or contempt) and do not scold them, and address them with respectful words. And submit yourself before them in humility out of compassion, and say, “My Lord, be merciful to them as they have brought me up in my childhood.” (17:23,24)

It is very important to respect and obey parents

Imām al-Qurtubi says that, in this verse (23), Allah Ta’ala has made it necessary (wajib) to respect and treat parents well by combining it with the command to worship Him. This is similar to what has been said in Surah Luqman where the inevitable need to thank Him has been combined with the need to thank one’s parents: (Be grateful to Me, and to your parents - 31:14). This proves that, after the obligation of worshipping the most exalted Allah, obeying parents is most important and being grateful to parents like being grateful to Allah Ta’ala is wajib (necessary). This has its confirmation in the hadith of Sahih al-Bukhāri where a person reportedly asked the Holy Prophet (saws): “Which is the most favored deed in the sight of Allah?” He said, “salāh at its (mustahabb: preferred) time.” The person asked again, “Which is the most favored deed after that?” To that he said, “Treating parents well.” (Qurtubi)

The merits of obeying and serving parents in hadith narratives

1. In the Musnad of Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Ibn Mājah and Mustadrak Hakim, it has been re-

ported on sound authority from Sayyidna Abu Darda that the Holy Prophet (saws) said, “A father is the main gate of Jannah. Now it is up to you to preserve or waste it.” (Mazhari)

2. According to a report from Sayyidna Abdullah ibn Umar appearing in Jami’ al-Tirmidhi and al-Mustadrak of al-Hakim (which Hakim rates as Sahih), the Holy Prophet (saws) said, “The pleasure of Allah is in the pleasure of the father and the displeasure of Allah in the displeasure of the father.”

3. Ibn Mājah reports on the authority of Sayyidna Abu Umamah that a person asked the Holy Prophet (saws) “What rights do parents have on their children?” He said, “They both are your Paradise, or Hell.” It means that obeying and serving parents takes one to Jannah and their disobedience and displeasure, to Jahannam.

4. Al-Baihaqi (in Shu’ab al-’Iman) and Ibn Asakir have reported on the authority of Sayyidna Ibn Abbas that the Holy Prophet (saws) said, “For one who remained obedient to his parents for the sake of Allah two gates of Paradise shall remain open. And for one who disobeyed them two gates of Hell shall remain open, and if he had just one of the two, either father or mother, then, one gate (of Paradise or Hell shall remain open).” Thereupon, someone asked, “Does it (the warning of Hell) hold good even when the parents have been unjust to this person?” Then he said thrice: ‘Yes, there is that warning of Hell against disobeying and hurting parents even if they were unjust to the son.’ (The outcome is that children have no right to settle scores with parents. If they have been unjust, it does not follow that they too back out from obeying and serving them).

5. Al-Baihaqi has reported on the authority of Sayyidna Abdullah ibn Abbas that the Holy Prophet (saws) said, “An obedient son who looks at his parents with mercy and affection receives the reward of one accepted Hajj against every such look cast.” People around

said, "What if he were to look at them like that a hundred times during the day?" He said, "Yes, a hundred times too (he will keep receiving that reward). Allah is great (His treasures never run short)."

Good treatment to parents even if they are not Muslim

To support this ruling, Imām al-Qurtubi has quoted an event related with Sayyida Asma' from the Sahih of al-Bukhāri. According to this report, Sayyida Asma' asked the Holy Prophet (saws), "My mother, a Mushrik, comes to see me. Is it permissible for me to entertain her?" He said, "Respect the bond of relationship with your mother and entertain her." And as for disbelieving parents, there is that statement of the Qur'an itself (Luqman, 31:15): (if the parents of a person are Kafirs and order him too to become like them, then, it is not permissible to obey them in this matter. But while living in this world, they should be treated in the recognized manner). It is obvious that 'recognized manner' means that they should be treated with courtesy.

Treating parents well especially in old age

As for serving and obeying parents, as parents, it is not restricted to any given time or age. In fact, it is necessary (wajib) to treat parents well, under all conditions, and in every age. But, there are circumstances that usually impede the fulfillment of what is necessary and obligatory. Under these circumstances, the typical response pattern of the Holy Qur'an comes into action to suggest ways and means through which acting according to given injunctions becomes easy. With this objective in sight, it grooms and trains minds through different angles and, at the same time, it continues to emphasize that compliance of these injunctions is imperative despite such circumstances.

The old age of parents, when they

become helpless, depend on children for everything they need and their life is at the mercy of children, is a terrible condition to be in. The slightest indifference shown by children at such a time breaks their heart. Then, there are those physical infirmities and diseases associated with old age which make one naturally irritation-prone. Furthermore, during the period of extreme old age, when usual reason and comprehension do not seem to be working, some of their wishes and demands assume the kind of proportions which children find difficult to take care of. The Holy Qur'an takes cognizance of these circumstances, but, while giving children the instruction to comfort them, it reminds them of their own childhood. It tells them that there was a time when they too were far more helpless, far too depending on their parents than their parents were on them at that point of time. Then, was it not that their parents sacrificed their desires and comforts for them and went on bearing by the unreasonable child talk with love and affection. Now when they have become so helpless, reason and nobility demanded that the past favor done by them should be paid back. When it was said: (As they have brought me up in my childhood) in the verse, this is what has been alluded to. Some other important instructions relating to the old age of parents have also been given in the verses under study. They are as follows:

1. Do not say even uff to them. Briefly explained parenthetically in the accompanying translation as 'a word of anger or contempt,' uff covers every word or expression that shows one's displeasure. The limit is that breathing a long breath after having heard what they said and thereby betraying displeasure against them is also included under this very word 'uff.' In a hadith narrated by Sayyidna Ali, it has been reported that the Holy Prophet (saws) said, "Had there been some other degree of hurting lesser than the saying of 'uff,' that too would

have certainly been mentioned.” (The sense is that even the thing that hurts parents in the lowest of the low degree is forbidden).

2. Do not scold them: This is the second instruction. The word: (nahr) in the text: means ‘scold’ or ‘reproach.’ That it causes pain in already obvious.

3. Address them with respectable words. This is the third instruction. The first two instructions related to the negative aspects where bringing the least emotional pressure on parents has been prohibited. Given in this third instruction is a lesson in the art of conversation with parents - talk to them softly with love, grace and concern for them. Says the revered Tabi’i, Sa’id ibn Mussaiyyab, like a slave talking to his strict master!’

4. Submit yourself before them in humility out of compassion. This the the fourth instruction. The word: (Janaah) in the text literally means ‘wings’ or ‘sides of arms’ lending the sense that one should stand in a stance of submission and humility as a mark of respect for parents. The addition of the expression: (out of compassion) at the end of the sentence is there to warn that this stance of grace should not be a mere show-off, instead, it should be adopted on the strong foundation of genuine, heart-felt respect and compassion for them. Perhaps, this may also be suggestive of something else as well—that showing humility before parents is practically no disgrace. In fact, it is a prelude to real honor for it is based on concern, compassion and kindness.

5. And say, “My Lord, be merciful to them”. It means, as for the effort to provide maximum comfort for parents, it is humanly not possible. One should do whatever it is possible for him to do in order that they remain comfortable and, then, along with it, he should also keep praying before Allah Ta’ala that He, in His infinite mercy, removes all their difficulties and makes things easy on them. This last instruction is really so extensive and universal that it

still continues to be valid and beneficial even after the death of parents. Through this, one can always keep serving parents.

Ruling

If parents are Muslims, making a prayer for mercy in their favor is obvious. But, if they are not Muslims, making this prayer within their lifetime will be permissible with the intention that they be delivered from worldly distress and that they be blessed with the *taufiq* of Iman. After their death, making a prayer of mercy for them is not permissible. (Abridged from al-Qurtubi).

A remarkable event

Al-Qurtubi has reported from Sayyidna Jābir ibn Abdullah that a man came to the Holy Prophet (saws) and complained that his father was taking away what belonged to him. He said, “Go and ask your father to come here.” At that moment Jibra’il came and told the Holy Prophet (saws), “When his father comes, ask him about the words he has composed in his heart but even his own ears have not heard them yet.” When this man returned with his father, he said to the father, “Why is it that your son complains against you? Do you wish to take away what belongs to him?” The father said, “You better ask him on whom do I spend other than his paternal or maternal aunts or myself?” The Holy Prophet (saws) said: (an expression which denoted that he had understood the reality and there was no need to say anything else). After that, he asked the father of the man, “What are those words that have not yet been heard by your own ears?” The father said, “Ya Rasulallah, Allah Ta’ala increases our faith in you through everything.” Thereby he meant that he got to know what was not heard by anyone, which was a miracle indeed. Then, he submitted, “It is true that I had composed some lines of poetry within my heart, something not heard even by my own ears.”

The Holy Prophet (saws) said, "Let us hear them." Then he recited the following lines of poetry he had composed:

*I fed you in childhood and took care of you
when young. You lived on my earnings alone.
When on some night, you became sick, I spent
the whole night remaining awake and restless
because of your sickness.*

*As if your sickness was my own and not yours
and because of which my eyes kept shedding
tears throughout the night*

*My heart kept trembling lest something hap-
pens to you, though I knew that the time of
death is fixed, being neither early nor late*

*So, when you reached the age and maturity
that I had always been looking forward to.*

*Then you made hard-heartedness and harsh-
ness my return as if you were the one doing me
favors and giving me rewards.*

*Alas, if it was not possible for you to fulfill my
right as a father, you could have at the least
done what a good neighbor would have done.*

*So, you could have given me the least right of a
neighbor and abstained from becoming miserly
in my case in my own property.*

After having heard these verses of poetry, the Holy Prophet (saws) held the son by his shirt and said, "Go. You and your property, everything belongs to your father. (Tafsir al-Qurtubi, p. 246, v. 10) These verses have also been reported in *Hamasah*, the famous book of Arabic literature as attributed to the poet, Umaiyyah ibn Abi as-Sult. Others say that Abd al-A'la wrote them. Still others attribute them to Abu al-Abbas al-A'ma. (Al-Qurtubi, marginal notes)

In the last verse quoted above. (Your Lord knows best what is in your hearts - 25), any possible scruple that remains in the hearts of children as to how they were going to comply satisfactorily with divine injunctions relating to consistent observance of etiquette and

respect due to parents. They have to live with parents all the time. Then, living conditions of the parties vary. They do not stay the same all the time. May be, on some such occasion, they happen to utter something, something that turns out to be against the norms of due etiquette, then, they stand facing the warning of Hell. Given this probability, it would become extremely difficult for them to wriggle out from this situation. In this verse, it is to remove this doubt and heart-burning that it was said: Should any such word come to be uttered out of sheer anxiety or lack of discretion - but, without intentional disrespectfulness - then, one must repent and resolve not to do that ever again. If so, since Allah Ta'ala knows the secrets of hearts and knows what was uttered was not to show disrespect or hurt, things will turn out for the better, for He is Most-Merciful. The word: (al-awwabin: those who turn to Him) used here carries the sense of (at-tawwabin: those who repent before Him). The hadith calls the six raka'at after Maghrib and the nawafil of al-Ishraq as the *salah al-Awwabin*. Embedded here is the hint that the *taufiq* (ability) of these prayers is granted only to those who are the *Awwabin* and *Tawwabin*.

(Quoted from *Ma'ariful Qur'an*, Vol. 5)

3. Jihaad in the way of Allah

Allah—the Creator knows mankind in all its aspects irrespective of any particular region or age—past, present or future. It doesn't matter Him anyway whether these aspects are biological, physical, mental, geographical etc. He is the only being knowing all the aspects in any age or region in a totally comprehensive way. So, He is the one and the only who is able to inform man what is right and/or what is wrong. His commandments and laws are absolute. Man has a limited knowledge and hence the laws enacted by him carry limited value and are also defective in nature. So, a believer is enjoined to try hard in the direction that the

world he lives in is governed by the divine laws which are beneficial for mankind and perfect in nature. The struggle of man in this regard is called the Jihaad in the way of Allah. Unless the world submits to the divine laws, there will be no justice and piece.

Allah Ta'ala says in Qur'an:

“And struggle for (seeking the pleasure of) Allah, a struggle that is due to him” (22:78)

The words (Jihaad) and (mujahadah) mean to exert one's utmost effort to achieve an objective and to take pains for it. (That is why the word is translated above as 'struggle'). While waging war against the infidels the Muslims make supreme efforts, and for this reason it is called Jihaad, and—a struggle that is due to Him—means that all these efforts and sacrifices should aim solely at winning the favours and goodwill of Allah Ta'ala, and be free from all considerations of worldly reward, such as fame or spoils of war.

Sayyidna Ibn Abbas has explained the phrase 'that is due to Him' by saying that it is to strive to the utmost 'if one's capacity in the course of Jihaad, unmindful of all criticism. Some other commentators have explained that the word Jihaad in this means that one exerts his utmost effort in carrying out the acts of worship and complete obedience to rules of Shari'ah with deep sincerity. Dhahhak and Muqatil have said that a struggle that is due to Him means to act in Allah's obedience and His worship as due to Him. Sayyidna Abdullah Ibn Mubarak thinks that Jihaad means to strive against the temptations (nafs) and its baser desires. Imām Baghawi supports this view on the basis of a hadith which he has from Jābir Ibn Abdullah to the effect that when a group of companions returned from Jihaad, the Holy Prophet (saws) said: (You have returned from a smaller Jihaad to a greater Jihaad) meaning thereby that the fight against the temptations of self and baser desires never ceases. Baiha-

qi has also related this hadith but he is of the opinion that it has some weak narrators, Tafsir Mazhari has adopted this latter interpretation and proceeded to say that the Muslims were in fact fighting against the coarse desires of Self even when they were engaged in Jihaad against the infidels, but the hadith places it after their return from the Jihaad. The suggestion here is that though the fight against temptations continued even on the battlefield, it could by tradition and usage be brought to fruition only under the watchful eye of a perfect spiritual guide, that is the Holy Prophet (saws).

Remembering Death

Hence Rasulullah (saws) is reported to have said: “Remember excessively the destroyer of all passions – DEATH”.

(Tirmizi)

Besides exhorting the Ummah to remember death excessively, Rasulullah (saws) has declared those who do as the wisest of all people. It is reported that once Rasulullah (saws) was asked as to who is the wisest of all men. He replied: “The wisest of men are those who remember death more than everybody else. It is such people, indeed, who win distinction in this world and who will be raised to positions of honour in the Aakhirah”.

(Majma'uz Zawaaid)

A Free Lunch

*Straight
Talk*



Scientists are eager to prove that matters of faith are disputable. So, they offer a set of calculations to show that the origin was a zero. We believe that the contention by the cosmologists, that the universe came out of nothing requiring no God, is not weak, but wrong, writes SYED IQBAL ZAHEER.

Who are we? Where did we come from? Where will we go with death? Who created this world? What am I to Him? These are questions that every human asks himself within himself. Priests and philosophers have taken the task to answer these questions. But that was in the past.

For many, science has now emerged as the new competing religion. Scientists are its priests. The modestly educated treat their writings as revelations. The better educated take them with a pinch of salt. They greet some of the latest findings, as announced by the newest priests, with some skepticism. “Really?” they quip, and move on with the realities of daily tasks. Rarely do they take the new ideas, concepts, and philosophies, seriously. They know, sometimes intuitively, that some other data does not support the findings of some science-spokespersons’ claims. They do not have time to think further – far from finding what exactly is it that’s preventing their inner selves to accept the new theories. Matters are left there, waiting for another priest to express a different view, with a set of different data.

If a new scientific finding does not appear, the old one goes into text books, and is taught at school and college level as facts that are not to be questioned. It becomes a part of faith, a doctrine, passed on from generation to generation. That’s how deities have multiplied over the ages, and beliefs that came out of the “forest days” have become unquestionable facts: beliefs that are so ludicrous as which do not even provoke a laughter, but which can provoke a believer in them to murder an unbeliever who dare laugh at them, simply because they were fed to him with the mother’s milk.

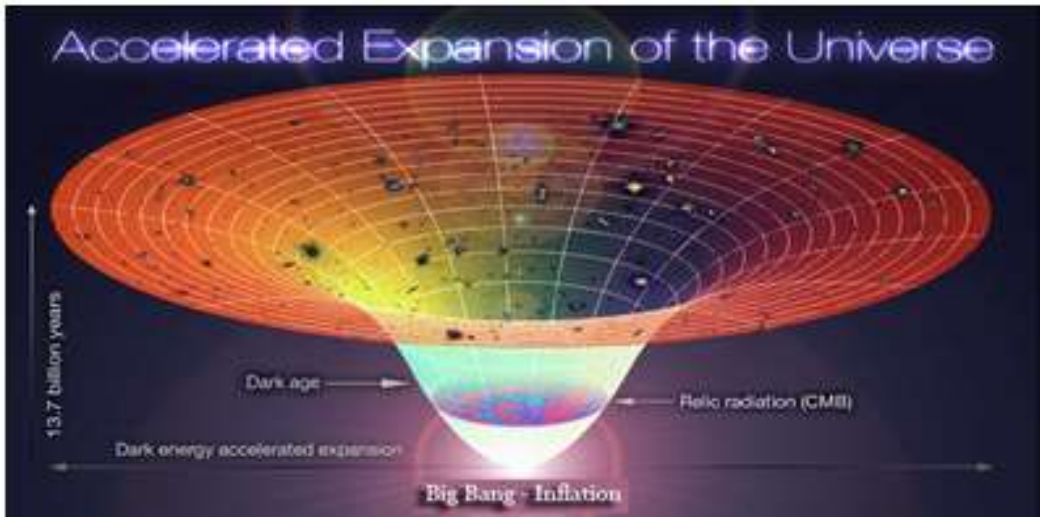
Meanwhile, science keeps advancing, but beliefs prevail, especially when Religion makes a comeback, and priests talk like scientists, confirming and re-establishing beliefs of the forest days, now remembered as the golden days, although a page of the past history will force a man to hang his head down.

The creation of the universe from nothing – which some scientists refer to as a ‘free lunch,’ is one dogma that has entered into the text books. A recent New scientist publication is en-

titled: “Nothing: From Absolute Zero to Cosmic Oblivion – Amazing Insight into Nothingness.” How did the scientists arrive at this conclusion?

Human question of when did their appearance start, led them to the question, when did the physical world start, and who started it? The answer could say where did they come from? And the fate of the universe would say when and where are the humans going to end? These are dangerous ideas. Therefore the scientists take charge:

were thought to be clouds of dust and some luminous objects, beyond the Milky Way galaxy, named nebulae by the cosmologists, were actually galaxies, beyond our own galaxy. There were millions and billions of them. He further observed that light rays received from distant galaxies suffered red-shift in the spectrum; and never a blue-shift. It didn't take long for the scientists to conclude that the visible universe was expanding; and that the expansion was accelerating.



“About 13.8 billion years ago, the universe we inhabit erupted, literally, out of nothing. It exploded in a titanic fireball, called the big-bang. Everything – all matter, energy, space and time – came into being at that instant.” (Nothing, ed. by Jeremy Webb, p. 6, Profile Books, 2013)

The idea of the big-bang received wide acceptance by 1950s. At that time, the world scientists held the belief that the universe was static: neither expanding nor contracting. After all, distance between the Sun and the Earth, or between the Moon and the Earth was not changing: neither increasing nor decreasing. Precise measurements taken over decades confirmed the visual observation.

But earlier in the 1920s, an American scientist called Edwin Hubble observed through the Mount Wilson telescope in California, that what

of nature) which is pushing all matter away. Its action is the opposite of gravitational force: not attractive, but repellant, sort of anti-gravity. It was named ‘dark force’ (or dark energy) since it cannot be detected by any means, but permeates the entire universe. This mysterious energy, which occupies about 70% of the universe, appears to be the cause of its expansion, so that every cluster of galaxies appears to be running away from all other clusters.

How long will the expansion of the universe go on? It is envisaged that one day, even if takes trillions of years, the gravitational force will overcome the force expanding it now, halt the expansion, and start pulling everything back to each other.

The finding that the world was expanding led to the idea that the universe was smaller yester-

What makes the universe expand and accelerate, has remained a mystery to this day for tens of thousands of scientists working on the problem. The conclusion for most has been that there appears to be a force (apart from the four forces

day, smaller than that, the day before yesterday, and so on; until you ended with a tiny fire ball.

“If the fabric of space is stretching, thereby increasing the distance between galaxies that are carried along on the cosmic flow, we can imagine running the evolution backward in time to learn about the origin of the universe. In reverse, the fabric of space shrinks, bringing all galaxies closer and closer to each other. As the fabric continues to shrink, the temperature rises unabated, as does the density of the primordial plasma. As we imagine running the clock backward from the age of the presently observed universe, about 15 billion years, the universe as we know it is crushed to an ever smaller size. The matter making up everything – every car, house, building, mountain on earth; the earth itself; the moon, Saturn; Jupiter and every other planet; the Sun and every other star in the Milky Way; the Andromeda Galaxy with its 100 billion stars and each and every other of the 100 billion galaxies – is squeezed by a cosmic vise to astounding density. And as the clock is turned back to ever earlier times, the whole of the cosmos is compressed to the size of an orange, a lemon, a pea, a grain of sand, and to yet tinier size still. Extrapolating all the way back to the “beginning,” the universe would appear to have begun as a point... in which all matter and energy is squeezed together to an unimaginable density and temperature. It is believed that a cosmic fireball, the big-bang, erupted from this volatile mixture spewing forth the seeds from which the universe as we know it evolved.”(Brian Greene, *The Elegant Universe*, Vintage Books, p. 82-83, 2000).

What would make the universe shrink to a point? It is gravity, a universal force. Einstein’s famous equation, helps chart the roll-back history: $E=mc^2$ – where E = energy, m = mass, and c is the speed of light, (186,000 km/second). So, if matter is crushed (let’s say a planet), it releases energy. If you keep crushing, the planet would disappear letting out energy in proportion to

the mass of the planet. If the universe is crushed, all matter will turn into energy. To remind: what will crush matter: gravity. At the time of the big-bang, (precisely, 10⁻⁴³ seconds after the bang), the density of matter was 1090 kg/cm³ the temperature close to 10³² Kelvin, the size was millions, millions, million times smaller than a sub-atomic particle.

That is how it began, and that is how it will end: to nothingness. What happens to the shrunken universe? It disappears, leaving only energy and gravitational force behind. The two cancel out each other, and you are left with nothing. The universe then is a free lunch. Writes Paul Davies:

A rough calculation of the (negative) energy of all this cosmic attraction reveals a remarkable result. Though enormous, it turns out to be very close to the same enormous (positive) energy contained in the material of all the stars. In other words, when the energy of all the matter in the stars is added to the gravitational energy of this same material, the answer comes out to be about zero. (Is the Universe a free lunch? Paul Davies, *The Independent*, 3rd March 1996)

He writes further:

“Physicists also observe subatomic particles suddenly coming into existence via quantum uncertainty. It is then a small conceptual step – albeit a huge leap in scale – to argue that the Universe of time and space likewise originated spontaneously from nothing as a result of quantum uncertainty.”

Paul Davies is neither the inventor of these ideas, nor alone in expressing them. Any book on cosmology, from the best part of the last century, down to this day, states these ideas. Hawking claimed this in one of his lectures, in a big hall, attended by intellectuals of all sorts.

However, there is a problem with the notion of there being ‘nothing’ at the start. Going downward from the present day universe, using the formula $E=mc^2$, to crush it to smaller and smaller size, we are left with two entities: energy

and gravity – all matter having been converted to energy. Now, energy is positive and gravity negative. They cancel out each other and we end up with a zero. Fine. Sounds good. The theory enters the text books. But it is not satisfactory to everyone! Nor the conclusion that:

“..science has done away with the need for a button-pushing creator who lives for eternity before making a Universe at a certain moment in time.” (Paul Davies, ref. citation)

To us, the calculation is only mathematically true. We came down from something to nothing, or zero. But for it to be true, we must start from nothing to something. That is, mathematically it must be demonstrated that from nothing comes out something. In other words, start from zero and go upwards. Show how $Zero = Energy + Gravity$, (and then the big-bang takes over).

Can that be done? If that cannot be done, and assuming that God does not exist, we are still left with the question: where did the universe come from? It may not be assumed though that we are not in agreement that the universe coming out of nothing. Our beliefs are derived from the unfailing Qur'an and Sunnah.

A thousand years before Galileo pointed his telescope towards the cosmos, Muslims were of belief that the universe emerged from nothing. The Qur'an and Sunnah emphasized this in no nebulous misty terms. The Qur'an says in half a dozen places: “His undertaking is that when He wishes a thing, He says to it, ‘Be’, and it is. (Ya Sin: 82). And, as in a report of Bukhari and others, when the Prophet was asked about the beginning of the affair, he replied, “(At the start) there was Allah, and nothing else apart from Him.” But that is a matter of faith; not science.

Scientists are eager to prove that matters of faith are disputable. So, they offer a set of calculations to show that the origin was a zero. Our objection is to the conclusion that now there is no “need for a button-pushing creator.” We believe that the contention by the cosmologists,

that the universe came out of nothing requiring no God, is not weak, but wrong.

There are other issues involved with reference to the ‘free-lunch’ claim. But they are not our main issues at the moment. Nor their argument that during laboratory experiments a sub-atomic particle can suddenly pop up, out of nothing, is worthy of consideration. Support for this argument is denied by the belief of the cosmologists that: time, space, forces of nature, energy etc.–all and everything –emerged spontaneously with the big-bang. To quote:

“This (emergence of time and space at the big-bang) is perhaps the most crucial and difficult aspect of the big-bang theory... it took Einstein’s theory of relativity to give the idea scientific respectability. The key feature of the theory of relativity is that space and time are part of the physical universe..” (Nothing, p. 47-48)

Another theory set forth by several scientists, speaks of the presence of a pair of particles, (particle-antiparticle), before the big-bang:

“Perhaps many quantum fluctuations occurred before the birth of our universe. Most of them quickly disappeared. But one lived sufficiently long and had the right conditions for inflation to have been initiated. Thereafter, the original tiny volume inflated by an enormous factor, and our macroscopic universe was born. The original particle-antiparticle pair (or pairs) may have subsequently annihilated each other.” (<https://www.astrosociety.org/publication/a-universe-from-nothing/>)

But, it is obvious that if this speculation is true, then the universe did not start with a zero. Therefore, to talk of a particle or particles popping out of space, as playing its crucial role in the creation process, contradicts that time, space and matter erupted with the big-bang. Our contention remains: demonstrate how energy and gravity come out of a zero – so that the concept of ‘God’ can be abandoned and the atheist’s mind put to rest.

YMD Nov-2018

Give Thanks

Habeeba Husain

Every time I walk up to the third floor of my apartment, I notice the wreath hanging on my downstairs neighbor's door. "Give Thanks" it reads all around in a pretty script, entangled with faux autumn leaves and seasonal pumpkins so very picturesque of the months in which we currently find ourselves. The message on the door, though hung specifically in this fall season reminds us of the attitude Muslims should have year round. It becomes especially helpful on the days I lug up grocery bags or run out of breath climbing the staircase—when a complaint tries to creep into my mind, my eyes fall right on the

wreath. We have far too much to be grateful for, and as one scholar put it, "I'm too blessed to be stressed!"

We can spend the rest of our lives counting our blessings, but the reality is, we can never innumerate all the bounties Allah bestowed upon us. Always giving thanks and being grateful can sometimes be easier said than done, and this is a reality we must face. There are difficulties that arise that are an inevitable part of life, losing a job or a loved one, getting into a car accident, misplacing one of your most cherished items, or not being able to attend a gathering. When

these kinds of hardships at all different levels of intensity show their faces in our lives, we must not forget the continuous blessings that are still raining down on us.

The Quran reminds people to be thankful on numerous occasions, oftentimes highlighting reasons as to why we should be as well. Below are just three verses about this very important virtue Muslims try to ingrain in themselves



every day in our lives.

“O you who have believed, eat from the good things which We have provided for you and be grateful to Allah if it is [indeed] Him that you worship”(Q. 2:172).

In this verse above, Allah names just one blessing He provides us, but what a blessing it is. Food! At the surface, this is an obvious blessing, as food provides us nourishment, joy, and togetherness. But when you really think deeply about where our sustenance comes from, the reasons to be thankful increase immensely. There are many steps that our food goes through before it makes it to our plates. Prior to entering our mouths, it had to first be prepared. Then working backwards before that, it had to be purchased, found in the store, delivered to the store, picked, grown, planted. There were so many steps and so many people involved in getting us a simple grain of rice! We had very little to do with it.

“And certainly We have established you in the earth and made in it means of livelihood for you; little it is that you give thanks” (Q. 7:10).

In this next verse, we see the word livelihood being mentioned. It is easy to get caught up in the mundaneness of our day-to-day jobs. In reality, our various professional positions are blessings given to us by God. They provide us our livelihood to take care of ourselves and our families with food, clothing, and shelter. Not only that, but often our jobs bring us a sense of worth and satisfaction.

“And Allah has extracted you from the wombs of your mothers not knowing a thing, and He made for you hearing and vision and intellect that perhaps you would be grateful” (Q. 16:78).

At the very first stage of our life—as tiny newborns—we are born without any knowledge of the world we just miraculously entered. Slowly but surely, we gain the skills to walk and to talk using the inherent blessings God provides. With our ears, our eyes, and our minds we ob-

serve this new environment around us, taking in all the details and developing through the grace of God. And this is only what happens after the baby is born—the formation of the baby inside the womb is another miracle and blessing entirely!

With the three verses mentioned above, we see some of the most basic blessings highlighted in the Quran. Our sustenance, our livelihood, and our senses. Allah draws our attention to these often overlooked aspects of our lives to make us reflect on all that we have to be grateful for. Muslims try to remind each other of these bounties bestowed upon us every second of every day, and the least we can do in return is give thanks.

When the Brakes Fail...

Every vehicle has a braking system which reduces the speed of the vehicle and allows it to come to a complete halt. This human body which is always on the move is daily faced by the fast moving sins and temptations. Modesty and shame form that much needed braking system in man. Without it, man will time and again be destroyed in head-on collisions and life threatening problems.

Music, magazines and movies have become part of a systematic effort to break down man’s braking system of modesty. When brakes fail, then that accidental glance meets up with broken homes and marriages. We need to keep our brakes serviced with good actions and pious company.



HARMS OF POLEMICAL DEBATING

Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi (ra)

Translated by Javed Iqbal

(Translator's Note: The following translation is of an Arabic piece by Hakim al-Ummah Mawlana Ashraf Ali Thanawi, may Allah have mercy on him, in which he has succinctly laid out the various objectives behind debating and pointed out the harms in each case. It provides a profound, insightful analysis of the debate culture which is in vogue more than ever before, concluding that such

Debating, with respect to its objective, is of a few types. This is because the objective is either:

(i) To make evident what is right, even if the opponent does not go quiet, in which case the debater will not concern himself with silencing him. In fact, when he sees stubbornness in him, he says: "For us are our deeds, and for you, your deeds. There is no argumentation between us and you. Allah will bring us together." [1] The Qur'an is filled with this type of debate and also calls towards it. Allah Most High says: "And if they dispute with you, say (to them), 'Allah is best aware of what you do.'" [2] I have named this beneficial point: Aversion to the Accustomed Manner of Debating (Al-Munafarah 'an Muta'araf al-Munazarah). This type is definitely praiseworthy, but it is non-existent in this era, except in very rare circumstances, which is essentially the same as non-existent. [3]

(ii) To silence the opponent, and this is also praiseworthy – provided the intention is good.

[4] However, this is dependent on the opponent becoming silent; if he is stubborn or a trouble-maker and does not have any shame, he will not be quiet. Thus, intending this objective is to intend something one has no power to achieve independently. One who has power through someone else's power is not powerful [in reality]. Thus, this is something non-volitional, and to intend a non-volitional matter is futile and tiresome. Hence, this cannot be an objective.

(iii) To silence the opponent and then this is actually achieved. However, because becoming silenced is not proof that this person who is totally silenced is wrong, this is also futile. In fact, it is harmful, because it suggests in the eyes of laymen that the one who has gone quiet is wrong. Hence, if such silence occurs at times from the people of truth, due to the opponent being more eloquent in expressing his evidence, laymen will take this as proof of their being wrong also. This is extremely harmful. [5]

(iv) To inform the people of the arguments of the opponents, to establish the truth and falsify the false: This is a form of arbitration, so how can an ignorant person be an arbitrator? Therefore, this is also futile. In fact, it is harmful, as one is essentially saying through one's action that ignorant people are capable of arbitrating. The harm of this is evident. If they seek a scholar as an arbitrator, the general habit, rather the definite habit, is that he will already believe in either side of the issue, in which case, how can one be sure that his fairness will supersede his own pre-belief? Hence, this is also futile.

Thus, it has become very clear that the accustomed manner of debating in our times is

totally void of any benefit, even if nobody agrees with us in this regard.[6]

But if someone asks: How will a seeker of the truth, in particular one who is confused, be guided? We say the path to this is that which is common throughout the Qur'an, namely that the truth is to be explained time and time again under different headings.[7] This is as Prophet Nuh (upon him be peace) said: "My Lord, I have called my people night and day... Then I called them loudly, and then I spoke to them in public and spoke to them in private." [8]

This is what Allah Most High indicated to, saying: "Surely, We have explained things in various ways in this Qur'an, so that they may

Got a Contact?

Sayyiduna 'Abdullah bin 'Abbaas (ra) narrates that Rasulullah (saws) said: "Protect the boundaries of Allah Ta'ala (by fulfilling His commands and refraining from what He has forbidden), you will find Him in front of you (at your assistance). Become acquainted with



Allah (i.e. become close to Him and develop a contact with Him by means of His obedience and constant remembrance) in ease, He will recognize you in times of difficulties." (Musnad Ahmad)

Whenever a problem arises, a person always tries to find a contact in "high places" to help him out of that difficulty. Allah, the Most High, is the contact and He alone can remove all difficulties. The biggest problem is that we have not developed our contact with Him, nor have we learnt to ask from Him. To develop this contact one will have to join the company of the pious, learned ones and learn the obedience and love of Allah from them.

‘Soon the



Will Become Like a Portion of a Black Night’

With our levels of Faith (Imaan) taking a trajectory dip, the trials (Fitnah) we face gather together even as a portion of a dark night, haunting the one who ventures out. The darkness will prevail until we hasten towards changing ourselves for the better, writes AMATUL HAKIM.

Abu Hurirah (ra) narrated, our Prophet (saws) said,

‘Hasten with good actions (during the time of Fitna); for Fitna is like a portion of dark night, (wherein) a man does the morning as a believer and but the evening like a Kafir, and the evening as a believer and the morning as a Kafir (so much so) that one of them will transact his religion for a portion of worldly wealth.’

Further Hasan Basri (ra) explained the hadith, ‘A man does morning as a believer and by evening he is a Kafir...’ as, a man believes in the morning that the blood, honour and wealth of another human are haram on him without any just reason, but, by evening, he considers it to be halaal.

This is exactly the situation of many Muslims

today. We believe lying, cheating, arrogance, jealousy, ridiculing others, narcissism or self-love are not part of Islam, but still indulge in it.

A Muslim is one who keeps up his words and upholds the trust, but, today, Muslims are known to break their promises without even a second thought.

Repercussions? A Muslim worker is refused employment because he lacks sincerity, a Muslim auto-driver is avoided because he demands more than the actual fare, houses are not rented to Muslim families because they will not abide by the formalities of the agreement. This is so much so that even a Muslim is reluctant to transact with another Muslim.

Apparently with our levels of Imaan taking a trajectory dip, the Fitna, or the trials we face, are like a portion of a dark night, haunting to the

one who ventures out. The darkness will prevail until we hasten towards changing ourselves, that is, towards good, as prophesied.

Islam is not just the outward appearance; what defines a Muslim is his character. If Kalimah of Tawheed, Salah, fasting, Zakat and Hajj are the periphery of the circle of Islam, good character is its core.

A Muslim without good character is more prone to lose his faith or Imaan during trials, like a hollow ball tearing up when bounced on a rough surface.

The foremost aspect in character building is sincerity, for our Prophet said, 'Religion is sincerity.' That is sincerity towards the Creator, His creation and towards oneself.

Sincerity as Explained by My Teacher

Signs of the absence of sincerity:

- Not having any intention before doing good action.
- Not being consistent in good work.
- Wanting everyone to know about one's good action, by blowing one's own trumpet.
- Not having a strong connection with Allah, and, thereby, complaining about difficulties to others. However, taking advice from a learned person regarding a problem is allowed.
- Expecting reward or token of thanks or a favour, for helping others.

Alib. Abu Talib (ra) is reported to have said, "One without sincerity will be lazy when alone and active/ enthusiastic when in a group. He is quick in an action when praised and procrastinates when unnoticed."

How to Develop Sincerity

1. Pause and think before any action; justify your action to yourself.
2. Be in the company of good people. The Companions (Sahaba) developed sincerity being in the company of our Prophet.
3. Be helpful and merciful towards the creation of Allah.

4. Remain humble all the time. Allah loves His slave when His slave shows humility towards Him and towards His creation. The more one submits to the command of Allah, the more one is raised in status, both in this world and the Hereafter.

Submitting to the Book of Allah

'Ali bin Husain (ra), also known by the title Zainul 'Aabideen, was the grandson of Sayyiduna 'Ali (ra) and the son of Sayyiduna Husain (ra).

On one occasion, Zainul 'Aabideen (ra) was performing wudhu while his slave girl was assisting him by pouring the water onto his limbs from a pitcher. As she was pouring the water, it so happened that the pitcher fell from her hand, striking Zainul 'Aabideen (ra) on his head and injuring him. On suffering the injury, Zainul 'Aabideen (ra) looked up at the slave girl (in anger).

The slave girl addressed him saying, "Allah mentions (while describing the people of taqwa):

And those who suppress their anger

As soon as he heard this, Zainul 'Aabideen (ra) responded, "I have suppressed my anger."

The slave girl then continued reciting the verse,

And those who forgive people

Hearing this, Zainul 'Aabideen (ra) submitted, "(I have forgiven you), may Allah forgive you."

Finally, the slave girl recited:

And Allah loves those who do good.

When he heard this, Zainul 'Aabideen (ra) replied, "Go, for I have set you free!"

(Shu'abul Imaan #7964)

The Problem With the Prophet's Birthday

Mohammad Ghilan

Humans are very interesting. There's not a single culture, contemporary or historical, except that they engaged in this odd practice of marking anniversaries to commemorate significant events. What is it about us that makes us so nostalgic to the past that we want to set aside special days to remember what happened on those days in history? That's not even the odd part. It's understandable that we would mark happy occasions in order for us to relive those special moments. But what's the deal with remembering tragedies? We deliberately mark our calendars to set aside days to be miserable using nothing but our memories of sad events – memories that are often distorted and quite unreliable and in many cases never even directly experienced. If it's about learning lessons from history, there must surely be another way to do so without combining it with misery. And what's the deal with setting days to celebrate our relationships as if throughout the whole year we're unaware of our parents and/or spouses' presence in our lives, and we need to be reminded of that through commercials that a chocolate box with a gift and a nice Hallmark card will make them forget about us taking them for granted all year long.

Every year Muslims need to go through the usual battle in the Bidah octagon. The Mawlid. Two sides that claim love of the Prophet peace be upon him dedicating their time and energy ex-

plaining why the other group is wrong. Sometimes there's civility, where each side will grant the other that their position is held out of love of the Prophet (saws). But too often we have speakers on this subject that will not let go until someone taps out in submission.

Judgment upon a matter is a branch from the tree of conceptualization. Everything in Islamic jurisprudence, Fiqh, revolves around this principle. Get the conceptualization wrong and it's your first class ticket to irrelevance city along with your ruling.

The problem about the Mawlid is the idea that it's a "religious practice" in a sense that a new ritual is added to Islam. No two Muslims, regardless of what stream of Islam they drink from, will disagree that the Mawlid as a "religious ritual" is an innovation that is unacceptable in Islam. The Beloved (saws) didn't do it. The Companions didn't do it. The Successors and Successors of the Successors didn't do it either. These are the best three generations whom the Beloved (saws) said about were the best of generations. If we're to be successful we must emulate them and walk in their footsteps. Case closed. And this is why the Mawlid IS a religious obligation.

Humans have a tendency to turn repeatable events into routine: a set of customary and often mechanically performed procedures or activi-

ties. We start performing tasks in a personal way, but sooner or later we switch into an impersonal mode. We can't help it. That's just how our brains work, and it's a good thing that they do it this way. Imagine having to think about the sequence of leg movements you have to perform every time you go down a set of stairs. In fact, if you do so now you'll actually find great difficulty and might trip. The brain performs repeatable actions best by automatizing their commands. The problem is that it doesn't distinguish between meaningful and meaningless tasks. Consciously trying to think about your legs going down the stairs might be harmful, but you most certainly have to be conscious of your repeatable actions in prayer if you don't want it rolled up and your face slapped with it after your Salam.

The Sunnah of the Beloved (saws) is something that every Muslim aspires to fulfill in all his or her actions. "Say: If you love God then follow me and God will love you."¹ One must follow in the footsteps of the Beloved (saws) to earn the love of God. The highest station one can achieve with God is to be one of His beloved servants. This cannot be achieved through impersonal adherence to routinized acts. The Sunnah is filled with meaning, and one cannot experience this unless they're actively engaged with their heart and mind when living it. This consciousness can only be attained when one's heart is connected to the Beloved (saws).

The purpose of the Mawlid is to break the inevitable turning of the Sunnah into a routine by re-establishing the withered connections between the heart of the believer and the Beloved (saws). It's a time when the Seerah (biography) is read, the Shama'il (description) is explained, and poems praising the Beloved (saws) are chanted. Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) was living the Sunnah, but it was the presence of the Beloved (saws) that made him feel more love for him than his own self. That second look Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) took upon the Beloved (saws) when he confirmed his immense love for him was a Mawlid. The jumping of Companions during battles in

front of the Beloved (saws) to protect him from flying arrows was a Mawlid. The taking of the Beloved's (saws) place in bed by Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) to save him from Quraysh's plot to kill him was a Mawlid. The migration of Bilal ibn Rabah (may Allah be pleased with him) from Medina after the passing of the Beloved (saws) because he was overwhelmed by the loss was a Mawlid. His flowing tears and inability to call the Adhan when he was asked after his return years later was a Mawlid. The yearning of Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) as he constantly said, "O how I miss the Messenger of God" was a Mawlid.

It's an innovation of the worst kind if the Mawlid is celebrated only once a year. The Mawlid must be celebrated as often as possible. There's a reason why we don't know the exact date of the Beloved's (saws) birth. It's not about the date. It's about the person. When the Mawlid celebrations turn into a single fixed time of the year that Muslims get together in order for them to "remember" the Beloved (saws) and "learn" about him, they miss the whole point. This is clearly manifested in the countdowns and excitement over the day. Instead of celebrating the birth, person, and mercy that is the Beloved (saws), it becomes a celebration of 12th of Rabi Al Awwal, a specific date that has never been agreed upon. This is not to say that we can't increase our dedication to learning about the Beloved (saws) and revivification of his Sunnah during this blessed month. Although we can't confirm the specific date with certainty, the majority of scholars do agree that Rabi Al-Awwal was the month in which the Beloved (saws) was born. But we must not lose sight of what the purpose of the Mawlid is.

The Mawlid is a time to rekindle the love. In a world where we've become more like programmed robots, the Mawlid is a chance to be humans as we reconnect our hearts to the ultimate human. The Mawlid is not a religious ritual. It's the life force that turns routine motions into what we all want to be on – the Sunnah of the Beloved (saws).

1. *Surah Al-Imran*, 3:33.

Islamic Society, Islamic Character

Mansoor Alam

The question: Is there a relationship between human character and human society? According to Erich Fromm:

-> The character structure of the average individual and the socio-economic structure of the society of which he or she is a part are interdependent.

-> The blending of individual psychical sphere and the socioeconomic structure is social character.

->The socioeconomic structure of a society molds the social character of its members.

-> The social character influences the socio-economic structure of society.

-> The social character sometimes acting as cement gives further stability to the social structure, or under special circumstances, acts as dynamite that tends to break up the social structure.

[Erich Fromm, TO HAVE OR TO BE?, Published by Continuum, 1977, page 109]

Creating a New Society requires New Minds

-> The relationship between social character and social structure is never static. It is a dynamic process. A change in either factor creates change in both.

-> Many political revolutionaries believe that one must first change the political and economic structure radically, and then, as a second and almost necessary step, the human mind will

change.

-> They think the new society will automatically produce the new human being. They do not see that the new elite, being motivated by the same character as the old one, will tend to create the conditions of the old society in the new sociopolitical institutions the change created. [Ibid, page 110]

Strong Urge for Religion

-> Religion is as old as the rise of self-consciousness in man. Social character must fulfill human being's religious needs. Religion provides a group-shared system of thought and action that offers the individual a frame of orientation and an object of devotion. [Ibid, page 110]

-> Plutarch (c. 46 – 120 AD, was a Greek historian), who flourished in the first century with extensive knowledge of the world of his time, affirms:

-> “In wandering over the earth, you can find cities without walls, without science, without rulers, without palaces, without treasures, without money, without gymnasium or theater, but a city without temples to gods, without prayer, oaths and prophecy, such a city no mortal has yet seen and will never see.”

Conditions for human change

-> We must recognize that we are suffering

and are aware that we are.

-> We must recognize the origin of our ill-being.

-> We must recognize that there is a way of overcoming our ill-being.

-> We must accept that in order to overcome our ill-being we must follow certain norms for living and change our present practice of life. [Ibid, page 137]

Creating Islamic Society

The Qur'an (more than 1400 years ago) mentioned that if a new society is to be created then the foremost prerequisite for this to happen is that there must be a change first in the "self" of human beings first. This means that a fundamental change must occur first in human personality (i.e., a fundamental change must occur in human psychology, in human behavior, in human outlook, in human mentality) before any change will occur in the larger community. In Erich Fromm's terminology, it means that a change in human social character must occur first before a consequent change occurs in society. The Quran provides the universal law for this change:

It is a fact that Allah will never change the condition of a people until they change what is in their self. (13:11).

A new society requires a profound change in human "self" first

-> The Quran says: that disintegrated and unbalanced selves Nafs Ammarah (12:53) produce corrupt society; that integrated and balanced selves Nafs Mutma-innah (89:27) produce peaceful and balanced society; that to reach that goal is a difficult and challenging process and requires overcoming wrong emotions by selves under constant tension called Nafs lawwamah (75:2).

-> Therefore, the Quran demands that Muslims must change their consciousness, their relative values, and their character first and only

then can a truly new society be built on universal Islamic values.

-> The corner stone of this society is universal justice and compassion. The Qur'an calls this by the term 'ADL WAL I'HSAN (16:90).

-> This is achieved by persons who want to willingly and consciously change their practice of life in accordance with the change in character they want to achieve.

The function of this new society is to encourage the emergence of new human beings whose character structure will exhibit the foremost Islamic value: the acquisition of knowledge. Acquiring and using knowledge is a sacred duty of Muslims. This is a Quranic imperative.

Quranic imperatives on acquiring knowledge

The Holy Quran puts the highest emphasis on the importance of acquiring knowledge. That knowledge has been at the core of the Islamic world from the very beginning as attested by (96:1-5). It says: "Read — for thy Sustainer is the Most Bountiful One who has taught (human) the use of the pen — taught humankind what he did not know!"

The Quran describes the Prophet (saws) as an imparter of knowledge to others (2:151). His famous prayer was: "Allah grant me knowledge of the ultimate nature of things".

In verse (39:9), the Quran rhetorically asks:

"Can they who know and they who do not know be deemed equal?" It exhorts believers to pray for advancement in knowledge. Further, the Quran exhorts believers not to pursue that of which they have no knowledge since God will hold them accountable for actions, which reflect a lack of knowledge. For those who have knowledge, the Quran says: "God will exalt by (many) degrees those of you who have attained to faith..." (58: 11).

According to Quranic perspective, knowledge is a prerequisite for the creation of a just

society in which authentic peace can prevail. The Quran emphasizes the importance of the pursuit of learning even at the time, and in the midst, of war. It says:

“With all this, it is not desirable that all of the believers take the field (in time of war). From within every group in their midst, some shall refrain from going to war, and shall devote themselves (instead) to acquiring a deeper knowledge of the Faith, and (thus be able to) teach their home-coming brethren, so that they (too) might guard themselves against evil” (9: 122).

Embodying the spirit of the Quran are some well-known ahaadith:

“The seeking of knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim” (Baihaqi, Mishkat);

“Searching for knowledge is compulsory for every Muslim male and Muslim female (Ibn Majah).

The attitude of Prophet Muhammad (saws) towards acquiring knowledge can be inferred from the fact that after the Battle of Badr (624 AD), he employed several captives from the Quraysh tribe to teach Muslims reading and writing — this service counted as their ransom. The Prophet (saws) instituted learning as an incumbent duty upon Muslims and this established a definite educational policy for Islam. The obligation to acquire knowledge was a concept that possessed religious urgency and was ready to play a prominent role in Islam.

Key values that Muslims must exhibit in their character are:

-> Willingness to give up all forms of emotional controls. Being controlled by emotion is like accepting one's emotion as god (45:23).

-> Security, sense of identity, and confidence based on faith in human dignity (17:70), and solidarity of all human beings (10:19) instead of desire to have, to possess, to control the world, and thus become the slave of possessions (102:1).

-> Accepting the fact that Allah created the Earth for the benefit all living beings (55:10, 11:6). The meaning to life must therefore come from fullest activity devoted to giving and sharing (2:215, 2:219) and not from hoarding and exploiting (104:2, 107:7).

-> Developing one's capacity for critical, un-sentimental thought (34:46).

-> Not deceiving others, but also not being deceived by others. [Khalifa 'Umar]

-> Keeping away from religion of commercialism and mechanical ritualism (2:41, 2:177, 5:44, and 16:95).

-> Noting that the Islamic society is neither patri-centric nor matri-centric but equi-centric (2:143).

Allama Iqbal sums it up beautifully in the following couplet:

*This is the goal of Nature; this is the secret of
being Muslim
Supremacy of Universal Brotherhood; abundance of affection*

“Indeed, Allah Ta'ala has bestowed a great favour on the Believers when He sent to them a Messenger from amongst themselves who recited to them the Quraan, taught them its laws, purified their souls and taught them the hikmah.” (Aal 'Imraan v164)

BATTLING DEPRESSION WITH THE QURAN

How?

A. Anwaar

Contrary to what humans would like to believe, life is not a bed of roses. It is a journey, where we stumble upon pain, calamities, heart-break, loss, desolation, and helplessness.

Sometimes, we find ourselves falling into an abyss of darkness. It is so deeply consuming that you think you might never come back up.

You try to paddle your way up, trying to get some air into your starved lungs, but you find yourself tired from the continuous struggle and eventually your limbs give out and you are stuck. Stuck and alone – without an escape.

That, in a nutshell, is what depression feels like.

How to Deal with Depression

Depression does not need a reason to exist. Sometimes it is just there, hanging around the corner, staring at us.

It can be exhausting and utterly draining on a person mentally and physically. Depression is not sadness. Sadness is temporary while depression is long-term and it is very much real.

However, for those of us who personally face these depressive demons on a daily basis, there is hope for us to overcome them.

Islam has equipped the believer with the essential tools to fight depression and recover from it. The greatest tool being the blessed Holy Quran itself.

From a psychological perspective, having a strong and healthy bond with Allah can directly

lead to better mental well-being.

This relationship with God needs to be built on unrelenting trust in Allah, His plans and His Will. Allah never forsakes His believers. If the believer trusts Allah blindly, Allah proves enough for him.

If you feel yourself drowning in depression, recite the Holy Quran more often.

One of the biggest causes of depression and anxiety is the fear of the unknown and the uncertainty of the future.

The feeling of not being in control of your circumstances or the events in your life can cause restlessness, desolation, and frustration.

By reciting the Quran, one is constantly reminded that it is only Allah who has control over all affairs and He has a plan for each and every one of us.

Every single thing that happens to us is part of a bigger and perfect plan that our Lord has for us. Ultimately, nothing is in our control. It is all in the hands of Allah, so why should we despair? When we know God is looking out for us and He has power over all things.

Upon reading the Quran, man is also reminded of the transitory nature of this life. Nothing is permanent in this world. This world is nothing but a platform of trials and tribulations for mankind which will eventually perish and a permanent world will emerge – that of Heaven and Hell.

Allah created this world to test us. And God

tests those He loves and He asks His faithful believers to bear those trials with patience and tawakkul.

Sometimes, these trials and tribulations are also a means to elevate the status of a believer and for the purpose of the expiation of his sins. If a believer bears the trials in this world with the intention of pleasing Allah, He promises eternal rewards in the Hereafter.

This life is created for hardship, loss, and disappointment. It is only our faith in Allah that can enable us to bear these worldly trials and keep ourselves focused on the ultimate goal of an eternal life in Paradise.

Through the recitation of the Quran, our hearts find ease. And we are reminded about the endless favors of Allah upon us.

At the end of the day, it is our faith in Allah that can keep us afloat in this world. The key is to trust in the power of Allah and His infinite

wisdom to know what is better for us and what is not. He loves us beyond measure. And He waits for us to rely on Him so He can give us beyond measure as well – in this world and the Hereafter.

Why Trials?

This world and its trials are all meant for one purpose: to bring us back to Him. Allah afflicts us with hardship so we may find solace in Him. He tests us so we may rely on Him to get us through it. And He sends calamities in our path so we may call for His help and His help alone.

He only wants His servants to remember Him and turn to Him and to not get lost in the rat race of this worldly life. And He wants man to realize his purpose of creation – to worship Him.

We should supplicate to Him with firm faith in His providence and His control over

everything. He will only decree what is best for us.

This serves as a wonderful example of a dua we should recite in order to ease the matter of our hearts and souls.

There is always hope for healing in Islam. Nothing is impossible for Allah and there is no abyss you can reach that is beyond His help.

The answer to depression lies in the words of Allah and His infinite wisdom. Trust Him, for He will never forsake you and He is the best of Planners!

Allah tells us in Quran 20:124

And whoever turns
away from My
Remembrance -
indeed, he will have
A Depressed Life



How to Start over after a life of sins?

Dina Muhammad

People are difficult sometimes. Right? If you had an argument with someone, and then you try to talk to them again, you'll feel like things are not the same anymore. They might not meet you with the same open arms and complete acceptance like before. And if you had several problems or downfalls with the same person, then that person might black-list you and make sure not to accept you back in his/her life because of your mistakes.

This is how we treat each other sometimes.

But this is NOT how Allah treats us!

Allah's Name is Ar-Rahman Ar-Raheem (The Continuously Merciful, The Especially Merciful), and He is indeed uniquely and exceedingly Merciful than any of His creation.

Look at this hadith...

Anas b. Malik reported that Allah's Messenger (saws) said:

"Verily, Allah is more pleased with the repentance of His slave than a person who has his camel in a waterless desert carrying his provision of food and drink and it is lost. He, having lost all hopes (to get that back), lies down in shade and is disappointed about his camel; when all of a sudden he finds that camel standing before him. He takes hold of its reins and then out of boundless joy blurts out: 'O Allah, You are my slave and I am Your Rubb'. He commits this mistake out of extreme joy". [Sahih Muslim]

This is actually saying that if you want to turn to Allah in repentance and you are embarrassed or ashamed of your sins and mistakes, Allah will never meet you with rejection or lack of trust. On the absolute contrary, He will be in extreme joy and He will be more pleased for you turning back to Him than you could ever imagine. Allah is telling you to never be embarrassed to come back to Him again and again and again, no matter how many times you have fallen or how long you have been away.

Remember this hadith?

Anas (ra) reported:

Messenger of Allah (saws) said,

"Allah, the Exalted, has said: 'O son of Adam, I forgive you as long as you pray to Me and hope for My forgiveness, whatever sins you have committed. O son of 'Adam, I do not care if your sins reach the height of the heaven, then you ask for my forgiveness, I would forgive you. O son of 'Adam, if you come to Me with an earth load of sins, and meet Me associating nothing to Me, I would match it with an earthload of forgiveness.'" [At- Tirmidhi]

This is part and parcel of this religion. No matter how many times you have sinned or how gravely you have sinned, you can ALWAYS come back to Allah in repentance, and He will always accept you...

"And it is He who accepts repentance from his

servants and pardons misdeeds, and He knows what you do.” (Qur’an 42: 25)

Now, this doesn’t mean that we should abuse this mercy and this kindness. This does not mean that we should indulge in wrongdoing, sinning, heedlessness and being completely distant from fulfilling our purpose in life.

Allah Glorified and Exalted created us for a purpose. He created us and honored us with the ability to learn about Him, so much so than any other creation; He honored us with the ability to love Him more so than any other creation.

To learn, love, worship Allah and fulfill our relationship with Him and our purpose in life, we need to be consciously following the perfect plan He provided for us.

We need to be consciously engaging in a relationship with Him. It doesn’t make sense to ignore Him for the most part of our lives and then meet Him suddenly on the Day of Judgment and expect to be popped into Paradise while we haven’t fulfilled our purpose of creation. Right?

The Ultimate Mercy of Allah is granted for those who are sincerely making an effort to rectify their affairs. You just have to be consciously and sincerely seeking Allah and His path.

Allah says:

“But indeed, I am the Perpetual Forgiver of whoever repents and believes and does righteousness and then continues in guidance.” (Qur’an 20: 82)

So the point is for us to be serious about our relationship with Allah and bettering ourselves.

If you do have this desire, but still engaged in sins, then what to do?

1. First thing is to stop the sin. Do not persist on committing the sin or going back to it. Make conscious, serious effort to stop and quit the sin.

2. Second, sincerely regret the sin. Regret is essential in showing sincerity. If you truly regret a wrongdoing, then you understand

why Allah told us that it is harmful and you desire to make things right and find the halal and pure means that Allah subhanu wa Ta’la prescribed instead.

3. Third, seek forgiveness of Allah and repent from the wrongdoing.

One of the ways to do that is to follow what was mentioned in this hadith:

The Messenger of Allah (saws) says:

“There is no one who commits a sin then purifies himself well (does wudoo’/ablution) and stands and prays two rak’ahs (two units of prayer), then asks Allah for forgiveness, but Allah will forgive him.

Then he recited this verse: ‘And those who, when they have committed Faahishah (illegal sexual intercourse) or wronged themselves with evil, remember Allah and ask forgiveness for their sins; — and none can forgive sins but Allah — and do not persist in what (wrong) they have done, while they know’ (Qur’an 3:135).” [Abi Dawood]

So perform this prayer of repentance.

4. Lastly, have a strong, sincere intention not to go back to the sin.

When you do the above successfully, you’ll have a fresh clean start, insha’Allah.

Now, you need to remember one very important point. Allah is your Ultimate Helper. No one can progress in this path without the Help and Mercy of Allah. There is a reason why we repeat the verse “It is You we worship and You we ask for help.” (Qur’an 1:5) in Surat Al Fatiha 17 times everyday during the five daily prayers.

It is Allah who ultimately helps us on His path. He is not a faraway Goal, He is our ally and Helper if we truly want to better ourselves.

Actually, the fact that you want to repent to Allah means that HE is The One who wants you to return to Him and He wants to accept your repentance! He says in the Qur’an:

“Then He turned to them so they could repent.

Indeed, Allah is the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful.” (Qur’an Surat AtTawba, Chapter 9: 118)

So always remember that so long as you are serious and sincere in seeking Him, He will facilitate and open doors for you.

Now, what are things to remember on this path as you start over?

1- Establishing prayer: this is the most important thing to work on right now. This is the daily connection and commitment you have with Allah Almighty. It keeps you focused and always link you with Him. Also prayer is the first thing that the person will be asked about on The Day of Judgement. So take it seriously and make sure you do it consistently and on time.

Remember that prayer and Qur’an are interrelated. Your knowledge of the Qur’an and understanding of it will increase your concentration and your presence in prayer and the degree to which you really feel connected to Allah Almighty. When we truly listen and concentrate on the words of Allah and the fact that we’re standing between His Hands in prayer, then we will feel the love of Allah, awe of His Power and Might, the fear of misguidance, remembrance of the Day of Judgment, the closeness of death... and all the experiences that Allah lets our hearts and bodies experience upon listening to His words.

So work on establishing your prayers.

2- Connecting more deeply with the Qur’an. Reading the Quran is a pleasure, guidance, cure, relief and mercy for the sincere seekers. Try to learn the meanings of what you read in depth. This will truly fill your heart and mind with awe of Allah and it will keep you focused on the straight path.

If there are Quranic tafsir sessions in your area, attend them. If there is an institute that organizes sessions on tadabbur Al Quran (pondering the meaning of the Quran), then seek this opportunity.

There are several institutions online as well that help greatly with that, like Bayyinah Tv and Bayyinah Institute, they have short and quite interesting explanations of the Quran that will help transform your relationship with it greatly. Try to look for the meaning and explanation and linguistic beauty of the Qur’an to enrich your experience and aid you in connecting further with the word of Allah.

3- Seek righteous companionship. It is a very important aspect of this path to have righteous friends that aid you on the path, remind you when you forget and uplift you when you feel down. See if you can volunteer in a nearby masjid, find charitable projects to volunteer in and help the poor/needy and the orphans. These are all activities that shall fill your time with goodness and introduce you to pious friends.

And don’t forget that first and foremost, you must seek Allah’s Help. Make sincere dua (supplication) to Allah to really help you and guide you and show you the way, and most definitely Allah is The Responsive and The Most Near.

So long as your soul is still in your body, there is still hope and Allah is opening the opportunities wide open for you. Seek the path of Allah because in it you will find ultimate and true peace, completion and satisfaction. You will find soothing pleasure, hope, meaning, purification and light that you haven’t experienced before through any other means. Allah gives us the path and the cure and His own Help and Support. So seek the opportunity and don’t waste it. Start now. Make dua to Allah and He will hear you and He will respond and He will open doors. Pray to Him constantly, listen to His words and understand them, be in the company or those who remember Him and seek Him, do righteous deeds as much as you can.... and you will find you entire life uplifted, filled with hope, meaning and purpose.

Just start and keep going... there is no hopelessness in this path.

The Loss of Reverence and Blessings

Mufti Shuaibullah Khan

Abu Hurairah (ra) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (saws) said,

“If the people of my community ever come to attach a lot of significance to this material world, the awe-inspiring effect of Islam will be taken away from them. And if they ever abandon the task of enjoining what is good and forbidding what is wrong, they will be deprived of the blessings of divine revelations. And if they start to curse one another, they will be degraded in the sight of Allah.”

Deprivation of Awe and Reverence

In this hadith, three types of crimes and consequently three punishments for them have been put forth. The first is that when this Ummah begins to attach much significance to this world and material possessions become a token of love and respect, then the awe and glory of Islam will be snatched from them.

Hakīm al-Tirmidhī comments:

The first condition of Islam is to surrender oneself to Allah Almighty, and surrendering to Allah means to sacrifice oneself for the pleasure of Al-

lah (SWT). If a person instead attaches importance to a thing that is really low in the sight of Allah, then one's status of being a true servant of Allah ends and such a person would never be able to sacrifice oneself for Allah Almighty. When the inner self becomes contaminated due to such emotions, the awe and respect will continue vanishing. The reason is that when a person looks upon the world with respect, then he naturally prefers the rights of worldly affairs to those of Allah Almighty. The respect towards the rights of Allah and the respect towards the mundane affairs may not be combined in

a single person's heart. However, the person who surrenders himself to Allah with all his concentration and starts sacrificing it for him, then he becomes of the servants of Allah, His dear and near servants and chosen friends. As a result, awe and dignity [emanate from him] just as a chosen servant of a king attracts awe and dignity for his deep relation to the king. In the same manner, dignity, awe, and respect are clearly seen on the faces of the chosen servants of Allah. However, when one ceases to revere the rights of Allah giving extra preference to the material things, then awe will be taken away from them for they no longer remain the true servants of Allah; rather they are servants of their desires and enslaved to materialism and lust. (Nawādir al-Usūl fī Ma'rifat Ahādīth al-Rasūl, 2:270)

In brief, when the Muslim Ummah is enslaved to riches and materialism, and start to attach much more importance to mundane affairs, then the awe of Islam will be taken away from them. The reason is that they no longer remain true servants of Allah due to their glorifying of worldly possessions. Awe is conferred upon the true servants of the king who are attached to him.

And this virtue may only be obtained when one deems the king as great and supreme, and by ignoring everything except the king. But when this Ummah contrarily deemed the worldly affairs as great and significant, it naturally committed a violation in its relationship with Allah. Therefore it no longer remains as chosen and dear to Him. The punishment inflicted upon it – as a result of this – is becoming degraded and imprecated by others and being deprived of all glory and respect.

Dear Muslims, you should think seriously. Is not the majority of the Ummah glorifying wealth and riches deeming it to be the standard of respect and disrespect? Are not the worldly posts and offices, certificates and degrees, being given more importance and considered to be the criterion of lowliness and greatness? Is not the majority of our community involved in obtaining material benefits by hook or by crook and satisfying their lusts like the unbelievers do from morning till evening? Even the prayer is not given importance by the Muslims. When the Muslims ceased to give proper respect to the rights of Allah, they were made [targets of insult] and deemed ignoble in the eyes of the other nations. This is the sum of the prophecy of the Messenger of Allah (saws) as mentioned in the hadith.

Deprivation of the Blessings of Revelation

The second point mentioned in the hadith is that when the Muslim Ummah ceases to fulfill the duty of enjoining good and forbidding evil then it will be left deprived of the blessings of revelation.

In fact, the duty of enjoining good and forbidding evil is something with which the prophets were tasked. The progress of the religion completely depends upon this. On account of enjoining good, the commandments of religion and its beautiful teachings remain safe and intact, whereas the duty of forbidding evil keeps the human society free from ills, innovations, alterations, and interpolations. If this duty is unfulfilled, then neither the beauties of religion will be brought to

the notice of the public nor the religion could be preserved. When the duty of enjoining good and forbidding evil ceases, insight into religion is lost and the light of the heart dims. The sense of distinguishing the right from the wrong disappears. Even the sense of distinguishing Īmān from kufr, Sunnah from bid'ah, the right from the wrong no remains.

Hakīm al-Tirmidhī further states:

Even though a person will recite the Qur'an and revelation, nothing will of its true teachings will enter his ears and he will be left deprived of its true understanding. He will have a good knowledge of the lexicon, high expertise in the commentary of the Qur'an, well versed in the fine subjects and subtle points, but despite all these he will be completely careless of the promises and punishments mentioned within them. These are the blessings of revelation which he will be deprived of. (Nawādir al-Usūl, 2: 271)

In brief, people will be unable to draw lessons from the Qur'an in order that they be delighted with glad tidings and fearful of the punishments.

Curse and Abuse – A Cause of Being Degraded by Allah

The last prophecy mentioned in the hadith is that when the individuals of this Ummah begin to curse each other, they will be degraded in the sight of Allah.

The reason is that cursing and abusing each other comes as a result of hatred and spite towards each other and [competing with one] another in worldly affairs. These are the things that degrade a person in the sight of Allah. And the person who is degraded in the sight of Allah is precluded from the protection of Allah which directly or indirectly results in many religious and worldly tribulations. (Nawādir al-Usūl, 271: 2)

It is a pity that this tribulation has gripped our society and everyone feels free to abuse and curse others which has resulted in their degradation in the sight of Allah.

Courtesy: Islamic Vision Monthly

The Simplicity of the Prophet (saws)



Whether you live in a “first world” country or not, everyone has problems. As humans we have a constant want. No matter how wealthy one becomes, the itch to want more does not go away. The Prophet Muhammad (saws) was a simple man. He ate from whatever was available, sat on the floor without hesitation, did not require salutes from an army, and was not one who chased the material of this world. One day a man was so nervous to meet the Prophet Muhammad (saws). The Prophet responded:

“Do not trouble yourself! Indeed I am not a king. Rather I am merely the son of a Qurayshi woman who eats dry meat.” (Ibn Maja).

He always emphasized his humanity and admonished people who over-revered him. He said:

“Do not over praise me as the Christians over-praised Jesus the son of Maryam. Indeed, I am only a slave. So call me the Slave of Allah and His Messenger.” (Bukhari).

The Prophet was not one who chased this world, rather he found joy in being among those who were less fortunate. Being in the presence of the poor, orphans, and weak has an impact on the heart and the way one views the world. It creates a sense of minimalism and thankfulness for the simple things in life that most take for granted. The Prophet (saws)

said:

“My Lord – the Mighty and Majestic – gave me the choice that the valley of Makkah be filled with gold, but I said: No! O Lord. However, grant food to me one day, and hunger the day after. So when I am hungry I humble myself before You and remember You, and when I am full, I am grateful to You.” (Tirmidhi).

The Prophet’s simplicity did not disappear when he became the undisputed leader of the Arabian peninsula at the end of his Prophetic career. His Companion Umar once visited him and saw him sleeping on a mat of branches. Umar could not hold back his tears and stated: O Messenger of Allah, how can we allow you to live like this? Look at the kings of Roman, Persia. Look at how they live. Surely O Messenger of Allah, you deserve better. The Prophet (saws) responded:

O Umar, is this why we are here for? O Umar, aren’t you happy that they have this ‘Dunia’ (this life) and we have the ‘Akhira’ (the after-life)? (Bukhari).

There is more to life than the gathering of material things. The example of the Prophet Muhammad (saws) teaches us that materialistic things are not prohibited, but they should not hinder us from our ultimate purpose.

We are not in this world forever, we came in with nothing and will leave with nothing. The Prophet Muhammad (saws) stated:

“A wise man is the one who calls himself to account (and refrains from doing evil deeds) and does noble deeds to benefit him after death; and the foolish person is the one who subdues himself to his temptations and desires and seeks from Allah the fulfillment of his vain desires.” (Tirmidhi)

He also said:

“Remember the destroyer of worldly pleasures (death) frequently; none will remember it (meaning death) while in hardship but will feel ease and while at ease but will feel disturbed.” (Tirmidhi)

The remembrance of death puts everything into perspective. The things we bicker over, the amount of money in our bank account, our status, entertainment, and egos become so insignificant. No matter how much you beautify your face and hair every morning, you will one day sleep in the dirt. No matter how much you beautify yourself in clothes, you will one day be buried in a white shroud. No matter how

much you love being around people, you will one day be buried all alone. Think to yourself, what am I doing here? What is my ultimate goal in this short life? What will happen after I die? What legacy will I leave behind? Remembering death helps us live a life based on the things that really matter, our relationship with God and our loved ones. Remembering death transforms one to be selfless and always looking to benefit others, even when there seems to be no point to it. The Prophet (saws) said:

“If the Final Hour comes while you have a palm-cutting in your hands and it is possible to plant it before the Hour comes, you should plant it.” (Ahmad)

Ask yourself, what is it that you really need in life? What are the most important things to you? Put down your electronic device and the insignificant things that are distracting you from what is really important to you. The greatest gift you have been given is life, take a moment and reconnect with God your Creator. Islam is the straight path that leads one directly to God. Want to know more? Call

Source: WhyIslam.



I Do Not Know



Abdul Fattah

Abdullah ibn ‘Umar (ra) says: “Knowledge is of three types: the book that is forever speaking (Qur’an), an established sunnah, and ‘I do not know.”[1]

In his explanation to this statement, al-Munāwi (ra) says: “It is learnt from this hadith that it is a duty of an ‘Ālim that if he does not know the answer to a question, he should say ‘I do not know’, or, ‘I am not certain’, or, ‘I have no knowledge thereof’, or, ‘Allah knows best’. If a person is asked a question and he replies, ‘I do not know’, this does not lower his rank, as some ignorant people assume. This is because the ignorance of a qualified ‘Ālim with regard to certain matters does not harm him. Rather, his saying, ‘I do not know’, raises his rank because it is proof of his great status, the strength of his dīn, the fear of his Sustainer, the purity of his heart, the perfection of his recognition [of Allah] and the goodness of his intention.”

“It is a person whose religiosity is weak and whose recognition [of Allah] is little who will scorn such a statement. This is because he fears a drop in his status in the eyes of those who are present but does not fear a drop in his status in the sight of the Sustainer of the worlds. This is an act of ignorance and weakness in din.”[2]

The statement, “I do not know” and “I have

no knowledge” have thus been recorded with regards to the four Imams, the four rightly guided caliphs, in fact, even from Rasulullah (saws) and Jibrā’īl (as).

Imam Abu ‘l-Hasan al-Māwardi (ra) says: “Since there is no way whatsoever of encompassing all knowledge, there is no shame in not knowing some of it. Since there is no shame in not knowing some of it, you should not feel shy to say: ‘I do not know’, with regard to what you do not know.” [3]

Saying “I Do Not Know” Is Half Of Knowledge

Imam al-Ghazzālī (ra) says: “The person who remains silent when he does not know—and he does this solely for Allah—is no lesser in reward than the person who speaks. This is because admitting ignorance is more difficult on the soul.”

Abu Tālib Makki (ra) says: “This is because the beauty of a person remaining silent for the sake of Allah out of piety is like the beauty of a person who speaks of knowledge for the sake of Allah willingly.” [4]

Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr (ra) narrates from someone of knowledge who said: “Learn to say, ‘I do not know’, and do not learn to say: ‘I know’. This is because if you say: ‘I do not know’, they will teach you till you know. But if you say, ‘I know’,

they will continue questioning you till you have no answer.” [5]

Abu Khaythamah al-Nasā’ī (ra) narrates on the authority of ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, who said: “It is part of knowledge for a person who does not know, to say Allah knows best.” [6]

Ibrahim al-Nakha’ī (ra) asked a question to ‘Āmir al-Sha’bī (ra), who was a great Imam and a great scholar from among the Tābi’īn (followers). So the latter replied: ‘I do not know.’ On hearing this, Ibrahim al-Nakha’ī (ra) said: “I take an oath by Allah that this is a true ‘Ālim—he was asked about something which he did not

know and he said: ‘I do not know.’”

[1] Al-Dāraqutni; Gharā’ib Malik. Al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī: *Asma man rawā ‘an Mālik. Abu Dāwūd: Kitāb al-Farā’id*, Vol 3, p.164. Ibn Mājah: *in the introduction to his sunan*, chapter eight.

[2] Al-Munāwi: *Fayd al-Qadīr bi Sharh al-Jāmi’ al-Saghīr*, Vol 4, pp. 387-388

[3] Al-Māwardī: *Adab al-Dunya wa al-Dīn*, p. 82 as quoted in *Sharh al-Ihya*, Vol 1 p. 394 of *al-Zabīdī*

[4] Al-Ghazzālī: *al-Ihyā*, Vol 1, p. 69

[5] Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *Jāmi’ Bayān al-‘Ilm*, Vol 2, p. 55

[6] Abu Khaythamah al-Nasā’ī: *Kitāb al-‘Ilm*, p. 120

Personally Giving to the Poor

(Haarithah bin Nu’maan [radhiyallahu ‘anhu]

At some point in his life, Sayyiduna Haarithah bin Nu’maan (ra) lost his sight. After losing his sight, he would place a basket filled with dates and other similar items near his musalla, and also had a string tied between his musalla and the door of his home.

When any beggar would knock on the door of Haarithah (ra), he would take some dates from the basket and then use the string to find his way to the door of his home where the beggar awaited him. In this manner, he would ensure that he personally gave the beggar something from his own hand.

When his family would see him undertaking so much of difficulty to give the sadaqah to the beggar, they would pity him and say, “We will give the charity to the beggar on your behalf!” However, he would insist on personally giving the sadaqah to the beggar and would say, “I heard Rasulullah (saws) mention, ‘Giving something to a beggar with your own hand (is an action that) saves from an evil death’.”

(Tabraani – Majma‘uz Zawaa'id #4683)

How *Optimism* will change your *life*

Monique Hassan

We have all heard the expression, is the glass half full or half empty. How you perceive it tells you something about your own perception on life. Do you choose to be optimistic and feel gratitude for the half full glass or do you choose pessimism and feel disappointment that the glass is half empty. This glass can represent your career, your marriage and even your faith.

Optimism is more than just having a sunny disposition. It embodies an attitude of perseverance, patience and not giving up in the face of difficulty. An optimistic person will notice opportunities instead of focusing on the hardships. This all describes positive thinking pat-

terns which in turn makes your emotions more stable. This cycle of positive thought patterns and emotions will undoubtedly lead to better behaviors.

Can you be Overly Optimistic?

Some will say that being optimistic opens people up for disappointment and greater let downs. While that can be true to an extent, if you actively try to bring optimism into your life it gives you more resilience when faced with hardship. We know that even a test or difficulty can have great reward and outcomes in the end. Focusing on that end result and having patience

is more beneficial than focusing on the hardship.

“For indeed, with hardship [will be] ease” [Quran 94:5]

This is not to say that we should be unrealistic and always expect rainbows and kittens, sometimes hardships will come into your life. It is healthy to be logical and acknowledge risks



associated with your actions. Ideally you should strive for optimistic thought patterns that are also rational. I am not advocating for grandiose illusions that you will become a millionaire overnight and have the perfect marriage all because you chose to see the glass as half-full, that is not realistic.

Anxiety and Optimism

If we think about anxiety, we can summarize that as fear of the unknown which can hinder someone's ability to function when not controlled. Anxiety disorders hold people back from going after their dreams because they are so afraid to fail that they don't even try.

An optimist is more likely to pursue their ambitions because of their positive outlook; they see opportunity and believe they can achieve it. We like to know we are right and often encounter self-fulfilling prophecies, which simply means we alter our behavior and thought patterns in order to cause those self-expectations to come true.

For example, an optimistic teacher expects a student to get an A on the exam so they spend extra time helping them study which results in them getting an A. On the other side of that, a pessimistic teacher may expect a student to perform poorly so they don't pay them much attention in class which results in a lower grade. We are not actually predicting anything; we are altering our own behaviors in order to make those expectations a reality.

Now imagine if you expected yourself to succeed at work, do you think this would cause you to work harder? What if you expected your marriage to fail, would you self-sabotage without realizing it just to prove yourself right?

Impact of Optimism

When someone decides to take steps forward to increase their optimism, they are choosing to bring more positivity and gratefulness into their life. If you take on an optimistic perspec-

tive when failure happens, instead of becoming defeated you will have the power to see that as a temporary setback and even a lesson. If you have ever heard of failing forward, that is an optimistic mindset.

You can even expect physical health benefits from increased optimism. Studies show that pessimistic people are at a higher risk for hypertension, a hindered immune system and some even claim a reduced life span. It makes logical sense that choosing to see the world with more positivity will lower health risks associated with stress.

You increase your chances of success. The person who goes into a job interview second guessing themselves will not come off as competent to the manager, but the optimistic interviewee that knows they are qualified are more likely to exude confidence and garner trust from the manager.

Your marriage can even increase in happiness if you approach everyday as a blessing to be with them and have optimistic views for your future together. Your wife or husband would feel happier if they get a sense of positivity and happiness from you instead of negative comments.

Tips to Increase Optimism

Fake it till you make it. Even if you are unsure of your abilities, do your best and tell yourself that you can achieve success. Keep trying and do it with a smile. The more you believe you can achieve success, the more likely you will.

Avoid negative/pessimistic people as much as you can. The social circles you choose to be around will impact your thought patterns and behaviors. It is not easy to be an optimistic in a room full of negative-nancies. Even your faith can be impacted by those you choose to keep as friends.

Man follows his friend's religion, you should be careful who you take for friends. [At-Tirmidhi and Abu Dawud]

Focus on what you can change. I have al-

ways liked the expression don't cry over spilt milk. Which simply means, if you can't change something then don't let it bring down your mood. Focus on the things you can positively impact and let the rest go.

Eliminate negative self-talk. The next time you hear yourself saying "I can't..." stop yourself and rephrase that to "I can because..." or "I will try my best". This goes back to self-fulfilling prophecies; don't set yourself up for failure by thinking you will not succeed before you even try.

Exercise gratitude daily. Every evening after maghrib take a moment to reflect on 3 positive things from your day. Allow yourself to feel gratitude and say Alhamdulillah after each one.

Final Thoughts

We know that nothing is too difficult or out of grasp for Allah (most glorified and exalted), taking time to really reflect on this reminds us that we can make duaa for anything as long as it is just and in line with our faith.

His command is only when He intends a thing that He says to it, "Be," and it is. [Quran 36:82]

How can we not feel optimism and hope when we are servants of the one that created everything and has ultimate power over everything.

Cont'd from page 46

crudely sung recently, 'Don't you wish your girlfriend was hot like me?'

What?!

What is this women and her ilk saying??

What are they implying??

What are they doing to their sisters in humanity??!

So many poor girls, eroding themselves physically and mentally as they watch with jealousy and anxiety their partners ogle singers like this. Have the same thing occur to these women, these 'idols'; have their partners swoon over another similarly attired, and witness their reaction! And when their daughters are molested by men they themselves, or women like them, have aroused, will they reflect?

Will they act?

Will society act?

Yeah, we see it reacting: ban the burqa!

It just amazes me how many women especially, despise my choice of dress. Yet, would they rather their husband's secretary to be dressed like me or otherwise?

Would they rather the waitress serving the table at their anniversary dinner, be dressed like me or otherwise?

Is it me and my sisters who are turning their husband's head, or attracting their boyfriends??

Is it me and my sisters who have led their daughters to anorexia, or their sons to pornography?

Is it me and my sisters whose bodies and faces solicit their husband's/boyfriend's attention on every corner? Is it me and my sisters who have aroused that man to rape or harass their sisters?

Whose mode of 'dress' is truly oppressive and harmful to women??

So now I've spoken, and although I am one, I speak on behalf of hundreds. I've explained to you that the majority of us have chosen this mode of dress, especially in the West. I have told you that we love it, we want it, and I've exemplified for you the inherent good in it. I've discussed here the issue of niqaab based on the suggestion that it is oppressive, or harmful to society, as this is the main reason stated by the French for the ban. When it comes to other issues of security and communication, then please see

<http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/07/11/veiled-threats/> for an excellent refutation of these arguments.

So to those of you who really are so concerned about 'liberating' me, then you will listen to what I have said, and let me and

A VOICE BEHIND A VEIL

Khadija N Arbee

I am a muslim women. I wear the niqaab (face veil).

I'm one of those to whom the new law in France would apply. I'm one of the ones being discussed by politicians, human rights groups and the media.

I'm one of those whom many feel the need to liberate.

I'm one of those you may think is oppressed.

I'm one of those many of you detest the sight of...

I'm one of those whom you may believe is uneducated; one of the ones you may think has no voice.

But I do. So let me speak.

I am not Arab, Asian or even African. I am Australian. No, not 'first generation', 'second generation', or an immigrant. On my mother's side, I'm of French-Canadian descent, and on my father's side; British. I grew up as a Christian, and attended church occasionally. I was in the school swim team, and district netball team. I holidayed with my family in the summer on the Gold Coast, and I'm educated. I have a university degree.

When I was 18 years of age I was introduced to Islam. I studied it, and accepted it a year and a half later. By the time I reached 20, I was wearing the headscarf, and after I married I donned the niqaab.

Because of my husband? No.

My husband did not want me to wear it, although his mother and sister do, and out of respect for his wishes I didn't do so for two years. But I wanted to, and eventually did, and knowing it to be in line with our religion, my husband knew he had no authority to prevent me, and he now greatly admires my strength.

Then, I wore it because of my father? No. He's a catholic.

Because of my brother? Nope, haven't got one.

My uncle? He's an atheist.

Then because of my son? My eldest is only 8 years old. Then why??

Because I want to, that's why.

And seeing as though my niqaab does not hurt anyone, that should be sufficient reason for all of you liberals of a liberal society; I should be able to finish my discussion right here. But although it may be so for any other style of dress, it isn't enough when it comes to niqaab for some reason. You want more. So I will continue.

What makes me want to then? *Two things: Faith and experience.*

Faith? Yeah, faith. Faith in my Creator, faith in His decisions, faith in Islam. A deep faith. Many wander at the faith of Muslims, at their conviction and their commitment. It's a faith, that if you are not Muslim, is hard to explain or describe. The scripture of Islam, the Qur'an has scientific miracles in it, such that have cap-

tivated scientists globally, leading many to accept Islam. Moreover, the Qur'an has not been changed in over a thousand years, since it was revealed; not one letter moved from its place. I dare say there isn't a religious scripture like it, and this lends a clue as to the root of such faith.

In the Qur'an, Allah Ta'ala tells us to cover ourselves, 'so as to be known, but not molested'. So our covering is a protection; a liberation.

Protection? you ask. Liberation? From what?

This is where I move on to my second reason for veiling. Like I said, I grew up in a Western secular society, in true Western secular style. I dressed secular, lived secular, and enjoyed all the 'liberties' of such a society. Did I feel liberated, free? Suffice to say, we were taught we were, so I never thought to think otherwise. It wasn't until I became Muslim, and started covering, that I really felt liberated, and realised, before that I wasn't.

Yet, time and time again we hear it said that we Muslim women are forced to veil, are oppressed; treated by our men folk as nothing more than 'objects.' And that niqaab, burqa, hijab; whatever term you use, is a form of 'imprisonment'.

But what about the imprisonment of anxiety and depression?

What about the imprisonment of anorexia and bulimia?

What about the imprisonment of frequent rigorous exercise routines?

What about the imprisonment of always feeling the need to look like the super-model on the cover of Cosmo, or the pop-singer in the music video?

What about the slavery to fashion?

What about the entrapment of jealousy??

How many women waste their hard-earned money, destroy their physical and mental health, expose their bodies to vulnerability, abuse and extortion in order to..... in order to what??

In order to gain approval and praise. *Who's

approval and praise? Men's.*

And yes, it seems even other women too. So it seems non-Muslim women are not only slaves to men, but slaves to society as a whole.

Before you scream your disagreement, which many of you may do as a knee-jerk reaction to being told you're also oppressed, stop and think. Look around you, contemplate society today, and its values, its aspirations, its goals, its direction, its past-times, its hobbies....

What good has it done for women to doff more and more clothing?

What good has it done for images of uncovered made-up women to be plastered on every billboard and magazine, on the TV, in the movies, and on the net?

Has it really brought any good for women?

The women in the images may aptly feel good about themselves for a while, but what does it mean for every other women?

Women who look upon these images usually become anxious, jealous, unsure and critical of themselves, or all of these things. Many men who view them will become aroused, or even unhappy, less satisfied with the partners they already have. What can, and does this lead to?

Cheating, dumping, chastisement, and even harassment of other women, and even children by, men who cannot find a legitimate outlet for their constant arousal. And yes, I can hear some of you; 'then the men must control themselves!' Frankly speaking that argument is well spent, not to mention futile, as most men are, inherently, only able to react to that, the same way a hungry lion would react if thrown a juicy piece of steak, and told not to eat it....

Do the uncovered women captured in these images and industries, or parading around, realise or even care how many young girls are starving, purging and stressing themselves trying to mirror their image? No.

It seems they even take perverse pleasure in it. One barely-dressed singer even boldly and

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Appeal

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