
Islam and Children



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Introduction



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The Prophet Muhammad (s) said: “Every one of your (people) is responsible, and everyone is responsible for whatever falls under his responsibility. A man is like a shepherd of his own family, and he is responsible for them” (Bukhari and Muslim).

The Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace) said, “When a Muslim dies, his actions are cut off from him except from three, continual charity (sadaqa jariya), knowledge he benefited from or a righteous child who supplicates for him” [Muslim]

The biggest flaw in modern education is there reduction of knowledge and wisdom into facts and lists of points on a piece of paper, a person through life tries to gain wisdom about everything in it, and wisdom on any topic is only gained by acquiring much knowledge about it, yet modern education stops teaching matters at points, facts and lists.

When knowledge is reduced to facts it quickly becomes a list of points to be memorized and the wisdom behind anything you do is lost, so all the acts we do in the religion become a hollow mindless shell of what they used to be because a person doesn't know why he is doing anything, how can you cure the heart of sickness if you can't involve your heart in what you are doing by motivating it with the wisdom behind the act, and for this you need to know why you are doing it.

It is for this reason the book is structured this way, we can teach our children lists of points on a piece of paper which we can read from any other book, but with this book we will be able to explain to them why we do everything in Islam.

The Book has three parts, the first explains the wisdom behind different things in the religion and this is based of my work in "The Islamic Journal", which you can find at my website Ghayb.com, then it talks about raising children and this is based of others work and the last section deals with the Pillars of Islam, why we follow them and what we try to achieve with them, they are from the work of Imam al Ghazali found in the book "Inner Dimensions Of Islamic Worship" and cover Prayer, Zakat, Sawm, Hajj, the Night prayer and other acts of Ibadah (worship), they are very deep and the sum of Islam's wisdom.

After all this we will be able to teach children the most important things in Islam when they get older or even just give them this book, wisdom is more important than anything else we can give them and Allah said about it in the Quran:

“He granteth wisdom to whom He pleaseth; and he to whom wisdom is granted receiveth indeed a benefit overflowing; but none will grasp the Message but men of understanding.”(2:269)

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1

The Prophet's Mission and The Significance Of Knowledge

The Messenger of Allah (saws) said “I did not see any evil but I warned you about it, and I did not see any good but I guided you to it” it was the prophets (saws) role to see and discover the evil present in creation and in the actions of man, and Jinn, then to warn his Ummah (people) about them, and it was his role to see and discover the good present in creation and the actions of man, and Jinn, then to guide His Ummah to it, it was also his role to be conscious of Allah so He could see His signs in the Heavens and the Earth for us, He (saws) earned His (saws) rank with Allah before our creation so His (saws) life was for Allah and Allah sent him for our sake. In this way because the prophet gave up His (saws) self for Allah, He was the one who solely looked after the needs of the Ummah because His character was capable of fulfilling this role fully, Allah almost making it impermissible for us to have tawakul (reliance) on anything other than His prophet (saws).

We see the extent of this responsibility in the special rules that only the prophets were commanded to follow, because

of this Allah honoured them by calling them His Rahma (mercy) for mankind, a state of existence that only a prophet is capable of living.

“It is not conceivable that a human being unto whom Allah had granted revelation, and sound judgment, and prophethood, should thereafter have said unto people, "Worship me beside Allah"; but rather [did he exhort them], "Become men of God by spreading the knowledge of the divine revelation, and by your own deep study [thereof].”(3:79)

Creation is a metaphor for Allah’s attributes, and an expression of His Will, “and in all that Allah has created in the heavens and the earth, are signs for those who are conscious (of him). ” (Al Qur'an 10:6-7), This metaphor for his attributes includes the Angels, Jinns and Humans, along with the rest of His creatures, man is capable of seeing Allah through that metaphor by understanding creation and what is in it, “And to Allah are the Highest similitudes”(16:60).

The prophet (saws) said human perfection lies in man’s ability to worship Allah as if we are seeing him, and if we can’t see him (see His qualities) then know that he sees you.

He is the creator of the Universe and through His creation everything we know occurs, but He created the Universe to represent His judgments so by understanding why things have occurred man can perceive Allah in creation, because both good and evil befall his creatures through what they have earned from their own actions man can put together this picture from his own experiences in life, “Wherever you may be, death will overtake you - even though you be in towers raised high. Yet, when a good thing happens to them, some [people] say, This is from Allah, whereas when evil befalls them, they say, This is from thee [O fellowman]! Say: All is from Allah. What, then, is amiss with these people that they are in no wise near to grasping the truth of what they are told?” (4:78).

Allah gives man good in life but evil comes into our life through our own actions, “Whatever good happens to thee is from Allah; and whatever evil befalls thee is from thyself (not your fellow man). AND WE have sent thee [O Muhammad] as an apostle unto all mankind: and none can bear witness [to it, the responsibility and task] as Allah does.” (4:79)

When Allah gave the prophet (saws) his mission He revealed to Mankind through Him knowledge about all areas of life and creation to help the Prophet (saws) in his work. Allah then said about what He granted His Messenger (saws), “We have explained in detail in this Qur’an, for the benefit of mankind, every kind of similitude”(18:54), this is so the Um-

mah of Muhammad (saws) can contemplate and draw knowledge by way of analogy to life from the similitude's in the Quran about creation Allah had revealed, these examples are intended to help us in Life until the day of judgment.

The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: “I was informed by the heavenly hosts of angels that the most dignified among my followers are people who rejoice in public when they ponder the vastness of Allah’s all-encompassing mercy and compassion, and they weep privately when they contemplate rigorous punishment He reserved for the sinners and the deniers of the truth. They sit in His blessed mosques morning and evening worshipping Him and celebrating His praises inwardly, and they implore Him with their tongues outwardly with reverence and awe. They pray to Him with their hands raised as well as lowered, and they yearn for Him unceasingly. They take little from people, and yet, it bears heavily on their hearts.

They walk barefooted, humble, unpretentious, and unnoticed, just like ants, without finery; and they are free of self-adulation. They walk with dignity and serenity, and they rise to the nearness of their Lord through their link to His messenger (saws). They wear the garment of good conduct and follow the clear proof. They read the Qur’an regularly, take their daily guidance from it, and they happily make the necessary personal sacrifices to meet its requirements. Almighty Allah has surrounded them with distinguished witnessing angels, and faithful guardians, and He has illumined their faces with effulgence as a sign of His blessings upon them and as a demonstration of His satisfaction with them. When they look at His servants, they anticipate promising signs. They often contemplate the vastness of Allah’s creation.

Their bodies dwell on earth, and their eyes are anchored upon the heavens. Their feet stand on earth, and their hearts dwell in the heavens. They breath on earth, and yet, their spirits are connected to the divine Throne. Their souls live in this world, and their thoughts are focused on the hereafter. They only worry about what may come. Their graves are in this world, and their ranks are exalted in Allah’s sight.” God’s messenger (saws) then recited: “Such is the reward of one who reveres My Majesty, and fears My warning.” (Qur’an, 14:14) (Hilyat-ul Awliya Wa Tabaqat al-Asfiya By Imam Abu Na’im al-Asfahani)

If the Qur'an is read, studied, understood and perceived we would find in it, beside guidance, knowledge about the laws of science such as physics, mathematics, chemistry, biology and geology, there are almost 750 verses in the Qur'an encouraging and guiding people to contemplate Allah's creation, pointing to specific aspects of science so we can study the universe.

“Say: "Roam the earth and observe how the creation was initiated.” (29:20)

“behold, there are messages indeed for people who think!” (30:21)

“behold, there are messages indeed for all who are possessed of [innate] knowledge!” (30:22)

“behold, there are messages indeed for people who [are willing to] listen!” (30:23)

“behold, there are messages indeed for people who use their reason!” (30:24)

The word signs and messages, usually translated from the Arabic word Ayat, means there is information to be learnt by looking at these things, the context of the verse tells us how this information is gained and what is meant by the word Ayat in this specific case, because at times it refers to science at other times it means to gain wisdom from something, and at other times it means spiritual signs we perceive inwardly.

If the verse is referring to the creation of man then Allah is asking man to study the world and discover that knowledge through scientific means, but as Allah sent revelation to the prophets and they learnt about all his different Ayat (signs) through Maarifa (gnosis) Allah often asks man to gain that knowledge through these means, which is the meaning behind the story of al Khidr (as) and Musa (as) in the Quran mentioned in surah al kahf (18), Musa (as) received revelations from Allah while al Khidr (as) received knowledge through Maarifa (gnosis), yet He (ra) was considered more knowledgeable than the prophet (as) because it takes an immense amount of knowledge to see and understand the universe through this manner, this is because al Khidr was capable of putting together the metaphors and similes Allah had placed in the Universe for us from his knowledge of life and understand them, these are Allah's Ayat (signs) in life, while Musa (Moses) Allah was still teaching, and so He sent him to al Khidr (ra) to learn this from him.

In regards to science the Prophet (saws) said, “The scholars are the inheritors of the Prophets” (Ahmad, Abu Dawwud, Tirmidhi and others).

The nature of many verses in the Quran encourage us to understand their depths, in relation to our own understanding of life and Allah's creation, this is the conversation Allah is having with each person to help them develop and complete the picture of life He is teaching them, the Messenger of Allah, upon him be peace, said, 'one who travels a path seeking sacred knowledge, Allah will make easy for him the path to the Garden', meaning to perform the actions of it's people, this is it's path in life.

And he, upon him be peace, said, 'the angels lower their wings for the seeker of sacred knowledge, pleased with what he is doing.' And he, upon him be peace, said, 'attending the gatherings of sacred knowledge is greater than the performance of a thousand prayer cycles, visiting a thousand sick people, and attending a thousand funerals', this it's magnitude, And he, upon him be peace, said, 'Allah undertakes responsibility for the sustenance of the seeker of knowledge. This responsibility is a special responsibility beyond His general responsibility for all creatures on the earth as expressed in His words "There is not a creature on the earth but that Allah bears its sustenance"'(11:6).

'Its meaning is 'increase in ease and removal of hardships in the seeking and acquiring provision'. In a long Hadith, the Messenger, upon him be peace, said, 'it, that is, sacred knowledge, is inspired in the felicitous and prevented from the wretched'.

"The scholars that embody their knowledge, are the medium between the Messenger of Allah (saws) and the Muslims. Allah said in reference to the excellence of the scholars: "Allah bears witness that there is no god but Him, as do the angels and the people of knowledge, upholding justice". (3:18) Allah associated them with His angels in bearing witness to His Oneness and maintaining His justice on earth.

Allah, Exalted be He, said: "are they the same - those who know and those who do not know?"(39:9)

"They are not equal either in this world nor the Hereafter, rather Allah has preferred the people of knowledge over those who do not know by many degrees, as He, Exalted be He, has said: "Allah will raise in rank those of you who believe and those that have been given knowledge".(58:11) What is meant here is that those who have knowledge will be raised above those who believe (but do not have knowledge). The Messenger of Allah, upon him be peace, said, 'the preference of the scholar over the worshipper (abid) is like my preference over the lowest of my companions'. In another version, it has been said 'like the

moon on the night when it is full over the rest of the planets” (which look like normal stars).

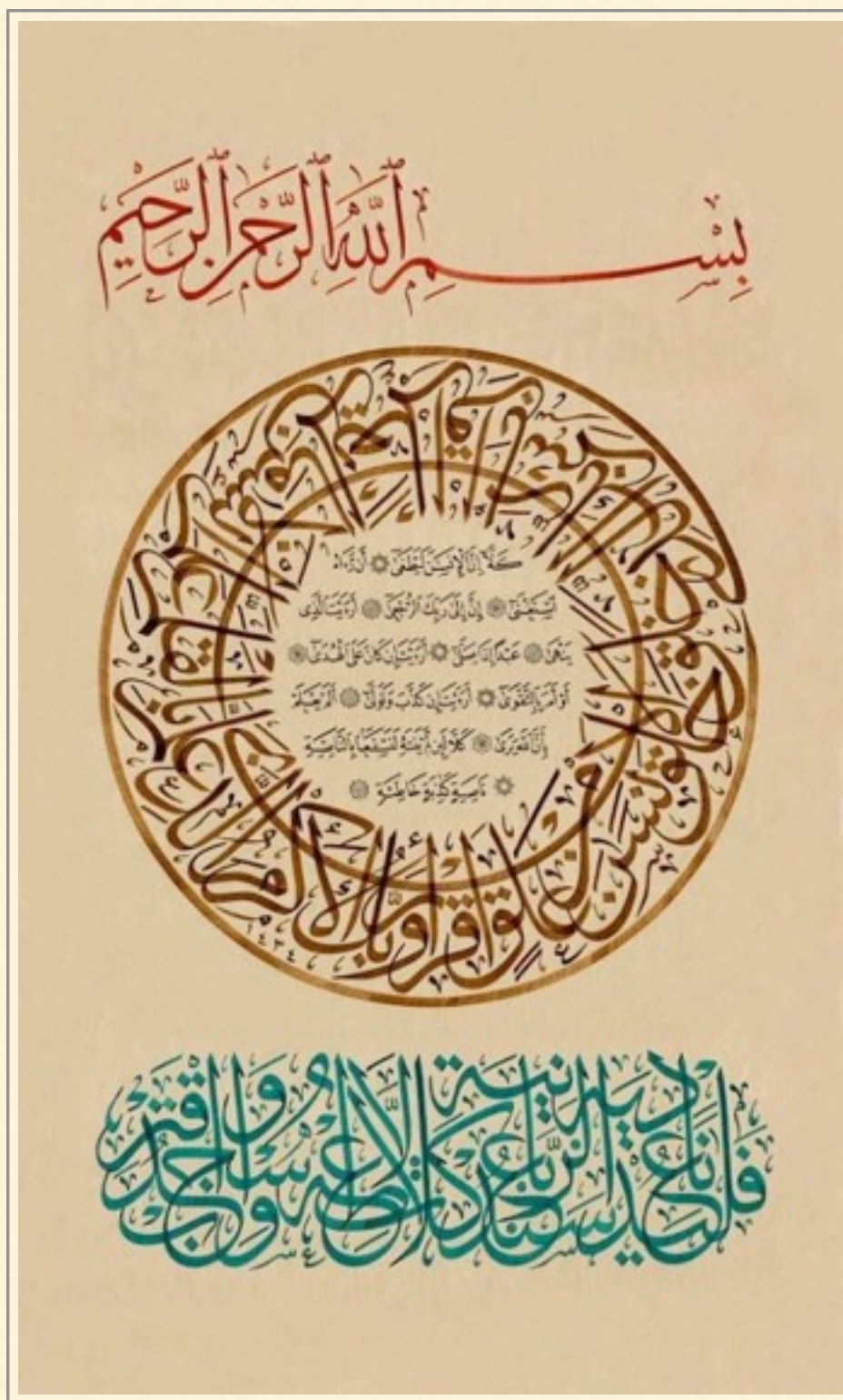
“The scholar who does not act upon his knowledge is stripped of this status. He should not be misled by what has been mentioned by Allah and his Messenger, upon him be peace, regarding the excellence of knowledge and delude himself into thinking that he is included in that solely by knowledge without action. The Messenger of Allah, upon him be peace, said, 'learn what you will, for, by Allah, it will not be accepted from you until you act upon it.' And he, upon him be peace, said, 'one who increases in knowledge and does not increase in guidance increases in nothing but distance from Allah.' Knowledge only gains that high rank with Allah when it benefits the servants of Allah. When a scholar does not derive benefit from his knowledge, how can others derive benefit from it? So recognise the loss of excellence that will befall one who has knowledge but does not act upon it.

The Messenger, upon him be peace, said, 'the person most severely punished on the Day of Judgement will be the scholar whom Allah did not benefit by his knowledge.' For that reason, the Messenger of Allah, upon him be peace, used to seek refuge from knowledge that does not benefit and from a heart that does not feel humility. The scholar that does not act upon his knowledge has nothing but the empty shell and mere image of knowledge, devoid of its true meaning and reality. Some of the righteous predecessors may Allah's mercy be upon them, said, 'knowledge invites to action. Either he answers or it leaves, meaning 'its spirit, light and blessing goes and only the outer form remains (empty words). This does not go, but rather stays as evidence against the blameworthy scholar.’”

If the scholar teaches his knowledge to people and they derive benefit from him, then he is like a burning candle that illuminates for the people. Allah, Exalted be He, has said: “Do you order people to devoutness and forget yourselves when you recite the Book, will you not use your intellects?” (2:44)

Ibn ‘Abbas (ra) reported, that the Messenger of Allah (saws) advised a group of his companions: “When you pass by the meadows of Paradise indulge freely in it!” They said: “O Messenger of Allah! What are the meadows of Paradise?” He said: “The circles of ‘Ilm (knowledge)” (At-Tabarani). This similitude the prophet (saws) employed is real, and not an empty metaphor, because He (saws) said the Angels lower their wings for any person seek-

ing knowledge, the effect of this can be perceived from the atmosphere in gatherings where knowledge is sought and learned, they are unlike any other place, so the prophet (saws) was revealing to us the reality that exists in the unseen part of our world that brings about this atmosphere we perceive when learning.





2 Mans Place In The Universe and How Islam Encouraged People To Think About Creation

Islam methodically encouraged people to think about creation and its creator, Allah mentions all the laws of creation, which He has encouraged us to think about in the Qur'an;

"And He imparted unto Adam the names of all things; then He brought them within the ken of the angels and said: "Declare unto Me the names of these [things], if what you say is true."

They replied: "Limitless art Thou in Thy glory! No knowledge have we save that which Thou hast imparted unto us. Verily, Thou alone art all-knowing, truly wise."

Said He: "O Adam, convey unto them the names of these [things]." And as soon as [Adam] had conveyed unto them their names, [Allah] said: "Did I not say unto you, `Verily, I alone know the hidden reality of the heavens and the earth, and know all that you bring into the open and all that you would conceal?'"(2:31-33)

"And He taught Adam the names, that is, the names of things named, all of them, by placing knowledge of them

into his heart; then He presented them...the majority of which concerned intellectual beings, to the angels and said, to them in reproach, 'Now tell Me, inform Me, the names of these, things named, if you speak truly', in your claim that I would not create anything more knowledgeable than you (Angels), or that you are more deserving of this vicegerency (responsibility); the response to the conditional sentence is intimated by what precedes it." (Tafsir al Jalalayn)

Allah says to his Angels who live in the Unseen part of our world and see what is veiled to us, "Did I not say unto you, 'Verily, I alone know the hidden reality", Ghayb al Samawati wal Ard, "of the Heavens and the Earth", in other words how the heavens and the earth work and the laws they run by, Allah was referring to a type of Ghayb (Unseen reality) the Angels did not see which was the Laws of the Heveans and the Earth.

At that time, in response the Angels referred to their understanding of Mans nature when Allah mentioned He would make Man His Khalifah (vicegerent) on earth, but in reply to them Allah referred to the Nature of the Universe when He Answered them regarding Man, saying to them there is a connection between mans physiology, his body, that you are objecting about and the nature of the Universe, which you haven't learnt yet, what this connection is lies in what Allah had granted Adam at that time, the names of all things, and had just shown the Angels.

"AND LO! Thy Sustainer said unto the angels: "Behold, I am about to establish upon earth (a Khalifah) one who shall inherit it." They said: "Wilt Thou place on it such as will spread corruption thereon and shed blood -whereas it is we who extol Thy limitless glory, and praise Thee, and hallow Thy name?" [Allah] answered: "Verily, I know that which you do not know."(2:30) Said He: "O Adam, convey unto them the names of these [things]." And as soon as [Adam] had conveyed unto them their names, [Allah] said: "Did I not say unto you, 'Verily, I alone know the hidden reality of the heavens and the earth, and know all that you bring into the open and all that you would conceal'?"(2:31-33)

The Angels understood they where a perfect creation, this was their reality as flawless beings, because they where perfect they thought they were complete, they could not perceive how a creation more exalted than them could be created, so they came to believe they where the Highest of Allah's creations and took this as a given, having seen none of his other creatures surpass them. In response to this Allah said to them I have created

Man and in regards to him, you do not know the Hidden realities of the Heavens and the Earth, implying Mans connection to the hidden Laws of the universe, which through them He would surpass the Angels in worth, but not strength and ability.

This same shortsightedness Iblis (satan) suffered from in regards to man, when He objected to Adam surpassing him, Allah asked him why He objected, He replied he was stronger than him, fire being able to burn clay, but the example Allah had just set was regarding knowledge not strength, Adam would become more knowledgable than him while satan was limited in what he was capable of understanding, He was a lessor creation, so He replied in terms of strength while the point Allah was making to the Angels and Jinn was regarding knowledge. Adam had a higher rank than the Angels because of knowledge, the one with more knowledge is better capable of knowing Allah, and that is the reason why Allah created the Universe, to know him.

This entire affair is reading man's body in relation to the Angels and Jinn's bodies, Allah makes this clear in the Quran, "It is We Who created you and gave you shape; then We bade the angels bow down to Adam, and they bowed down; not so Iblis (satan); He refused to be of those who bow down. (Allah) said: "What prevented thee from bowing down when I commanded thee?" He said: "I am better than he: Thou didst create me from fire, and him from clay." (Allah) said: "Get thee down from this: it is not for thee to be arrogant here: get out, for thou art of the meanest (of creatures)." (7: 11-13)

In another verse Allah mentions the command (laws) in His creation, "VERILY, your Sustainer is Allah, who has created the heavens and the earth in six aeons, and is established on the throne of His almightiness. He covers the day with the night in swift pursuit, with the sun and the moon and the stars subservient to His command (Laws): oh, verily, His is all creation and all command (they are mentioned separately). Hallowed is Allah, the Sustainer of all the worlds! (In the Universe)" (7:54)

When Allah mentioned "all creation" along with "all command" the rules of tafsir say the matters relate to each other, so in fact Allah is referring to the Laws of creation which are his command in creation.



3

Islam's Spread Of Knowledge and The Significance of Purity In History

Abu Huraira related that Allah's Apostle said referring to the Quran, "I have been sent with the shortest expressions bearing the widest meanings, and I have been made victorious with ru'b (awe and fear, cast into the hearts of the enemy), and while I was sleeping, the keys of the treasures of the world were brought to me and put in my hand." Abu Huraira added: Allah's Apostle has left the world and now you, people, are bringing out those treasures. (Bukhari)

If intellectual strength was solely what gave mankind the ability to judge truth from falsehood, then uneducated people would be incapable of judging the truth and knowing right from wrong, yet the Qur'an is for all mankind not just the intelligent. The truth and essence of any matter is felt in a persons heart and it is what guides all mankind towards their actions. This is why Rasul Allah (saws) said "I have been sent with the shortest expressions bearing the widest meanings", the simple minded can understand the expressions and the essence of what they mean through the descriptive imagery they employ, and the knowledgable peo-

ple can derive knowledge from them as they understand their depths, in this way all society benefited from the Quran's guidance.

Over the last 1400 years of Islam, Muslim Scholars took from the Qur'an, which was revealed in stages over 23 years, between 609 AD and 632 AD, knowledge that helped shape the Islamic and Modern world.

Until the mid 19th century When the last Islamic Khalifah, the Ottomans, began to decline and Europe began referring to it as a sick man, in anticipation of one day finally surpassing it technologically having spent centuries in its shadow, Islam had advanced the entire world in all areas of knowledge lifting it from the dark ages much of it was in.

By only the 9th century muslim scientist's had discovered the world was round and in comparison to Europe, the masses embraced the notion and took it for granted, Ibn Hazm said its proof was "that the Sun is always vertical to a particular spot on Earth", meaning if you where to follow the sun to where you perceived it to be setting, you would always find it vertical (up in the sky) to that location even though from your original location it may appear to be setting, that notion dawned on Galileo 500 years later.

"The debate in those days, was about, exactly how large was the earth. In the early 800s, the Abbasid Caliph al-Ma'mun assembled the brightest minds of the day (including al-Khawarizmi) in Baghdad who calculated the earth's circumference and were off by only 4% of its actual size."

Muslim scientist measured its circumference at 40,253.4 Km, less than 200 Km from the exact figure in accuracy, many scientific advances in the Islamic world occurred because of this, and hence over the years one scientific discovery built upon another scientific discovery, for almost 1300 years.

Many verses in the Quran point to the nature of things in the Universe, "He it is who has made the sun a [source of] radiant light and the moon a light [reflected], and has determined for it phases so that you might know how to compute the years and to measure [time]. None of this has Allah created without [an inner] truth. Clearly does He spell out these messages unto people of [innate] knowledge."(10:5)

Other translations read "He it is Who made the sun a shining brightness and the moon a light" the significance of the moon and sun is in their specific description, the sun is men-

tioned as a source of light, an object that gives out light while the moon is mentioned as simply a light without using the description that it shines or radiates even though light does that naturally. If one looks at the moon at night and thinks about these words it becomes clear that the moon is serving its function as a light at night which is different than the sun's function, to create the Day itself by its radiating Light. Allah made a deliberate distinction and emphasis on the sun's role in being the producer of light but did not do so for the moon, to teach man there is a difference between the two.

“Indeed, in the alternation of night and day, and in all that Allah has created in the heavens and the earth there are Signs for a God-fearing people.” (Al Qur'an 10:5-6)

Allah says a God Fearing people would see His signs in creation and advance scientifically as they come to know them. Allah mentions this for a God fearing people because of the qualities they embody and the acts they perform. Our world by comparison Arabia 1400 years ago is entirely focused on scientific endeavours, but in the old Islamic world from 609 AD onwards it was precisely the God fearing people who studied creation and science because they were not preoccupied with wealth and the material world, most scientists up to the modern age were in fact religious and devout people who had mastery over multiple disciplines.

So it was religious people who laying the scientific foundations of the modern world, the world would not have reached up to this point without them as no one else was capable of doing this work because of their lifestyles and the conditions they lived under in a pre-modern world.

The basic act of worship in Islam begins with and requires wudu, washing, this act cleanses the body and mind and allows man to focus on finer details in life, better so than a person who does not wash on a regular basis, keeping in mind the state of the world at the time, and in Islam wudu (washing the body) is performed at least five times a day.

We only need to imagine what we would feel like if we didn't wash more than one day a week, could we work with the same productivity and have the same clarity in our self.

By comparison to the Islamic world washing on a regular basis was not common in Europe or Arabia before the lifetime of the Prophet (d.632), Allah bless him and grant him peace. When the muslims began to pray regularly it changed the Arab world entirely from that point, in fact soap was a muslim invention, and the benefits of washing regularly did not

spread to Europe until after the crusades in 1095 AD when they began to take back with them all the advances of the Islamic world.

If people only washed once a week and society as a whole was in that state, people who are born into a world in which they did not know what it felt like to be clean, then the psychological impact of introducing regular washing on that society would be significant and dramatic.

It was only after this point in time that Europe began to pull itself out of the Dark Ages it was in for the past few hundred years and began to catch up scientifically, once washing spread through out society and the world, it was a key factor in uplifting the European mentality, the change began and so they started struggling to change their old belief's, but it would take them another few hundred years to rid themselves of the archaic institutions that dominated the landscape and their old ways of thinking.

Since washing now became a fundamental aspect of life that allowed them to focus on the finer realities of the world around them and make advances in knowledge, the European renaissance began in the 12th century and was vastly different than any that had come before it.

Even though cleanliness helped change Europe the extent of it's importance was still not realized among the mass's because by the 14th century when the Black Death wiped out an estimated 200 million people, a lack of Cleanliness in society not just personnel life was responsible for the spread of the disease, the cleaner and generally more rat-free environment of Islamic communities, in which medicine and health were far more advanced than in the West at that time, forestalled the spread of Plague eastward and it took relatively few victims there.

Because of the Islamic societies focus on purity, this allowed them to see it's significance in other ares of life and develop on it. By comparison to Europe and the rest of the world, the first hospital in the world was founded by Khaliph Al-Walid I, an Ummayad Khaliph (705-715 AD), in Jundishapur, a Persian city. But the first true Islamic hospital which set the standard for later hospitals around the world was built during the reign of Khaliph Harun-ul-Rashid (786-809 AD) in Baghdad. A well-known physician, Jibrail Bakhtishu, was invited to head the new bimartistan, it achieved great fame and so other hospitals were built in Baghdad.

The great Islamic physician Al-Razi selected the site for the Audidi hospital by having pieces of meat hung in various quarters of the city and watched how much and how quickly they putrefied. He then advised the Caliph to locate the hospital where the putrefaction was the slowest and the least! This showed the inception of the concept of germs carried through the air. When the hospital opened, it had 24 physicians on staff including specialists categorized as physiologists, oculists, surgeons and bonesetters.

There was a guiding text called the Waqf document which set the standard of care for all Hospitals well into our own time, and is part of the oath taken by modern physicians, which stated: "The hospital shall keep all patients, men and women, until they are completely recovered. All costs are to be borne by the hospital whether the people come from afar or near, whether they are residents or foreigners, strong or weak, rich or poor, employed or unemployed, blind or sighted, physically or mentally ill, learned or illiterate. There are no conditions of consideration and payment; none is objected to or even indirectly hinted at for non-payment. The entire service is through the magnificence of Allah, the generous one."

"One of the largest hospitals ever built was the Mansuri Hospital in Cairo, completed in 1248 AD under the rule of the Mameluke ruler of Egypt, Mansur Qalaun. The hospital garnered many endowments for its functioning. Men and women were admitted to different wards, and no attention was paid to religion, race or creed. Following the tenets of the Waqf document, no one was turned away and there was no limit to how long patients could stay."

"There were different wards for different conditions, such as those requiring surgical procedures, fevers and eye diseases. The Mansuri Hospital had its own pharmacy, library and lecture halls. There was also a mosque for Muslim patients, as well as a chapel for Christian patients."

"The physical conditions of many of these hospitals were actually lavish, especially those established by princes, rulers and viziers. Some were even converted from palaces."

"The invention of the hospital was one of the greatest achievements of Islamic medicine. Probably the most impressive aspect of this invention was its mission, the treatment of all people who came to it, regardless of their status."

If we contrast this to the Black death that almost wiped out Europe then the significance of Purity can be clearly understood, not just for these obvious reasons but to uplift man so he can reach the higher aspects of life and work to make them a reality, Islamic prayer began with purity and as a result it became the foundation of It's Empire.





4

The Miracle Allah Gave The Prophet (saws) Was Science

“A People once came before the Prophet Muhammad (saws) and asked him for proof that he was a Prophet of Allah. They said that Musa, one of Allah’s prophets, He (as) had come before the world with the miracles of the Staff and the White Hand, clear proof of his being a prophet. Isa (saws), they added, was given the Ability to make the blind see and heal the lepers, proving that he was a prophet of Allah. Other prophets, too, had been given the power to perform miracles, and they displayed this ability as proof of their prophethood. "Tell us," they said, "what miracle have you brought as proof of your prophethood?"

The Prophet (saws) listened in silence to what they had to say, then he read out the verses of the third chapter of the Qur'an:

“In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day, there are signs for men of sense; those that remember Allah when standing, sitting and lying down, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth (saying): 'Lord, You have not created these in vain (to

be never understood). Glory be to You! Save us from the torment of the Fire. Lord, those whom You will cast into hell shall be put to eternal shame: none will help the evil-doers. Lord we have heard a preacher call men to the true faith, saying: 'Believe in your Lord,' and we believed. Lord, forgive us our sins and remove from us our evil deeds and make us die with the righteous" (3:193).

The Prophet pointed towards the creations of Allah that man took for granted and said there are signs in them for men of sense, and those that remember Allah and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth (saying) Our Lord has not created these things in vain and we will never understand what they truly are. He told them knowing what these things were was the miracle Allah was giving man, in comparison to the miracles Allah gave Musa (as) and Isa (as).

He asked the questioners to consider why these things are created, what purpose did they serve and to study them, these verses gave Muslims one of the reasons and intentions behind the revelation of the Qur'an, the muslim Ummah was instructed to look towards science to explain creation and the function everything had, the Qur'an effectively inspired man to know what Allah created.

This intention of Allah is clearly mentioned in the Qur'an along with the point in time mankind would excel in understanding the deeper scientific aspects of the universe.

Allah promised that "In time We shall make them fully understand Our messages [through what they perceive] in the utmost horizons [of the universe] and within themselves, so that it will become clear unto them that this [revelation] is indeed the truth. [Still,] is it not enough [for them to know] that thy Sustainer is witness unto everything?"[Qur'an 41:53]

"Man is a creature of haste; [but in time] I shall make obvious to you [the truth of] My messages (in arabic the word used is Ayat or signs): do not, then, ask Me to hasten [it]!"(21:37)

Here Allah addressing the non muslims is saying in time He will show them and all mankind the truth of His Ayat (signs or messages) in the Universe, what everything means, Allah then says don't ask him to Hasten it, which means it would be a burden on mankind and it would be revealed only after a point in time mankind could no longer be patient and seek it out eagerly, as Allah asks for patience of mankind.

This kind of knowledge would be a burden on man because it would lead to exploitation, Abu Bakr (ra) said “The more knowledge you have, the greater will be your fear of Allah. Without knowledge action is useless and knowledge without action is futile. Knowledge is the life of the mind. When a noble man learns knowledge he becomes humble, [whereas] when an ignoble person gains knowledge, he [becomes] conceited. When knowledge is limited – it leads to folly. [But] when knowledge exceeds a certain limit, it leads to exploitation.”

Because Allah is addressing the non muslims with the statement “In time We shall make them fully understand Our messages [through what they perceive] in the utmost horizons [of the universe] and within themselves,” it should be easy to understand how they would be the ones who would receive this knowledge when the time came, and the following verses (21:37-40) specifically mention that towards the end of time is when mankind would know and understand the secrets of the utmost horizon of the universe, because the verses mention a time after creation ends, “And they say: When will this promise (be fulfilled), if ye are truthful? If they but knew - they who are bent on denying the truth - [that there will come] a time when they will not be able to ward off the fire from their faces, nor from their backs, and will not find any succour! (21:37-39)

Then the topic changes back to just before the hour when it comes upon them, “Nay, but [the Last Hour] will come upon them of a sudden, and will stupefy them: and they will be unable to avert it, and neither will they be allowed any respite.”(21:40), in other words man will make great scientific discoveries towards the end of time, our time.



5

Allah Created The Universe So Man Can Know Him Because Of The One Who Can Achieve Knowing

Allah said: When Adam made an error, he asked: O Allah! I ask you for the sake of Muhammad to forgive me. Allah said: O Adam! How do you recognize Muhammad when I have not yet created him? Adam said: O Allah! When you created me and blew into me the spirit, I lifted my head and saw written on the Arsh (throne) ‘La ilaaha illallah Muhammadur rasoolullah’. So, I got to know that you would only join your name with him who is most beloved to you. Allah said: O Adam! You have spoken the truth. Indeed Muhammad is more beloved to me than anything and when you asked me for his sake, I pardoned you. If Muhammad was not in existence, I would not have created you” (Hakim in Mustadrik, Baihaqi in Dalail an-Nubuwah, Tabrani in Ka-beer)

Abdullah ibn Abbas (r.a) said that: “Allah revealed to Prophet ‘Isa ‘(as) that: O ‘Isa! Have Iman in Muhammad and order your ummah to do the same. If Muhammad was not in existence, I would not have created Adam nor would

I have made heaven or hell”. (Hakim in Mustadrik and Abu as-Shaykh in Tabqat al-Isfahani’in)

Salman al-Farsi (r.a) said that: “Jibra’il came to Rasoolallah (saws) and said that Allah says: I have not created anyone who is more honoured to me than you. I have created the world and all that is therein so that they may know the rank that you possess. I would not have created the world if I had not created you”.(Ibn Asakir)

Ibn Hajar ‘Asqalani says: “These reports say that if Muhammad (saws) were not created then Allah would not have made the skies nor the Earth, neither heaven nor hell, neither the sun nor the moon”.

This is because Allah was referring to the depth all His creatures would achieve in knowing Him, and the Prophet Muhammad (saws) surpassed any other creation in that, among all His creatures Mankind surpassed Allah’s other creations, this is mankind’s place with Allah because they fulfilled the reason for Allah creating everything, which is to know Him.

Allah created Death and life to see which of us is best in Deed (surah al Mulk), Heaven and Hell are a reward or punishment for those who Follow and pick up this burden, and those who ignore it and become evil. If neither existed then our actions would not have worth and real consequences, both heaven and hell serve as a balance in creation being the two most opposite places with Allah representing His best rewards and His most sever punishment.

If they didn’t exist no creature would have been deserving of his reward, which means that no creature would have achieved the same depths in knowing Allah to deserve its creation in the first place, everything is in Allah’s foreknowledge and it was all created for the sake of mankind so they could achieve knowing Allah.

Because Allah mentioned both Heaven and Hell in relation to why creation was created, Allah was saying He would not have otherwise created a system in the universe that promoted knowing Him to the same Depths, because Allah says “man can not have anything but what he strives for” (53:39) or earns in other words.

If we keep in mind what Imam al Ghazali said we would understand that in the following Hadith, Allah wanted the companions and mankind after them to understand that creation worshiped him by obeying his Laws, which is why it was made to speak in front of the companions.

Abdullaah ibn Mas‘ood, may Allaah be pleased with him, said, "We were with the Messenger of Allaah, (saws), on a journey, and we ran short of water. He said: ‘Bring the remaining water with you.’ People brought a utensil containing a little water. He dipped his hand in it and said: 'Come to the blessed water - and the Blessing is from Allaah!' I saw the water flowing from among the fingers of the Messenger (saws) and we certainly heard the food glorifying Allaah when it was being eaten [by him]." (Al-Bukhaari)

If man sees that Allah has just made this inanimate object speak then He will understand that it is obeying Allah’s will and laws.

Allah began teaching the prophet (saws) this fact about the Universe before He (saws) became a prophet to prepare him for what He would reveal through the Quran. The Prophet (saws) said: "I recognize a stone in Makkah which would salute me before my commissioning as a Prophet. I still recognize it." (Muslim)

‘Ali ibn Abi Taalib, may Allaah be pleased with him, said, “I was once with the Prophet (saws) in Makkah and we went out to some location. Every mountain and tree which the Prophet, (saws), passed by would salute him (saying) 'Peace be upon you, O Messenger of Allaah.'" (At-Tirmithi)

Moreover, the tree-trunk which the Prophet (saws) would stand beside while giving his Khutbah (Friday sermon) was one of the inanimate objects which talked to the Prophet, (saws). Ibn ‘Umar, may Allaah be pleased with him, said, “The Prophet (saws) would deliver his Khutbah while standing beside a trunk (of a palm-tree). When he had the pulpit made, he used it instead. The trunk therefore began weeping, and so the Prophet went to it and rubbed his hand over it.” (Al-Bukhaari)

The signs in Allah's creation point towards his religion because they speak of His will , command and laws throughout creation.



6

The Aim Of Creation Is So That Man Can Know Himself and Allah

[71:7] ...And they persist [in their rejection], and act in great arrogance.

Imam Tustari said: Persistence in sin (dhanb) gives rise to ignorance, and ignorance gives rise to transgression into falsehood (bāṭil). The transgression into falsehood gives rise to hypocrisy (nifāq) and hypocrisy in turn gives rise to disbelief (kufr). [He] was asked, ‘What is the sign of the hypocrite?’ He replied: It is that he perceives something when he is reminded of it, but when he gets up to go, it is as if that thing never entered his heart. Allah, Exalted is He, has said: Whenever it gives them light, they walk therein, and when darkness falls around them, they stand still [2:20].

Allah Said in the Qur'an the main reason He sent the Prophet (saws) was to help people purify their character and selfs (nafs) from bad qualities and to nurture and grow good qualities in their place, “He it is Who sent among the

unlettered ones a Messenger (Muhammad SAW) from among themselves, reciting to them His Verses (teaching them), purifying them, and teaching them the Book (Law and science) and Al-Hikmah (Wisdom regarding creation). And verily, they had been before in manifest error”(62:2).

[62:2] It is He who sent to the unlettered [folk] a messenger from among them...

Imam Tustari said: The unlettered are those who believed in Muḥammad (saws) and were connected to him through following (ittibāʿ) him and emulating (iqtidāʿ) him. Whoever does not emulate him is not of his nation.

[62:3] And [to] others from among them who have not yet joined them...

Imam Tustari said; That is, those (later generations) who came after him who believed in him and followed him, Allah will join with the first [generation of believers].

Imam al Ghazali said a man “intends to construct a house. For the first time his vision embraces a perspective of his proposed great house, which is laid originally on the plan of his mind, at the back of which he has the number of walls and rooms, etc., and the order in which bricks are to be placed to make the walls. Unless he plans the house according to his prearranged outline, he cannot construct it. Similarly, know that Allah creates man, so that he may attain nearness to Him. This nearness is impossible without the assistance of the intermediaries nearer to Him, i.e. the Prophets. Prophethood, therefore, is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. Allah’s claim to nearness is obligatory and binding upon all creatures because He made it obligatory upon them through the words of His Prophets, and not by reason alone.” (The Mysteries of the Human Soul).

Meaning science alone isn’t enough, and will never be enough, because mans nature is not built that way, rationality is only part of mans physiology while Allah gave man instincts to sense matters through, sound judgment is only partly built upon facts, any person can present fabricated information as facts then person are only left with their instincts to unravel the matter.

People constantly put their faith in things without realising it, a scientist can prove what he likes through experimentation to which he knows all the proofs and evidence, but even the greatest and most devout Atheist must put his faith in the words of the scientist be-

cause he didn't conduct the experiments himself, so he is taking the matter at the scientists words, this is the state of every Atheist secular society.

Because this is mans nature Allah created the universe to accommodate for this, the matter with Allah isn't simply faith it is first learning and understanding and then to have faith our actions will bring results, Islam is faith based upon knowledge. Allah calls this process Jihad, it is the struggle to find a wasila, a means to Him, and every persons wasila, or means to Allah is different because each person's heart is unique.

Upon making the connection between science and faith, scholars began to write works on such matters, Imam Al-Balkhi (933 CE) wrote a book dedicated to maslahah (public interest), which he entitled, Masalih al-Abdan wal-Anfus (Benefits for Bodies and Souls), in which he explained how Islamic practices and rulings contribute to health, physically and mentally, this was one of the earliest works connecting science with religious practice.

One of the most famous and important hadith (narration) in Islam is the hadith of Jibril (Gabriel), which occurred just 86 days before the prophets (saws) death;

Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "While we were sitting with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, one day a man came up to us whose clothes were extremely white, whose hair was extremely black, upon whom traces of traveling could not be seen, and whom none of us knew, until he sat down close to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, so that he rested his knees upon his knees and placed his two hands upon his thighs and said,

'Muhammad, tell me about Islam.'

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, 'Islam is that you witness that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, and you establish the prayer, and you give the Zakat, and you fast Ramadan, and you perform the hajj of the House if you are able to take a way to it.'

He said, 'You have told the truth,'

and we were amazed at him asking him and [then] telling him that he told the truth.

He said, 'Tell me about Iman.'

He said, 'That you affirm Allah, His Angels, His Books, His messengers, and the Last Day, and that you affirm the Decree, the good of it and the bad of it.'

He said, 'You have told the truth.'

He said, 'Tell me about Ihsan.'

He said, 'That you worship Allah as if you see Him, for if you don't see Him then truly He sees you.'

He said, 'Tell me about the Hour.'

He said, 'The one asked about it knows no more than the one asking.'

He said, 'Then tell me about its tokens.'

He said, 'That the female slave should give birth to her mistress, and you see poor, naked, barefoot shepherds of sheep and goats competing in making tall buildings.'

He went away, and I remained some time. Then he asked, 'Umar, do you know who the questioner was?' I said, 'Allah and His Messenger know best.' He said, 'He was Jibril who came to you to teach you your deen.'" (Muslim and Bukhari narrated it and has a grade Higher than Sahih and that is "Agreed upon", in terms of authority it is on par with the Quran).

This hadith is described by Imam Nawawi as one of the hadiths upon which the Islamic religion turns. The use of the word deen in the last line, Atakum yu'aallimukum dinakum, He "came to you to teach you your religion" entails that the religion of Islam is composed of the four fundamentals mentioned in the hadith: Islam, or external compliance with what Allah asks of us; Iman, or the belief in the Unseen (parts of the universe) that the prophets have informed us of; Ihsan, or to worship Allah as though one sees Him; and The Hour, or the remembrance of death and the afterlife.

The reason it is one of the most important Hadiths in all of Islam is because it summed up the entire religion and categorised into into four parts, and the meeting with Jibril occurred 86 days before the prophets (saws) death, a time when Allah revealed the verse, "This day have I perfected your religion for you (sent down all it should be about), completed My favor upon you (decided your blessings and what you shall receive spiritually

and materially), and have chosen for you Islam as your religion (All that is mentioned in the Hadith of Jibril)” (Surah Al-Ma'idah 5:3).

Because Jibril (a.s) was the one who brought down this verse to the Messenger, Allah inspired him to prepare the Prophet (saws) and the Ummah for what it meant by first visiting them and instructing them on all the parts of the Deen.

So there is no room to say the hadith is missing any aspect of what Islam is, and to deny any part of it is to deny what Allah revealed and is Kufr (disbelief), because the Prophet (saws) said “He was Jibril who came to you to teach you your deen” these words have the same authority as a verse in the Quran.

The holy Prophet Muhammad (saws) had four Prophetic duties, as illustrated in the holy Qur'an:

“Certainly did Allah confer [great] favor upon the believers when He sent among them a Messenger from themselves, reciting to them His verses and purifying them and teaching them the Book and wisdom, although they had been before in manifest error.”(3:164)

“It is He who has sent among the unlettered a Messenger from themselves reciting to them His verses and purifying them and teaching them the Book and wisdom - although they were before in clear error.” (62:2)

These four duties are:

(1) Reciting the Verses of the Qur'an; The Revelation conveyed the Commands of Allah, and is the foundation of Islamic Shari'ah. The final revelation was received at 'Arafat on the 9th day of the Islamic month of Zilhajj during the Farewell Pilgrimage. It declared: “This day I completed your Deen (way of life) for you and My favours upon you, and chosen for you Islam as Deen”, according to the Hadith of Jibril Islam means the religion and it's laws, and Deen is the way of life, or end result in each persons life.

(2) Tazkiyah, purifying them; there a number of ways to purify the self, such as through our actions as we practice the acts that purify us, the other was the Prophet's (saws) company, it purified the souls and immediately refined human conduct. This was because of the extent to which He embodied the qualities of Allah, some of the companions converted on the sight of him because they could perceive the magnitude of Allah through him. Allah took a number of oaths by the messenger of Allah in the Qur'an, two on the tremendous

nature of his character. “Ya Seen, By the wise Qur'an Indeed you, [O Muhammad], are from among the messengers, On a straight path (36:1-5). And “Nun. By the pen and what they inscribe, You are not, [O Muhammad], by the favor of your Lord, a madman. And indeed, for you is a reward uninterrupted. And indeed, thou art of a tremendous nature.”(68:1-4) This transformation was most strikingly evident in the character of his Companions, this process of purifying the soul instantly, still continues with those who emulate him and achieve what he did, the Awliya of Allah who are the inheritors of the prophets. “Indeed in the Messenger of Allah you have a good example to follow, for him who hopes in (the Meeting with) Allah and the Last Day, and remembers Allah much”. (Surah Al-Ahzab, Verse 21)

(3) Teaching of the Book; It was befitting Allah's majesty that the exalted personality (saw) which received the Book and fully understood the Message, should teach it to the rest of mankind.

(4) Teaching of Wisdom; To expound the deeper meaning of the Book, teach the wisdom behind the words of Allah, raise people up to be wise in conduct and exhibit practical implementation of the Qur'an. Wisdom means that a person considers as much knowledge as possible when judging a matter, and only people with purified hearts can handle taking in many points of view before their heart settles on the best answer, others may be quick to anger, be short sighted, not intelligent enough to handle more than one kind of knowledge or perspective, and may be hypocritical and only seek self interest, many bad qualities hinder the ability of a person to be wise and sagacious (having an ability to understand difficult ideas and situations and make good decisions).

This is why Allah coupled knowledge and wisdom with Takiyah, purifying the self and a person can only know himself if he purifies it, and he can only know Allah if he knows His self.



7

For Each Type Of Knowledge In Islam A School Was Created and Devoted To Studying It

From the Hadith of Jibril (r.a) the scholars understood Islam Has four main categories which all other areas of knowledge come under, they are Islam, Iman, Ihsan and The Signs of the Hour.

From what rasul allah (saws) mentioned of Islam we know that the laws for the Shahada, Prayer, Zakat, Fasting Ramadan, and performing the Hajj, each of them comes under the topic of Islam, the legal sciences of Fiqh (Law) and it's codification into the legal system, Shariah, are all under this subject.

If we where to simplify the explanation of how the Legal Schools can be traced back to the prophet (saws), we can say Imam Ali and the companions who lived in Iraq where Hanafi in Law since that schools rolling revolve around their opinions, the companions who lived in Madina are Maliki, and the Shafii and Hanbali madhhabs (legal schools) are a mix of both the companions of Madina and Iraq.

This is all referring to the opinions that the founders of Islam's four legal schools, Imam Abu Hanifa, Malik, Shaffi and Ahmad followed. The Imam's looked into the opinions of the companions that lived in their area, and derived the methods by which these companions came up with their rulings and from all that the science of Usul al Fiqh, principles of jurisprudence, was born which every legal system on earth today relies on, the four legal schools agree on about 75% of these principles (Usul) and have differences on about 25%.

As Jibril (as) defined the Deen into four areas of knowledge, the scholars went through these four areas of knowledge in Islam and codified (to put laws or rules together as a code or system) the knowledge in them and developed sciences around studying them, like the modern sciences related to history or language, in order to preserve and study our Deen with accuracy and reliability for many later generations.

Under the topic of Iman (faith) came the laws and science behind affirming Allah's existence, His angels, His books, His messengers, the existence of the Last Day, and the Decree of Allah, the good of it and the bad of it, which the Islamic science of Aqeedah (Creed) deals with, the two main schools of Aqeedah that were dedicated to the spread of this science are the Maturidi and Ash'ari schools, named after the respective scholars who founded them. These are the schools the wider muslim community agreed upon and spread around the Muslim world.

Most muslims know of these categories of knowledge along with the Signs of the Hour (ilm Alamat al Sa'ah) which the Mufasireen, those who wrote commentary on the Quran and Sunnah dealt with, but hardly any in the western and modern world know about the knowledge that comes under the last Islamic Science mentioned in the hadith of Jibril, that of Ihsan or human perfection.

The Deen (religion) today is only learnt from the Fuqaha (Lawyers) who are only knowledgeable and qualified in Fiqh (law) and Aqeedah (creed) but not Ihsan (human perfection), so they can't teach what they don't know despite the fact this is the ultimate aim of Allah for mankind which He mentioned in the Quran, hence today they can't fulfil what Allah wants.

While Islam in the hadith comes under the science of Fiqh (Law) and it's four Madhhabs (legal schools), and Iman (faith) comes under the science of Aqeedah and it's Madhhabs (schools), Ihsan in Islam's History came under the science of Tassawwuf, sufism.

Just as schools were created to study the other areas of knowledge, likewise schools were created to study this area of knowledge as well, the main schools dedicated to this science throughout Islam's history were the Qadiri, Naqshbandi and Rifai, there are also many more that we can mention which developed in different parts of the Islamic world, because each person is different and each nation has its own identity, it is only natural that a science dealing with human character and reforming should have many different schools around the world.

Typically a scholar in Islam could be Hanafi in his Fiqh (law), Ash'ari in his Aqeedah (creed) and Rifai in his Tassawwuf (Ihsan), since they all dealt with a different area of knowledge in Islam.

Being able to quote many facts about religion is not the same as understanding it, and how it all fits together, this is like being able to quote a lot of facts about the Fiqh of wudu (ab-lution) and salat (prayer) but not being able to give a tafsir (explanation) of verses in the Qur'an. A fiqh (Law) manual contains a list of facts about wudu, salat, zakat, fasting and hajj while a tafsir (exegesis) contains the understanding of the Qur'an, and Allah doesn't give understanding of the religion to every person,

يُؤْتِي الْحِكْمَةَ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

“He granteth wisdom to whom He pleaseth; and he to whom wisdom is granted receiveth indeed a benefit overflowing; but none will grasp the Message but men of understanding” (2:269).

So there are many Lawyers today but not many Mufasirs, people capable of explaining the religion. Under the Khalifah of Islam and through out history, Ihsan (Tasawwuf) in our academic institutions was taught alongside Fiqh (law) and Aqeedah (creed) because Allah mentions in the Qur'an that Ihsan is the mission (aim) of Rasul Allah (saws), it is the reason why He was sent, and the four reasons Allah gave for sending in the verse all aim to achieve this for man.

Imam an Nawawi wrote in his Sharh Sahih Muslim, “As far as Fiqh and Hikma (wisdom) are concerned, the former (fiqh) means to have a deep understanding of religion, whilst the latter (hikma) refers to having conscious acknowledgment of Allah Most High (ma'rifa), coupled with self-reformation, good character and abstaining from following

one's desires and falsehood (this is Tazkiya).”(Nawawi, al-Minhaj Sharh Sahih Muslim, Pg: 158-159)

The prophet (saws) said Ihsan is 'That you worship Allah as if you see Him, for if you don't see Him then truly He sees you.'

Tasawwuf or Tazkiya an Nafs (91:9) is mentioned in many places in the Quran, Imam Tustari said regarding verse [91:9] “successful indeed will be the one who purifies it (the self)”, He who is granted [the ability to consider] (nazar) the matter of his final return (ma'ād), succeeds. [91:10] “and he will indeed have failed who eclipses it (in darkness)” He said: The soul which is (punished) by Allah, Mighty and Majestic is He, such that it does not give the matter of its final return any consideration, will fail.

The Prophet (saws) said “be in this world as if you were a stranger”, Imam Ali (ra) said “Work for this world as if you will live forever, and work for the hereafter as if you will die tomorrow”, Ibn Umar (ra) said “In the evening do not anticipate the morning and in the Morning do not anticipate the evening.”

Man should build this world as if he was going to stay in it forever, so he should do what is the best and lasting for mankind in it, even though he won't be here forever his descendants will benefit from what he wished for himself, and he should prepare for the hereafter as if He was going to die tomorrow because his end can come at any moment, and man can only take from this world what he prepared for it. Man should be a stranger to the world (not it's people) and not contemplate in the morning what will occur by evening because he should perfect and be focused on what is occurring in that hour, moving on to his next task and perfecting it when it arrives being unattached from anything he has previously done, so he isn't pleased with himself.

This is how man maintains his constant focus throughout the day, moving from one task to the next and perfecting it.

Before advancing scientifically, Islams scholars laid out the foundation for the Islamic state and community to live by, they codified the law, formulated the Sharia and developed the sciences and tools to investigate and understand the sources of Islam, the Qur'an and Sunnah, then they wrote about theories of law and established what the Maqasid (overall Aim and intent) of the Shariah was, which were identified and summarized in five principles known as the Five Maqasid al Shariah, in summary these five are the preservation of Relig-

ion, Life, Intellect, Procreation (family) and Property, other scholars added Justice or Happiness. Imam al- Ghazali, said regarding all the Maqasid of the Shariah, they are only for the achievement and the realization of the very benefits of man on earth.

“The muslim community responded to the magnitude of this knowledge (that Allah revealed) and the ethical imperative of living it on a daily basis with a wide range of scholarly disciplines that furnished the means to distill this vast tradition into a clear, practical answer to the question: What does Allah expect of one?”

This then is the basis for the study of sacred Law or Shari’ah in Islam: we have been ordered to follow the prophet (saws), but he is no longer alive to teach us, and All that has reached us of it came to us through men and the works they left behind, these are the tasks they spent their lives perfecting so later generations like ours could benefit from them.

This is why Muslims from the earliest times have relied on the most knowledgable of these men to take their religion from - whether in hadith, tenants of faith (Aqeedah), Qur'anic exegesis (tafsir), or the other Islamic sciences. The foremost of them were termed Imams or “Leaders”, in view of their position in each field so their place and knowledge could be accepted and followed by others.

“O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the messenger and those of you who are in authority” (4:59)

“Say: “Can they who know and they who do not know be deemed equal?”(39:9)

“And so We propound these parables unto man: but none can grasp their innermost meaning save those who are aware (of Us).” (29:43)



8

Ihsan and It's Place In The Quran and Sunnah

The word Sufism is an English word with Arabic roots, in Arabic the science is called Tasawwuf, and the act you perform is called Tazkiyah an Nafs, Purifying your self of evil and bad while promoting good qualities, and what you try to achieve by it is Ihsan, Human Perfection.

Tasawwuf can be established with Three verses of the Qur'an and a Hadith:

1) In Surah al Shams (91:1-9) Allah takes an oath in the Qur'an like no other and swears by the act of Tasawwuf, Allah says "Qad Aflaha man Zakaha" the word Zakaha means Tazkiya an nafs, in English the sentence reads "He Who Purifies it (his self) succeeds". This verse is talking about getting rid of your bad qualities, Tazkiya an Nafs, and the one who does it will be granted Jannah (heaven).

2) In Surah Abbasa (80:3) a blind man comes to the Prophet (saws) seeking to learn about Islam and the Prophet (saws) frowns upon His untimely question because He is busy in a meeting with the leaders of Quraish, Allah responds to the

prophet (saws) by saying, "Wama yudrika La-alahu Yazaka" the word Yazaka also means Tazkiyah an Nafs, in english the verse reads, "Yet for all thou didst know, [O Muhammad,] he might perhaps have grown in purity".

So in Surah a Shams Allah mentions the first part of purifying the self (Tazkiyah an Nafs) and that is Purifying your self of Evil, and in surah Abbasa Allah mentions the second part of tazkiya, which is learning and promoting good qualities in your character and growing as a person. The word zakaha means "purifies it" referring to our selves, which is the first step, and the word yazaka means to "grow in purity" or to build upon the first step of purifying the evil from our self.

3) In Surah Ashurah (26:88-89) Allah says, "The Day whereon neither wealth nor sons will avail, But only he (will prosper) that brings to Allah a sound heart", that is "a heart free of sins and love for this worldly life" (Tanwir al miqbas Min Tafsir Ibn Abbas).

You have to know the acts of Tazkiyah an Nafs (purifying your character) to free your Heart from sin and love for this world, and only one science in Islam deals with this Subject, that is Tasawwuf, Fiqh does not cover Human Character and Psychology, it covers the Laws of Halal (the permitted) and Haram (the prohibited), it may touch upon it because it uses the same Qur'an and sunnah but that isn't it's focus or aim. How to actually change your self, the Ullumah dealt with that in detail in a different science of Islam.

4) The most famous hadith in Islam, the hadith of Jibril (as), which occurred 86 days before the prophets (saws) death it defines all the Aspects of islam with out a Doubt, into Fiqh (Islam), Aqeedah (Iman), Ihsan (Tasawwuf) and the Sings of the Hour, we have already mentioned the hadith and it is a sound, Sahih Hadith mentioned by Imam Muslim and Imam Bukhari as well as many other Muhadiths in their works.

Ihsan, Perfection is achieved when a person gains the ability to worship Allah as if he is seeing Him every hour in our life, and this is done through Tazkiyah an nafs (Purification of the Self). Allah says about human Perfection in the Qur'an "We sent unto her Our Spirit (Jibril) and it assumed for her the likeness of a perfect man." (19:17), the Angels can take on the form of any man that is sound and healthy but here Allah is stressing that Jibril (Gabriel) chose to show Maryam (as) the likeness of a perfect Human being whose presence alone is not like other men, this was so she could recognise him as a person from Allah.

All the Scholars of Islam in our history knew about tasawwuf and most of the great Scholars practised it because they wanted to achieve human perfection and it was through this practice that Allah granted them knowledge we are benefiting from today. About their practice of tasawwuf Allah says in the Qur'an "So for this let the competitors compete." (83:26), encouraging the Ummah to out do each other in gaining nearness to Him (Aza wa Jaal) by perfecting the self. The verse itself is referring to illiyyun which is the Highest part of the highest level of Jannah (heaven) just beneath the Throne of Allah.

The List of Ullumah who practiced Tazkiyah an Nafs is extensive and the argument over Tasawwuf by those properly educated in it, is one over which practice in tasawwuf is acceptable in Islam and which isn't, this is Usually Ikhtilaf (difference of legal opinion) between the Hanbali Madhab, which is literalist in its understanding, and the other three Madhhabs of Islam. Not wether tasawwuf is part of Islam or not, which is kufr to claim it isn't since it is mentioned in the Qur'an similar to how Fiqh and Aqeedah are mentioned.

The Subject of Ihsan dates back to the time of the messenger himself (saws) who spoke about it extensively and this is reflected in the major Hadith collections.

The following works are part of the Sahih Sita, Islam's major hadith collections and are chapters found in each scholars work, they cover an important part of tasawwuf and the sunnah:

Imam Tirmidhi's Book of Asceticism, Imam Muslims Book of Zuhd (Asceticism) Piety And Softening Of Hearts, Imam Muslims' The Book of Manners and Etiquette (Adab), Imam Bukhari's Book of Good Manners and Form (Al-Adab), Imam Bukhari's Book "To Make The Heart Tender", Imam Malik's Book on Good Character, Imam Ibn Majah's Book of Zuhd (Asceticism), Imam Abu Dawwud's Book of General Behaviour (Kitab Al-Adab), Imam Bukhari's Al-Adab Al-Mufrad (on Conduct and behaviour).

All these books mention Ahadith about the prophets (saws) Life that are Important to Tasawwuf.

This understanding that Tasawwuf is part of Islam is established clearly in the history of the Hanbali madhhab, Ibn Taymiyah himself was a Qadiri Sufi and died a Qadiri Sufi, his Major work majmool al Fatawa, which is 36 volumes, the 11th Volume is entitled al Tasawwuf in which he teaches tasawwuf, he has an essay in it called al-Sufiyya wa al-fuqara. In his commentary Ibn Taymiyya stresses that the primacy of the Shari`a (its essence at the start

of islam) forms the soundest tradition in tasawwuf, and to argue this point he lists over a dozen early masters, as well as more contemporary shaykhs like his fellow Hanbalis. In his al-Risala al-safadiyya, Ibn Taymiyya defends the Sufis as those who belong to the path of the Sunna and represent it in their teachings and writings.

It is Kufr (disbelief) to deny a single verse in the Qur'an, so denying that the verses on Ihsan or Tazkiyah an Nafs exist itself isn't anything less than Kufr.

Allah in Surah al Shams, 91 verses 1 - 10 takes an Oath on thirteen things He created, like no other oath in the Qur'an, except when He swore on the life of our prophet (saws), that Tazkiya an Nafs, which the science of Tasawwuf deals with, is the aim of every Human and Jinn in this life.

Allah said;

By the Sun and his (glorious) splendour;

By the Moon as she follows him;

By the Day as it shows up (the Sun's) glory;

By the Night as it conceals it;

By the Firmament and its (wonderful) structure;

By the Earth and its (wide) expanse:

By the Soul, and the proportion and order given to it;

And its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right;-

Truly he succeeds that purifies it,

And he fails that corrupts it! (The Soul or Nafs).

It is clear from the Qur'an itself that the Ullumah did not neglect the topic of Ihsan over the past 1400 years because it is the thing all creatures being tested on this earth by Allah aim for, "He Who created Death and Life, that He may try which of you is best in deed" (67:2).



9

Ablution (Wudu) Is Worth Half Of Our Iman (Faith) and It Affects On The Unseen (Subatomic) World

The heart isn't the only part of our body affected by our acts, it is just the most sensitive part in us and the easiest to be affected by them.

The Messenger of Allah (saws) said, "He who performs the Wudu (ablution) perfectly (according to Sunnah), his sins (on his body) will depart from his body, even from under his nails."(Muslim).

Our ablution washes away the effect of sin from our body no matter how hard it is to get at and in what place, this is the significance of water to religion.

In the following hadith the prophet (saws) shows how our sins have effects on all the different parts of the body which we need to purify with water.

The Messenger of Allah (saws) said, "When a Muslim, or a believer, washes his face (in the course of Wudu'), every sin which he committed with his eyes, will be washed away from his face with water, or with the last drop of water; when he washes his hands, every sin which is committed by

his hands will be effaced from his hands with the water, or with the last drop of water; and when he washes his feet, every sin his feet committed will be washed away with the water, or with the last drop of water; until he finally emerges (physicaly) cleansed of all his sins.”(Muslim).

The Messenger of Allah (saws) said, "The adornment of the believer (in Jannah) will reach the places where the water of Wudu' reaches (his body)." Our reward in Jannah and the spiritual world is literally determined by the extent of our Wudu.

Allah created creation in a way that our actions impact the spiritual world (ghayb) in various ways and they in turn affect us.

The Messenger of Allah (saws) said: "On the Day of Resurrection, my followers (or Ummah) will be summoned (Al-Ghurr Al-Muhajjalun) from the traces of (their) Wudu'. Whoever can increase the area of his radiance should do so.”(Al-Bukhari and Muslim).

Al Ghur as the Ullumah explained is like the mane of a horse, on the day of Judgment the spiritual effects of our wudu will show on our body like the mane of a horse and each place we washed will be white like a bright light. The Ummah of Muhammad (saws) will be known on that day by this Ghura, or marks of wudhu on their forehead, face, arms and legs so whomever can increase the area of their wudu should.

The spiritual effects of our actions in this life that we can't see now will be seen then because on that Allah will lift the veils from our eyes allowing to see ghayb, in this hadith is the understanding that these marks are present on us in life but we can't see them because they are at the quantum level of the universe and invisible to our eyes.

The Messenger of Allah (saws) went to the cemetery (of Baqi) and said, "May you be secured from punishment, O dwellers of the abode of the believers! We, if Allah wills, will follow you. I wish we (could) see my brothers." The Companions said, "O Messenger of Allah! Are not we your brothers?" He (saws) said, "You are my Companions, but my brothers are those who have not come into the world yet (the later generations)." They said; "O Messenger of Allah! How will you recognize those of your Ummah who are not born yet?" He (saws) said, "Say, if a man has white-footed horses with white foreheads among horses which are pure black, will he not recognize his own horses?" They said; "Certainly, O Messenger of Allah!" He (saws) said, "They (my followers) will come with bright faces and

white limbs because of Wudu'; and I will arrive at the Haud (Al-Kauthar, the drinking lake) ahead of them.”(Muslim).

The Messenger of Allah (saws) said, "Shall I not tell you something by which Allah effaces the sins and elevates ranks (in Jannah)?" The Companions said; "Certainly, O Messenger of Allah." He (saws) said, "Performing the Wudu' thoroughly in spite of difficult circumstances, walking with more paces to the mosque, and waiting for the next Salat (prayer) after observing (a) Salat; and that is Ar-Ribat, and that is Ar-Ribat.”(Muslim).

The Messenger of Allah (saws) said: "Wudu' is half of Iman (faith).” (Muslim)

Scholars considered this hadith to be among the most significant hadith's of the prophet (saws) just like the hadith of Jibril (as), it is one of the reasons why water and cleanliness was so significant in Islamic society.

The most important step in reaching the stage of Ihsan (Human perfection), wudu, is worth half of a persons Iman (faith) because of the importance of cleaning the body spiritually from the sins that mark it, weigh it down and stop it from receiving the light of Allah that expands the breast and allows a persons heart to uphold truth and act rightly.

The Messenger of Allah (saws) said, "Whoever of you performs Wudu' carefully and then affirms: `Ash-hadu an la ilaha illallahu Wahdahu la sharika Lahu, wa ash-hadu anna Muhammadan `abduhu wa Rasuluhu [I testify that there so no true god except Allah Alone, Who has no partners and that Muhammad ((saws) is His slave and Messenger],' the eight gates of Jannah are opened for him (on the day of judgment). He may enter through whichever of these gates he desires (to enter).”(Muslim).

“To those who reject Our signs and treat them with arrogance, no opening will there be of the gates of heaven, nor will they enter the garden, until the camel can pass through the eye of the needle. Such is Our reward for those in sin”. (Qur'an 7:40)

“And those who feared their Lord will be led to the Garden in crowds, until behold, they arrive there. Its gates will be opened, and its keepers will say: 'Peace be upon you! You have done well! Enter here, to dwell therein.” (Qur'an 39:73)

This is the spiritual significance of wudu, the eight gates of Jannah are opened for that person as a result of his effort in life and He can enter by which ever one he chooses, some people will only enter by one gate according to the action they performed best in life oth-

ers will be given a choice of more than one, but perfecting wudu constantly perfect and affirming the shahada (testimony of faith) surpass all of these and will open all eight gates, such is its importance in life.

Abu Hurairah narrated that the Prophet said: "Whoever spends two things in the way of Allah will be called from the gates of Paradise and will be addressed, 'O slave of Allah, here is prosperity!' So whoever was among the people who used to offer their prayers will be called from the gate of prayer; and whoever was among the people who used to participate in jihad will be called from the gate of jihad; and whoever was among those who used to observe fasts will be called from the gate of ar-Rayyaan; and whoever was among those who used to give in charity will be called from the gate of charity."

The Doors of Jannah are, "Baab As-Salaat", the door of prayer, it is for those who perfect their prayer and are constant in it, "Baab Al-Jihad", the door of fighting in the cause of Allah, it is for those who perform Jihad, "Baab As-Sadaqah", the door of charity, it is for those who constantly give charity, "Baab Ar-Rayyaan", the door of fasting, it is for those who constantly fast and perfect the fast during ramadan, "Baab Al-Hajj", the door of pilgrimage, it is for those who perfect their Hajj and are attached to it, "Baab Al-Kaazimeen Al-Ghaiz Wal Aafina Anin Naas" this door is reserved for those who control their anger and forgive others, "Baab Al-Iman", the door of faith, it is for those who perfect their iman and increase on account of their Sincerity and Sidq (truthfulness), "Baab Al-Dhikr", the door of remembrance, it is for those who constantly remember Allah and are aware of him.

Some will enter by the gate of fasting or by the gate of charity others by another gates, but because wudhu is the thing that opens the way for all these actions to be performed in the name of Allah all the gates of Jannah will be opened because of it.

For this same reason it is also worth half of our Iman (faith), it opens the way for most of our actions.

Incidentally the prophet (saws) said marriage completes a persons religion, so Allah placed the other half of religion with women, they open the way for men to perform the other acts in life.

The aim of wudu is to prepare us for prayer, the Prophet (saws) instructed us to pray at certain times of the day and avoid certain times because of the spiritual harm and benefit in these times.

He (saws) was drawing a complete picture for us of the unseen world, its benefits and harms, so we could understand the hidden reality of this Universe, and how the acts we perform in life affect us from that level of creation. Some of the acts we perform in Islam are dependent on the time of day because spiritual conditions on earth change throughout the day with the day and night cycle, primarily because of the sun and its effects on our solar system at the quantum level and because of the other celestial bodies and earths atmosphere and gravity.

Allah even takes an oath by this fact in surah al Shams (91) "By the Sun and Its radiance" its radiance is literally what affects man on earth at the quantum level, then Allah talks about the moon, earths atmosphere and expanse (i.e gravity) and how they affect people spiritually, the first 10 verses of the surah are about the human self and what influences it and moulds our character through out the day and night.

We can illustrate this by saying good weather puts us in a good mood and bad weather puts us in a bad mood and that shapes our character during these times, in a similar way Allah is talking about something deeper at the quantum level of the universe which does a similar thing. The sun affects our earth through the fields it generates and the gravity it creates, at the beginning of the day that is when this is first beginning, by midday the sun is at its strongest and by sunset its weakest, this is consistent every single day on earth so there are daily, seasonal and yearly cycles, the sun along with the other bodies in space through all the cycles we experience shape mans self and mould it, it is clear from many ahadith the prophet (saws) understood this and advised us in regards to it.

Abu Najih 'Amr bin 'Abasah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported, when the Prophet (saws) emigrated to Madinah: "I went to Al-Madinah and came to him and said, "O Messenger of Allah, do you recognize me?" He (saws) said, "Yes, you are the one who met me in Makkah (at the time only Abu Bakr and Bilal were his only followers)." I said, "O Messenger of Allah, tell me of that which Allah has taught you and of which I am unaware. Tell me about Salat (prayer) first." He (saws) replied, "Perform the Fajr (morning) Salat, then stop Salat until the sun has risen up to the height of a lance, for when it rises, it rises up be-

tween the horns of the devil (a simile because the sun is constantly rising on earth and the devil is not literally following it or that large), and the infidels prostrate themselves before it at that time.

Then perform Salat, for Salat is witnessed and angels attend it (the Angels are countless and their witnessing it means man receives spiritual benefit from their presence as they attend to it), until the shadow becomes equal to the length of its object; then stop Salat, for at that time Jahannam (Hell) is heated up...

[In previous scriptures Allah revealed to the prophet Idris (as) that Black Holes are Hell, and in the Quran He gave a simile for their crushing force saying the people of Hell will need to surpass a black holes crushing gravity to escape hell, “To those who reject Our signs and treat them with arrogance, no opening will there be of the gates of heaven, nor will they enter the garden, until the camel (which is larger than a horse) can pass through the eye of the needle (referring to a black hole’s crushing gravity, that shrinks matter, in order to escape it and go to Heaven). Such is Our reward for those in sin” (Qur'an 7:40). If we keep this in mind then we can see how the prophet (saws) is referring to the black hole at the centre of our Galaxy affecting us and space, black holes contribute a small amount to all gravity effects (as well as other forces) in the milky way, the black hole at the centre of our galaxy has a mass that is about 4.5 million times that of the sun and in some ways behaves like our sun emitting forces that effect the rest of the galaxy, in 2014 for example it unleashed a record-breaking X-ray flare that was 400 times brighter than the normal level of radiation.

It isn't a coincidence that at the centre of every galaxy in the universe there is a black hole, just like we rotate around the sun our solar system and all stars rotate around their black hole. In some ways our circulation around the kaaba mimics the circulation of the earth around the sun, which mimics our solar systems rotation around a black hole which mimics the milky ways rotation in the Universe, Allah is connecting our souls to the greater order in creation and the soul is always perceiving what is occurring in ghayb.

During prayer we connect our self to this order because we pray facing the Kaaba, a black holes influence in space is significant when a person is praying because that is when man is trying to connect spiritually to Allah, meaning the heart at the quantum level is open and perceiving what is there sub-atomically, and this is a time when “Hell is heated up”, it's ef-

fects are stronger than usual. From all this we can see how Allah wanted us to be aware of the effects of the sun, moon, earth and its atmosphere, the stars and blackholes on us in the cycles we experience in life because they mould and shape us spiritually. If we understand anything about symmetry and harmony it is significant to learn that the golden mean or ratio of the earth is located in Makkah, this same ratio also defines the spiral shape of our milky way galaxy, "Behold the first House [of worship] set up for mankind was the one at Becca (Makkah); it is blessed and a guidance for [everyone in] the Universe" (3:96)].

...Then pray when the shadow becomes longer, for the prayer is witnessed and angels attend it, until you perform 'Asr prayer; then stop Salat till sun sets, for it sets between the horns of a devil. At that time the infidels prostrate themselves before it." (because the prophet (saws) mentioned its worship the simile more than likely means that is a time when the evils draw power from it and use that power against man causing him to worship it, which was common in the world at the time of the prophet (saws), so we shouldn't be praying at this time).

...I then asked the Messenger of Allah to tell me about Wudu' (ablution), and he (saws) said, "When a person begins the Wudu' and washes his mouth and nose, the sins committed by his face, mouth and nostrils are washed out. Then when he washes his face as commanded by Allah, the sins of his face are washed out with the water from the sides of his beard. Then when he washes his hands up to his elbows, the sins of his hands are washed out through his fingers with the water. Then he passes his wet hands over his head and the sins of the head are washed out through the ends of his hair with water. Then he washes his feet up to the ankles, the sins of his feet are washed out through his toes with the water. Then, if he stands up for Salat (prayer) and praises Allah, glorifies Him, proclaims His Greatness as He deserves and devotes his heart wholly to Allah, he emerges sin free as the day he was born" (the effects of sin are no longer on him, it doesn't mean his book of records is wiped and he will not be accountable on the day of judgment for his actions, here we see the prophet (saws) talking about the "physical" effects of sin on the body and how to get rid of them).

When 'Amr bin 'Abasah (May Allah be pleased with him) narrated this Hadith to Abu Umamah (May Allah be pleased with him) a Companion of the Prophet (saws), the latter said to him, "Watch what you are saying. O 'Amr bin 'Abasah, a man will be getting all of

this in one shot?" (getting to much information at once) 'Amr (May Allah be pleased with him) replied, "O Abu Umamah, I have attained old age, my bones have become dry, my death is approaching and there is no need for me to tell lies concerning Allah and His Messenger (saws). Had I not heard this from the Messenger of Allah only once, twice, thrice (and he counted up to seven) I would never have reported it. Indeed I have heard this frequently".(Sahih Muslim, Imam Nawawi also records it in Riyadh al Saliheen).

This science and knowledge the prophet (saws) taught to his companions on a regular basis using words they could understand, so it is something every person in the Umma should know because it is at the core of Islam. It was well known among the companions, a single companion heard it from the Prophet (saws) seven times, so when people asked about prayer and ablution this is what the prophet (saws) taught everyone on a regular basis, not just how to wash and prostrate but there spiritual (subatomic) reality as well.

The prophet said the same thing about prayer as He did wudhu, and while water is physical and we can understand how it can have cleaning effect even in the subatomic world because everything exists at every level of the universe, the atoms water is made from are made from even smaller particles.

We should ask our self how prayer, which is an act and not a substance can do the same thing as water.

The prophet (saws) said, "The five set Prayers may be compared to a stream of fresh water, flowing in front of your house, into which you plunge five times each day. Do you think that would leave any dirt on your body?' When they replied: 'None at all!' The Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'Indeed, the five Prayers remove sins, just as water removes dirt.'" (Muslim)

The short answer to this question is that our own body cleanses itself because of prayer, if we play sport the physiological result is that we develop muscles and become healthier, the act of prayer also has physiological effects which affect the body on a subatomic level, the most obvious way is the bodies own electromagnetic field produced by the heart and brain, it is made from quantum particles and connected to the two organs that are the centre of mans consciousness and self, it surrounds the entire body stretching out some 3 to 4 ft from it and above all else the other name for an electromagnetic field is light, the very same substance Allah uses to do many things.

While ablution washes away minor and normal sins, prayer can wash away the effects of major sins. The prophet (saws) said “The five set Prayers are an expiation, for there is something amongst them by which major sins are repelled” (Muslim), here in literal terms the prophet (saws) is telling us prayer and the acts Allah made impermissible have a subatomic reaction with the human body, a reaction that occurs in the ghayb (unseen) of this universe, which should also tell us that everything we do is to protect ourself from the bad effects that occur in the ghayb of the universe.

The Prophet even described the nature of it's effects, He (saws) said: “The prescribed Prayer is like a pair of scales: whoever gives full measure will also receive in full.” Scales and measure is just another way of mentioning science to desert arabs, for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction, this hadith is just the law of conservation in physics, energy cannot be created or destroyed, just transformed from one form to another. If the prayer is performed properly you will receive it's full benefit, if you fall short in anyway the results will fall short as well.

The prayer isn't simply the actions of bowing and prostrating, the prophet and companions used to go to great lengths to make certain their and self were completely in prayer and focused on it.

The Prophet, on him be peace said: “Two members of my Community may perform the Prayer in such a way that their bowing and their prostration are as one, yet their Prayers may be as far apart as heaven and earth.”(Bukhari) (In respect of their humility, that is.)

The Prophet, on him be peace, said: “Abu Hurayra, command your family to perform Prayer, for Allah will provide you with blessings too numerous to reckon.” Meaning the benefit of prayer, in a similar way to how sport has benefits, are to many to count.

Congregational Prayer has an even stronger benefit than individual prayer, the Prophet, on him be peace, said: “The merit of congregational Prayer surpasses that of individual Prayer by twenty-seven degrees.” The number twenty seven is a multiplication of it's benefit and result.

A scholar once said: “One who performs Prayer is like a merchant, who does not start making a profit until he has recovered all his capital. In similar fashion, one who performs Prayer gets no credit for supererogatory devotions until he has discharged his basic obligations (the obligatory prayers).”

Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, used to say: “When it is time for Prayer, get up and extinguish the Hellfire you have kindled for yourselves”, throughout the day through your actions, Abu Bark (ra) is referring to what is occurring in the ghayb (unseen) of the universe because of mans actions in life, “for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction” whether in physics, chemistry or biology, today we call the unseen part of space, the quantum universe.

The prophet (saws) didn't just teach people the benefit and harms that exist in the unseen world, He (saws) described in detail what was occurring, “Then when he washes his face as commanded by Allah, the sins of his face are washed out with the water from the sides of his beard.”... “Then when he washes his hands up to elbows, the sins of his hands are washed out through his fingers with water”... “Then he passes his wet hands over his head and the sins of the head are washed out through the ends of his hair with water.”... “Then he washes his feet up to the ankles, the sins of his feet are washed out through his toes with water”.

This is a description of what is occurring at the quantum level, hence this narration shows that what is occurring at the subatomic level in our universe establishes the system and laws we know as Shariah.

Looking at this more broadly, the laws that Allah placed there govern the world of Jinn and Angels, in this understanding that the unseen world is the subatomic part of the universe we can see how things like Baraka (a general term meaning blessing), Sakina (tranquility) and Sihr (dark magic) work, all of which interact with us according to specific laws today we call these laws quantum mechanics, the physics of the quantum universe.

The hadith also tells us that both ghayb (the unseen) and our universe are the same universe, and the veil (brazakh) placed on mans perception is the only thing stopping us from seeing the unseen part of this universe, it doesn't stop one part of the universe affecting the other.

Those who converted to Islam in the first days were better and closer to Allah than those who converted later, almost but not always in the order of their conversion, because their perfection and character drew them to the light of Allah before others who needed more proof before they understood who the prophet (saws) was, the hadith regarding prayer and ablution came to us from one of the first people in Islam who went to the prophet (saws),

His moral character is significant because it was through Him that Allah chose to teach the rest of the Umma this knowledge.

Abu Najih 'Amr bin 'Abasah (May Allah be pleased with him) began the hadith mentioned earlier by telling us his story, He was the third person who wanted to convert to Islam (after the prophets immediate family) and possibly the first who was not of the prophets (saws) tribe as he came from a distant land, He (r.a) said:“"In the Pre-Islamic Period of Ignorance, I used to think that people who used to worship idols, were deviated and did not adhere to the true religion. Then I heard of a man in Makkah who was preaching a message. So I mounted my camel and went to him. I found that (this man who was) the Messenger of Allah (saws) remained hidden because of the persecution by his people. I had entered Makkah stealthily and when I met him I asked him, "Who are you?" He (saws) said, "I am a Prophet."

I asked; "What is a Prophet?" He said, "Allah has sent me (with a message)". I asked, "With what has He sent you?" He said, "He sent me to strengthen the ties of kinship, to destroy idols so that Allah alone should be worshipped and nothing should be associated with Him". I asked, "Who has followed you in this?" He said, "A freeman and a slave". (At that time only Abu Bakr and Bilal (May Allah be pleased with them) were with him). I said, "I shall follow you". He said, "You can not do that now. Do you not see my situation and that of the people? Go to your people, and when you hear that my cause has prevailed, come to me". So I went back to my people, and while I was with my people, the Messenger of Allah (saws) emigrated to Al-Madinah. I continued to ask people about him till some of my people visited Al- Madinah. On their return, I asked them, "How is that man who has arrived in Al-Madinah faring?" They said, "People are hastening to him. His own people had planned to kill him but did not succeed." Then I went to Al-Madinah and came to him” (Sahih Muslim), this is when the prophet (saws) taught him about ablution and prayer.



10

The Role Of Wudu (Ablution) In Being Happy

Allah, the Exalted, affirms the reason for wudu in the Qur'an, He says: "O you who believe! When you intend to offer As-Salat (the prayer), wash your faces and your hands (forearms) up to the elbows, wipe (by passing wet hands over) your heads, and (wash) your feet up to the ankles. If you are in a state of Janaba (i.e., after a sexual discharge), purify yourselves (bathe your whole body). But if you are ill or on a journey, or any of you comes from responding to the call of nature, or you have been in contact with women (i.e., sexual intercourse) and you find no water, then perform Tayammum with clean earth and rub therewith your faces and hands. Allah does not want to place you in difficulty, but He wants to purify you, and to complete His Favour to you that you may be thankful." (5:6) Another translation has "God does not want to impose any hardship on you, but wants to make you pure, and to bestow upon you the full measure of His blessings."

We can't receive his complete favour, light and baraka until our body is purified and the effects of sin impeding it are

washed away spiritually (at the quantum level). He (swt) then connected this act to our ability to be thankful, which means having the ability to appreciate Him, and that is the foundation of sincerity, and of being Sidiq (truthful), the two matters most at the heart of reaching Ihsan (Human Perfection).

Perceiving Allah's worth is achieved by perceiving the meaning and worth of things He created this is the essence of finding happiness in life because the best kind of happiness is the one accompanied by knowledge and understanding of what we are happy with, and connecting our heart to Him gives meaning to our good acts making them easier to perform, we can't have the ability to be thankful and happy until we perform wudu regularly.

We can say wudu is the key to Jannah (heaven) and everything in the unseen world because it allows man to receiving the full measure of Allah's spiritual favor and blessing (braka) upon us.

When Iblis (satan) took an oath in front of Allah to misguide man "[Satan] said, "Because You have put me in error, I will surely sit in wait for them on Your straight path. Then I will come to them from before them and from behind them and on their right and on their left, and You will not find most of them grateful [to You]." (7:16-17), he will come at us from various perspectives (all the sides he mentioned) and his main goal is to stop us from being grateful or thankful to Allah, and appreciating what you have is the essence of finding joy in it.

His manner of attacking us is to stop all the means by which we will understand the reasons why we should be thankful to Allah.

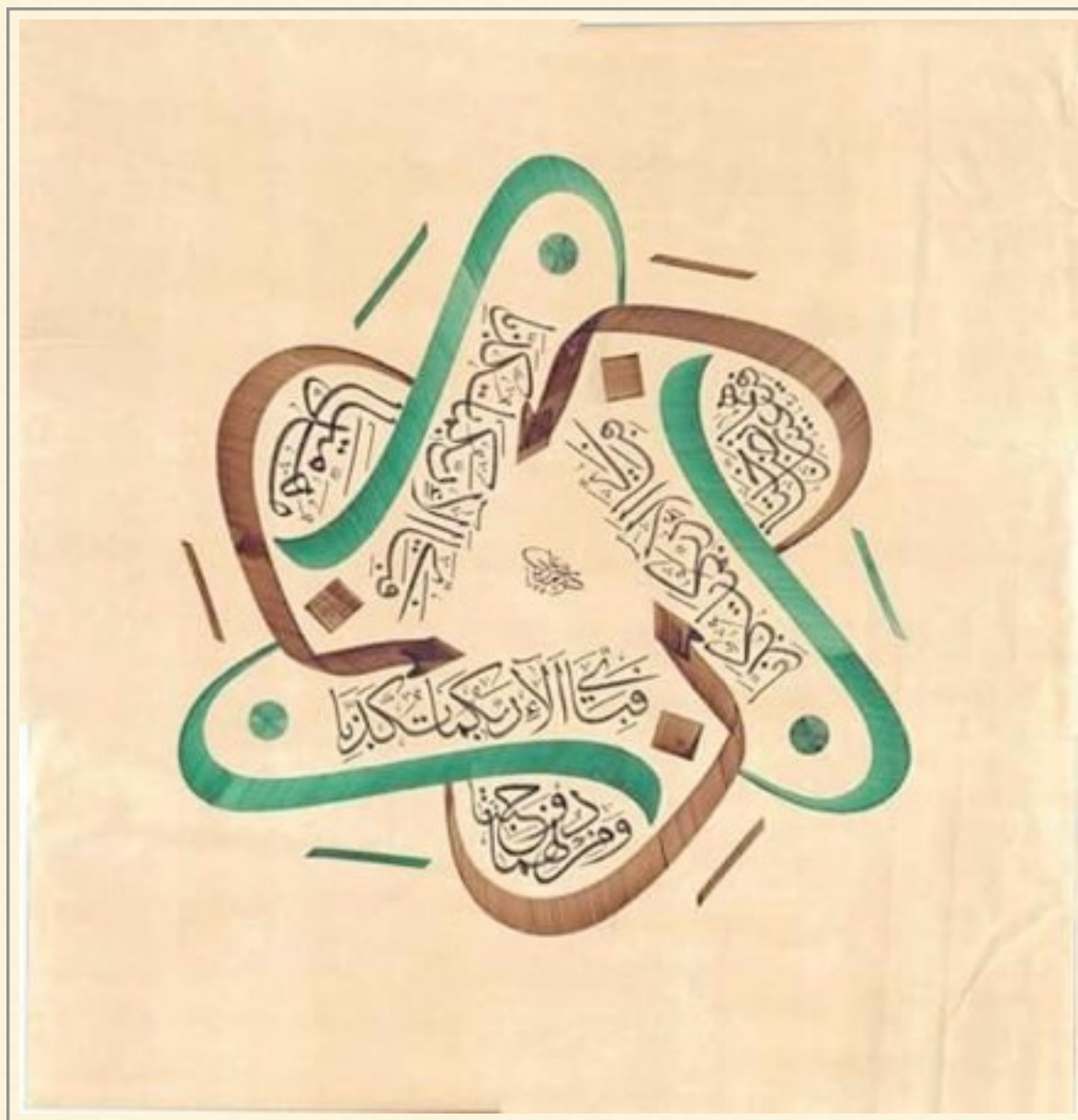
"Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) explains that when Iblees (satan) said he will come to you from your front (Qur'an 7:17) this means Iblees will cause you to doubt the hereafter (the most direct path to doubting Allah). When Iblees comes to you from the back, he will cause you to have hope in the dunya (worldly life).

[All our aims and intentions revolve around this life, so he will cause man to solely focus on it. Dunya comes from the word adnaa which has two meanings: something close and also something debased and low (a reference to the lowest state of matter). Iblees is coming to people to make them doubt in the hereafter and also to give them hope in this life, this is the effect of materialism, his goal is to make people absolute materialists because when that is our nature we are incapable of anything else until we remove our self from it.]

“Ibn Abbas (r.a) continued that the attack from the right is to cause people to have doubt in regards to their religion, to make problems in the religion, and to give you a hard time and cause you to question the religion. The way to cure doubts is to ask someone who knows”, “So ask the people of knowledge, if you do not know.”(16:43) (educate yourself).

The Prophet Muhammad (saws) said: “Acquire knowledge: it enables its possessor to distinguish right from wrong, it lights the way to heaven; it is our friend in the desert, our society in solitude, our companion when friendless – it guides us to happiness; it sustains us in misery; it is an ornament among friends and an armor against enemies.” The prophet (saws) also said “seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave”, and an hours study of nature is better than a years adoration”; “to listen to the words of the learned and to install unto others the lessons of science is better than religious exercises”; Allah mentions in the Qur'an “Thy lord is the most Generous who taught man by the Pen”. (96:4-5)

The last thing that Ibn Abbas (ra) mentioned is the attack from the left which is falling into sins. All of this becomes more significant to us when we have a goal and aim to achieve and then search for ways to achieve it, because it all starts with the self and what is in our heart.





11

The Spiritual Impact Of Perfecting The Self And The Importance of Spiritual Training

Allah in the Qur'an emphasized the spiritual effect and impact of achieving perfecting our self, Allah says in the Qur'an;

“O Prophet! Inspire the believers to fight, [so that,] if there be twenty of you who are patient in adversity, they will overcome two hundred; and [that,] if there be one hundred of you, they will overcome one thousand of those who are bent on denying the truth, because they are people who cannot grasp it.” (8:65)

“For the time being, [however,] Allah has lightened your burden. for He knows that you are weak: and so, if there be one hundred of you who are patient in adversity, they will overcome two hundred; and if there be one thousand of you, they will overcome two thousand by Allah’s leave: for Allah is with those who are patient in adversity.”.(8:66)

This is a very is significant in indicating the worth of a person who practices what Allah instructed in relation to people who are incapable of understanding and bent on deny-

ing the truth. Allah says to the companions (ra) of the prophet (saws) during war, a time when the matter of life and death, Allah's decree on each person is almost black and white, that twenty who are patient during war will overcome two hundred, and one hundred will overcome one thousand, the reason given for these number is related the character of the enemy mentioned at the end of the verse, "they are people who cannot grasp it" and "are bent on denying the truth".

Conquering fear of death while fighting means it does not enter your heart what so ever, it doesn't mean you shrug it of at that point in time. We are referring to what is really in a persons heart, not the delusion he wants to believe about himself at that moment, this quality is gained by man because of how he lived his life up to that point and our daily practices which we keep the heart attached to. The prophet (saws) himself because of his life, his heart was tested with the wonders of Jannah near the lote tree of furthest limit and Allah praised his heart saying it never wavered from Allah nor was his sight even bold staring at anything.

In similar manner 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar (r.a) narrates that Rasulullah (saws) said: "Indeed Allah relieves difficulties for 100 neighbors due to a pious Muslim living near them".(al-Mu'ajjam al-Kabir, Tabrani; Mu'alim, Baghawi)

Anas (r.a) narrates that Rasulullah (saws) said: "When Allah wishes to do good with a person, He uses the person to remove difficulties from the people".(Shu'b al-Iman, Bayhaqi)

These verses in the Quran ring true with what once said regarding Shaolin monks, it was believed that "One Shaolin Monk was considered to be worth one thousand soldiers", they were known for there spiritual practices and martial arts training.

Islam has been in china from the earliest days of Martial arts as we know them, where the two spheres of spirituality and combat are combined. In 651 CE, during the Tang Dynasty, a delegation was sent to China by the Khaliph Uthman Ibn Affan (r. 644-656 CE) from Madina, led by S'ad Ibn Abi Waqqas (d. 674 CE), from tribe of Bani Zuhrah, the clan of Aminah daughter of Wahb, mother of the Prophet Muhammad (saws), they arrived at the port of Guangzhou to deliver the peaceful message of Islam. Another delegation was sent "When a military commander An Lu-Shan revolted against Emperor Su T'sung in 755 CE, an urgent plea was made to the Abbasid Caliph Abu Jafar al-Mansur who immediately sent a contingent of 4000 soldiers who eventually quelled the unrest and recaptured the city".

“The city of Chang’an, (present day Xian in Shaanxi) retained its normality once more and continued in its splendour under the Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE). During the Tang period a variety of different cultures, knowledge and spiritual beliefs, all interacted with each other; thus attracting many keen Japanese and Korean scholars who wished to learn and observe Chinese arts”.

“Many Abbasid warriors who helped the Emperor accepted the invitation to stay and settled in China, they trained in the martial arts, and married Chinese wives thus beginning a natural process of integration into Chinese society while maintaining their Islamic identity and stressing a common lineage and descent from venerated Muslim ancestors. These ancestors were colloquially known as “Hui Hui” down the centuries, and founded one of the longest lived and rarest of all Muslim minorities in the world”.

Muslims added much to the already rich Chinese culture, Syed 'Umar Shams-uddin (known as Sayyid al-Ajall, d.1271CE), a noble figure and descendant of the Prophet (saws), among his many achievements was his study of three ancient Chinese books, called the “Books of Changes” dating back to 909 BCE, which are understood by only a few scholars today, Shams-uddin was responsible for the origin of the “Tai T’si”, the Yin and Yang symbol.

The Ability to understand and expound on the spiritual systems Allah placed in the universe is rare, of which there are many theories around the world because it is the scientific study of the universe, but all come from our understanding the Human body (our Physiology) and how the energy created by it through it’s organs and nervous system interacts with the energy flowing around us in the world, seen in the various electromagnetic fields (of different wave lengths) presents on earth.

Allah stressed the importance of understanding the human body in the very first verse revealed in the Qur'an and the importance of understanding the quantum universe that these fields exist in, in the first verses of it’s second chapter.

Allah says “Proclaim! (or read!) in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created- Created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood” and Allah says this religion is for those “Who believe in the Unseen, (and) are steadfast in prayer” (2:3), believe in the Unseen means to understand the unseen.

The system Allah created in the Universe impacts the Nafs (self) because the spiritual world is a reflection of the physical world, and the physical world is a reflection of the spiritual world what occurs in one impacts the other (now long established in physics).

Many scholars studied this relationship and wrote theories about how it existed although with the limited scientific knowledge available to them at the time, the Yin and Yang is one theory which was applied to the human body to cure it through acupuncture, which mapped the flow of energy through the body and how energy affected specific organs, essentially we know this today as the nervous system which sends electrical impulses (energy) to each organ of the body, this science spread throughout Asia while in the Islamic world the Lataif were developed and adopted.

To illustrate this relationship between energy in the world, the electromagnetic field around us created by the Sun, Earth, mobile phones and broadcast stations, and energy in our body created by the brain heart and nervous system, children living underneath high-powered voltage lines which radiate energy have an increased chance of developing cancer and nervous system related illnesses as adults. The science behind acupuncture is well established today but what was missing for a long time from the equation was a recent scientific vocabulary and our modern understanding of physics and physiology, because it is physics which tells us how energy, in waves or fields in the world behave.

Because this relationship between energy in the universe and the human body is becoming increasingly apparent a new field of science has emerged that uses the laws, methods and theories of physics to study biological systems from the molecular scale up, called Biophysics.

It is closely related to Biochemistry and can even be called biochemical physics because any chemical reaction requires a specific amount of energy to occur and at the molecular level the human body is more closely linked to the energy in the world around it, seen most clearly in how the energy in light particles fuels the chemical reaction in our eyes allowing us to see, and again energy is the domain of physics.



12

Allah Himself Is The One Who Categorised The Nafs

Allah created the Nafs (self or ego) and was the one who categorized it into different kinds in the Qur'an. The first is called “the constant commanding soul (commanding the self to evil)” (12:53), in arabic this is Al Nafs Al-Ammara, elsewhere Allah took an Oath by the second, Nafs al Lawwama, “and I swear by the constant reproachful soul (the person who is correcting himself after his mistakes)” (75:2), and He also mentions Al nafs al mut’ma’inna, “O thou human being that hast attained to inner peace! (Mutmainna)”(87:27).

Allah was pointing out to the muslims Ilm al Nafs, the science of the self and He categorized three different types that would be common to all people and indirectly mentioned three types that are specific to the Prophets, Awiyah (saintly people) and the people of Jannah (heaven).

According to the majority of Muslim scholars the Nafs, can be change into seven states, the lowest one being an animalistic criminal state while the highest is the prophetic character.

Rasulullah (saws) said: “There shall always be 40 men in my ummah whose hearts will be similar to the heart of Ibrahim (as). Allah will remove difficulties from the people due to them. Their title is Abdal (substitute’s, because when one of them dies Allah substitutes another to take his place)”. [Abu Nu’aym fi Hulya]

These stages can be considered part of the path of spiritual growth “Yet for all thou didst know, [O Muhammad,] he might perhaps have grown in purity” (80:3), from the lowest state of man to its perfections.

According to Allah in the Qur’an, the “soul” has two universal influences it can turn to which the nafs (self) is influenced by, the first is called “fujoor” and the second one is called “taqwa”;

Immorality (fujoor) is the lower reality that the “Nafs” (self) can experience and turn to, “Man has been created weak” (4:28)

Morality (taqwa) is the higher reality the “soul” can turn to, “And how He inspired it (Al-hama-ha, the soul) (to know) its Fujoor (Immorality) and its Ta’qwa (morality)” (91:8), the soul is pure and can’t be corrupted but it can be buried in darkness so it can’t perceive morality anymore, the nafs (self or ego) can bring a person down while the soul can lift him up again, this is similar to the struggle of Yin and Yang.

Yin and Yang in plain words is the evil that Allah placed in creation and the good that Allah placed in creation, this expression of Taqwa and Fujoor refers to what is already in creation and not what is in man, because Allah created evil and what is bad in the universe and gave the creatures he created capacity to be influenced by them as a test. They were created because it was part of Allah’s knowledge, His complete knowing of All things that can exist, everything that is good and everything that is evil is part of learning the knowledge that Allah knows.

The terminology that is used by the Chinese is different, incomplete and incorrect in places because they had an incomplete picture of creation.

When you can conceptualize what is in the universe entirely, you can then describe it more completely. In verse 91:8 Allah says He inspired the soul “to Know”, the verse means to know what is immoral for it and moral for it because Allah created man in the best of forms, he didn’t place immorality inside him.

Meaning good and evil are things external to us and the soul is inspired to identify the evil and good forces in creation, among all the things that Allah created whether objects or ideals and beliefs.

This is closer to the terminology of the Chinese, that Yin and Yang are forces (a term used to objectify all things in creation and see them in an abstract way), but they focus on the “science” of it all and say good and evil depend on each other. The dependence of good and evil on each other only resides in the fact Allah created them both and they aren’t going anywhere, you can not get rid of the evil present in creation, it’s actually more scientifically accurate to say evil is created from peoples actions because our actions mould what is in the universe into good or evil, otherwise it isn’t evil in and of itself. This relates to the human body because man is always in a state of loss (surah al Asr) unless he does specific things to protect himself so he is susceptible to weakness from himself and evil that comes from other peoples actions.

Adam (as) was created in Jannah (Heaven) a place entirely pure so man doesn't actually need evil forces to exist because the highest state man can achieve and be constantly in, only reside in what is Good, this is seen in the example of the prophets (as), so the balance and harmony they perceive isn’t correct or a complete picture of the Universe.

“Verily, We have shown him the way (al ssabeela): either grateful or ungrateful”. (76:3) According to this verse, Man’s freewill is enabled to recognize immorality and morality in his Nafs (self) so man can free himself of evil.

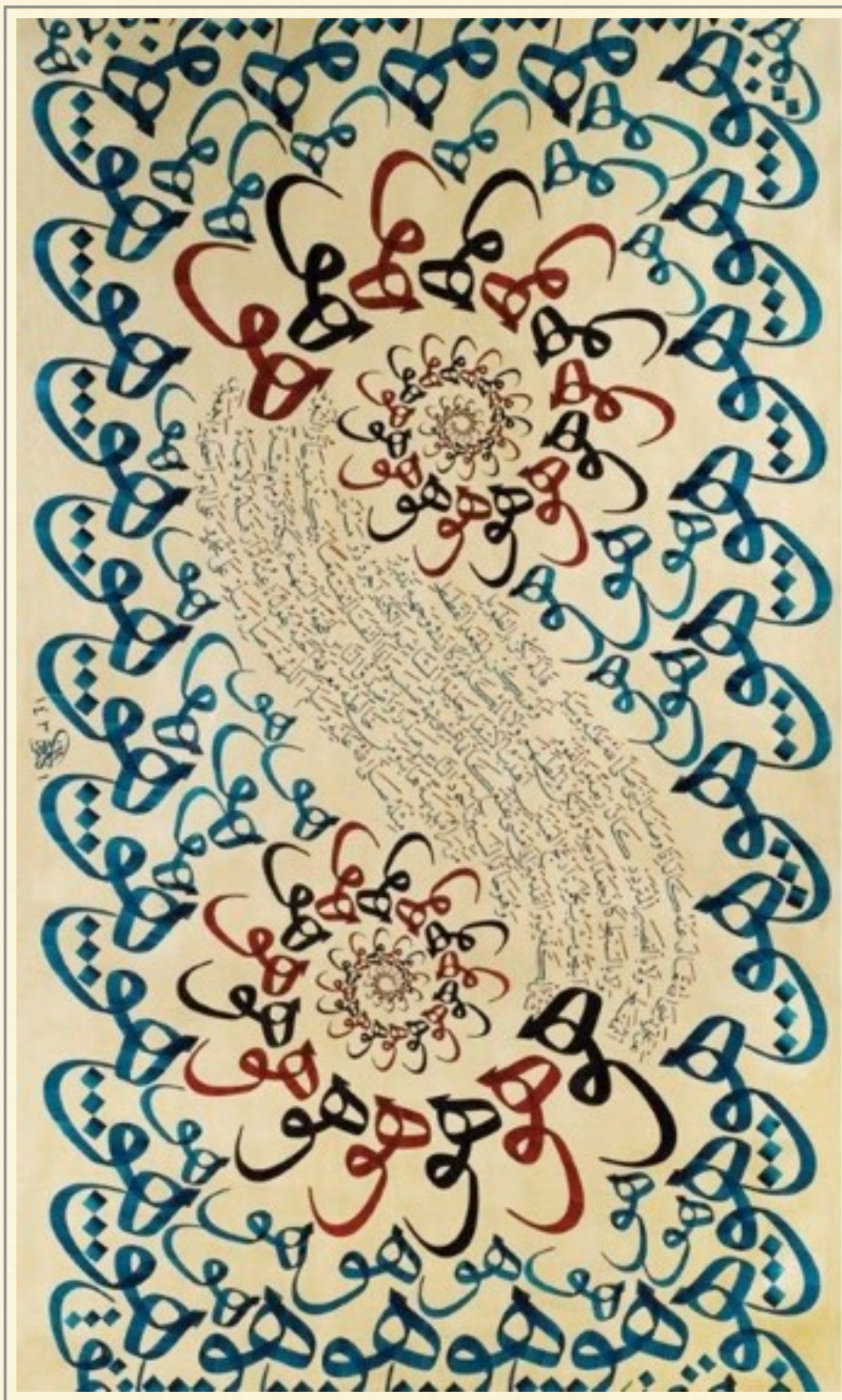
Allah uses what we feel to guide us and inspire us to many things, an Artist to Art, a Chef to cook, an Architect to design but He has placed boundaries so we don’t hurt our self in these domains or fall into the perverse.

Because of mans corporeal (earthly) weakness which would impose a heavy burden upon his nafs (self) through his actions in life, Allah decreed and wanted to lighten the burdens on the self, He said in the Quran: “Allah wants to lighten your burdens: for man has been created weak.” (4:28) this is the ultimate wisdom behind Allah instructions in the Quran.

If man falls into to much desire it burns him out, degenerates his self and degrades him, most people maintain a balance but fall on the heavy side of these burdens on the self, and over time it impacts upon them until in their later years they have a nervous break down,

the world has lost its meaning and the only freedom they can find is to stop caring about it.

If the balance of the self is maintained from the start, as Allah instructed us, then in our later years man would not suffer such things, those who pray as Allah said do not suffer anxiety.





13

How The Celestial Bodies In Space Affect Man On Earth Though His Physiology

In General each of the objects in space, the sun, the moon and earth, generate their own quantum fields, on top of this each object is affected by gravity and they in turn affect each other through gravity and the quantum fields they create.

The fields in space have a real affect on life here on earth and are needed so we can survive, for example High tide occurs when a body of water is facing the moon above it and the moon is pulling the water toward it with its gravity. High tide also occurs when an ocean is facing directly away from the moon, which is now on the opposite side of the earth, and the moon is pulling the mass of the Earth away from the water towards it.

The Earth itself affects other bodies in space with the fields and forces it creates like they affect us. Our entire planet is enveloped in a giant bubble of magnetism, which springs from the molten dynamo (Lava rotation) in the Earth's hot core and its rotation in space.

The sun also has an impact on us, the sun creates giant solar winds, “the solar wind is a stream of plasma released from the upper atmosphere of the Sun, this wind (made of electrons and protons) streams off of the Sun in all directions at speeds of about 400 km/s (about 1 million miles per hour), it can vary between 800 to 300 km/s. These wind speed variations buffet the Earth's giant magnetic field that surrounds it and can produce storms in the Earth's magnetic bubble”, all creatures on earth can sense the earth magnetic bubble and get their sense of direction from it, it is part of life, so anything that affects it affects us.

“Out in space, the solar wind presses against the earth's magnetic bubble and stretches it, creating a long tail in the downwind direction, making the earth magnetic bubble look like the tail of a comet. The Earth's magnetic tail is so great it extends well beyond the orbit of the Moon and once a month, when the Moon is full it orbits through it. This can have consequences on the moon ranging from lunar ‘dust storms’ to electrostatic discharges”.

Researchers have scientifically shown, that historically, bursts of human creativity correlate with solar activity. The periods of greatest levels of human flourishing and creativity in science and the arts recorded in history were clearly shown to occur during solar activity (Solar wind) peaks.

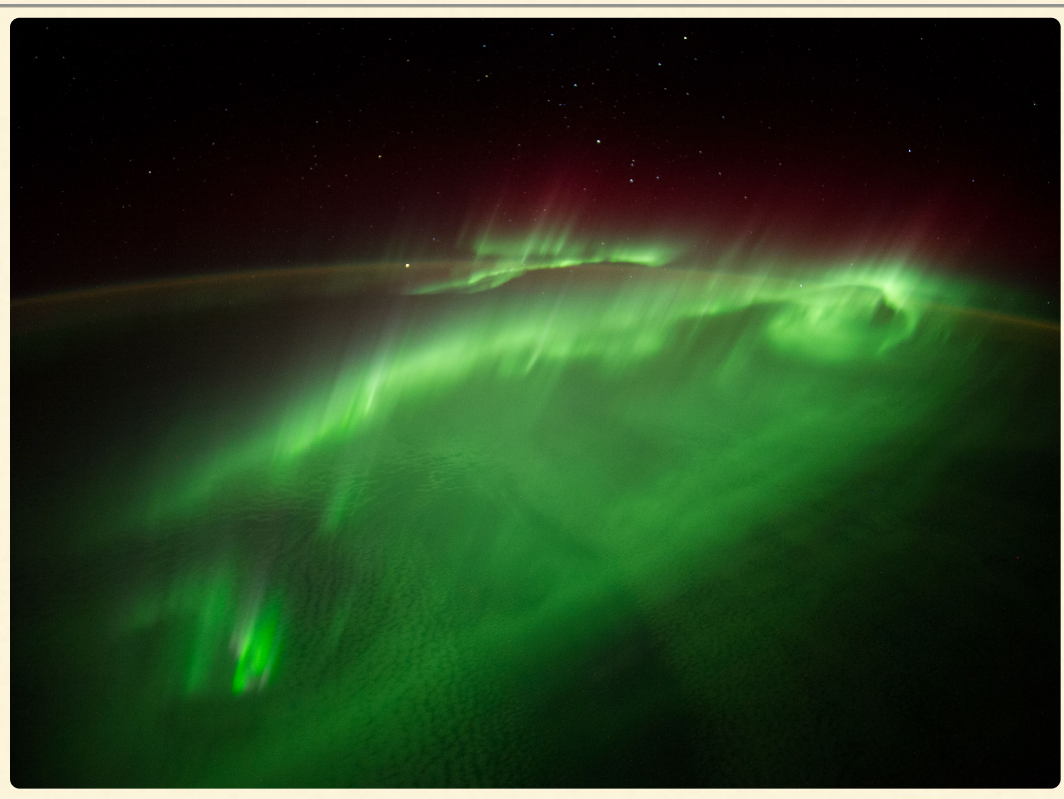
Solar Activity was mapped by the Sun's solar cycle which lasts for 11 years, in 1610 the first European observations of Sunspots were made, the number of sun spots indicates how much solar activity there is, in simple terms how strong the sun is shining. From that time continuous daily observations were started at the Zurich Observatory in 1849 and earlier observations have been used to extend the records back to 1610. Monthly averages (updated monthly) of the sunspot numbers show that the number of sunspots visible on the sun increases and decreases with an approximate 11-year cycle, the peak of solar activity by the sun is roughly in the middle of the cycle. Solar activity first affects the fields surrounding the earth, the ionosphere (upper regions of the atmosphere) then life on earth through the electromagnetic field that all creatures on earth produce and sense through.

The increase in solar activity in simple terms is an increase in energy which the Lataif in the human body are receptive to, they open the heart to deeper states of perception and creativity. It was discovered that this increased solar activity increased creativity and inspi-

ration in humans which was witnessed by the creative endeavors of mankind during these periods.

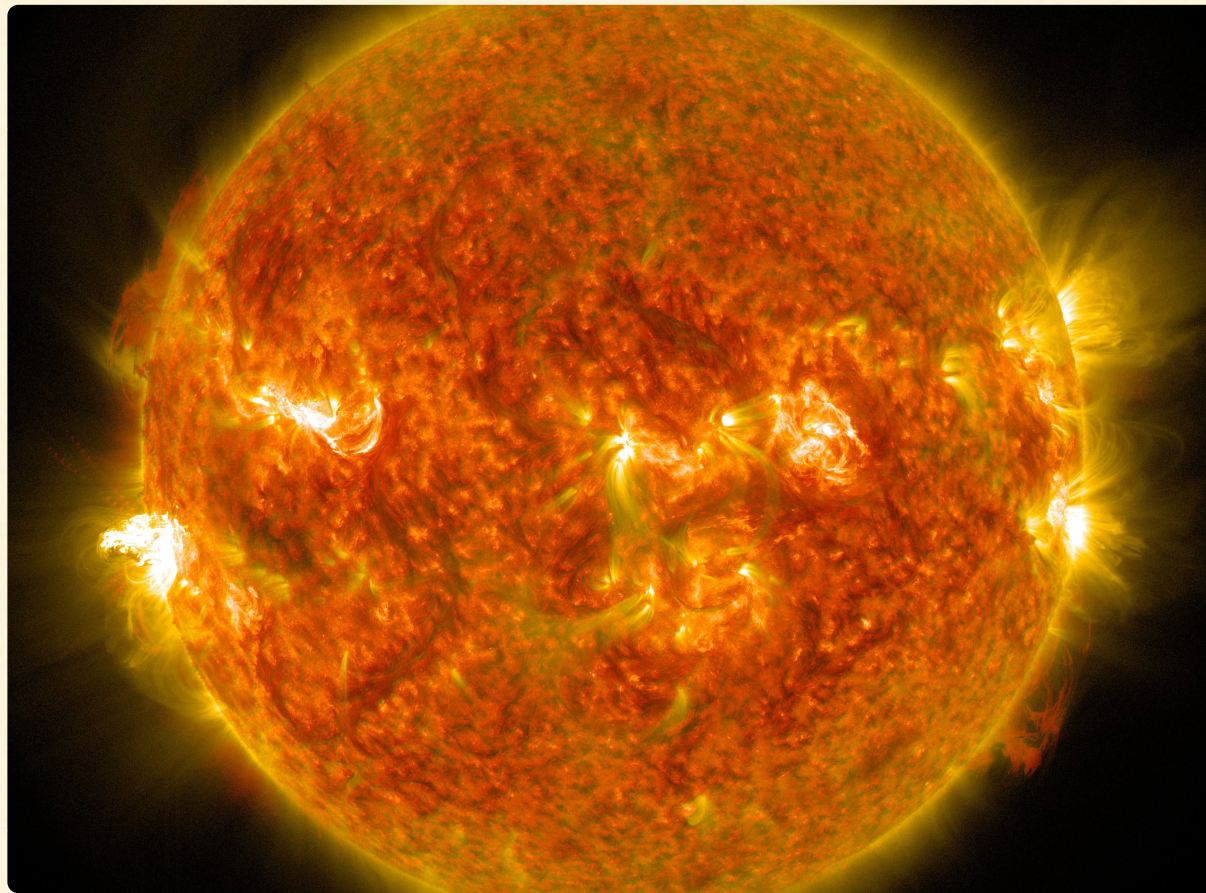
All of this is just as Allah mentioned in surah al Shams (91), he inspires man through the suns brightness, the moon as it reflects the sun, the day that reveals the sun's peak brightness to the world and the night that covers it, the earths atmosphere created by it's magnetic buble which is affected by the sun, and the earth and it's vastness affected by gravity in space.

“BY the sun and its radiant brightness, By the moon as it reflects the sun! (It reflects the suns solar activity at night) BY the day as it reveals the (sun to the) world, By the night as it veils it darkly! (The day and night cycle is the period of increased and decreased solar activity, a cycle that humans experience very relevant to the Lataif) BY the sky and its wondrous make (the atmosphere is created because of the earth's magnetic field shielding it from the sun and space), By the earth and all its expanse! (The expanse of the earth is affected by gravity, it creates the atmosphere and different weather that exist around the world) BY the Soul (which is made from quantum particles), and how it is formed (from these particles) in accordance with what it is meant to be (subject to the Laws of physics), And inspired it (through the quantum universe, the particles and forces that exist there, with) what is wrong for it and right for it. To a happy state shall indeed attain he who causes this [self] to grow in purity (Zakaha), and truly lost is he who buries it [in darkness]. TO [THIS] TRUTH (that previous civilizations already new) gave the lie, in their overweening arrogance, [the tribe of] Thamud”(91:1-11).



This photograph taken by astronauts is of an aurora covering the Earth.

Solar Dynamics Observatory Captures Images of a Late Summer Flare



On Aug. 24, 2014, the sun emitted a mid-level solar flare, peaking at 8:16 a.m. EDT. NASA's Solar Dynamics Observatory captured images of the flare, which erupted on the left side of the sun. Solar flares are powerful bursts of radiation. Harmful radiation from a flare cannot pass through Earth's atmosphere to physically harm humans on the ground, however -- when intense enough -- they can disturb the atmosphere in the layer where GPS and communications signals travel. This flare is classified as an M5 flare. M-class flares are ten times less powerful than the most intense flares, called X-class flares.



“A large variety of animals possess a magnetic sense. Migratory birds use magnetic clues (in addition to light polarization, star signs and position of the sun) to find their way south in fall and north in spring. Salamanders and frogs use the magnetic field for orientation when they have to find the direction of the nearest shore quickly, e.g., when they sense danger”. Many creatures like sharks, bats, homing pigeons have dedicated organs to sense and in reality see with the electromagnetic field,

If one thinks about how magnetic fields can be perceived in principle, three mechanisms immediately come to mind:

Mechanical Reception - This is the principle behind a compass needle. A magnetic field exerts a torque on a ferromagnetic material.

Electric Induction - Movement in a magnetic field (this can occur because of the sun) will result in an induced electric field. Many creatures can sense and perceive electric and magnetic fields with high accuracy. Man's body is similar in this way because both the heart and brain produce an electrical and magnetic fields, called the electromagnetic field, and they are the centers of man's sensory perception.

Chemical Reception - Chemical reactions that involve transitions between different spin states can be influenced by magnetic fields, so that one of the possible products (outcomes) is favored due to the influence of the magnetic field. In other words the magnetic field can influence chemical reactions in the body and scientists think a chemical compass exists in many animals.

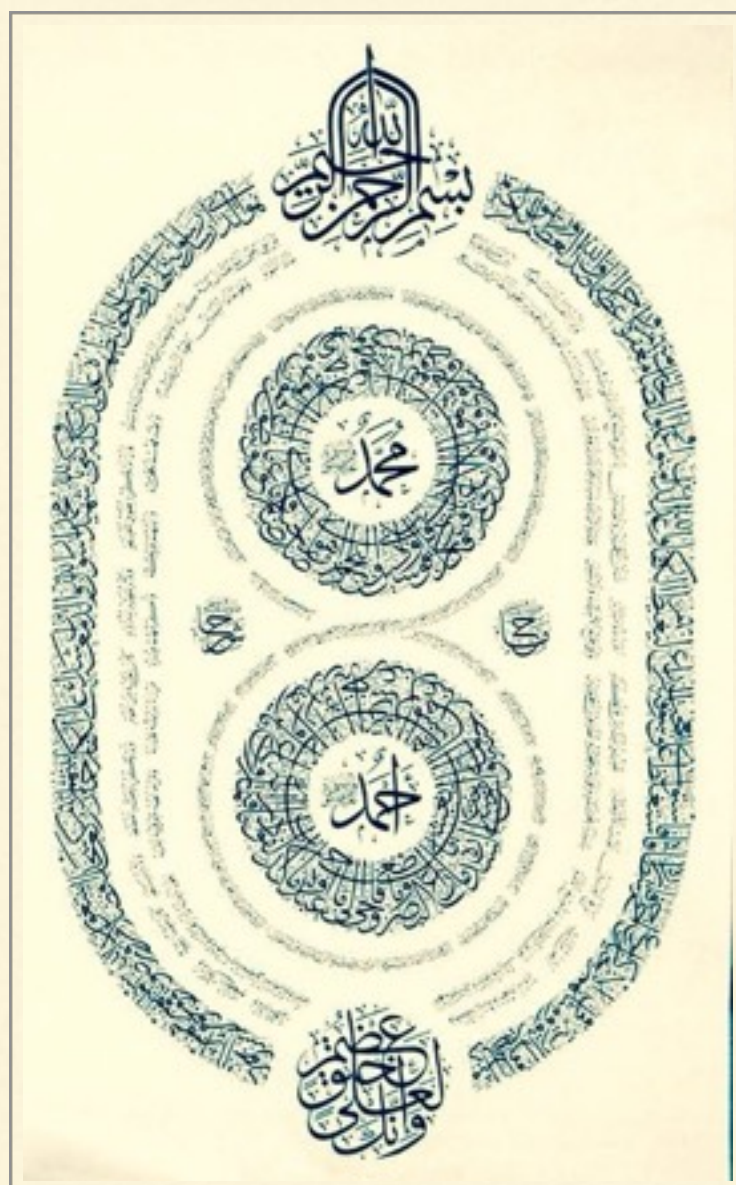
When we consider Quantum Mechanics other mechanisms based on the laws of physics can be enumerated such as the coherence of waves.

In the Human Body, its electromagnetic field will interact with other fields around it and its perceptive organs will be influenced by it sensing the world around them. Scientists are beginning to realize that human consciousness is a state of matter, like a Liquid, Solid or Gas but only Quantum and is subject to the same laws of physics that govern the rest of the universe.

What we know as consciousness is the result of the body's interaction with the universe around it on all levels, because the brain and nervous system are a distributed parallel processing system (like a computer CPU with multiple cores computing), it can compute multiple things at the same time and act on each simultaneously, so consciousness is born out of the sum of those interactions. Who we are is what our body has recorded from the results and effects of our actions in life, the Prophet (saws) said "Your body has a right over you" (Bukhair), and Allah said on the day of judgment, "This Day, We shall seal up their mouths, and their hands will speak to Us, and their legs will bear witness to what they used to earn." (36:65) meaning we will be judged according to the different parts of our body.

It is very significant that it was in Surah al Shams (The Sun) that Allah took one of the most significant oaths in the Quran, only less important than the oath he took by the prophets (saws) own soul. The intent of the verse is to consider the things been sworn by in greater detail and how they relate to each other, Allah then mentions that this relationship the Tribe of Thamud (7:73) which the Prophet Saleh (saws) was sent to guide, lied about it, and ignored the reality between the things Allah swore by, and Himself, consequently they where destroyed because of their evil.

‘Their depth of knowledge regarding the celestial bodies and their effect on humans shouldn't be surprising since nearly all ancient cultures around the world had an advanced understanding of these celestial bodies and their effects on the human self, reflected in their religion and the elaborate structures they constructed and left behind in perfect alignment with the celestial bodies that marked their elaborate movements through the sky. Some took to worshiping them instead of Allah as they saw them as the source of inspiration, power and influence on human life, which Allah condemned because He was their creator and said that through them He inspired the soul (with conscience of) what is wrong for it and (what is) right for it (91:8).’





14

How The Human Body Learns and The Downward Spiral Of Western Medicine Over The Past 100 Years

The History of the Lataif of Islam begins with Shaykh najmudin Kubra (12/13century) but it's origins begin with the prophet (saws) himself who better than anyone understood the physiology of the Human body and how Allah created it. The prophet (saws) understood both the physical and spiritual side of man's physiology which reflected in many of His (saws) actions and dua (prayers) that He (saws) taught to His Ummah. When the Angel Jibril (ra) first came to him He instructed the prophet (saws) to (iqra), "Read! In the Name of your Lord, Who has created (all that exists)".

That is, to Iqra (read) the Ayat (signs) in the Universe in the name of Allah, and the first thing Allah taught Him (saws) was that He "has created man from something that clings (Alaq, the fetus)." Then He told Him (saws) to again "Read!" these Ayat (signs) because "your Lord is the Most Generous" (96: 1-3), meaning He will be generous in revealing the signs to Him (saws), so He (saws) should continue to look for them and study them.

Because this knowledge was new to the prophet (saws), Allah wanted to first focus the prophets (saws) mind on how man was created and from there He would then think about man's complete physiology as He (swt) revealed it to Him (saws) in other verses. The first verses of the Quran were not a warning to mankind but the scientific foundation for everything the prophet (saws) would later instruct man to do in Islam in order to perfect himself, because all actions in the Deen (religion) related to mans creation and physiology.

Man needed to purify his body so it can be capable and ready to accept Allah's (physical) light in his heart, this is because light or the electromagnetic field is the source for all knowledge we receive through our body and faculties. The Human body through our nervous system and organs such as the heart and brain produce a strong electromagnetic field, in simple terms Light.

A pure heart free from fault is capable of holding, sensing and understanding a subtle light, some light is visible others are not, a good example of this is the battle of the trench, when the muslims were digging the trench a large rock stood in their way from completing it, the prophet stuck the rock three times and each time He saw a flash of light, Salman al farisi (ra) saw the light as did the prophet (saws) but he could not make out what was in the light while the prophet (saws), because of his purity could, (the hadith is related in full at the end of this work).

In physics this transmission of information and knowledge through the electromagnetic field (light) is called the coherence of waves, (a field is just a bunch of waves together). When one electromagnetic wave connects with another, if they are in a state of coherence (synchronized, calm and there is no interference) then information can be passed on from one to the other clearly, this is like a mobile phone which also uses the electromagnetic field to communicate, if there is bad reception because of interference with the signal from something (in terms of the human body, a persons bad character or mood) then you will get drop outs in the information the phone is sending and receiving, if there is a good signal (coherence, produced by good character and self control) then the information is passed on crystal clear.

This is where the entire matter of revelation begins, with Light and the Angels created from Light charged with giving mankind the revelations of Allah. Imam Malik said "Knowledge does not consist in narrating much. Knowledge is but a light which Allah

places in the heart”, narrations are the end result of receiving knowledge not the beginning which is the light placed in the heart, the source of the prophets (saws) knowledge was revelation and the light Allah placed in his heart every time He sent Him verses from the Quran. "For he (Gabriel) it is who hath revealed (the Quran) to thy heart by Allah's leave." (2:97)

Imam Al-Dhahabi (along with many other scholars) similarly said, Knowledge (al-`ilm) “is not the profusion of narration but a light which Allah casts into the heart.” From here Imam Dhahabi goes on to explain what all the major scholars understood, that man passes on the knowledge he knows to his students, friends, family, children...etc, through the light (electromagnetic field) of his own heart, (literally the heart and brain produce light), this knowledge is passed on to the light produced by the heart of the student or child they are teaching in their presence, this is, along with the normal manner of communicating, a person with a clear heart will be able to take in more of what they are learning and hearing if they can form a coherent link with the teacher, usually achieved through respect and good conduct towards the teacher, something all of Islam’s scholars said is the foundation of learning.

Imam Dhahabi said regarding the light the heart receives “Its condition is followership”, ittibaa, following someone, akin to a respectful teacher student relationship which is what following the sunnah meant to the companions, it was because of the Prophet’s light that Madinah the city He lived in was called Madinah al Munawara (the illuminated city), in literal terms “The City that is Enlightened” referring to the amount of knowledge being passed on through His (saws) light which many companions living in the city could sense and see, and when He (saws) died the companions said that light left and the city became darker.

Allah in the Quran clearly says He sent the prophet (saws) as a light for people because of this "O Prophet! We have sent you as a witness, a bearer of good tidings and of warning, as a caller to Allah by His leave and as an illuminating lamp,"(33:45) Just like the lamp creates light the Human body creates light, in this verse Allah said He sent him as a lamp for people whose role was to illuminate them, because physiologically people are guided by the light (electromagnetic field) of people.

The Prophet, may Allah's blessings and peace be upon him, said "Allah created His creation in darkness then He sprayed them with His light. Those whom this light reached became rightly guided, while those it did not reach went astray."(Tirmidhi)

Those who saw him in the full moon noticed that his blessed face was brighter than the moon,(Tirmidhi) and one of his Companions, the Lady Rubayyi', when asked to describe him, said, "My son, had you seen him, you would have seen the sun shining."(Tirmidhi)

Aisha (ra) the prophet's wife related how she saw the whole room fill with light one night, then it disappeared, while the Prophet continued to call upon Allah. Then the room was filled with a more powerful light which disappeared after a while. She asked, "What is this light I saw?" he said, "Did you see it. O 'A'isha?" "Yes!" she replied. He said, "I asked my Lord to grant me my nation, so He gave me one third of them, so I praised and thanked Him. Then I asked him for the rest, so He gave me the second third, so I praised and thanked Him. Then I asked Him for the third third, so He gave it to me, so I praised and thanked Him." She said that had she wished to pick up mustard seeds from the floor by this light she could have.(Hilya)

This is the basis for the Tariqah's of Tassawwuf and learning from a teacher who has a silsila (genealogy) of teachers that goes back to the prophet (saws), because as they have been saying for 1400 years the silsila (genealogy) of teachers means you are receiving from the light of a teacher who received from the light of a teacher who, going all the way back, received from the light of the prophet (saws) himself, Allah speaks about this in very clear terms in the Quran in a few places.

The scholars understood the importance of this and preserved this chain of teachers very carefully, today every tariqa (path) of Tassawwuf can recount the lineage of teachers they received their knowledge from all the way to the prophet (saws), usually through Imam Ali (ra) or Sayidina Abu Bakr (ra).

This is what Allah means in the verse "They aim to extinguish Allah's light with their utterances: but Allah has willed to spread His light in all its fullness (until the coming of the hour), however hateful this may be to all who deny the truth", this expression is Jawmi al-Kamil encompassing of more knowledge, other translations have "They want to extinguish the light of Allah with their mouths, but Allah will perfect His light, although the disbeliev-

ers dislike it”.(61:8) “Allah will perfect His light”, Allah’s light is already perfect so this is referring to it’s role on earth that will be perfected.

Allah in the verse refers to revelation as light because of how it will spread on earth, this isn’t frivolous or hollow speech which is beneath Allah, it has significance and purpose, Allah is trying to teach us something by stating the verse in this unique way, and He promised to protect this light as it spreads from person to person until the coming of the hour.

This is why the prophet (saws) said He has left for us his descendants to learn from and that they and Islam will not separate from each other until He meets them all at His reservoir (al Kawthar) on the day of Judgment. He (saws) said “I am leaving among you something which is very important and should (both) be followed, you will not go astray if you get hold of it after I am gone, one part of it being more important than the other: Allah's Book, which is a rope stretched from Heaven to Earth, and my close relatives (and descendants), who belong to my household. These two (the Quran and my descendants) will not separate from one another till they come down to the reservoir (al Kawthar, on the day of judgment), so consider how you act regarding them after my departure.” (Tirmidhi)

“Allah has willed to spread His light in all it’s fullness” meaning in every manner light can spread knowledge and through it his religion, Allah prepared the way until the hour by saying about the prophet (saws) descendants in the Quran “Allah intends only to remove from you impurity, O people of the [Prophet's] household, and to purify you with [extensive] purification”(33:33), it is significant enough that the last Khalifah of the Muslim Ummah (nation), Imam Mahdi (ra), will be a descendant of the prophet (saws) showing how Allah is fulfilling this promise, and only the pagans “want to extinguish the light of Allah with their mouths”.

Imam Dhahabi, who was Ibn Taymiya’s student, then explains what preserves this light that the heart is taking knowledge through from being destroyed, seen most keenly in the teacher student relationship... “Its condition is followership and the flight away from egotism (hawa) and innovation (which destroy that light).”

Imam Ali (ra) similarly understood all this and said: “Enlighten the heart with prayers” meaning prayer causes the heart to create light which helps it to sense and translate knowledge, and this is the foundation of why we do everything in religion.

In this regard Allah said “Whomsoever Allah desires to guide, He expands his breast to Islam (so it can easily understand that light); whomsoever He desires to lead astray, He makes his breast narrow, tight, as if he were climbing to heaven (it becomes difficult to perceive the light of religion, even if someone is talking to us about it). So Allah lays abomination upon those who believe not.” (6:15)

This is the significance of Allah mentioning the chest in this ayah, because we can effectively take out the word Islam from this verse and replace it with the word knowledge, “He expands his breast to knowledge”, but Allah mentions Islam because He is referring to a specific type of knowledge that man is given or deprived of as punishment, while the heart is still capable of perceiving other kinds of worldly knowledge.

If for some, it is difficult to see the connection between all these things, all we have to ask is, what does Allah mean by expand a persons chest in relation to Islamic knowledge, and what is in the chest that literally receives that knowledge because it isn't the brain or the lungs, the only receptive organ is the heart.

From here we have to then ask, how is the heart able to receive knowledge because to most people it just pumps blood, but this simple understanding is the old outdated view of western medicine over the past 100 years, that the heart is just a muscle, in fact the heart has very complex “electrical wiring” (nervous system) which does some very sophisticated things like a computer, literally the heart is like a mini brain and this has only been recently discovered because of advances in technology that allowed for closer inspection of that organ.

This state of western medicine over the past century was unfortunate because mankind has always understood the heart had a sophisticated role to play, but as the west became secularized during the 19th century it attacked religion and used it's pseudo scientific discoveries of the past 100 years to prematurely justify it's Atheism, which now it is moving away from because the science is crystal clear and can't be ignored.

Like the human body all animals produce an electromagnetic field, through it they sense the world around them and hunt other creatures, through it birds can migrate large distances and navigate the magnetic currents of the earth, most animals have specific organs designed to interpret what they sense or see through the electromagnetic field that their

body produces and the human body is closely related to theirs but perfected, as Allah states.

The electro-magnetic field is made of two things, an electric field and a magnetic field which feed upon each other, both exist because of the electro-magnetic force which is like gravity (but not exactly the same) but for small (quantum) particles.

The electromagnetic force is one of the fundamental forces that the universe relies on, in importance it is second behind gravity, it affects everything in the universe including gravity and is the force behind magnetic fields, electric fields and light. It is also responsible for giving things strength, shape and hardness because it is responsible for how particles are attracted to each other or how they repel each other, just like in magnets.

This force is approximately 10 to the 36 (10^{36}) times stronger than the gravity on earth, but it mainly works on the small (quantum) particles, if this force wasn't there everything would collapse into a black hole because particles are no longer being kept apart (repelled) from each other, which tells us how significant it is to life and space, as well as how widespread it is.

The electromagnetic force is also responsible for giving us the ability to hold and move things, the electric field (technically it's called the electrostatic field) generated among atoms and molecules near the surface of our hand generates a force field that doesn't allow large objects to pass through our hand, it's also responsible for dirt sticking to our hand, but this is how common and far reaching this force is in the universe, our heart, brain and entire body are governed by it, through it they produce a field that surrounds the entire human body by a distance of 3 to 4 feet.

Animals have specific organs that allow them to interpret or see with these fields, man has his heart and we do more complex things in our body, through them we sense and feel what others want or intend and through them we pass on knowledge, there isn't an organ or cell in the human body that isn't affected by this force.

Science and medicine, with many recent advances over the past decade, have already in our time established what we have known about the human body from the first days of Islam, for example if we hear a second hand conversation from someone, we take less information from what we are told than if we witnessed it ourselves because our body takes input on many more levels from the presence and atmosphere of the people speaking or events

unfolding in front of us, if this didn't relate to man's heart and senses than any second hand conversation will do.

This is because our body senses, through our organs, heart and its electro-magnetic field, what those people are feeling and expressing, and the mind which receives all that information from our body translates all these inputs so we can comprehend it.

Most scientists agree that cognition and emotion are distinct functions in the body, mediated by separate but interconnecting neural systems, moreover, communication channels in the brain are hard wired, and linking the mental and emotional systems together are essential for the expression of our full range of mental capacities, meaning our emotions and what we sense and feel are part of man's ability to perceive, they are not useless "women's" emotions as the western view was for many years.

It is also significant that the actual number of neural connections in the brain going from the emotional processing areas (centres) to the cognitive (rational) centres in the brain is greater than the number going the other way, meaning the body and brain is hard wired to translate and pay attention to what we sense and feel first then to be rational.

This goes some way to explaining the powerful influence of emotions on thought processes, and the brain's receptiveness to emotions, or the body's input to the brain through its senses, this is why the heart is the seat of the intellect because rational thought comes after what we sense and feel, western psychology has been teaching the opposite of this for well over 100 years with drastic results to society.

Neuroscience has shown that because of the way the body is hardwired, that while emotions can easily dispel non emotional thoughts from our awareness, non emotional thoughts do not easily displace emotions from the mental landscape.

In this regard the scholars said the heart is the seat of the intellect not the brain, Imam Ali (r.a) said at Siffin, "The (seat of the) intellect is located in the heart. Mercy is located in the liver, Compassion is located in the spleen. The self (soul) is located in the lungs (these refer to regions in the body that affect these types of emotions)." (Adab al Mufrad, Hasan).

Imam Ali (ra) also said: "The (spiritual) disease of the heart is worse than the disease of the body." Imam Al-Nawawi said: "This hadith was used as proof that the seat of the mind (intellect) is the heart (al-'aql fi al-qalb) and not the head."

What is emerging from the most recent research is that the human body also has another layer of sensory input on top of his physical senses, and this is the input from mans electro-magnetic field produced by the brain and heart. Our body is made from cells which are sensitive to what occurs at the quantum level of the universe because they need light to survive, so the heart and brain through the electromagnetic force are connected to the most basic level of matter, the subatomic world.

When there is coherence within and between the mental and emotional systems of the body, they impact constructively to expand awareness, they also enable the body to work optimally both psychologically and physiologically. In relation to this very point the prophet (saws) on a regular basis used to make dua for Allah to increase him in light (the electromagnetic field) (Bukhari, Muslim and many others). He (saws) would ask Allah to place light in very specific organs of the body because He understood how the body uses and relies on the electromagnetic field (light), these dua are among the most repeated prayers in Islam.

There is no doubt that the prophet (saws) understood the importance of the electromagnetic field (Light) in the body and the significance of keeping it strong. The Prophet (saws) would ask “O Allah, place light in my heart, and on my tongue light, and in my ears light and in my sight light, and above me light, and below me light, and to my right light, and to my left light, and before me light and behind me light. Place in my soul light. Magnify for me light, and amplify for me light. Make for me light, and make me light. O Allaah, grant me light, and place light in my nerves, and in my body light and in my blood light and in my hair light and in my skin light.”(Bukhari, Muslim)

“O Allaah, make for me a light in my grave... and a light in my bones.”(Tirmidhi)

“Increase me in light, increase me in light, increase me in light.”(Adab al Mufrad)

“Grant me light upon light.”(Bukhari)

“And make the light greater for me.”(Muslim)

Opposite to the coherence of light, is when the mental and emotional systems are out of phase, they lack synchronisation and they interact in a conflicting manner, degenerating the performance of the human body.

Many positive thinking strategies, developed today, “follow the assumption that all emotions follow thought, which occurs first, and so by changing one’s thoughts, we should be able to gain control over our emotions. However, in the last decade, research in neuroscience has made it quite clear that emotional processes operate at a much higher speed than thoughts, and frequently bypass the mind’s linear reasoning process entirely. In other words, emotions do not always follow thought; in many cases, in fact, emotions occur independently of the cognitive system and can significantly bias or colour the cognitive process (in other words how we perceive and gain knowledge) and its output or decision.”

This is completely in line with the Islamic understanding that man reacts after he senses, the brain isn’t the starting point of the self and is just sitting there reacting and creating everything we experience, as western medicine concluded and spread around the world. Mans senses give him input from what is occurring around him and the body is hardwired to process and translate this input, again reinforcing what Imam Ali (ra) and many verses in the Quran indicated, that the seat of the intellect is located in the heart.

Researchers state that “Since the mind and emotions affect a wide range of abilities and responses, mental and emotional coherence (synchronisation) are of the utmost importance. Vision, listening ability, reaction times, mental clarity, problem solving, creativity, and performance in a wide range of tasks are all influenced by the degree of coherence of these two systems at any given time. Because emotions exert such a powerful influence on cognitive processes, emotional incoherence often leads to mental incoherence, and is often the root cause of mental problems and stress.”

Allah speaks about the consequences of this in the Quran clearly, “Such are they whose hearts and ears and eyes Allah hath sealed (the heart has a perceptive faculty which can be sealed, when it is), And such are the heedless.” (16:108), when He mentions the heart, He is referring to its cognitive processes, starting from the quantum level of the Universe, the consequence is complete heedlessness in the person.

In the Quran Allah says many times, He guides man from the quantum level, for example the verse of light, after Allah explains how His light exists in the Universe by outlining how the Atom comes into existence from the quantum universe, He says He guides man to Him through this process, (our book “How Is Allah The Light Of The Heavens and The Earth” explains this in detail).

“Increasing stability in the emotional systems of the body can often bring the mind into a greater sense of peace and clarity”, we achieve stability through the acts of worship we perform because they all impact upon mans body and then self physiologically, Allah mentions this connection very clearly in the Quran when He says, “Then (O people)...prostrate yourself (in prayer) and draw nearer to Us.” (96:19), nearness is achieved in the heart but it requires a physical act in order to attain it, this is the relationship between prostration and the self coming closer to Allah.

When the mental and emotional systems of the body are in sync (in coherence), we have greater access to our full potential in order to achieve our aims because we are focused.

Research has shown, through experimentation with heart rate variability patterns, it's rhythm as it beats which shapes the electromagnetic field it produces, that our emotional state constantly reflects in the field produced by the heart.

Very literally, our emotions are broadcast through the electromagnetic field produced by the heart like a broadcast tower, for example anger produces a very distinct wave from love, another layer of complexity is added once we consider quantum mechanics and the entanglement of particles, at the quantum level this is how all particles interact with each other to cause all reactions, and the body is certainly entangling quantum particles through it's fields.

Particles are prevalent through out the universe, for example physicists estimate that about 60 billion solar neutrinos, particles created by the sun, pass through a persons fingernail every second, but this is all due to the latest research which is making the old western understanding of science obsolete as they re-evaluate their core beliefs.

‘Current (western) scientific knowledge regarding the physiology of emotions has it's roots in Gaelic medicine. Galen's influence on scientific thinking persisted well into the 1800s, with the notion that thought's circulate in the ventricles of the brain, and emotions circulate in the vascular system (circulatory system of the blood). A persons temperament was determined by four “humors” or secretions in the body: sanguine, choleric, phlegmatic, and melancholic. Modern biochemical research has added much to this inaccurate and simplistic model but the withdraw from this perspective, that the brain does one thing and the heart another and each part of the body woks separately, has been slow, and guarded for two reasons: “Old theories do not die easily, and there is an aspect of truth to this view,

the thoughts circulating in the ventricles have turned out to be neural electrical activity and the humors are endocrine secretions (the secretion of hormones and other products into the blood)”.’

By comparison to what we know today, this is a two dimensional understanding of the body, while the latest scientific understanding perfectly explains what the pseudo science of the 19th and 20th century attempted to throw out rather than advance, Eastern and Islamic medicine.

There is a deep relationship between emotions and physiology which western science and medicine has deliberately turned away from for the past 100 years, “even ordinary conversation about emotional experiences contains many physiological allusions. So there is no question that emotions are accompanied by a vast array of physiological changes, this is why people often describe emotional experiences in physiological terms, such as “My heart was pounding”, “My throat went dry”, “My blood ran cold”, “My skin crawled”, “It was gut wrenching”, “and it took my breath away.”

In the 1920’s physiologist Walter Cannon (erroneously) proposed that the essential mechanism of emotion occurred within the brain, and that bodily responses and other inputs were not needed to fully experience emotions. Much of his research centred on responses that occur in states of hunger or intense emotion (and not normal situations), and led him to propose the “fight of flight response”, his views won over the scientific community of the day and shaped western scientific views for decades to come, others simply built upon his original ideas and assumptions. In 1937 James Papez introduced the Papez circuit, and later in 1950 Paul Maclean suggested the Limbic system of the brain, responsible for emotions, both would later prove flawed.

Cutting out the heart as the centre of emotions in the body would shape the heartless world we live in today, as many adopted the philosophy around world that emotions were just chemicals, the cruelest period in man's history would follow, WW2 and the rise of Capitalism, which was the commercialisation of every aspect of life, literally everything was up for sale and used to make a profit. With this new found belief everything was devaluated since nothing had the same meaning any longer, nothing remained sacred in the world of chemicals, not even the family.

This fatal error and path in western medicine, that emotions occurred within the brain alone ignoring what man already had understood for millennia, would not only shape their understanding of physiology but psychology and psychiatry as well who similarly with the advent of recent advances in technology, and the discoveries that came with them (seen clearly in neuroscience) had to literally throw out the past 100 years of their doctrines and teachings. They likewise were the foundations that secular Atheism built itself upon.

The Islamic's worlds fundamental understanding of the human being is now proving true after almost a century of being challenged by premature theories based on incomplete science.

The impact of assuming that emotions were manufactured by the brain alone had a significant impact not just on western medicine but religious and secular beliefs as well, it almost certainly fuelled the evolutionary debate which attempted to downgrade the significance of Man in the universe in order to promote their likewise flawed theories that he originated from monkeys, despite the fact that still to this day the missing archeological link their theories relied upon hadn't been found, there is still a few hundred thousand years gap in the archeological record between their ancient monkeys that fraudulent scientists have been passing on to the scientific community (see piltdown man and other hoax's designed to shape the views of society) and when they assume Man first appeared on earth.

While Islam certainly advanced the idea of evolution in creatures through out history (see past issues of the Journal), which Darwin almost certainly took from as Islamic medicine and knowledge dominated the pre-modern world, it was now being used to attack religion through the manipulation of facts.

Evolutionary assumptions were responsible for the rise of secular Atheism which relied on evolution and psychology to prove that man was just another animal, in order to challenge religious perceptions and secularise society through what is by today's standards pseudo science.

What we know today in physics and quantum mechanics alone could debunk many of their beliefs, which is why new fields of science like biophysics are emerging which establish the relationship between man's body and the quantum universe.

Most medical textbooks are replete with diagrams that illustrate the nervous system sending signals from the brain to the organs in line with the idea that the brain produces emo-

tions alone, this fuelled the over rationalised secular Atheist belief that the brain is doing everything, medical textbooks though do not complete the circuit because they omit the existence of the pathways which carry signals from the body to the brain.

“Remarkably we now know that the heart sends more neural traffic to the brain than the brain sends to the heart.”

Most academic theorists now agree that emotion involves, at the most basic level, stimulus from memory in addition to information from the human body (it's various organs) and the emotional state we are in, and in recent years attempts have been made to determine the correct sequence of these components.

Although even more recently it is now understood that it is indeed possible to have emotional processing in specific brain areas simultaneously with input from the body to the brain, each building on the other to contribute to what we ultimately sense and feel at that moment in time.

It was first observed in the 1970's that input from the heart and cardiovascular system (nervous system etc) significantly affected perception and behaviour, this was the first time Cannon's theories were challenged (not that long ago) because it was observed that the heart seemed to behave as if it had a mind of it's own.

Subsequent research also revealed a link between the heart rate response (independent of other parts of the body) to different environmental stimuli, and a persons cognitive attitude to the environment around him. This indicated that the heart's response was not merely a mechanical (or automatic) response due to signals being sent from the brain, it literally thought on it's own.

What was more intriguing were the results of simple human reaction time experiments, or reflexes, the heart decelerated during preparation which resulted in faster reflexes. This led researchers to propose that the feedback to the brain plays a role in accepting or rejecting what is going on in the environment, very literally the heart was telling the brain to block out the world around it, or tune out, so the person could focus, a similar mechanism seen in animals when they hunt.

When the signals from the heart to the brain are compromised by disease, there is less awareness of feeling sensations in the body, evidence now clearly demonstrates that signals

from the heart significantly influence the way the brain processes, the signals are not only relayed to the brain so it can balance the body, but they have a separate and specific effect on higher mental processes of the brain related to perception.

This is literally part of the mechanism involved in revelation (wahy), because revelation (knowledge) is revealed to the heart and not the brain.

“In addition to functioning as a sophisticated information processing and encoding centre, the heart is also an endocrine gland, it controls the way our body functions by producing and releasing hormones and neurotransmitters, that travel through out the body to maintain our tissues and organs.”

“So with each beat of our heart it not only pumps blood, but also continually transmits dynamic patterns of neurological, hormonal, pressure, and electromagnetic information to the brain and body. Therefor the multiple inputs from the heart and cardiovascular system to the brain are a major contributor in establishing the dynamics and patterns of the brain.”

The brain familiarises itself with the rhythmic patterns of the heart, whether ordered or disordered, it then regulates the body to keep it's balance and at the same time process emotions and senses.

The systems of the brain operate essentially as a pattern recognition system, it's to simplistic and inaccurate to say it processes singles from the body, meaning the brain processes the complete picture being sent to it by the body rather than just individual signals, this old way of thinking is what limited and gave rise to many incorrect theories in western medicine and psychology.

It's like watching a movie, the body is relaying the complete picture, scene by scene, along with atmospheric effects (feelings) that dramatise it, while science and medicine for a long time assumed it was sending random and almost unrelated pixels.

This is where western science fell short in comparison to the Islamic understanding of the human body for more than 100 years, because looking back on western history after Europe's enlightenment came it's secularisation and there wasn't a period in western history where they accepted this reality, until now.

In addition to monitoring and controlling the bodies stability in each moment of time, there are also processes that assess the degree of harmony between the past (moment), what is occurring now, and the projected future, these give rise to more complex emotions like optimism and pessimism, like wise quantum particles are entangled in more complex ways than just simple reactions, because in the quantum universe time is a significant factor in how particles behave.

If the body doesn't perceive (or predict) it is going to return to stability this can give rise to fear or anxiety. In simple terms the body is equipped to process and deal with time itself and what arises due to the passing of time, this is one of the more significant ways in which western understanding of the human body fell short because they looked at the body in a two dimensional manner completely ignoring the fact that time even exists and how the body deals with it.

If we were to take this a step up, above this simple view of man, in a Hadith Qudsi Allah said, the "Sons of Adam inveigh against [the vicissitudes of] Time, and I am Time, in My hand is the night and the day" (Bukhari).

Allah created man in His image or likeness, but with human limitations, so that man is capable of knowing Him completely, in relation to this, mans body must then be capable of understanding and dealing with time. The word for Time used in this Hadith is Dhuhur, in classical Arabic according to the Ullumah (scholars), Dhuhur means the Span of Time, or Time stretched out, so Allah (swt) is saying in regard to knowing His qualities He is "the Span of Time", His qualities are known through the passing of time and the body must be able to quantify and understand through time.

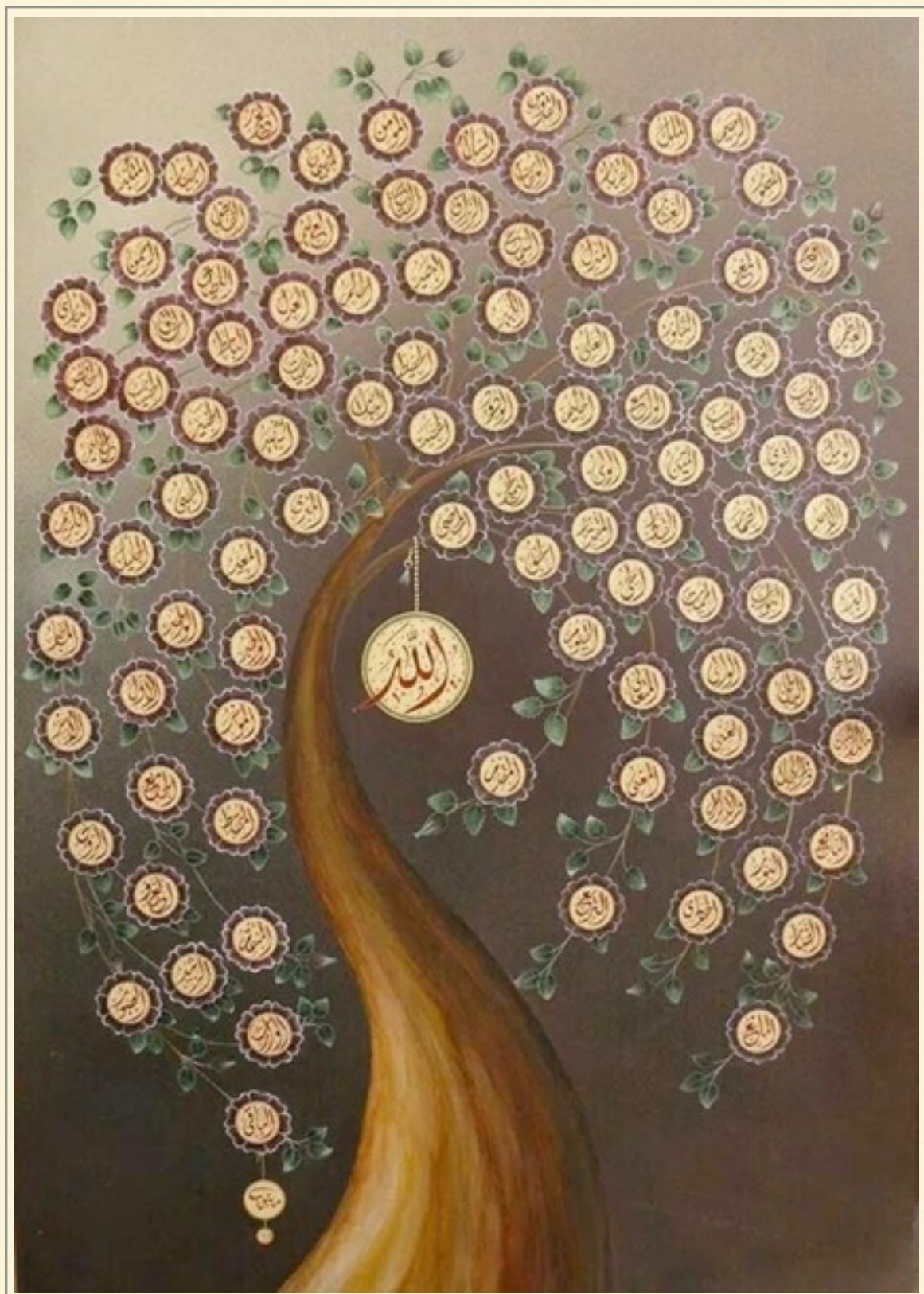
With this understanding Imam Ali (ra) said "The vision of the eye is limited; the vision of the heart transcends all barriers of time and space", this is because the heart gives a complete image (picture) of what it is focused on, and not jus a single signal that is relayed to the brain in that second, what it does is more complex than that.

One of the ways an emotion is generated is through the comparison of information received from our external senses, such as sight, sound and smell, against those present in our memories, this occurs almost with out thinking about it, but it is how the feeling of familiarity in new environments occurs.

With this understanding, we can view emotions and thought emerging from an intricate array of interactions, occurring within a complex system that is the body, its main components include the brain, heart, nervous system, and the hormone system.

Although there are many sources for input to the brain, the heart is given particular importance due to the unique degree of inputs and rhythmic patterns that indicate a change in a person's overall emotional state.

(The main source used in writing this was "Heart-Brain Neurodynamics: The Making Of Emotions")





15

The Three Stations Of The Deen, Islam, Iman, Ihsan and It's Nine Degrees

The Three Stations of the Deen

by Shaykh al-Islam Ibrahim Niasse (ra) (Interpreted from the Arabic)

In the Name of Allah, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful

May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon His Noble Prophet Muhammad (SAWS), the Best of Creation and also upon his Companions—the Stars of Guidance. All praise and thanks belongs to Allah—The Source of Peace (As-Salaam), The Granter of Security (Al-Mu'min), The Bountiful Doer of Good (Al-Muhsin). Glorified and Exalted is He—The King (Al-Malik), The Acceptor of Repentance (At-Tawaab), The Most Merciful (Ar-Rahim), The Watcher (Ar-Raqib), The Protector (Al-Muhaiman).

May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon the Straight Path (Sirat al-Mustaqim), the Consciously Aware (At-Taqi), the Pure (An-Naqi), the Truthful (As-Sadiq), the Sincere (Al-Mukhlis), the One Attributed with Perfect Character

(Al-Mutakhaliq bi'l Khuluq al-Azim), the Observer (Al-Muraqib), the Witness (Al-Mushahid), the Source of the Most Perfect Gnosis (Ain al-Ma'arif al-Aqwam), the Slave and the Master (Al-'Abd As-Sayyid), the One Attributed with the Quality of the Greatest Mastery (Al-Mutasafa bi Sifat as-Sayyid al-A'zam).

May the complete and perfect satisfaction of Allah be upon the Helper of Truth with Truth (Nasir al-Haqq bi'l Haqq), the Guide to the Straight Path (Al-Hadat ila Sirat al-Mustaqim), and also upon his Family. May it be according to his true reality and indeed, his degree is extremely great (Haqq Qadrihi wa Miqdarihi'l Azim).

To my beloved Habib, Umar ibn Malik, I have received your cordial letter and your flawless speech which contains your question concerning the three (3) stations of the Deen and the reality of its corresponding degrees. Although the knower of Allah, Sidi Ubaida ibn Anbuja has spoken at length on the subject in his book "Al-Mizab", I was unable to find convincing proofs in that, so I am going to respond with what has come to my mind:

There is no god but Allah! The stations of the Deen are three(3): Al-Islam, Al-Iman & Al-Ihsan. Al-Islam is to bear witness by saying "La ilaha il Allah", Al-Iman is to know "La ilaha il Allah", and Al-Ihsan is to act in conformity to "La ilaha il Allah". So it is to speak, to know and to act in accordance with the Noble Word (Kalima Sharifa). The first station is Al-Islam and that is for one to speak in "Hadrat an-Nasut" accordingly. The second station is Al-Iman and that is to possess the knowledge of the oral statement. The third station is Al-Ihsan and that is for ones behavior to be (totally consumed in its meaning). These are the different stations of the Deen and they all revolve around "La ilaha il Allah".

As for the three (3) corresponding degrees to each station, they are:

THE FIRST STATION OF THE DEEN IS AL-ISLAM:

The First Degree Of Al-Islam Is Repentance (Tawba):

That is to (firstly) abandon ingratitude for the blessings of Allah (Kufr an-Ni'mat), for every blessing is due gratitude and thanksgiving to the Bestower. The opposite of gratitude is unbelief (Didu Shukr Kufr). The Ulama among the Sufi's have said it is to abandon every base characteristic for every sublime attribute. However, I say the reality of base characteristics for the common person (Al-'Amm) is to leave off the religious obligations (Al-Fara'id) and to commit acts which are prohibited (Al-Muharamat), but for the spiritually elite (Al-

Khass) it is to leave the praiseworthy deeds (Al-Fada'il) and to do what is disliked (Al-Makruhat). For the elite of the elite (Khass al-Khass), it is to turn away from the Divine Presence and that is heedlessness or forgetfulness (Al-Ghafla), and this repentance is the reality of Tawba—which is to kill one's ego—as Allah Ta'ala says, “So repent to your Creator and kill yourselves, that is better for you with your Creator.” (2:54). The reality of killing one's ego is to not see any action or spiritual state or station as belonging to the “self”—and that is repentance from repentance! “Verily, Allah loves those who turn to Him in repentance.”(2:222), meaning to repent from repentance!

The Second Degree Of Al-Islam Is Righteousness (Al-Istiqama):

That is to travel upon the Straight Path without any crookedness or swerving in your Suluk. Allah has described the Straight Path in Surah Al-An'am by enumerating ten(10) qualities: “Say: ‘Come, I will recite what your Lord has prohibited you from: Join not anything in worship with Him; be good and dutiful to your parents; kill not your children because of poverty – We provide sustenance for you and for them; come not near to Al-Fawahish (shameful sins, illegal sexual intercourse, etc.) whether committed openly or secretly, and kill not anyone whom Allah has forbidden, except for a just cause (according to Islamic law). This He has commanded you that you may understand. And come not near to the orphan's property, except to improve it, until he (or she) attains the age of full strength; and give full measure and full weight with justice. We burden not any person, but that which he can bear. And whenever you give your word (i.e. judge between men or give evidence, etc.), say the truth even if a near relative is concerned, and fulfill the Covenant of Allah, This He commands you, that you may remember. And verily, this is my Straight Path, so follow it, and follow not (other) paths, for they will separate you away from His Path. This He has ordained for you that you may become Al-Muttaqun.”(6:151-153).

So, the Straight Path is to act in accordance with these ten (10) things and most important among them is: to avoid ascribing any partners to Allah; to avoid killing anyone without just cause; to avoid abortion of ones child due to fear of poverty; to abandon Al-Fawahish—inwardly and outwardly; and so on. The righteousness (Al-Istiqama) of the common person is to stand upright upon this Straight Path. For the spiritually elite (Al-Khass), the Straight Path is the Messenger of Allah himself(SAWS) and annihilation in him and love for him and his character. It is to emulate his beautiful characteristics—outwardly and inwardly—and busy oneself with his remembrance and sending prayers and salutations

upon him with every breath. That is the righteousness described by Allah in His saying, “Lo! Those who say, ‘Our Lord is Allah’, and afterward are upright, the angels descend upon them, saying: ‘Fear not nor grieve, but hear good tidings of the paradise which you are promised.’”(41:30).

The righteousness (Al-Istiqama) of the elite of the elite (Khash al-Khash) is;

The Third Degree Of Al-Islam Is Conscious Awareness Of Allah (Taqwa):

The (basic meaning of Taqwa for the common person) is to obey the commands and avoid the prohibitions of Allah—outwardly and inwardly—in public and in secret. The conscious awareness of the elite (Al-Khash) is to remember Him and to never forget Him, to obey Him and to never disobey Him. Allah Ta’ala says, “O you who believe! Fear Allah as He should be feared.”(3:102), and this is the degree for the spiritually elite (Al-Khash). To the common believers He says, “Fear Allah as much as you can.”(64:16). The conscious awareness of the elite of the elite (Khash al-Khash) is to think of Allah in every moment. This spiritual state is the station of an Arif and the Unique Cardinal Pole (Qutb al-Fard al-Jami’). This is the state which Allah alludes to in His saying, “Verily, Allah loves the Muttaqun.”(3:76).

THE SECOND STATION OF THE DEEN IS AL-IMAN:

The First Degree Of Iman (Faith) Is Truthfulness (As-Sidq):

Truthfulness is to act with piety in seeking the Countenance of Allah, as He says, “True piety does not consist in turning your faces towards the East or the West, but truly pious is he who believes in Allah and the Last Day; and the Angels, and Revelation, and the Prophets; and spends his substance—however much he himself may cherish it—upon his near of kin, and the orphans, and the needy, and the wayfarer, and the beggars, and for the freeing of human beings from bondage; and is constant in prayer, and pays the Zakat; and [truly pious are] they who keep their promises whenever they promise, and are patient in misfortune and hardship and in time of peril: it is they that have proved themselves true, and it is they who are conscious of Allah.”(2:177). This is the Sidq of the common person (Al-‘Amm).

The truthfulness of the spiritually elite (Al-Khash) is to have Sidq in loving the Exalted Divine Essence (Ad-Dhat al-‘Aliyya), meaning that nothing in existence is more important

than being connected (Wusul) with this Exalted Divine Essence. It means that His Name is more beloved than any other name, His Word is more beloved than any other word, His satisfaction and pleasure is more beloved than anyone else, and His Beloved is more dear than any other loved one. This is the Sidq of the spiritually elite (Al-Khass), as Allah says, “Fear Allah and be with the Saadiqin.”(9:11 9). The person who has achieved this station will never allow his/her thoughts to be with anything other than what is the Will of Allah. “This is the bounty of Allah which He gives to whom He wills, and Allah is the possessor of great bounty.”(57:21).

The truthfulness of the elite of the elite (Khass al-Khass) is to affirm everything which has been conveyed to the Presence of Prophethood (Hadrat an-Nubuwa) from the Divine Presence (Hadrat al-Ilahiyya)—either from knowledge, spiritual states, secrets, good conduct, or spiritual realities. Whosoever attains this station of Sidq has attained the utmost degree of truthfulness.

The Second Degree Of Iman (Faith) Is Sincerity (Al-Ikhlās):

Sincerity is to perform every act of obedience and to avoid every prohibition only seeking the Noble Countenance of Allah. If you do not find in yourself any conceit, desire for repute, or showing off (in doing the above), this is the Sidq of the common people (Al-‘Amm). The Sincerity of the spiritually elite (Al-Khass) is to act in obedience without any desire for reward and to avoid the prohibitions without any fear of punishment and to have no desire to achieve some spiritual station, but rather to only act in worshipful service and yearning (Al-‘Ubudiyya wa Shawq). Worshipful service is to act without any ulterior cause or reason, but only because Allah is a God Who deserves to be worshipped and you are a servant who ought to render service. So act in accordance with this and see yourself as deserving of nothing! This, along with witnessing the blessing of being His servant, and that all (good) actions are from Him to you, as a bounty and grace, is enough for the sincere person.

The sincerity of the elite of the elite (Khass al-Khass) is to dispel the entirety of creation in your dealing with the Truth—and your ego is from among the created beings! The people of this degree see that all actions are from Allah, to Allah and by Allah! They see nothing as coming from themselves or for themselves! You must know that Allah loves those with sincerity!

The Third Degree Of Iman (Faith) Is Stillness And Tranquility (Tu'manina):

This is the calmness and serenity of the heart which is independent of everything except Allah and it now lives in Allah (Baq'a billah). This is achieved when the heart does not turn to what will (perceivably) benefit the ego or turn from what will (perceivably) harm it, rather it is when the Nafs has completely submitted itself before Allah—in words and deeds! The tongue of the one in this state will say, “Allahuma ‘Alayka Mu’awwali” (O Allah! I have complete dependence upon You!) This is the meaning of Tu'manina and it is not possible except for the spiritually elite (Al-Khass).

The Tu'manina of the elite of the elite (Khass al-Khass) is their absolute conviction that there is nothing in existence except Allah! The heart of this person does not rest except in Him and it does not resort to anyone but Him! It is this heart which Allah addresses in His saying, “O Nafs at rest and peace! Return to your Lord, well-pleased and well-pleasing! Enter among My servants, enter My Garden!” (89:27-30).

THE THIRD STATION OF THE DEEN IS AL-IHSAN:

The First Degree Of Spiritual Perfection Is To Observe Allah In Everything (Al-Muraqaba):

Al-Muraqaba is to have perpetual presence of heart & mind with Allah, along with absolute cognizance that He is aware and knowledgeable of the servant—and this observation never leaves the mind of the servant. The person at this degree sees the Realities from behind a thin veil (Hijab Raqiq), and gains an understanding of things from direct experiential knowledge of “tasting”, and may speak words which a person who is not at this degree will not understand. But still this person gains direct experiential knowledge from behind a thin veil, and does not yet have the experience of direct witnessing. This is the observation of the spiritually elite (Al-Khass) before they have direct witnessing (Mushahada). The observation after direct witnessing is the degree of Muraqaba of the elite of the elite (Khass al-Khass). The direct witnessing (of Reality) with every breath is the spiritual station of the Men of Allah (Ar-Rijal) and it is the result of Divine Gnosis (Ma'rifa).

The Second Degree Of Spiritual Perfection Is Direct Witnessing (Mushahada):

Direct Witnessing is to see Reality by means of the Real—with ocular perception—without any doubt or skepticism or delusion, as nothing remains (of the servant) except the Truth,

by the Truth, in the Truth. Not even a single hair remains with the servant (at this degree), because they have been completely annihilated to themselves and to other-ness (Al-Ghayr wa'l Ghayriyya). The tongue of the one in this state will say, "Nothing remains except Allah, nothing at all!" as there remains no name, no description, no form, and no limitation. This ocular perception (Ru'ya) takes place without any "how" (Kayf), "definition" (Tahdid), "union" (Itihad), "direction" (Jihat), "comparison" (Muqabila), "beginning" (Ibtida'a), "connection" (Itisal), or "separation" (Infisal). There is no "remembrance" (Dhikr), "remembered" (Dh akir) or "one remembering" (Madhkur). "Truth has come and falsehood has vanished. Surely, falsehood is ever bound to vanish."(17:81).

This degree (of direct witnessing) is lower than the degree of spiritual illumination (Fath) and everything before this degree is not the Fath—but it is the door to Divine Gnosis (Ma'rifa). Every 'Arif is spiritually illuminated (Maftuh), but the opposite is not the case!

The Third Degree Of Spiritual Perfection Is Divine Gnosis (Ma'rifa):

Divine Gnosis is the steady fixation and firm establishment of the spirit in the Presence of Direct Witnessing, along with complete annihilation and continuation in Allah (Fana at Tam wa'l Baqa Billah). Divine Gnosis (Ma'rifa) is the last station of the Deen and repentance (Tawba) is the first, but Tawba is better than Ma'rifa because Gnosis is the result of repentance—although the reality of repentance is repentance from repentance—and this is not possible without Ma'rifa!

This is what was alluded to by Shaykh al-Khatm Ahmad al-Tijani(RA) when he said, "I did not achieve the degree of repentance.", meaning that he was repentant from seeing his Tawba. As long as the servant sees himself in the act of repentance, he has not achieved the (real) degree of Tawba!

This is an abridged explanation of the Three Stations of the Deen and if I were to continue giving details on the subject I would need to write a whole book. As I mentioned before, the reality of Al-Islam is (to say) "La ilaha il Allah"; the reality of Al-Iman is "So know! La ilaha il Allah."(47:19); the reality of Al-Ihsan is "Say: 'Allah!' Then leave them to play in their vain discussions."(6:91).

The Presence (Hadrat) of Shaykh al-Tijani(RA) is the Station of Al-Islam, the Presence of the Messenger(SAWS) is the Station of Al-Iman, and the Presence of Allah is the Station of Al-Ihsan. "Until your Lord is the highest degree."

APPENDIX:

Commentary on the Three Stations of the Deen and its Nine Corresponding Degrees:

1.) The reality of repentance (Tawba) is to repent from repentance. “Know that Allah accepts repentance from His servants and takes the Sadaqa, and that Allah Alone is the One Who forgives and accepts repentance, the Most Merciful.”(9:104).

2.) The reality of righteousness (Al-Istiqama) is subsistence/continuation after extinction (Baqā ba'da Fana). “Verily, Allah commands that which He wills.”(5:1).

3.) The reality of conscious awareness (Taqwa) is to totally focus ones thoughts on Allah Alone. “That is because Allah, He is the Absolute Reality.”(31:30).

4.) The reality of truthfulness (Sidq) is to make ones direction and destination only to Allah. “Everything will perish except His Face.”(28:88).

5.) The reality of sincerity (Ikhlas) is to recognize that all actions are not from you, to you, or for you. “Indeed, you are guiding to a Straight Path—the Path of Allah to Whom belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. Verily, all matters at the end return to Allah.”(42:53); “His is the Dominion, and to Him belongs all the praises and thanks, and He is Able to do all things.”(64:1).

6.) The reality of stillness and tranquility (Tu'manina) is not to hope for something to cease which exists, nor to desire something which is non-existent. “Truly, Allah knows and you know not.”(16:74); “He cannot be questioned as to what He does, while they will be questioned.”(21:23).

7.) The reality of observing Allah in everything (Muraqaba) is to perpetually attach ones heart to (the Presence of) Allah. “Verily, your Lord is Ever Watchful (over them).”(89:14); “And whatever work you are engaged in or whatever portion of the Qur'an you recite, and whatever actions the people are doing, We are Witness thereof when you are doing it. And nothing is hidden from your Lord (so much as) the weight of an atom on the earth or in the heavens. Nor what is less than that or what is greater than that, except it is in a Clear Record.”(10:61); “And indeed We have created man and We know what his own self whispers to him. And We are nearer to him than his jugular vein.”(50:16); “Have you not seen that Allah knows whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is on the earth? There is no

secret counsel of three except He is their fourth—nor of five but He is their sixth—nor of less than that or more but He is with them wherever they may be.”(58:7).

8.) The reality of direct witnessing (Mushahada) is see the Truth with ocular perception. “And to Allah belong the East and the West, so wherever you turn there is the Face of Allah.”(2:115).

9.) The reality of Divine Gnosis (Ma'rifa) is to (continuously) witness the Perfect Divine Essence. “There is nothing like Him.”(42:11).





16

Children In Islam

Give the child a good name

Parents have the responsibility to provide the child with a good name which is in accordance with Islamic traditions. One of the hadith in this context is the one narrated by Naafi' that Ibn 'Umar said: The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) said: "The most beloved of your names to Allah are 'Abd-Allah and 'Abd al-Rahmaan" (Narrated by Muslim, 2132).

Spend appropriately on your children

Parents, and especially fathers, have the responsibility to spend on their children in ways that can help their proper upbringing. It was narrated that 'Abd-Allah ibn 'Amr said: The Messenger of Allah (s) said: "It is sufficient sin for a man if he neglects those on whom he is obliged to spend" (Narrated by Abu Dawood, 1692; classed as sahan by Shaykh al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Jaami', 4481). Another hadith in this context states that 'Aa'ishah, the wife of the Prophet (s), said: A woman came to me with two daughters

and asked me for food, and I could not find anything except one date which I gave to her. She shared it between her two daughters, then she got up and went out. The Prophet (s) came in and I told him what had happened. He said: “Whoever is in charge of any of these girls and treats them well, they will be a shield for him against the Fire” (Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 5649; Muslim, 2629).

Treat your children fairly

All children within a family have their own rights to be treated fairly. This right was referred to by the Prophet (s) in the saheeh hadeeth: “Fear Allah and treat your children fairly” (Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 2447; Muslim, 1623).

Parents should not show undue preference to their children based on their gender or other criteria. Unfair treatment can arouse a feeling of jealousy and hatred in children that can continue for life and can also lead to bitterness in the child’s heart toward the parents as well. The Prophet (s) referred to this in the hadeeth narrated by Muslim (1623) when he said to the father of al-Nu’maan, “Would you like them to honor you equally?” He said, “Yes.” In other words, if you want them all to honor you equally, then be equally fair to all of them.

Even about the inheritance that children are bound to receive from parents, Allah (SWT) has made it clear that it does not depend on the parents’ wishes but has to be given according to the laws laid down in the Quran:

“Allah commands you as regards your children’s (inheritance)...” (An-Nisa 4:11).

Treat your children with love and mercy

Parents have the obligation to show love and mercy to their children. This will help children to develop normal and stable personalities and will also make it easier for children to love and respect their parents and elders when they grow up. Seeing the Prophet kissing his grandson, a person named Alaqr’a Ibn Habis found this behavior strange and said, “I have ten children, but I have never kissed any of them.” The Prophet (s) replied, “The one who has no compassion will not be treated mercifully” (Bukhari and At-Tirmidhi).

Your children deserve the right to proper education and upbringing

One of the most important facets of raising children is for the parents to provide them with the right training. According to Islamic traditions, the best gift that parents can provide to their children is training that can help them live as responsible Muslim adults fulfilling the rights of Allah and others. This, then, can lead them to succeed in the hereafter as well. The Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) said, “The best gift to children from parents is their correct training” (Tirmizi).

Educating children in such a way that they can be successful both in this life and the hereafter should be the supreme responsibility of parents. In today’s world, while it is common to see parents focus on the kind of education that can help them toward building the right careers and in making a living, the focus on Islamic education rarely gets its due focus. Depriving children of proper Islamic teachings can prevent children from building a close relationship with their creator Allah, which is the cornerstone of all success in this life and the hereafter. A good religious education grounded in love of their Lord, on the contrary, can help them live a more peaceful life, deal with life’s challenges easily and maturely, and fulfill the rights and obligations of all around them (including the parents themselves), leading the children to grow up as better citizens of their communities and making them an integral part of the overall Muslim Ummah.

The following provide some of the key responsibilities of the parents in terms of raising and training their children:

Inculcating the concept of “La Ilaha Illa-Allah” and Huquq Allah (Rights of Allah)

Parents should inculcate in their children the correct ‘aqedah of the oneness of Allah followed by all religious acts of worship that are needed for them to get close to Allah. This involves teaching children all rights of Allah, which can come by children fully understanding the concepts of Tawheed. The principles of Tawheed should never be taken lightly because they mark the boundaries of entering Islam. Mu`adh bin Jabal relates that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said to him: “O Mu`adh! Do you know what is Allah’s right over His servants and what their right is over Him?” I said: “Allah and His Messenger know best.” He said: “Allah’s right over His servants is that they worship Him without associating any partner with Him in worship, and their right over Him is that He does not pun-

ish anyone who worships Him without associating any partner with Him in worship” [Sahîh al-Bukhârî and Sahîh Muslim].

Eeman (belief/faith) in Allah comprises of the following distinct concepts that parents must strive to teach their children:

1. Faith (Eeman) in the Existence of Allah: This refers to believing in Allah – not just any God – but specifically Allah as the supreme being of this universe and all that exists in this universe.
2. Faith (Eeman) in the Rububiyah (Lordship) of Allah – This refers to believing in Allah as the true Lord of this universe and as the controller of all aspects of this universe.
3. Faith (Eeman) in the Uluhiyyah (Worship) of Allah – This refers to singling out only Allah as the one who is worthy of any worship.
4. Faith (Eeman) in al-Asma was-Sifat (the names and attributes) of Allah – This refers to belief in Allah’s names and attributes.

Believing and living life on the concepts of Tawheed not only can lead to ultimate salvation, it can also nurture the love of Allah in the children’s hearts at an early age, which is the essence of our relationship with Allah. The Quran also gives us examples where prophets and the righteous stressed the importance of fulfilling the rights of Allah to their children. As an example, Luqman (alaihi’salam) provided the following instructions to his son as mentioned in the Quran by Allah:

“And (remember) when Luqmaan said to his son when he was advising him: “O my son! Join not in worship others with Allah. Verily, joining others in worship with Allah is a great Zulm (wrong) indeed” [Luqmaan 31:13].

As part of this training, parents should also ensure that they train their children on all the rituals of worship including the five times obligatory prayers, fasting, charity, Hajj, reciting Quran, and so on. A hadith in this context clarifies this concept where Mu’adh ibn Jabal narrated that, “I said to Allah’s Messenger (peace be upon him): Inform me about an act which would entitle me to get into Paradise, and remove me away from Hell-Fire. He (the Prophet) said: You have asked me about a matter (which ostensibly appears to be) difficult but it is easy to those for whom Allah, the Exalted, has made it easy. Worship Allah and do

not associate anything with him, establish prayer, pay the Zakat, observe the fast of Ramadan and perform Hajj to the (sacred) House (Ka'bah)."

Teaching children about Huqul-Ibad (Rights of other fellow beings)

Huqul-Ibad is about respecting the rights of others and especially understanding others' rights from an Islamic standpoint. A concise description of fulfilling both Huqooq Allah and Huqooqul Ibaad is found in the following verse:

"Worship Allah and join none with Him in worship, and do good to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, Al-Masakin (the poor), the neighbor who is near of kin, the neighbour who is a stranger, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (you meet), and those (slaves) whom your right hands possess. Verily, Allah does not like such as are proud and boastful (An-Nisa 4:36)."

For example, children raised in certain non-Muslim cultures may not develop the same respect for parents and elders as mandated in Islam. Children should, therefore, be taught to be respectful and dutiful to their parents, maintain good relations with relatives, and neighbors. Children should also be warned against picking up habits that can lead to disrespecting others. These include backbiting, slandering, lying and abusing others.

Helping children to choose their role models

Role models help people to model their behavior and character after those personalities. Parents should, therefore, help their children choose their role models wisely. When teaching about Islam and its teachings, parents should help their children learn about the lives of the prophets, especially Prophet Muhammad (s), sahaba (prophet's companions such as Abu Bakar, Umar, and so on), tabieen (the ones who followed the sahaba), other salaf (the likes of Hassan al-Basri, Muhammad ibn Sirin, Umar Ibn Abdul-Aziz, Ahmad bin Hanbal, etc.), and early Islamic scholars such as Ibne-Taymiyyah, Ibn Al-Qayyim, Ibn Katheer, and so on. Learning about these personalities of Islam who actualized the teachings of Islam can help children learn from their knowledge and appreciate the relationship that those individuals developed with Allah and how they lived exemplary lives. While it may be difficult to teach children about each one of them, parents should at a minimum introduce these personalities to their children and how such personalities achieved high status within Islamic circles. Planting the seeds of respect for such personalities at an early age in

your children's hearts will make it easier for them to seek out more knowledge about these personalities of Islam when they get older.

Teach your children skills that lead to earning only Halal (legal)

Parents should spend their time, effort, and resources to help their children make the right choices for earning a living. In doing so, parents should stress the need for their children to pursue career paths that can provide them solely with Halal (legal) living. Islam places enormous emphasis on this subject and these teachings are clearly stated both in the Quran and hadith. In one case, the prophet (s) said:

“...Purify your food, your supplication will be accepted. By the one in whose hand lays the life of Muhammad, verily a servant places a morsel of Haram in his stomach (and as a result) forty days of worship will not be accepted from him.” (Recorded by Imam Tabrani). In another narration, it is narrated that an angel at Bayt al-Maqdis proclaims every day and night: “Whosoever consumes unlawful (haram) food, Allah Most High will not accept his obligatory (fard) and voluntary worship.” (See: al-Kaba'ir of Imam Dhahabi).

Teaching children knowledge of the Quran

In addition to teaching your children recitation of the Quran, knowledge of the Quran will help your children to think beyond the mundane matters of this life and instead develop elevated thinking that can enable them to ponder about critical issues that can help them reconcile the many confusing ideologies that the world will throw at them as they grow up. Getting them to start thinking about the reasons of their existence, their day to day struggles, and where the world is heading to will make them become more prudent in terms of their life's priorities.

Consider that once when in Madinah, the prophet (s) had to send a group to Yemen for teaching new Muslims there about Islam. The prophet picked Mu'adh bin Jabal as their leader (even though Muadh was very young – perhaps in his early twenties). The prophet said, “The most knowledgeable of my ummah [community] in matters of Halal [permitted, allowed, lawful or legal] and Haram [forbidden] is Mu'adh bin Jabal.” This shows that knowledge of Quran had expanded the horizons of Muadh to such an extent that the prophet (s) himself picked him as a leader for an important expedition.

Teaching children Islamic morals and characters

Besides teaching children the rituals of worship and the rights of individuals, children should be taught Islamic morals, characters, and etiquette from an early age so that it becomes part of their habits. Children should be taught the principles of humility, tolerance, patience, and other such behavioral traits. These personality traits can help any individual tremendously in their lives. For example, teach them about patience and tolerance and dealing with tough situations, and they will be thankful to you for the rest of their lives. Those of us who struggle in life by not having properly learned such conduct may also very well know their value. Children can learn such conduct by learning hadith as well as learning about the lives of the prophet (s) and his companions.

Provide your children a healthy environment for their upbringing

Training children so that they can grow up to become responsible citizens requires that parents actively maintain an atmosphere at home that is conducive to positive learning and upbringing. This, therefore, requires that parents, too, model their lives according to the Islamic way of life. Children can get conflicting messages and thus can get confused when they do not see parents and elders following the instructions that they give to them, or when out of excessive love for them, parents become so indulgent that they turn a blind eye to their sins and fail in checking them.

It is well known that children who are raised in households where argumentation, fighting, and abuse abound, not only learn less but are more prone to develop personality disorders. There is plenty of research that shows that the serious problems of adolescents, including drug abuse, school failure, delinquency and violence, have grown to tragic proportions in part because of the deteriorating environments in which young people are raised.

Conclusion

Parents should put in their best efforts to ensure that their children become true inheritors of Islam, and to keep Islam alive in their lives and their families' lives after their death. Parental efforts are, therefore, quite instrumental in inculcating the love of Islam and the desire to worship in the right manner. Parents should also recognize that raising good children can be a source of their salvation in the hereafter. This is because if parents raise good Allah-fearing children, those children can constantly pray to Allah for their parents after their death. The Prophet Muhammad (sallallahu alaihi wa sallam) said:

“Upon death, man’s deeds will stop except for three deeds, namely: a continuous charitable fund, endowment or goodwill; knowledge left for people to benefit from; and a pious righteous and God-fearing child who continuously prays to Allah, for the souls of his parents” (Muslim).

Finally, let’s not forget that fulfilling the rights of the individuals prescribed by Allah is part of the limits set by Allah that should be taken seriously. Allah states thus in the Quran:

And treat not the Verses (Laws) of Allah as a jest, but remember Allah’s favors on you (i.e. Islam), and that which He has sent down to you of the Book (i.e. the Qur’an) and Al-Hikmah (the Prophet’s Sunnah – legal ways – Islamic jurisprudence) whereby He instructs you. And fear Allah, and know that Allah is all-aware of everything Quran (2:231).

Source: iqrasense.com



17

Mercy Towards Children

Mercy towards Children

So how was the Prophet (Sallallahu 'Alayhi Wasallam) with children? Here's a few hadiths, which we might all well know, to remind us:

The Prophet (Sallallahu 'Alayhi Wasallam) said, "He is not of us who does not have mercy on young children, nor honor the elderly" (Al-Tirmidhi Hadith)

Allah's Apostle kissed Al-Hasan bin Ali while Al-Aqra' bin Habis At-Tamim was sitting beside him. Al-Aqra said, "I have ten children and I have never kissed anyone of them." Allah's Apostle cast a look at him and said, "Whoever is not merciful to others will not be treated mercifully." (Sahih Al-Bukhari Hadith 8.26 Narrated by Abu Huraira RA)

The Apostle of Allah (Sallallahu 'Alayhi Wasallam) came to some children who were playing: He greeted them lovingly. (Sunan of Abu-Dawood Hadith 5183 Narrated by Anas ibn Malik)

“I served the Prophet (Sallallahu ‘Alayhi Wasallam) for ten years, and he never said to me, “Uff” (a minor harsh word denoting impatience) and never blamed me by saying, “Why did you do so or why didn’t you do so?” (Sahih Al-Bukhari Hadith v8 #64 Narrated by Anas (when mentioning his childhood))

From this we can deduct, that in the sunnah we have been given clear instructions to treat our children with gentleness, mercy and compassion. We have heard stories of how Hassan and Husain (RA) would sometimes climb on the Prophets (pbuh) back, while he was praying, and he remained in his position until they moved away, we know he used to go to the houses of some of his companions and play with their children.

Mercy is the incredible gift of Allah Subhana Ta’ala that He bestows on parents, so that they would be able to take care, love and cherish their children. Nowadays many of us seem to have lost balance though, and we are either too strict or too lax in our attitudes. So did the Prophet (Sallallahu ‘Alayhi Wasallam) ever discipline children?

Discipline

The Prophet (Sallallahu ‘Alayhi Wasallam) never raised his own hand against a child (or a woman, for that matter), and we should do our best to apply to this sunnah. There are some ahadtih that people unfortunately take out of the context, misinterpret and then justify themselves, such as: Narrated Ibn ‘Abbaas that the Messenger of Allah (Sallallahu ‘Alayhi Wasallam) said: “Hang your whip where the members of the household can see it, for that will discipline them.”

However the hadith doesn’t advise us to use that whip, and the Prophet never told anyone to do such a thing in any other narration either. Islam is the religion of the middle path, and avoiding extremes. When are we, then, allowed to use physical discipline?

“There are various opinions of how to discipline one’s children. Some groups advocate physical forms of disciplinary action, while other groups completely oppose of it. The Islamic way is a middle ground between these two ideologies. Parents are only given permission to lightly smack their children in certain circumstances and with restrictive conditions. [Mawsu’a al-Difa’ ‘an al-Rasul]

Scholars note that it is permissible for parents to give their child a light smack if they’ve previously resorted to other methods of disciplinary action that proved unsuccessful. Or

another example is if the child has reached the age of 10 years and refuses to pray, after the parents have attempted since the age of 7 to exhort and instruct the child to worship the Lord of the Worlds. [Ibn Zayn, al-'Uqubat al-Tarbawiyya al-Mufida]

If giving a child a light smack, one should know that

1. One cannot hit his face;
2. It cannot be a harsh or severe hitting;
3. It must be done with the intent to discipline the child, not out of anger; and
4. One cannot insult, degrade, or verbally abuse the child. Scholars concur that the best place to lightly smack a child is on the two hands or the two feet. [Mawsu'a al-Difa' 'an al-Rasul]"

Scholars have also pointed out, that if we beat our children for minor issues (for example a child breaks our favorite vase, paints on our best abaya, pours a pot of curry on the living room carpet, etc (provided of course, that these are accidents, or that the child is small), or even if we clearly get angry and start yelling for these kind of incidents, what effect can we expect beating or yelling to have on them, when they're 10 and (Allah forbid) refuse to pray? It will have no effect, whatsoever, except a negative one, because this will lead the child to think, that, for example, breaking a vase and not praying are in the same category (which of course they're not. Of course the situation is different, if the child does these kinds of things on purpose, or when they are, let's say, older than 7).

Favoritism and Empty Promises

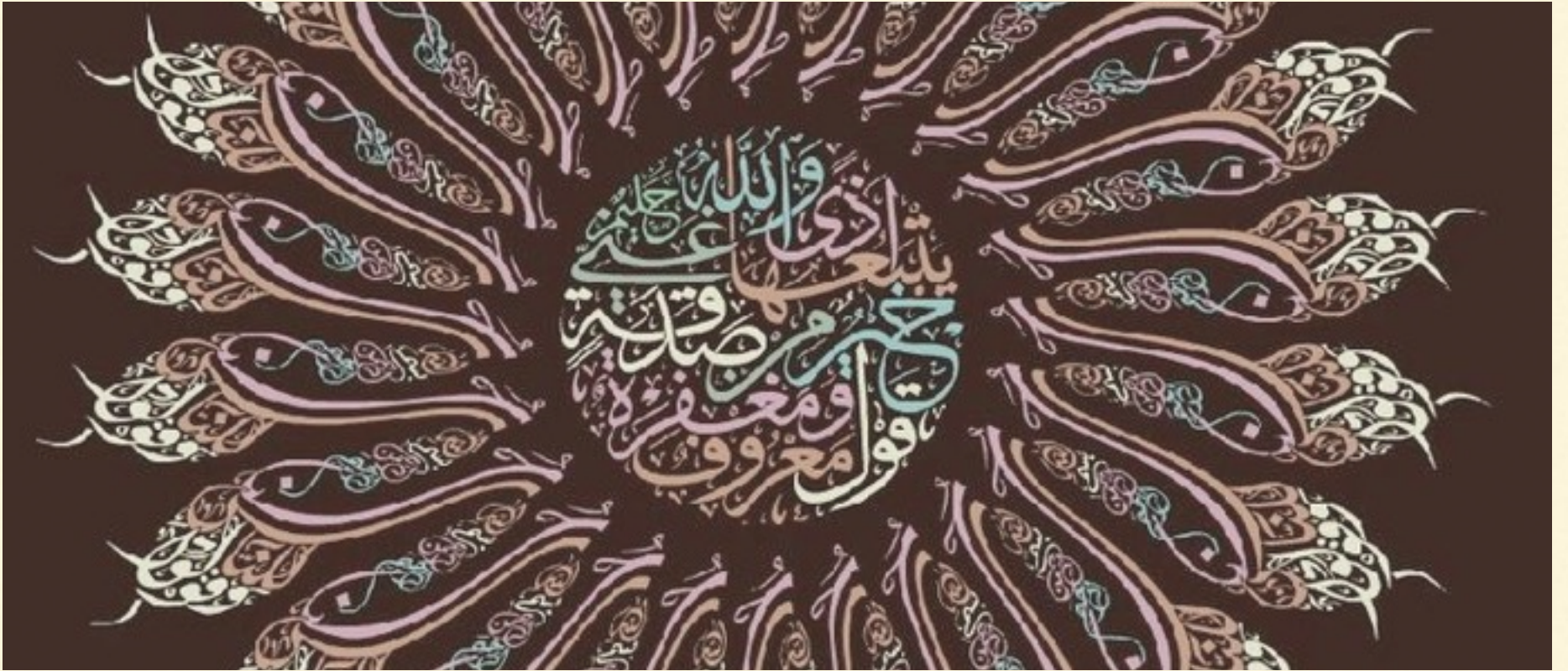
The Prophet (Sallallahu 'Alayhi Wasallam) also strictly advised us against having favoritism amongst our children. We should make sure we treat our children equally, at all times. We should also never make empty promises or lie to our children. Here are some ahadith to illustrate this:

My mother called me once, whilst the Prophet (peace be upon him) was at our home and she said, "Come here, I will give you something." Thereupon the Prophet (peace be upon him) asked, "What did you want to give to him?" She replied, "Dates." The Prophet then said, "Had you not given him anything, it would have been recorded as a lie." (Sunan of Abu Dawood Hadith Narrated by Ibn Aamir)

The Prophet (Sallallahu 'Alayhi Wasallam) said: Act equally between your children; Act equally between your sons. (Sunan of Abu-Dawood Hadith 3537 Narrated by An-Nu'man ibn Bashir)

I heard An-Nu'man bin Bashir on the pulpit saying, "My father gave me a gift but 'Amra bint Rawaha (my mother) said that she would not agree to it unless he made Allah's Apostle as a witness to it. So, my father went to Allah's Apostle and said, 'I have given a gift to my son from 'Amra bint Rawaha, but she ordered me to make you as a witness to it, O Allah's Apostle!' Allah's Apostle asked, 'Have you given (the like of it) to everyone of your sons?' He replied in the negative. Allah's Apostle said, 'Be afraid of Allah, and be just to your children.' My father then returned and took back his gift." (Sahih Al-Bukhari Hadith 3.760 Narrated by Amir)

Source: navedz.com



18

Golden Principles of Raising Children

[This section and the ones that follow are from scanned pages so you may find some small errors in them]

By Imam Abu Hamid Muhammad Al-Ghazali (May God Shower His Mercy Upon Him)

CHILDREN'S INITIAL EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND ATTAINMENT OF MORAL VALUES

Adopting an effective method for training children is extremely important and necessary. It is because a child is Allah's trust in parents' hands and the child's heart is like a nice, clean, and simple mirror which, although, is devoid of any types of impressions or shapes, is capable of accepting the influence of all types of impressions and influences and it can be inclined towards any thing you like. Therefore, if good habits are inculcated in the child and if he/she is instructed in knowledge, then the child after gaining such excellent nourishment (upbringing), achieves the real success of this life and of the life hereafter. In this [success], the par-

ents and the teachers of the child become entitled to a share in the rewards [from Allah for good upbringing of the child].

And if bad habits are inculcated (nurtured) in a child and [if the child is] left unhindered (unattended/free) like animals, then he/she gets destroyed after becoming ill mannered. The burden of sin [of such negligence] falls on his/her guardian and caretaker. Allah, the Exalted, has said [in the Holy Quran]:

"Ya Ayyuhal Lazeena Aamano Qu Anfusakum Wa Ahleekum Naarun."

"O you who believe! Save yourself and your family from the fire of Hell."

And when the father saves his child from the fires of this world, then as a first priority, it is incumbent (obligatory) upon him to save his child from the fire of the hereafter (Hellfire) and the only way of doing this is that he teaches the child manners and civilization and educate him/her in the best of morals and protect him/her from bad companions and friends and should not let the desire for physical beautification, fine dresses, ornamentation, physical ease, and comfort-seeking settle in his/her heart, otherwise, the child after growing up, will waste his/her precious life in desiring and seeking these lowly things and will get eternally destroyed by them. Instead, it's incumbent upon the father to keep a strict watch and care from a very early age [of his child].

NECESSITY AND IMPORTANCE OF PERMISSIBLE (HALAL) FOOD

For upbringing of the child and for nursing, [in the absence of the mother] a woman of good character and religiosity should be appointed, who eats lawful (Halal) food because the milk that comes from unlawful food, has no betterment or blessing in it, instead, if the child is brought up with milk that comes from unlawful (Haram) sources, then evil gets permeated into the very fiber (consciousness/psychology/inner being) of the child, and because of that, the temperament of the child gets inclined towards Satanic (evil) deeds. And when [the parent feels that] the child is able to discern between the good and the bad then a complete nurturing of the child should begin.

This [phase of child's life] is indicated by the appearance of the initial signs of shyness (Hqya/modesty), because when the child, realizing his/her respect and honor, starts to feel shy and because of shyness starts to leave doing certain things, then this is only the result of the light of intelligence emerging in him/her. This [emergence of the light of intelli-

gence] happens to such an extent that he/she starts to think of some things as good and of some things as bad, and starts to feel shameful about certain deeds and this very realization of shyness (Haya) is a huge favor on the child by Allah, the Exalted. And it's a clear sign that argues for (clearly shows) his/her moderation of the moral values and the purity of the heart. Instead, we should think of it in this way that this consciousness of the realization of good and bad [in the child], is a glad tiding from the nature (i.e. Allah) that this child upon attaining puberty, will possess perfect intelligence.

That's why a child with shyness (Hqya/modesty), should never be left free (liberated), but instead, making use of his/her shyness (Haya) and discernment [between good and bad], a full training should be given to him/her.

AN EXPLANATION OF THE ETIQUETTES OF EATING

The first bad desire that dominates a child, is the greed to eat more; therefore, it's extremely necessary to teach him/her the etiquettes of eating.

For example, [the etiquettes are] to eat food only with the right hand, to recite "Bismillah" ("In the Name of Allah") in the beginning, to eat from the front [of the plate], to wait for others to begin before he/she does, to not start staring at the food [when others start first], to not even stare at others who are eating, to not eat in an unnecessary hurry, to chew the food properly, to not continuously [or hurriedly] put morsels of food in his/her mouth [but should do that gradually], to not soil his/her hand and clothes with the food [by dropping it]. Sometimes, the child should be fed only the bread so that he/she does not consider the curry [to go with bread] to be a necessity so as to not even be able to do without it. Likewise, one should narrate in front of the child, the undesirability of eating too much, for example, those who eat excessively should be compared to animals.

The child should be told to not follow the kids who eat too much and the kids who eat less and are well trained should be praised in front of the child. The child attention should be drawn towards sacrificing the food for the sake of others [who are less fortunate] by taking care of the needs of his/her companions. The habit should be developed in the child to not care too much about [fine] food and to be content with simple food.

AN EXPLANATION OF THE ETIQUETTES OF DRESSING

Similarly, instead of colorful and silk clothes, the love and desire for simple and plain clothes should be developed in the heart of the child. It should be firmly impressed on his/her mind that to wear such clothes is not appropriate and pious people abhor such ways of dressing. Such things (admonitions) should be told to the child from time to time in a generalized way. And it's an obligation on the parents that when they see any child wearing silky or brightly colored dresses in front of them, then they should express their disapproval [of such ways of dressing] in front of the child and should instill their undesirability [for such dresses] in the heart of the child.

The parents should protect their child from meeting with all those children who are accustomed to prosperity, seeking comforts (comfortable lifestyle), and dressing proudly. They (parents) should also protect the child from the company of all those people who tell him/her stories about such ways of indulgence [like seeking comforts, dressing proudly, etc.]. Any child, who is left unattended [in such things] during his/her initial growth (upbringing), after growing up commonly becomes ill-mannered, liar, thief, tale-bearer, intransigent (stubborn), evil talker, sarcastic, cunning, deceiver, and foolish.

The only source of protecting the child from all these evils is good education and training, after that, the child should be admitted into a religious school so that he/she studies Quran and Hadith (traditions of Prophet Muhammad [Peace and blessing of Allah be upon him]), acquires knowledge of the conditions, biography, and traditions of Allah's righteous slaves so that from the early childhood, the love of the saints (May Allah shower His Mercy upon all of them) get established in his/her heart.

EPIDEMIC OF POETRY

Furthermore, protect the child from romantic poetry and romantic-minded poets and also make him/her stay away from those writers who think that such poetry is an indication of the life of the heart and subtlety of perception [or expression], because such things sow the seeds of corruption (Fasad) and evil in the minds of children.

METHOD OF PERSUADING TOWARDS GOOD AND STOPPING FROM EVIL

Whenever the child displays a good quality or displays a praiseworthy action, then father should praise the child and give him/her such a gift that will make the child happy and should praise the child in front of others. If the child then does something opposite [to his/her praiseworthy quality or action], then it's appropriate to show unawareness of it and [the father] should not dishonor or humiliate the child nor should he highlight the fault. Instead, the father [or parent] should not even let the child know that he even thinks that the child has the courage to do such a thing in front of him, especially, in the case, when the child himself/herself tries to cover and hide the fault. It's because revealing the mistakes [of the child] at times, is the cause for the child to become more daring to such an extent that slowly and gradually the child does not even care about his/her faults being revealed. Even after taking such a wise precaution, if the child does the same [bad] thing again, then it's suitable to rebuke him/her in private and the fault of the bad deed should be revealed to him/her and should be told, "Beware! Do not ever do this bad thing again. God forbid, if this is found by someone, then you will get humiliated in front of the people", [etc. etc. and other statements can be guessed from this].

HARMS OF EXCESSIVE SCOLDING

But it should be kept in mind that the child not be rebuked excessively, because it creates a habit in the child to listen to condemnation and scolding and increases in him/her the courage to commit wrongs. And slowly and gradually, the value of admonitions diminishes from the heart of the child.

Similarly, it's necessary for the father that when he talks to the child, he maintains his awe and fear [in the heart of the child] and should rarely rebuke him/her. And the mother should make him/her fear the father when the child is being stubborn and should strictly stop the child from doing bad things.

ETIQUETTES OF SLEEPING

The child should be told not to sleep during the day because it creates laziness but he/she should not be stopped from sleeping at night. However, the child should still be stopped from sleeping on a soft bed so that the child's bodily organs will get strong and the body will not get disfigured, due to which the child will not be able to live without comforts. In-

stead, the habits of sleeping on hard beds, wearing non-fine (simple) clothes, eating simple food should be instilled in the child.

The child should be stopped from doing things in a clandestine way because he/she knows that it's bad, that's why the child hides it. If it's ignored, then the child will develop the habit of doing bad things.

Similarly, the habit of walking during the day and exercising should be instilled in the child so that he/she does not become lethargic and lazy. However, utmost care must be taken to ensure that the child does not expose his/her head, knees, thighs, etc. Furthermore, the child should not walk too fast nor should keep his/her hands loose [which is a sign of laziness] but instead, the child should keep his/her hands close to the body and should be active.

PROHIBITION OF ARROGANCE AND PRIDE

The child should be prohibited from showing pride on anything from the possessions of his/her parents, his food items, clothes, even from something like his/her writing tablet and ink. Instead, the habit of dealing with all of his/her companions with humility, respect, honor, and having pure (clean/civilized) conversation, should be inculcated in him/her and should not be allowed to take anything from other children. If it's a child of wealthy parents then he/she should be explained that the honor and rank is in giving and not in taking, instead, taking [from others] has in it [the characteristics of] lowliness, humiliation, and insult. If it's a child of poor parents then he/she should be taught that to have greed and to take something from others is a cause of one's own insult and humiliation and it's the characteristic of a dog that it keeps wagging its tail waiting and being greedy for a morsel [of food]. Similarly, the child should be made to dislike gold and silver and should be made to fear the love of these things worse than the love of snakes and scorpions.

It's because the love and greed of gold and silver, causes far more damage to children and adults than the harms caused by poison [from snakes and scorpions].

ETIQUETTES OF GATHERINGS AND CONVERSATIONS

The child should be taught to not spit publicly, to not pick his/her nose, to not yawn in front of anyone, to not turn his/her back to anyone, to not sit cross-legged, to not sit while putting his/her palm under the chin or while supporting the head with hands because all

these are indications of lethargy and laziness, in other words, the child should even be taught the proper manners of sitting. The child should be restrained from talking too much and it should be clearly impressed on his/her mind that all these are shameful things and are not the works of well-mannered children. Furthermore, the child should be completely prohibited from swearing either truly or falsely so that he/she will not develop the habit of swearing from childhood. Similarly, the child should be stopped from starting a conversation first and should have this habit instilled in him/her that he/she should speak only to answer [questions] and that too should be proportionate to the question [asked]. When someone is speaking to the child then he/she should listen very attentively and should get up to create more space for those who are older and then should sit with proper manners in front of them. The child should be stopped from useless (evil) talk, dirty talk, cursing, accusations, verbal abuse and should be prohibited from meeting people who do these things because the evil qualities of [one's] companions, necessarily influence the child [in a bad way]. And the real secret of [proper] training of children is embedded (hidden) in protecting the children from [the company of] bad companions.

PATIENCE AND FORBEARANCE

It is also necessary that when the teacher punishes the child then the child should neither scream nor shout nor seek the support of intercession (interference) of someone, instead, [the child] should exercise patience and forbearance. In order to make the child understand this, he/she should be told that to exercise patience is the way (characteristic) of the brave ones and to scream, shout, and cry are the works of those who lack dignity.

IMPORTANCE AND BENEFITS OF PHYSICAL EXERCISES

After finishing his/her studies, the child should be permitted to play some good sport, with the help of which, he/she could get rid of the tiredness from the school and to get relaxation. But the child should not be allowed to play so much so that he/she gets tired due to the play [itself].

Because, to completely stop the child from playing and to just keep him/her under the pressure of studies, makes his/her heart dead, makes his/her intelligence nullified and useless, and makes his/her life miserable, due to that, the child starts to look for excuses to get rid of the studies.

ETIQUETTES OF RESPECTING THE ELDERS

It's extremely important that the child should be taught the obedience to the parents, teachers, and everyone who is older in age than him/her whether this person is a relative or not. And he/she should be told to look at them with the eyes of respect and should abandon play in front of them.

When the child reaches puberty, then he/she should not be allowed to have laziness in cleanliness (personal hygiene) and purity and should not be ignored for missing prayers. In certain days of [the holy month of] Ramadan, the child [before acquiring puberty] should be made to fast in some days and should be kept away from silk, and wearing gold and silver. As needed (as it's suitable according to the need), the child should be explained the limits (boundaries) and laws of the Islamic Shari'ah (Divine laws) and should be made to fear theft, unlawful earnings and food, breach of trust, dishonesty, shamelessness, and all evil things that are born in the temperament (personality) of the child during adolescence. When a child's upbringing from the [early] childhood will be like this, then by the time the child reaches puberty, he/she will be able to clearly understand the secrets and the wisdom behind these matters.

A GOOD THOUGHT ABOUT FOOD

During this stage (childhood/adolescence), he/she should be explained that whatever permissible (Halal) food is there, is also like medicines and the only purpose of them is that the human beings, after eating them, could be obedient to Allah, the Exalted.

IMPERMANENCE OF THE WORLD

It should also be clearly impressed upon the mind [of the child] that the world itself is not the purpose [of our lives], and [the world] is unreal, without permanence, and has an ending. Death puts an end to these [material] blessings and the world is only a place we are passing by. It is not a place of satisfaction and [is not] a place to settle. But the world of the hereafter is the real station of peace and tranquility and a place of stillness and satisfaction and the death, at all times, is in ambush, to end the life of the world.

WHO IS INTELLIGENT?

In reality, intelligent is the one who provides the capital of reliance (provision needed for one's journey to the hereafter) and good deeds from this mortal world for the eternal life of the hereafter, so that he/she attains a high rank of acceptance before Allah, the Exalted, and the limitless blessings of the Paradise. If the child's initial upbringing would have been good, then during adolescence, this discussion will prove to be pleasing to the self (Nafs), effective, get inscribed on the heart like an [indelible] inscription on the stone, auguring well for the child.

On contrary to that, if the child's mental development had been along the wrong lines, then the qualities of evil, shamelessness, desire for eating too much, greed for fine dresses, ostentation and ornamentation, gaudiness, arrogance and pride, would have been born in him/her, and his/her heart will refuse to accept this fact (i.e. the impermanence of the worldly life and the need to work for the life hereafter) like the dry wall refuses to accept dry soil (i.e. such teachings will not stick to the heart of the child). In summary, these are the initial matters that need to be taken care of to the utmost.

CHILD'S NATURE AND PARENTS' OBLIGATION

Since the composition of the child's heart is such that it can accept the influences of both the good and the bad, the righteous and the evil, it's the responsibility of the father and the mother to incline the [heart of the] child either to good or to evil (Imam Ghazali is not giving us a choice in this matter, but instead, urging us to incline the child towards good otherwise the child will automatically get inclined towards evil due to the parents' negligence). Prophet Muhammad (May peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) says:

"Kullu Mauludiy Yauladu 'Alal Fitrati Wa Innama Aabawahu Yuhawwidanihi Aow Yunas-siranihi Aow Yumajjisanihi."

"Every child is born on the [true] nature [of God] but his/her parents make him/her either a Christian, Jew, or Magian."

A HISTORICAL EVIDENCE OF THE BEST RESULTS OF GOOD UPBRINGING

Shaykh Suhail bin Abdullah Tusteri (May Allah Shower His Mercy upon him) says: "When I was three years old, I used to get up at night to see the [heart-warming] spiritual view of

the Tahajjud prayers [done in the last part of the night which is highly recommended in Islam for spiritual advancement on the Path of God] of my maternal uncle Muhammad bin Sawar (May Allah Shower His Mercy upon him). Once he said to me:

'Do you not engage in the remembrance of Allah, the Exalted, Who created you?'

I asked: 'How should I remember Allah?'

He said: 'At night, when you change your sides [on bed before sleeping], recite the following only in your heart, three times without moving your tongue:

Allahu Ma'iyah, Allahu Nazirun Ilaeyya, Allahu Shahidi

Allah is with me, Allah is watching me, Allah is in front of me.'

I did that for a few nights, and then I informed him about it to which he said:

'Now on every night, do the same thing seven times.'

I did that and informed him about that to which he said:

'Now do this eleven times.'

I did the same and as a result of that, I started to feel its taste and sweetness in my heart. Then when one year passed by acting on this [every night], he said:

'The remembrance that I have taught you, you should remember it well, and keep acting on that until you die. This will be a source of benefit to you in this world and in the next.'

I kept doing it for a couple of years, until I started to feel its taste (deep impact) in the deepest recesses of my innermost being. Then one day, he said:

'O Suhail! Allah, when He is with someone, whom He watches [every single moment], whom He is in front of, could that person ever disobey Allah, the Exalted? Beware! Never [ever] transgress against Allah and disobey Him!'

Therefore, I started to live in seclusion. Then he tried to send me to a school but I said:

I feel the danger that my attention [towards Allah] will get divided. But it will be better, if you could get this commitment from the teacher that I will study with him for a while then I will quickly return to indulge in Allah's remembrance.'

Then afterwards, I went to the teacher and by the time I was six or seven years old, I memorized the entire Quran by heart. I always fasted and until I was twelve, the barley bread was my primary food (diet). During this time, when I was thirteen, I had this need to learn (find out) about a particular religious matter, and then I requested my family to allow me to go to Busra [in Iraq] so that I can ask the scholars there about this matter. Therefore, I came to Busra and asked scholars there about this matter but none of them satisfied me. Afterwards, I went to 'Abadan [in Iran] to be in the presence of Shaykh Ha-beeb Humza bin 'Abdullah 'Abadani (May Allah Shower His Mercy upon him) and asked him about the same religious matter to which he gave me a satisfactory response. Then I continued to stay in his presence for a long time to gain spiritual benefits (Fayd) from his [book] 'Mulfoozat al-Qudsiya' and continued to learn manners from him. Then I returned to [my hometown of] Tuster and apportioned my diet so that one Dirham's (an old currency) worth of barley used to be grounded for me and bread used to be prepared for me from it. Every night, at the time of Suhoor (Late night meal before starting the fast), I used to eat one Aoqia (an old unit of measure equivalent to one ounce today) from the bread without using any curry with it. Therefore, one Dirham [which is a very small amount] used to be sufficient for me for [the food for] the whole year.

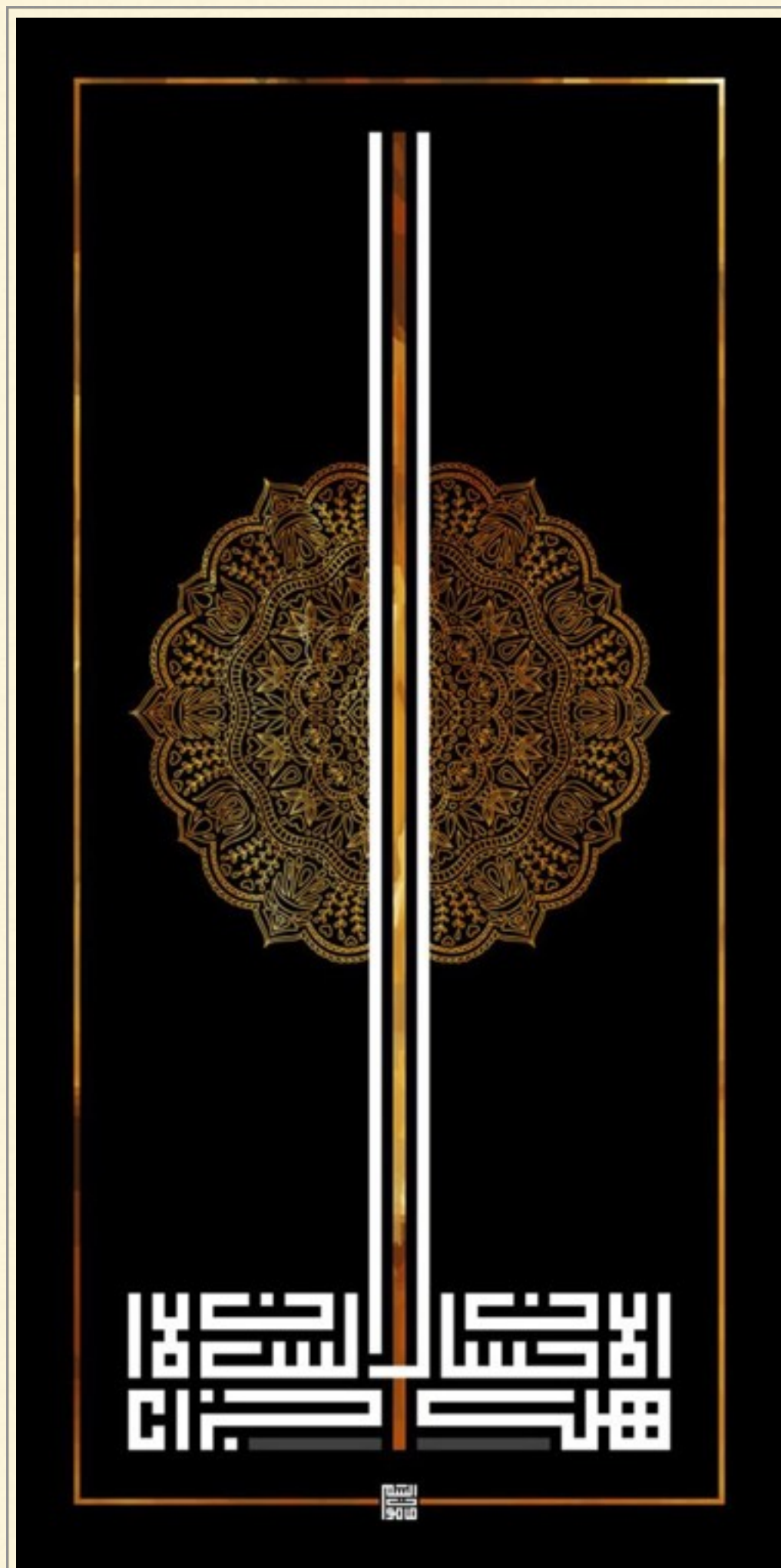
I made progress [in this matter] to such an extent that I used to break my fasts after three nights (in other words, he used to fast continuously for three days and nights), then after five nights, then after seven nights, then I gradually reached up to twenty-five nights. I continued in this way for twenty years continuously. Then I toured the world for many years and returned to Tuster. I used to worship and pray almost all night."

Imam Ahmad (May Allah Shower His Mercy upon him) says:

"I never received any evidence that he (i.e. Shaykh Suhail Tusteri [May Allah Shower His Mercy upon him]) ever used curry [with his bread when he ate]."

[Imam Ghazali (May Allah Shower His Mercy upon him) did not mention this tradition so that we also raise our children like this in terms of the intense spiritual exercises and extraordinary feats of physical endurance that Shaykh Suhail (May Allah Shower His Mercy upon him) performed from his early childhood. Imam Ghazali's purpose in mentioning this is to drive home

the point that if proper arrangements are made by parents for the child's proper upbringing, then the child can reach the pinnacle of human potential, otherwise, such intense spiritual and physical exercises is not necessary for all Muslims].





19

The Excelent Merits Of Prayer

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Mercy-giving.

(Bismi-llahi-lrahmani-lrahim.)

All praise belongs to God, Who has lavished His favours on His servants, filling their hearts with the light of religion and its duties, sent down from the Throne of Glory to the heaven of this world by the steps of mercy. One mark of His compassion: in contrast to earthly kings, though majesty and might belong to Him Alone, He urges the people to bring His requests and pleas, saying: 'Will anyone call, that I may answer him? Will anyone seek My forgiveness, that I may forgive him?' Unlike the rulers of this world, He keeps an open door and does not screen himself away. He allows His servants to converse with Him intimately in their Prayers, under all circumstances, be they in Congregation or in isolation. Not merely allowing, indeed, he gently urges and invites. How different are those feeble worldly kings, who grant an audience only when they have received a gift or bribe!

Glory be to Him, therefore, so grand in His sublimity, so Strong in His authority, so Perfect in His graciousness, so All-embracing in His goodness. Blessings and salutations to Muhammad, His chosen Prophet and selected friend, and to his family and Companions, those keys of right guidance and lanterns in the dark.

Prayer is the pillar of religion, the mainstay of conviction, the chief of good works and the best act of obedience.

Merit of the Call to Prayer (Adhan)

Said the Prophet, on him be peace: 'On the Day of Resurrection, three people will find themselves on a ridge of black musk. They will have no reckoning to fear, nor any cause for alarm while human accounts are being settled. First, a man who recites the Quran to please God, Great and Glorious is He, and who leads the Prayer to people's satisfaction. Second, a man who gives the Call to Prayer in a Mosque, inviting people to God, Great and Glorious is He, for the sake of His good pleasure. Third, a man who has a hard time making a living in this world, yet is not distracted from the work of the Hereafter . '

According to other Traditions, the Prophet, on him be peace, said: All that hear the Muezzin's cry, be they jinn, human or whatever, will testify for him on the Day of Resurrection.'² And: 'The hand of the All-merciful is on the Muezzin's head until he completes his Call to Prayer.'³

Commentators say that God, Great and Glorious is He, was referring to Muezzins when He revealed the Quranic Verse:

'Who speaks better than one who calls to God and acts righteously?' [Fussilat, 41: 33]

(Wa-man ahsanu qawlan mimman da'a ila-llahi wa-'amila saliha.)

The Prophet, on him be peace, also said: 'When you hear the Call, repeat what the Muezzin says.'¹ This is the recommended practice, except that on hearing the two sentences beginning 'hayya 'ala . . .' ('Come to . . .'), one says: 'There is neither power nor strength save in God' (la hawla wa-la quwwata ilia bi-llah). The response to 'qad qamati-lsalah' ('Prayer has begun') is: 'May God establish it and preserve it as long as the heavens and earth endure' (aqamaha-llahu wa-adamaha ma damati-lsamawatu wa-l'ard). At dawn, the

Call includes the sentence: 'Prayer is better than sleep,' to which we respond with: 'You have spoken truly and veraciously and given good advice' (sadaqta wa-bararta wa- nasahta). When the Call to Prayer is over, one says:

'O God, Lord of this perfect invitation and firmly established Prayer, endow Muhammad with favour, merit and exalted rank. Raise him to the glorious position You have promised him. You do not break Your promise.'

(Allahumma rabba hadhihi-lda'wati-ltammati wa- lsalati-lqa'imati Muhammadani-lwasllata wa-lfadflata wa-ldarajata-lrafi'a / wa-b'athhu-lmaqama-lmahmuda- lladhil wa'adtah/innaka la tukhlifu-lmi'ad.)

Sa'Id ibn al-Musayyab said: 'If a person performs Prayer in a wilderness, an angel prays on his right and an angel prays on his left. If he also gives the Call to Prayer and the signal to begin, angels perform Prayer behind him in rows like mountain ranges.'

Merit of the Prescribed Prayers at Set Times (Salat)

Allah, Exalted is He, says: 'Prayers have been prescribed for the believers at set times.' [al-Nisa', 4:103]

(Inna-lsalata kanat 'ala-lmu'minina kitaban mawquta.)

Said the Prophet, on him be peace: 'There are five Prayers which God has prescribed for His servants. For those who perform them properly, without disrespectful omissions, there is a guarantee that God will admit them to Paradise. To those

who do not observe them, however, God offers no such guarantee: He may punish them or He may admit them to Paradise, as He wills.

Said the Prophet, on him be peace: 'The five set Prayers may be compared to a stream of fresh water, flowing in front of your house, into which you plunge five times each day. Do you think that would leave any dirt on your body?' When they replied: 'None at all!' The Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'Indeed, the five Prayers remove sins, just as water removes dirt.' 6

Other sayings of the Prophet, on him be peace: The five set Prayers are an expiation, for there is something amongst them by which major sins are repelled.' 7

'What distinguishes us from the Hypocrites is our attendance at late night and early morning Prayers, both of which they miss.

'If a man meets God when he has been negligent of the Prayer, God will pay no attention to his other virtues.' 9

'Prayer is the pillar of religion; to neglect it is to prepare the downfall of religion.'

'Prayer at the appointed times.'" (In answer to the question: 'Which action is the most meritorious?')

'If a man performs the five Prayers, in a proper state of purity and at the times prescribed, they will be a light and a proof for him on the Day of Resurrection. But he who misses them will be resurrected along with Pharaoh and Haman.' 12

'The key to Paradise is ritual Prayer.' 3

'After the affirmation of His Unity, no duty God has imposed on His creatures is dearer to Him than ritual Prayer.

Had anything been dearer to Him than this, it would have become a form of worship for His angels. As it is [each of them performs part of the Prayer,] some bowing, some prostrating themselves, some standing upright and some sitting on their heels." 4

'Anyone who deliberately misses a Prayer has forsaken his faith. 15 That is to say, he has virtually been stripped of faith, since its knot has been untied and its pillar has fallen. The [Arabic verb meaning] 'has forsaken . . .' is used idiomatically, much as one might say that a man 'has arrived' when he is very near his destination.

'If someone deliberately omits a Prayer, he ceases to enjoy the protective custody of Muhammad, on him be peace.' 6

Abu Hurayra, may God be pleased with him, said: 'If someone makes his ablution and does it well, then sets out with the intention of performing the Prayer, he is already in the state of Prayer while on his way to it. With each two steps he takes, a good deed is added to his record and a bad deed is erased from it. So do not linger when you hear the signal that the Prayer is beginning, for the one who is farthest from home will get the greatest reward.' They asked: 'Why is that, Abu Hurayra?' and he said: 'Because of all the steps he had to take.'

According to Tradition: 'Of all a man's actions, the first to be examined on the Day of Resurrection will be the Prayer. If it is found to be complete, it will be accepted of him along with the rest of his works, but if it is found wanting it will be rejected along with the rest of his deeds.' 7

The Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'Abu Hurayra, command your family to perform Prayer, for God will provide you with blessings too numerous to reckon.' 18

A scholar once said: 'One who performs Prayer is like a merchant, who does not start making a profit until he has recovered all his capital. In similar fashion, one who performs Prayer gets no credit for supererogatory devotions until he has discharged his basic obligations.'

Abu Bakr, may God be pleased with him, used to say: 'When it is time for Prayer, get up and extinguish the Hellfire you have kindled for yourselves.'

Merit of Correct Performance (Ta 'dif)

The Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'The prescribed Prayer is like a pair of scales: whoever gives full measure will also receive in full.' 9

Yazfd al-Riqashi said: 'The Prayer of God's Messenger, on him be peace, was as even as if it had been perfectly balanced.' 20

Traditions of the Prophet, on him be peace: 'Two members of my Community may perform the Prayer in such a way that their bowing and their prostration are as one, yet their Prayers may be as far apart as heaven and earth.' 2 ' (In respect of their humility, that is.)

'God will have no regard, on the Day of Resurrection, for that servant of His who does not straighten his spine between bowing and making prostration.' 22

'Is he not afraid - he who turns his face around in the Prayer - that God may turn his face into that of a donkey?' 23 ^

'If someone performs his Prayer at the proper time, makes his ablution correctly, does the bowing and prostration properly and observes due humility, that Prayer will rise up, all bright and shining, and will say: "May God take care of you as you have taken care of me!" But if someone performs his Prayer at the wrong time, without correct ablution, not bowing and prostrating properly and not observing due humility, his Prayer will rise up all dark

and gloomy, saying: "May God neglect you as you have neglected me." Then when it has reached wherever God wishes, it will be folded up like an old rag and he will be slapped with it in the face.' 24

Merit of Congregational Prayer (Jamd'a)

The Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'The merit of congregational Prayer surpasses that of individual Prayer by twenty-seven degrees.'

According to Abu Hurayra, the Prophet, on him be peace, once noticed that certain people were missing from the Congregation. He said: 'I considered appointing someone else to lead the Prayer, while I went to show my disapproval of those absentees by burning down their houses.' 26 According to another version, he added: Any one of them would have joined the Congregation if he had expected to get a marrowbone or a couple of trotters.'

According to 'Uthman, may God be pleased with him, the blessed Prophet said: 'To perform the late evening Prayer, ('Isha'), in congregation is equivalent to spending half the night in vigil, while to perform the dawn Prayer, (Fajr), in congregation is like keeping vigil throughout the night.'"

The Prophet, on him be peace, also said: 'To perform the Prayer in congregation is to fill one's throat with worship.' 28

Sa'id ibn al-Musayyab said: 'In all of twenty years, the Call to Prayer has always found me in the Mosque.'

Muhammad ibn Wasi' said: 'Only three things do I wish for in this world: a brother to set me straight if I get crooked; a livelihood for which I do not have to beg; and a congregational Prayer in which I am relieved of absent-mindedness and which is recorded in my favour.'

Hatim al-Asamm said: 'I was once too late for congregational Prayer and Abu Ishaq al-Bukhari was the only one to commiserate with me. Had I lost a son, more than ten thousand would have offered me their condolences, for people find religious misfortune easier to bear than worldly calamity.'

Ibn 'Abbas, may God be pleased with him and with his father, said: 'If a man hears the crier (Muezzin) and does not respond, he does not wish for good and no good is to be expected of him.'

Abu Hurayra, may God be pleased with him, said: 'Better for a human being to have his ear filled with molten lead, than to hear the Call and fail to respond.'

It is related that Maymun ibn Mihran once came to the Mosque, only to be told that the people had all left. He quoted from the Quran: 'Surely we belong to Allah, and to Him we are surely returning,' then said: 'Truly, the value of this Prayer is dearer to me than the governorship of 'Iraq.'

Said the Prophet, on him be peace: 'If a man performs his Prayers in congregation for forty days, never arriving after the "Allahu Akbar!" of consecration, God will grant him two absolutions: absolution from hypocrisy and absolution from Hellfire.' 29

It is said that on the Day of Resurrection a group of people will be assembled, their faces like shining stars. The angels will ask them: 'How did you conduct yourselves in life?' To this they will reply: 'On hearing the Call to Prayer, we used to set about our ablutions, letting nothing else distract us.' Another group will then be assembled, their faces like radiant moons. In answer to the same question, they will say: 'We used to make our ablutions ahead of time.' The next group to be assembled will have faces like the sun. They will say: 'We used to hear the Call to Prayer inside the Mosque.'

It is related that early believers used to commiserate with themselves for three days if they missed the first 'Allahu Akbar!' and for a whole week if they missed the congregational Prayer altogether.

Merit of Prostration (Sujud)

God's Messenger, on him be peace, said: 'The servant has no better means of approaching God than prostration in private.' 30 Also: 'Whenever a Muslim performs a prostration for God's sake, God raises him one degree and absolves him of one offence.' 31

It is related that a man once said to God's Messenger, on him be peace: 'Pray to God that He may include me among those who enjoy your intercession, and that He may grant me your companionship in Paradise.' The Prophet, on him be peace, replied: 'Help me by making frequent prostration.' 32

According to another Tradition: 'The servant is never closer to God, Exalted is He, than when he is prostrating himself in worship.' 33 This is the meaning of the words of God, Great and Glorious is He, 'Prostrate yourself and draw near.' [Iqra', 96: 19] (Wa-sjud wa-qtarib.) God, Great and Glorious is He, also says: 'Their foreheads show the mark left by prostration.' [al-Fath, 48: 29] (Sfmahum fi wujuhihim min athari-lsujud.)

Some say this refers to the dust that sticks to the brow during the act of prostration, while others say it is the light of humility, shining forth from within. The latter view is more correct. According to yet others, it is the radiance that will shine on their faces on the Day of Resurrection, as a result of their ablution.

The Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'If a human being prostrates himself at an appropriate point in his recitation of the Quran, the devil withdraws, weeping as he says: "Alas! This man was bidden to prostrate himself and he has obeyed, so Paradise is his. I was also commanded to make prostration, but I disobeyed and so Hell is my lot."' 34

It is told of AH ibn Abdullah ibn Abbas that he used to make a thousand prostrations every day. They used to call him the Great Prostrator (al-sajjad).

It is related that 'Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz, may God be pleased with him, never prostrated himself on anything but the bare earth.

Yusuf ibn Asbat used to say: 'Young men, take advantage of your good health, before you become infirm, for I no longer envy anybody except a man who completes his bowing and prostration in Prayer, now that my own time is too short for that.'

Sa'Id ibn Jubayr said: 'I look to nothing in this world for consolation except to prostration in Prayer.'

'Uqba ibn Muslim said: 'No quality in a man is dearer to God, Great and Glorious is He, than the longing to meet Him. At no moment is a man closer to God, Great and Glorious is He, than when he sinks down in prostration.'

Abu Hurayra, may God be pleased with him, said: 'The servant is nearest to God, Great and Glorious is He, when he prostrates himself in Prayer, so that is the time to make many supplications.'

Merit of Humble Adoration (Khushu')

God, Exalted is He, said: 'And perform the Prayer in remembrance of Me.' [Ta Ha, 20: 14]

(Wa-aqimi-lsalata li-dhikri.)

The Exalted One also said: 'Do not be one of those who are neglectful.' [al-A'raf, 7:205]

(Wa-la takun mina-lghafilin.)

God, Great and Glorious is He, also said: 'Do not approach the Prayer when you are intoxicated, until you know what you are saying.' [al-Nisa', 4: 43]

(Wa-la taqrabu-lsalata wa-antum sukara hatta ta'lamu mataqulun.)

Some say that 'intoxicated' means inebriated by many anxieties, while others say it means drunk on the love of this world. According to Wahb, the meaning is obviously a caution against worldly attachment, since the words 'until you know what you are saying' explain the underlying reason. Many, are those who pray without having drunk wine, yet do not know what they are saying in their Prayers!

Said the Prophet, on him be peace: 'If a man performs two cycles of Prayer without the distraction of any worldly thought, all his previous sins will be forgiven.' 35

The Prophet, on him be peace, also said: 'Prayer is nothing but submissiveness, humility, supplication, sighing and remorse, holding out your hands and saying: "O God! O God!" Otherwise it is abortive.' 36

In the earlier scriptures, we find these words attributed to God, Glorified is He: 'I do not accept the Prayers of everyone who prays. I accept the Prayers of none but those who are humble before My Majesty, who are not arrogant towards My servants, and who feed the poor and hungry for My sake. '

The Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'Ritual Prayer was made obligatory, Pilgrimage and circumambulation were ordained, and the rites of sacrifice were instituted, all for the purpose of ensuring remembrance of God, Exalted is He. If your heart is devoid of awe and reverence for the One Remembered, who is the aim and the goal, what is your remembrance worth?' 37

This advice was given to someone by the Prophet, on him be peace: 'When you pray, pray like a person who is saying farewell,' 38 i.e. saying farewell to himself, to his passions and to his life, before setting off on the journey to his Lord. As God, Exalted is He, says:

'O Man, you labour towards your Lord laboriously, and you shall meet Him.' [al-Inshiqaq, 84: 6]

(Ya ayyuha-l'insanu innaka kadihun ila rabbika kadhan fa-mulaqih.)

The Exalted One also says: 'Be aware of God, for it is God who teaches you.' [al-Baqarah, 2: 282] (Wa-ttaqu-Ilaha wa-yu'allimukumu-llah.)

God, Exalted is He, says also: 'Be aware of God, and know that you are going to meet Him.' [al-Baqarah, 2: 223] (Wa-ttaqu-Ilaha wa'lamu annakum mulaquh.)

Said the Prophet, on him be peace: 'If a man's Prayer does not deter him from indecency and mischief, he gains nothing from God but remoteness.' 39

Since Prayer is intimate communion, how can it go with heedlessness? Bakr ibn 'Abdullah said: 'Human being, if you wish to enter the presence of your Lord without permission, and to speak with Him without an interpreter, you have only to enter!' When someone asked him how this could be he said: 'You do your ablution correctly and enter your prayer-niche . . . There you are! You have entered your Lord's presence without permission and may now speak to Him without an interpreter.'

Said 'A'isha, may God be pleased with her: 'God's Messenger, on him be peace, would talk to us and we to him, but when it was time for Prayer it seemed as though he did not know us, nor we him.' 40 This was because they were completely in awe of God, Great and Glorious is He.

The Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'God has no regard for a Prayer in which a man's heart is not present as well as his body.' 41

When Abraham, God's special friend, got up to pray, the throbbing of his heart could be heard two miles away.

When Sa'id al-Tanukhi was praying, tears used to flow incessantly down his cheeks and onto his beard.

God's Messenger, on him be peace, once saw a man playing with his beard during the Prayer, so he said: 'If this fellow's heart was submissive, his organs would also act with humility. 42

It is related that al-Hasan noticed a man playing with pebbles as he prayed: 'O God, marry me to the maidens of Paradise!' 'A poor suitor you are,' said al-Hasan. 'You propose to the maidens of Paradise while playing with pebbles!'

Someone asked Khalaf ibn Ayyub: 'Don't the flies bother you so much during your Prayer that you have to chase them away?' But he replied: 'I do not make a habit of anything that would spoil my Prayer.' When asked how he had acquired such patience, he said: 'I have heard that culprits patiently endure the Sultan's whip, because this gives them a reputation for being "able to take it." They boast of their patient endurance. Here am I, standing before my Lord in Prayer. Am I going to budge for a fly?'

It is related of Muslim ibn Yasar that, when he wanted to pray, he would say to his family: 'You may talk, for I shall not hear you'. It is said that he was praying one day in the Great Mosque of Basra, when a corner of the building collapsed. This attracted a crowd, but he was quite unaware of what had happened until he had finished his Prayer.

Whenever the time of Prayer approached, 'All ibn Abi Talib, may God be pleased with him and ennoble his countenance, used to quake and change colour. They asked him: 'What is the matter with you, Commander of the Believers?' To this he would reply: 'The time has come for a trust which God offered to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to carry it; they were wary of it, but I have taken it on.'

It is said of 'Ah ibn al-Husayn that he used to turn pale when he made his ablution. When his family asked him what came over him during his ablution, he would say: 'Do you realise before Whom I wish to stand in Prayer?'

According to Ibn 'Abbas, may God be pleased with him and his father, the Prophet David, God bless him and give him peace, used to say in his intimate Prayers: 'My God, who inhabits Your House? And from whom do you accept the Prayer?' Then God told him by inspiration: 'David, he who inhabits My House, and he whose Prayer I accept, is none but he who is humble before My Majesty, spends his days in remembrance of Me and keeps his passions in check for My sake, giving food to the hungry and shelter to the stranger and treating the afflicted with compassion. His light shines in the sky like the sun. If he in-

vokes Me, I am at his service. If he asks of Me, I grant his request. In the midst of ignorance, I give him discernment; in heedlessness, remembrance, in darkness, light. He stands out among ordinary people as Paradise towers over earthly gardens, its rivers inexhaustible and its fruits not subject to decay. '

It is related of Hatim al-Asamm, may God be pleased with him, that he said, in answer to a question about Prayer: 'When the time for Prayer is at hand, I make a proper ablution, go to the spot where I intend to pray and sit there till all my limbs and organs are in a collected state. Then I stand up to perform my Prayer, placing the Ka'ba between my brows, the Bridge-over-Hell beneath my feet, Paradise to my right and Hell to my left, and the Angel of Death behind me, thinking all the while that this is my final Prayer. Then I stand between hope and fear. I carefully pronounce "Allahu Akbar!" Then I recite the Quran harmoniously, bow in humility and prostrate myself submissively. I then sit back on my left haunch, spreading out the top of my left foot and raising my right foot on the toes. I follow this with sincerity. Then I wonder whether or not my Prayer has been accepted. '

Ibn 'Abbas, may God be pleased with him and with his father, once said: 'Two moderate cycles of Prayer, performed in full awareness, are better than a whole night's vigil when the heart is inattentive.'

Excellence of the Mosque and Place of Prayer (Masjid)

God, Great and Glorious is He, said: 'The only ones to frequent God's Mosques shall be those who believe in God and the Last Day . . .' [al-Tawbah, 9: 18]

(Innama ya'muru masajida-llahi man araana bi-Hahi wa-lyawmi-l'akhir.)

The Prophet, upon him be peace, said: 'If a man builds a Mosque for God's sake, be it no bigger than the hollow where a sand grouse lays her eggs, God will build him a palace in Paradise.' 43

Other Traditions of the Prophet, on him be peace:

'If a man is fond of the Mosque, God will be fond of him. ,44

'When one of you enters the Mosque, let him perform two cycles of Prayer before sitting down. ' 45

'He who lives next to the Mosque may not pray outside of the Mosque.' 46

'The angels bless you as long as you remain sitting in the place where you do your Prayers, saying: "O God, bless him. O God, have mercy on him. O God, forgive him." They keep this up until you need an ablution or leave the place of Prayer.' 47

'In the latter days, there will be members of my Community who come to the Mosques and sit there in circles. Their talk will be of this world and their love of it. Do not sit in their company, for God has no need of them.' 48

'God, Great and Glorious is He, has said in one of His Books: "The Mosques are My houses on My earth. My visitors are those who frequent them, so blessed is he who purifies himself in his own house, then visits Me in Mine. For the host has a duty to entertain his guest." ' 49

'If you see a man frequenting the Mosque, you may testify to his faith.' 50

Sa'Td ibn al-Musayyab said: 'Anyone who sits in the Mosque is actually sitting in the company of his Lord, so he has no right to say anything that is not good. '

It was probably one of the Companions who said: 'Gossip in the Mosque consumes good deeds as animals eat up grass.'

Al-Nakha'i said: 'They used to maintain that walking to the Mosque on a dark night gave a guarantee of Paradise.' Anas ibn Malik said: 'If someone installs a lantern in a Mosque, the angels and the bearers of the Heavenly Throne do not cease to beg forgiveness for his sins as long as that lamp continues to illuminate that Mosque.'

'Ali, may God ennoble his countenance, said: 'When a man dies, he is mourned by his place of Prayer on earth and by the place in heaven to which his good deeds have ascended. 'Then he recited the verse [referring to Pharaoh and his unbelieving followers]:

'Neither heaven nor earth shed a tear over them; nor were they reprieved.' [al-Dukhan, 44: 29]

(Fa-ma bakat 'alayhimu-lsama'u wa-r'ardu wa-ma kanu munzarin.)

Ibn 'Abbas said: 'The earth laments him for forty mornings.' 'Ata' al-Khurasam said: 'Any spot on earth where a man has made a prostration to God will testify on his behalf on the Day of Resurrection, and will weep for him on the day he dies.'

Anas ibn Malik said: 'If a man remembers God, Exalted is He, on any plot of ground, be it by way of Prayer or other form of remembrance, that plot will boast about it to all the surrounding plots. It will rejoice in the remembrance of God, Great and Glorious is He, to the utmost extent of seven lands.

No man gets up to pray without the earth being embellished for him.' It is also said that any place where people stop for the night will either bless them or curse them in the morning.

INTERNAL PREREQUISITES OF PRAYER: ACTIONS OF THE HEART

The Need for Humility and Conscious Awareness

Many Quranic Verses and Traditions could be cited in evidence of this, including the words of God, Exalted is He:

'And perform the Prayer to remember Me.' [Ta Ha, 20:14]

(Wa-aqimi-lsalata li-dhikri.)

The obvious force of the imperative is to make something obligatory.

Since heedlessness is the opposite of remembrance, how can someone who is heedless throughout his Prayer be performing it in remembrance of God? The Exalted One said:

'Do not be one of those who are neglectful.' [al-A'raf, 7:205]

(Wa-la takun mina-lghafilin.)

Here we have a negative imperative, with the obvious force of a prohibition.

God, Great and Glorious is He, also says: '. . .until you know what you are saying.' [al-Nisa', 4:43]

(hatta ta'lamu ma taqulun.)

This explains the reason for debarring those who are intoxicated [from the Mosque], but the term 'intoxicated' applies by extension to those who are wholly preoccupied with temptations and worldly thoughts.

When the Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'The Prayer is nothing but submissiveness and humility . . .' he used a particularly definite and emphatic construction in Arabic. 5'

The Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'If a man's Prayer does not deter him from indecency and mischief, he gains nothing from God but remoteness.' Heedless Prayer does nothing to deter a man from these vices. The heedless are alluded to in the Tradition: 'Many of those who pray derive nothing from their Prayers except weariness and strain.' 52

The Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'A man gets credit only for that part of his Prayer of which he is conscious.' 53 This is confirmed by the Tradition: 'When performing the Prayer, one is conversing intimately with one's Lord.' 54 Speaking in a state of heedlessness is certainly not what is meant by intimate conversation with the Lord.

To clarify matters further, let us consider the contrast between ritual Prayer, on the one hand, and Zakat, 55 Fasting and Pilgrimage on the other. A man may pay his Alms without being consciously attentive, yet the very act of parting with money runs counter to greed and is hard on the lower self. The case of Fasting is similar: since it subdues the natural forces and breaks the hold of the passions, which are the tools of God's enemy, Satan, its purpose may well be achieved in spite of heedlessness. As for Pilgrimage, it presents physical hardship and difficulty and involves painful struggle, whether or not its actions are performed in full awareness.

In contrast to these other religious duties, ritual Prayer consists only in remembrance, recitation, bowing, prostration, standing erect and sitting down. As for remembrance, it is proximity to God, Great and Glorious is He, and communion * with Him. If its purpose is not conversation and dialogue, it must be a verbal and vocal exercise, set to test the tongue in the same way as the belly and the genitals are tested by abstinence during the Fast, as the body is tested by the ordeals of Pilgrimage, or as one is tested by having to part with beloved money on paying the Alms. Without a doubt, this latter supposition must be wrong, for nothing comes more easily to the heedless than idle tongue-wagging. It cannot, therefore, be a simple physical exercise. The sounds produced are significant only when they form articulate speech. Articulate speech must be expressive of what is in the heart and mind, and this is not possible without conscious awareness.

What is the point of praying: 'Show us the Straight Path,' if one is in a state of absent-mindedness? If it is not intended as a humble entreaty and supplication, why bother with the idle mouthing of the words, especially if it has become a habit?

The purpose of Quranic recitation and expressions of remembrance (at various stages in the ritual Prayer) is undoubtedly praise and glorification, supplication and entreaty, addressed to God, Great and Glorious is He. But the veil of heedlessness screens the heart from Him. Far from seeing or witnessing Him, the heedless worshipper is not even aware of Whom he is addressing, as his tongue moves purely from force of habit. How remote this is from the purpose of ritual Prayer, which was prescribed for the refinement of the heart, the renewal of Divine remembrance, and to secure the knot of faith!

We have been discussing the case of recitation and remembrance, but our strictures in this matter are by no means relevant only to the spoken elements in ritual Prayer, as distinct from the physical postures. As for bowing and prostration, their purpose is definitely veneration. While one could be venerating God, Great and Glorious is He, through one's action; although unaware of Him, one might just as well be unconsciously venerating an idol set before one, or even the wall in front. It then ceases to be an act of veneration and is reduced to mere movement of the back and head, devoid of any hardship that might make it a real test.

Ritual Prayer has been made the chief pillar of religion, the criterion for distinguishing between unbelief and Islam. It takes precedence over the Pilgrimage and other forms of worship. It is unique in having capital punishment as the penalty for its abandonment. I do not believe that ritual Prayer enjoys all this special dignity by virtue of its external motions, unless these are linked to the purpose of intimate communion with God. That is what has priority over Fasting, Zakat, Pilgrimage and so on; indeed, over sacrifices and offerings which entail self-denial through financial outlay. As God, Exalted is He, says:

'It is not their flesh nor their blood that reaches God: it is your devotion that reaches Him.' [al-Hajj, 22:37]

{Lan yanala-Ilaha luhumuha wa-la dima'uha wa-lakin yanaluhu-Itaqwa minkum.)

What is meant here by 'devotion' (taqwa), is a quality that gains control over the heart, disposing it to comply with the commands it is required to obey.

What, then, of the ritual Prayer, if its actions are without purpose?

You may say that I am going against the consensus of the jurists, if I make the validity of Prayer dependent on conscious awareness, since they stipulate such attention only at the initial Allahu Akbar. But the jurists do not concern themselves with the inner life or the way of the Hereafter. Their job is to formulate the outer rules of religion, with reference to external physical behaviour. . . As for what is beneficial to the afterlife, this is beyond the scope of jurisprudence, since no consensus can be claimed.

Sufyan al-Thawri, an early legal scholar, is reported as saying: 'Without humility and awareness, one's Prayer is invalid.' It is related that al-Hasan said: 'Any Prayer performed without conscious awareness is a short cut to punishment.'

According to Mu'adh ibn Jabal: A man gets no credit for a Prayer in which he deliberately notices those on his right and left.'

According to an authenticated Tradition, God's Messenger, upon him be peace, said: 'Though he performs the whole Prayer, a man may be credited with no more than one sixth or one tenth of it. A man gets credit only for that part of his Prayer of which he is conscious.' 56

If this had been transmitted on lesser authority, it would surely have become a dogma, so why should it not be taken seriously?

Abd al-Wahid ibn Zayd said: 'The scholars are unanimously agreed that a man gets credit only for that part of his Prayers of which he is conscious.' According to him, there is actually a consensus to this effect.

In short, conscious awareness is the very spirit of ritual Prayer. Attentiveness to the initial 'Allahu Akbar' represents the bare minimum required to keep the spark of this spirit alive. . . Of God we beg His gracious support!

INTERNAL STATES CONDUCTIVE TO PERFECTING THE LIFE IN PRAYER

These qualities can be expressed in many ways, but they are well summed up in six words, namely: awareness; understanding; reverence; awe; hope; shame.

AWARENESS

By conscious awareness we mean that state in which one's mind and feelings are in no way distracted from what one is doing and saying. Perception is united with action and speech. Thoughts do not wander. When the mind remains attentive to what one is doing, when one is whole-heartedly involved, and when nothing makes one heedless, that is when one has achieved conscious awareness.

UNDERSTANDING

Understanding the meaning of one's words is something that goes beyond awareness, for one may be conscious of making an utterance, yet not be aware of the meaning of that utterance. What we mean by understanding, therefore, is an awareness that also includes comprehension of the meaning of one's utterance. People differ in this respect, not sharing a common understanding of the Quran and the glorifications.

How many subtleties of meaning we come to understand in the course of ritual Prayer! Things that had never occurred to us before. . .

It is in this context that prayer becomes a deterrent to indecency and mischief, for the understanding it brings is a positive obstacle to vice.

REVERENCE

As for reverence, this is something beyond both awareness and understanding. A man may address his servant in full awareness of his speech, and understanding the meaning of his words, yet without reverence, for reverence is an additional element.

AWE

As for awe, it is over and above reverence. In fact, it represents a kind of fear that grows out of the latter. Without experiencing fear, one will not stand in awe. There is an ordinary fear of things we find repugnant, like scorpions or bad temper, but this is not called awe.

What we call awe is the kind of fear we have of a mighty king. Awe is the kind of fear induced by a sense of majesty.

HOPE

As for hope, this is unquestionably something else again. There are many who revere some king or other, and who are in awe of him or afraid of his power, yet do not hope to be rewarded by him. In our Prayers, however, we must hope for the reward of God, Great and Glorious is He, just as we fear His punishment for our faults.

SHAME

As for shame, it is something additional to all the rest, for it is based on the realisation of one's deficiencies and the apprehension of sin. It is quite possible to conceive of reverence, fear and hope, without this element of shame.

MEDICATION CONDUCTIVE TO INNER SERENITY

As a believer, one must magnify God, Great and Glorious is He, in fear and in hope and in humble awareness of one's shortcomings. There can be no relaxation in any of this once faith has been achieved, although one's intensity will depend on the strength of one's conviction. Any slackness in prayer is surely caused by mental distraction, divided attention, failure to be whole-hearted in communion and a heedless attitude to worship. Random mental activity is the thing that distracts us from prayer; it must therefore be dispelled so that a feeling of serenity can be acquired. To remove the symptom we must

treat the cause, so let us find out where it lies. Stray thoughts may be prompted by something external, or they may arise from within.

As for external causes, our attention is caught by anything that happens to engage our eyes or ears. We begin to take an interest in it. Then one thought leads to another and the process goes on and on. Seeing gives rise to thinking, then one thought becomes the cause of another. Sensory impressions do not divert those whose intention is strong and whose aspiration is lofty, but they inevitably distract the weak. The remedy lies in cutting off these causes by lowering the eyes, praying in a dark room, leaving no distracting objects in front of one, or reducing one's range of vision by praying close up to a wall. One should avoid performing the Prayer on the street, in places where there is artificial decoration and on coloured carpets.

That is why very devout people used to worship in a small, dark cell, where there was just enough room for prostration, for it is easier to concentrate in such conditions. Those who were strong would attend the Mosques, keeping their eyes downcast and confining their gaze to the place of prostration.

They considered their Prayers to be perfect when they were unaware of the people to their right and left. Ibn 'Umar, may God be pleased with him and with his father, would allow no object to remain in the place of Prayer, not even a copy of the Quran. He would remove any sword he found there and erase any writing.

Internal causes pose a more serious problem. One's worldly concerns may be many and varied, so that the mind does not dwell on a single subject but keeps flying from one direction to another. To lower the eyes is then of no avail, for plenty of distractions have already got inside. The way to deal with this is to make a deliberate effort to comprehend the meaning of the words one is reciting in the Prayer, concentrating on this to the exclusion of everything else. It is helpful to prepare for this before the initial consecration, by reminding oneself of the Hereafter and that one is standing in communion in the awesome presence of God, Glorified is He, and under His scrutiny.

Before consecration for Prayer, one should empty the heart of all its cares, leaving oneself free of potential distractions.

God's Messenger, on him be peace, once said to 'Uthman ibn Abi Shayba: 'I forgot to tell you to cover up the cooking pots that are in the house, for there should be nothing in the house to distract people from their Prayers.' 51 This is a technique for quietening the mind. If mental agitation is not stilled by this tranquilliser, the only recourse is a purgative that will strike at the deep roots of the malady. That is to say, one must examine the distractions that prevent the attainment of inner serenity. These will undoubtedly be traced to one's pressing concerns, which have become so important simply because of one's base desires. One must therefore discipline the lower self by abstaining from those desires and by severing those ties. Anything that distracts us from Prayer is the adversary of our religion; the army of Satan is the foe. To hold it in check is more troublesome than driving it out, so let us drive it out and be rid of it.

The Prophet, upon him be peace, once prayed while wearing a cloak with an ornamented border, a gift from Abu Jahm. He removed it when he had finished his Prayers, saying:

Take it back to Abu Jahm, for it distracted me from my Prayer. Bring me Abu Jahm's cloak of coarse wool.' 58 God's Messenger, on him be peace, once had new laces put in his sandals.

When their newness attracted his attention during his Prayer, he had them removed and the worn laces put back. 59 According to another Tradition, the blessed Prophet once found himself admiring the beauty of a pair of sandals he was wearing, so he made a prostration and said: 'I have humbled myself before my Lord, Great and Glorious is He, so that He will not be displeased with me.' Then he went out and gave the sandals to the first beggar he met. He then told 'AH, may God be pleased with him, to buy him a worn pair of tanned leather sandals, which he put on his feet. 60

Before it was declared unlawful for men to wear gold, the Prophet, upon him be peace, used to wear a gold ring on his finger. As he stood in the pulpit one day, he threw this ring away, saying: 'It distracted me: a glance towards it and a glance towards you.' 61

It is related that Abu Talha once prayed in his garden where there were trees. He was attracted by the sight of a honey bird and he spent so long following the movement of the bird, as it flew about seeking an opening in the foliage, that he forgot how many cycles of Prayer he had completed. He told God's Messenger, on him be peace, about the temptation to which he had succumbed, then said: 'Messenger of God, I offer my garden as a charity. Dispose of it as you wish.' 62 According to a different source, he was distracted by the pleasant sight of the bees, buzzing around the fruit as he prayed in his garden. He mentioned this to 'Uthman, may God be pleased with him, saying 'Offer it as a charity. Use it for the sake of God, Great and Glorious is He.' 'Uthman then sold the garden for fifty thousand.

Such conduct was intended to eradicate causes of mental distraction and to atone for deficiencies in Prayer. This medicine tackles the root of the disease; it is the only effective remedy. As for the gentler measures we proposed, such as calming oneself and concentrating on understanding the words used in Prayer, they may be useful when passions are feeble and cares are only marginally distracting. But it is useless to try and calm oneself when the pressure of desire is strong, for it will attract you and you will attract it until it gets the better of you. You will be caught up in this process throughout your Prayer.

Consider this analogy: There was a man beneath a tree. He wished to collect his thoughts, but the sparrows disturbed him with their chirping. He would chase them with a stick and then resume his train of thought, but the sparrows would come back and he would have to scare them away with the stick once again. Eventually someone told him: 'This is like being a slave at the wheel, going round and round forever. If you want to escape the vicious circle, you should fell the tree.' So it is with the tree of base desires. Thoughts are attracted to its ramifying twigs and branches, just like sparrows to real trees.

Flies are attracted by filth and chasing them becomes a full time occupation, for they just keep coming back. Random thoughts are like flies.

Our base desires are numerous and human beings are seldom free of them. They all share a common root, namely love of this world. That is the origin of every fault, the basis of every shortcoming, the source of all corruption. Filled with the love of this world, a person becomes so attached to it that he fails to make provision for the Hereafter. He then has no hope of experiencing the pure bliss of communion in Prayer.

Those who delight in this world can take no delight in God, Glorified is He, nor in communion with Him. A man aspires to that which gives him joy, so if his pleasure lies in this world he will surely seek it there. Nevertheless, one must continue to strive, turning the heart back towards prayer and reducing the causes of distraction.

This is bitter medicine, so bitter that we instinctively recoil from taking it. The sickness remains chronic and the disease becomes incurable. Great men have endeavoured to perform two cycles of Prayer without having any internal conversation about worldly matters, only to find themselves unequal to the task. No hope, then, for the likes of us! If only we may be safe from temptation during half of the Prayer, or one third, so that our deeds are at least a mixture of good and bad!

In short, the worldly and spiritual aspirations in the human heart are like water poured into a cup full of vinegar; as water goes in, an equal volume of vinegar inevitably goes out and the two can never combine.

INNER STATES AT EACH STAGE OF THE RITUAL PRAYER

THE CALL TO PRAYER

When you hear the Call to Prayer given by the Muezzin, let yourself feel the terror of the Summons on Resurrection Day. Prepare yourself inwardly and outwardly to respond, and to do so promptly. Those who are quick to answer this call are the ones who will be summoned gently on the Day of the Great Review. So review your heart now: if you find it full of joy and happiness, eager to respond with alacrity, you can expect the Summons to bring you good news and salvation on the Day of Judgment. That is why the Prophet, on him be peace, used to say: 'Comfort us, Bilal!' For Bilal was the Muezzin and Prayer was the joy and comfort of the Messenger, on him be peace.

RITUAL PURITY

When attending to ritual purity in the things that envelop you in progressively closer layers - your room, then your clothes, then your skin, - do not neglect your inner being, which lies at the heart of all these. Endeavour to purify it with repentance and remorse for your excesses, and a determined resolution not to commit them in future. Cleanse your inner being in this way, for that is the place to be examined by the One you worship.

COVERING PRIVATE PARTS

You cover the private parts, i.e. prevent certain areas of the body from being exposed to human view. But what about the shameful areas of your inner being, those unworthy secrets of your soul, that are scrutinised only by your Lord, Great and Glorious is He? Be conscious of these faults. Be discreet about them, but realise that nothing can be hidden from the sight of God, Glorified is He. Only through repentance, shame and fear, will they be forgiven . . .

FACING THE QIBLA

As for facing the Qibla, in doing so, you turn your external face away from all other directions and toward the House of God, Exalted is He.* Do you then suppose you are not also required to turn your heart away from everything else, directing it towards God, Great and Glorious is He? What an absurd notion, since this is the whole object of the exercise!

The Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'When a man stands up to pray, directing his desire, his face and his heart towards God, Great and Glorious is He, he will come out of that Prayer as on the day his mother gave him birth.' 63

STANDING UPRIGHT

As for standing upright, it means holding oneself erect body and spirit - in the presence of God, Great and Glorious is He. Your head, which is the highest member of your body, ought to be bowed down as a reminder of the need to keep the heart meek and humble, free of haughtiness and pride . . .

INTENTION

When forming the intention, resolve to be responsive to God, Great and Glorious is He, by performing the Prayer in obedience to His command, by doing it properly, by avoiding things that invalidate or mar it, and by doing all this sincerely for the sake of God, Great and Glorious is He, in hope of His reward and in fear of His punishment, seeking His grace and favour by His leave . . .

TAKBIR

As for the takbir, + your heart must not gainsay the words on your tongue. If you feel in your heart that there is something greater than God, Glorified is He, though your words are true, God will attest that you are a liar . . .

OPENING INVOCATIONS

When making the opening invocation* be very wary of disguised polytheism in yourself. It was concerning those who worship for the sake of human as well as Divine approval that God, Exalted is He, revealed the Verse:

'Whoever hopes to meet his Lord, let him do righteous work and let no one share in the worship due to his Lord.' [al-Kahf, 18:110]

(Fa-man kana yarju liqa'a rabbihi fa-lya'mal 'amalan salihan wa-la yushrik bi-'ibadati rabbihi ahada.)

When you say: 'I take refuge with God from accursed Satan', you should be aware that the devil is your enemy and that he is waiting for an opportunity to alienate you from God,

Great and Glorious is He. Satan is envious of your ability to commune with God, and to prostrate yourself before Him . . .

RECITING THE QURAN

Where recitation of the Quran is concerned, we can distinguish three types of people: (a) those who move their tongues unconsciously; (b) those who pay conscious attention to the movement of the tongue, understanding the meaning while listening as if to a person outside themselves; this is the degree of 'those on the right'; (c) those who start from awareness of the meaning, then use the tongue to give expression to this inner consciousness. The tongue may act as interpreter for the inner feeling, or as its teacher. In the case of those nearest to God, the tongue is an interpreter ...

BOWING DOWN

According to 'Ikrima, God, Great and Glorious is He, is referring to the postures of standing, bowing, prostration and sitting, when He says: '. . . Who sees you when you stand up [to pray] and your movements among those who prostrate themselves.' [al- Shu'ara', 26:218-219]

(AlladM yaraka hlna taqumu wa-taqallubaka ff-lsajidm.)

Bowing (ruku') and prostration (sujud) are accompanied by a renewed affirmation of the supreme greatness of God, Glorified is He. . .

In bowing, you renew your submissiveness and humility, striving to refine your inner feeling through a fresh awareness of your own impotence and insignificance before the might and grandeur of your Lord. To confirm this, you seek the aid of your tongue, glorifying your Lord and testifying repeatedly to His supreme majesty, both outwardly and inwardly.

Then you rise from bowing, hopeful that He will be merciful towards you. To emphasise this hope within you, you say: 'sami'a-llahu liman hamidah,' meaning: 'God hears those who give thanks to Him.' Acknowledging the need to express gratitude, you immediately add: 'Rabbana laka-lhamd' - 'Grateful praise to You, our Lord !' To show the abundance of this gratitude, you may also say: 'mil'u-lsamawati wa-mil'u- r'ard' - 'as much as the heavens and earth contain.'

PROSTRATION

Then you go down in prostration. This is the highest level of submission, for you are bringing the most precious part of your body, namely your face, down to meet the most lowly of all things: the dust of the earth. If possible, you should make your prostration directly on the bare ground, this being more conducive to humility and a surer sign of self-abasement.

When you place yourself in this position of lowliness, you should be aware that you belong there. You are restoring the 1 branch to its root, for of dust you were created and to dust you shall return. At the same time you should renew your inner awareness of God's majesty, saying: 'Glory to my Lord Most High!' (Subhana rabbiya-l'a'la.) Repeat this to add confirmation, for saying it only once is not sufficiently emphatic.

When your inner feeling has clearly been refined, be confident in hoping for God's mercy. For His mercy quickly flows towards weakness and lowliness, not towards arrogance and vanity.

As you raise your head, say 'Allahu Akbar!' and ask for what you need, making the supplication of your choice, e.g. 'My Lord, forgive and have mercy! Overlook my faults, of which You are well aware!' (Rabbi-ghfir wa-rham wa-tajawaz 'amma ta'lam.)

You then make a second prostration, reinforcing your submissiveness.

SITTING AND TESTIFYING

When you sit up to make the testimony (tashahhud), sit decorously. Declare that all the prayers and good works you perform are for the sake of God, and that everything belongs to Him. Such is the meaning of al-tahlyyat. ... Be inwardly aware of the Prophet, on him be peace, and of his noble person, as you say: 'Peace be upon you, O Prophet, as well as God's mercy and blessings.' (Salamun 'alayka ayyuh'a-l'nabiyu wa-rahmatu-llahi wa-barakatuh.) Be sure that your salutation will reach him, and that he will return an even more perfect

greeting to you. Then salute yourself and all God's righteous servants. Then testify to the Unity of God, Exalted is He, and to the Mission of Muhammad, His Prophet, on him be peace. By repeating this two-fold testimony, you reaffirm the covenant of God, Glorified is He, and assure yourself of its protection.

END OF SUPPLICATION

At the end of your ritual Prayer, you should offer a traditional supplication, imploring and entreating with meekness and humility, confidently hoping to be heard. Let your supplication include your parents and the other believers.

SALUTATION

Finally, and with the intention of concluding your Prayer, address your salutation {salam} to the angels and to the others present. Feel a sense of gratitude to God, Glorified is He, for having enabled you to complete this act of worship. Imagine that you are saying farewell to this Prayer of yours, and that you may not live to see another like it . . .

STORIES OF THE HUMBLE, MAY GOD BE PLEASED WITH THEM, AND THEIR PRAYERS

It should be known that humility is the product of faith and the result of conviction, brought about by the majestic power of God, Great and Glorious is He. Those blessed with it are humble not only in their Prayers, but at other times also, even when they are on their own or when they need to use the toilet. For humility is caused by the awareness that we are always in the sight of God, by awareness of His majesty and by awareness of our human failings. It is by consciousness of these things that humility is engendered, so it is not confined to ritual Prayers.

There was once a man, we are told, who never held his head up to the sky in all of forty years; so great were his modesty and humility before God, Glorified is He.

Some people assumed that al-Rabi' ibn Khaytham must be blind, because he always lowered his head and kept his eyes half-closed. For twenty years he was a regular visitor to the home of Ibn Mas'ud. When the latter's maidservant saw him, she would say to her master: 'Your blind friend is here.' Ibn Mas'ud used to laugh when she said this. Whenever she went to answer the guest's knock at the door, she would see him ! with his head down and his eyes averted. Ibn Mas'ud would look at him and say, quoting from the Quran:

And give good tidings to the humble.' [al-Hajj, 22: 34]

(Wa-bashshiri-lmukhbitin.)

Then he would add: 'By God, if the Prophet, on him be peace, had seen you, he would have been so pleased with you!' (In one version of this story, the wording is 'he would have loved you,' and in another: 'he would have laughed.') One day, he was walking with Ibn Mas'ud when they passed the blacksmith's workshop. He fell in a faint at the sight of the bellows and the fire blazing in the furnace. Ibn Mas'ud sat with him till the time of Prayer, but he did not come round. He then carried him home, where he remained unconscious till twenty-four hours after having fainted, so missing all five Prayers. Ibn Mas'ud stayed close by him, saying: 'By God, this is real fear!'

Al-Rabi' used to say: 'When engaged in Prayer, I never pay attention to anything, except what I am saying and what is being said to me.'

'Amir ibn 'Abdullah was one of those who are humble in their Prayers. He would sometimes pray while his daughter was playing the tambourine and the women of the house were chattering freely, but he was quite insensitive to the noise and did not even hear it. They once asked him: 'Does anything come into your mind during the Prayer?' 'Yes,' said he, 'the thought that I am standing in the presence of God, Great and Glorious is He, and that I am bound for Paradise or for Hell.'

He was then asked: 'Do you get any worldly thoughts, as we do?' To this he replied: 'I would rather be made a butt for lances than get that sort of thing in my Prayer.' He was also in the habit of saying: 'Even if the veil was lifted from the unseen, my faith could not be more certain than it is now.'

Another of these characters was Muslim ibn Yasar , the one who did not notice the collapse of a column while he was praying in the Mosque.

One of these men had a gangrenous limb. Amputation was necessary, but it seemed impossible until someone said: 'He won't feel a thing while he is at Prayer.' The operation was, in fact, successfully performed during the Prayer.

Someone said: 'Prayer belongs to the Hereafter; to enter it is to leave this world.' Another was asked if he had any worldly thoughts during his Prayers. 'Neither in my Prayers nor at any other time,' said he. Yet another was asked: 'Do you remember anything during the Prayer?' He replied: 'Is anything dearer to me than the Prayer, that I should recall it while I am praying?'

Abul Darda', may God be pleased with him, used to say: 'The sensible thing is to attend to one's needs first, so as to have nothing on one's mind when approaching the Prayer.'

Some of them would keep their Prayers short, fearing the whisperings of the devil. We are told that, on a certain occasion, 'Ammar ibn Yasir finished his Prayer rather quickly. When someone commented on this, he said: 'Did you see me skip any of the essentials?' The answer was: 'No! 7 He then explained: 'I was forestalling the distraction of Satan. God's Messenger, on him be peace, said: "Though a man performs the whole Prayer, he may get no credit for half of it, or a third, a quarter, a fifth, a sixth or a tenth. A man gets credit only for that part of his Prayer of which he is conscious.'" 64

It is said that Talha and al-Zubayr were among a group of the Companions, may God be pleased with them, who were particularly noted for keeping their Prayers brief. They explained that they followed this practice in order to forestall the whisperings of Satan.

It is related that 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, may God be pleased with him, said from the pulpit: 'A man's whiskers may turn grey in Islam, without his having completed one Prayer for God, Exalted is He.' When the people asked him how this could be, he said: 'Because he never achieves perfect humility, submissiveness and devotion to God, Great and Glorious is He, in any of his Prayers.'

Abul Aliya was once asked about the words of God, Exalted is He: Those who are heedless of their Prayers.' [al-Ma'un, 107:5]

(Alladhina hum 'an salatihim sahun.)

He said: 'This refers to those who are so heedless in their Prayers that they do not know whether they have performed an even number of cycles or an odd one.' According to al-Hasan, it refers to those who heedlessly let the time for Prayer slip by. Others say: 'This is directed at those who are neither happy when they pray on time, nor sorry when they are late in praying. They see no virtue in promptness and no sin in delay.'

Said Jesus, on him be peace: 'God, Exalted is He, says: "Through obligatory duties My servant attains salvation. Through supererogatory devotions My servant draws close to Me."'

The Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'God, Exalted is He, says: "My servant does not achieve salvation except by fulfilling the duties I have set him ." ,6i

It is related that the Prophet, on him be peace, once omitted a verse from the part of the Quran he recited in the course of a ritual Prayer. As he was turning to leave, he said: 'What did I recite?' Nobody spoke, so he repeated the question to Ubayy ibn Ka'b, may God be pleased with him, who said: 'You recited such-and-such a Sura, omitting a particular verse. We are wondering whether it has been abrogated or taken out.' The Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'Good for you, Ubayy!'

Then he turned to the others and said: 'What are we to make of people who come for their Prayers, line up in their rows behind their Prophet, but do not know what he is reciting to them from the Book of their Lord? That is just how the Children of Israel behaved, so God, Great and Glorious is He, spoke to their Prophet through inspiration, saying: "Tell your people: 'You present your bodies before Me and you offer Me your tongues, but you keep your hearts from Me. What you are doing is futile'" 66

These stories and Traditions help to prove that the fundamental elements in ritual Prayer are humility and conscious awareness, and that merely going through the motions, in a state of heedlessness, has little value for the life hereafter. God knows best. We pray for His gracious help and guidance.





20

Zakat

Almsgiving

God, Exalted is He, has made Zakat, (Almsgiving) one of the pillars of Islam and has usually mentioned it immediately after the Prayer, saying, 'And perform Prayer and give Alms'.

The Prophet, upon him be peace, said: 'Islam rests on five things: to witness that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger, to perform Prayer, to give Alms .-..'. God, Exalted is He, has warned those who do not give Zakat with dire consequence, for He says: 'Those who amass gold and silver and do not spend them in the way of God - give them the glad tidings of a painful chastisement' [al-Tawbah, 9: 34]

Certain inward attitudes and duties are incumbent on those who seek, through payment of their Alms, the way that leads to the Hereafter:

I Understand the Purpose and Significance

To understand the necessity and significance of paying the Alms, how it represents a test of character, and why it has been made one of the fundamentals of Islam, even though it is a financial transaction and not a physical act of worship.

Three points deserve consideration here:

(a) TESTING THE DEGREE OF LOVE FOR GOD

To pronounce the two sentences of the Confession of Faith (Shahada) ('There is no god but God - Muhammad is God's Messenger') is obligatory as affirmation of the Divine Unity and testimony to the singleness of the One to Whom all worship is due. Complete fulfilment of this obligation requires that he who affirms the Divine Unity should direct his love to none but the One, the Unique, for love tolerates no partnership. There is little value in mere verbal affirmation.

The degree of love is tested only by separating the lover from other things he loves.

Now, worldly goods are an object of love in everybody's eyes, being the means by which they enjoy the benefits of this world; because of them they become attached to life and shy away from death, even though death leads to meeting the Beloved. The truth of our claim to love God is therefore put to the test, and we are asked to give up the wealth which is the darling apple of our eye.

That is why God, Exalted is He, said: 'God has bought from the believers their persons and their goods, Paradise being theirs for the price.' [al-Tawbah, 9:111]

(Inna-llaha-shtara mina-lmu'minina anfusahum wa-amwalahum bi-anna lahumu-ljanna.)

This concerns Jihad, the struggle in the way of God, which entails a readiness to sacrifice even life itself in longing to meet God, Great and Glorious is He. The renunciation of wealth is trivial by comparison.

Once this concept of testing the degree of love is understood to underlie the spending of wealth and material sacrifice, people fall into three groups in this respect:

Firstly, those who affirm the Divine Unity, fulfil their covenant and renounce all their worldly goods, setting aside neither pounds nor pence. They are unwilling to incur the

liability to pay the Alms; so much so that when one of them was asked the amount due on two hundred dirhams, he replied: 'For ordinary people the legal requirement is five dirhams, but we must give up everything. '

Thus Abu Bakr, may God be pleased with him, donated all his wealth, while 'Umar, may God be pleased with him, gave half of his. When the Prophet, upon him be peace, said to the latter: 'What have you kept for your family?' he replied: 'An equal amount.' And when he asked the same question of Abu Bakr, may God be pleased with him, he said: 'God and His Messenger.' The Prophet, upon him be peace, then said: 'The difference between you is the difference between your two answers.' 1 For Abu Bakr, the veracious, had borne himself out completely, keeping nothing back for himself but the Beloved, i.e. God and His Messenger.

Secondly, at a lower level are those who hold on to their goods, waiting for occasions of need and seasons of charity. Their object in saving up is to supply their own needs, without extravagance, and to devote what is left over to charitable purposes as the occasion may arise. Such people do not confine their giving to the prescribed amount of the Alms. One group of the Successors 2 (the generation following the Companions, may God be pleased with them) maintained the view that wealth is subject to other dues apart from the Zakat.

When al-Sha'bi was asked if this was the case, he replied: 'Yes, have you not heard the words of God, Great and Glorious is He: "[True piety means . . .] and giving away one's wealth, much as one loves it, to close relatives, orphans, the wayfarer and beggars, and for the emancipation of slaves ..."[al-Baqarah,2:177]?'

(Wa-ata-lmala 'ala hubbihi dhawi-lqurba wa-lyatama wa- lmasakina wa-bna-lsabHi wa-lsa'ilina wa-fi-lriqab.)

They cited the words of God, Great and Glorious is He: 'And spend from what We have provided them with.' [al-Baqarah, 2: 3]

(Wa-mimma razaqnahum yunfiqun.)

as well as His words, Exalted is He: 'And spend from that which We have provided you.' [al-Munafiqun, 63: 10]

(Wa-anfiq mimma razaqnakum.)

They maintained that these duties, far from being abrogated by the 'Verse of zakdt'* form part of the mutual obligations of all Muslims. In other words, whenever a well-to-do Muslim encounters one who is in need, it is incumbent upon him to relieve that need, over and above his payment of the Alms.

The correct legal opinion in this matter is that the relief of pressing need is a collective duty, resting on the Community as a whole, since a Muslim cannot be allowed to perish.

It may be argued that a well-to-do person is not obliged to pay for the relief of want except by way of a loan, and that no donation can be required of him once he has discharged his due by giving his Alms. It could also be argued that he is nevertheless required to make a donation and that lending is impermissible, i.e. it is not permissible to burden the poor with the acceptance of a loan. There is no unanimity on this question.

Thirdly, to resort to lending is to descend to the final level of ordinary people. Those who belong to this third group confine themselves to the bare fulfilment of duty, neither more nor less. This is the lowest degree, the limit to which all ordinary people confine themselves because of their miserliness, their attachment to money and the feebleness of their love of the Hereafter, As God, Exalted is He, said:

'If He were to ask your possessions of you, and press you to give most of them, you would be miserly.' [Muhammad, 47: 37]

(In yas'alkumuha fa-yuhfikum tabkhalu.)

What a difference between a servant whose property and person God has bought, with Paradise as the price, and one He does not even ask to give all of it because he is so miserly!

(b) ELIMINATION OF MISERLINESS

The Divine decree by which God, Glorified is He, bids His servants to expend their wealth, is also significant in respect of purging the habit of miserliness, which is one of the deadly sins. As the Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'Three are deadly: avarice indulged, passion pursued and self-conceit.' 3

And in the words of God, Exalted is He: 'Those who are shielded from their own greed, they are the ones who will prosper.' [al-Hashr, 59: 9]

(Wa-man yuqa shuhha nafsihi fa-ula'ika humu-Imufiihun.)

The habit of miserliness is only eliminated by making oneself accustomed to spending money, for to break an attachment one must force oneself away till a new habit is formed.

From this point of view, therefore, Zakat signifies purgation, in that he who pays the Alms is purged of the deadly evil of miserliness. The purity he acquires is in proportion to his outlay, to his delight in giving away and to his joy in spending for the sake of God, Exalted is He.

(c) EXPRESSION OF GRATITUDE

The third factor is gratitude for benefits received, for the servant is indebted to God, Great and Glorious is He, for, bounties both personal and material. Bodily acts of worship are an expression of gratitude for bodily blessings, while financial acts of worship express gratitude for material bounty.

How mean one must be to see a poor man in needy straits, and yet be unwilling to give up two-and-a-half or ten per cent of one's wealth in token of one's gratitude to God, Exalted is He, for sparing one the need to beg as others must.

2 Payment at Proper Time

The second duty concerns the time of payment. One of the good practices of religious people is to anticipate the moment when payment falls due, demonstrating their willingness to comply by bringing joy to the hearts of the poor, forestalling the obstacles time might place in the way of charitable action, aware that there are dangers in delay as the servant runs the risk of disobedience should he postpone beyond the appointed moment. Whenever the impulse to good arises from within, the opportunity must be grasped at once as heaven-sent. 'The believer's heart lies between two fingers of the All-merciful.' Yet how fickle is the heart! The Devil threatens poverty and bids us to commit atrocious and abominable deeds. Demonic suggestion follows hard on the heels of angelic inspiration.

One should therefore seize the opportunity and fix a definite month for giving the Alms (if one is used to paying it all at once.) One should endeavour to choose one of the most propitious times, resulting in extra closeness to God and compounding the value of the Zakat.

Such a favourable time would be the month of Muharram, since it is the first in the year and one of the Sacred Months; or Ramadan, for the Prophet, on him be peace, was the best of all creatures, and during Ramadan he was as unstinting as the breeze that blows. 4 Ramadan also enjoys the special virtue of the Night of Destiny, as well as being the month in which the Quran was sent down. Mujahid used to say: 'Do not say "Ramadan," for Ramadan is one of the Names of God, Exalted is He. Rather say: "the month of Ramadan."' Dhul Hi j ja is also one of the months of great merit; as well as being a Sacred Month, it is distinguished by the major Pilgrimage, the Hajj, and the Well-known Days (the first ten of the month) and the Numbered Days, which are the days of tashriq.

3 Give in Secret

The third duty is secrecy, for this is farthest removed from hypocritical display and reputation-seeking. Said the Prophet, on him be peace: 'The most meritorious form of Almsgiving is the effort to help a poor man, made in secret, by one who is himself of little means.' 5 According to one of the scholars: 'Three things are accounted among the treasures of righteousness, one of them being to give Alms in secret.' This saying has also been attributed to the Prophet, on him be peace. 6 The Prophet, on him be peace, also said: 'Let the servant do a good deed in secret and God will surely record it to his credit as a secret; if he reveals it, it will be transferred from the secret list and recorded among good works done openly; if he talks about it, it will be taken off both lists and recorded as hypocrisy.' 7 According to the well-attested Tradition: 'Seven will God shade on the day when there will be no shade but the shade of His Throne: one of them is a man who offers Alms without his left hand knowing what his right hand has given.' 8 In another Tradition: 'Secret Alms extinguish the anger of the Lord.' 9 God, Exalted is He, said: 'But if you hide it and give it to the poor, it is better for you.' [al-Baqarah, 2: 271]

(Wa-in tukhfuha wa-tu'tuha-lfuqara'a fa-huwa khayrun lakum.)

The advantage of secrecy is that it confers deliverance from the perils of hypocritical ostentation and reputation-seeking. As the Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'God does not accept from a braggart, a hypocrite or one who always looks for gratitude.' 10 He who talks about Almsgiving is seeking prestige, while he who gives for all the world to see is after public recognition; these pitfalls are avoided by secrecy and silence.

Some have taken such an extreme view of the merit of secrecy 'as to maintain that the recipient should not know the identity of the giver. Some used to slip their Alms into the hand of a blind man, while others would drop them in a poor man's path or in the place where he sat, so that he could see the gift without seeing the giver. Some would tuck their Alms in the poor man's clothes while he was sleeping; still others would convey them by way of a third party so as to hide the donor's identity, the intermediary being asked to keep the secret and charged not to disclose it.

Such measures were designed to extinguish the anger of the Lord, Glorified is He, and as a precaution against hypocrisy and reputation-seeking. Whenever it is inevitable that at least one person should be in the know, it is preferable to entrust the Alms to an agent for delivery to the needy beneficiary, who should not be known to his benefactor; for knowing the beneficiary carries the double danger of ostentation and expectation of gratitude, whereas knowing the intermediary carries the former alone.

Whenever fame is the donor's objective, his work will be in vain, since the purpose of Almsgiving is to eliminate miserliness and to weaken the love of wealth. But the love of status has a stronger hold over the soul than the love of wealth, and both of them have deadly consequences in the Hereafter. In the tomb, while the attribute of miserliness will assume, as it were, the form of a stinging scorpion, the attribute of ostentatiousness will turn into a viper. We are bidden to render them both weak or to kill them, so as to ward off their mischief or at least reduce it. But whenever we seek recognition and renown it is just like reinforcing the viper at the scorpion's expense: as the scorpion gets weaker so does the snake get stronger. Things would have been better left as they were. The way to reinforce those attributes is to act in accordance with their demands, while the way to reduce their power is to combat and oppose them and to act counter to their demands. So what is the use of going against miserly impulses only to yield to hypocritical motives, weakening the lesser only to reinforce the more powerful?

4 Give Openly

The fourth duty, when one knows that such conduct will tend to encourage others to follow suit, is to let one's giving be seen. In doing so, however, one must be inwardly on guard against hypocritical motives.* God, Great and Glorious is He, has said: 'If you make your Almsgiving public, it is well . . .' [al-Baqarah, 2: 271]

(In tubdu-lsadaqati fa-ni'imma-hl.)

That is, in cases where display is called for, either to set a good example or because a beggar has made his request in public. In the latter instance it is not proper to withhold Alms for fear of publicity; rather should one give while making every effort to be inwardly on guard against hypocrisy. This is because, apart from the expectation of gratitude and the risk of hypocrisy, there is a third danger in visible Almsgiving, namely that of offending a poor man's dignity. It may be hurtful to him to be seen to be needy. But someone who begs in public is bringing the disgrace upon himself; there is therefore no sense in being wary .

Consider similar cases: It is forbidden to expose a person's vice so long as he keeps it private, and it is equally prohibited to spy on him and gossip about it. A flagrant offender, on the other hand, has only himself to blame when he suffers the penalty of public disgrace. Of like import are the words of the Prophet, on him be peace: 'He who casts off the garment of shame has no cause to complain of slander . " '

God, Exalted is He, said: 'And spend of that which We provide for them, in secret and in public.' [al-Ra'd, 13: 22]

(Wa-anfaqu mimma razaqnahum sirran wa-'alaniya.)

He commends giving in public also, because this has the advantage of encouraging others. His servant should therefore take careful stock, weighing this benefit against the risks involved, for the situation varies from case to case and from one individual to another. For certain people under certain conditions open giving is preferable. To one who is aware of the pros and cons, and whose vision is unclouded by desire, what is right and proper in any given case will be readily apparent.

5 Avoid Taunting and Hurting

The fifth duty is not to invalidate one's Alms through taunting and hurting. As God, Exalted is He, said: 'Do not make your Almsgiving void by taunting and hurting.' [al-Baqarah, 2: 264]

(La tubtilu sadaqatikum bi-lmanni waTadha.)

There is some disagreement as to the true meaning of taunting and hurting. According to some, taunting is reminding a person of a favour, while hurt lies in making it commonly

known. Said Sufyan: 'Anyone who taunts invalidates his Alms.' When they asked him the nature of taunting, he replied: 'Reminding him of the favour and talking about it.' According to others taunting is to exploit a person in return for a gift, while hurt lies in making him feel ashamed of his poverty. Still others say that taunting means making one's gift an excuse for arrogant behaviour, while hurt is caused by scolding and rebuking a man for begging.

The Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'God does not accept the Alms of a taunter. My personal opinion is that taunting has its root and origin in the conditions and qualities of the heart, from which it then ramifies into external manifestations on the tongue and other organs. It stems from seeing oneself as the bountiful benefactor, whereas one ought really to look upon the poor person as one's own benefactor, by virtue of the fact that he accepts what one owes to God, Great and Glorious is He^ and allows one to attain purity and salvation from the Fire. Had he not accepted, one would have remained under obligation. One is therefore indebted to the poor person inasmuch as he makes the palm of his hand a surrogate for God, Great and Glorious is He, to collect what is due to Him. God's Messenger, on him be peace, said: 'Alms fall into the hand of God, Great and Glorious is He, before they reach the hand of the beggar.'³

One should therefore realise that giving Alms is actually paying God, Great and Glorious is He, what is due, while the poor man is actually receiving his sustenance from God, Exalted is He, to whom it has first passed. Suppose a man owed someone a debt, and that he transferred it to a servant totally dependent on him for his livelihood; that servant would be a silly fool to believe that the creditor was obliged to him for making the repayment. The true benefactor would be the man responsible for his livelihood. As for him, he is merely discharging a liability incurred in getting what he wanted; since he is pursuing his own interests, why should he think he is doing someone else a favour?

Anyone who grasps the significance of the three points we mentioned earlier, while discussing the purpose and importance of the Zakat - or even one of them - must realise that he is a benefactor only to himself, through expending his wealth either to demonstrate his love of God, Exalted is He, or to purge himself of the vice of miserliness, or to give thanks for the blessing of wealth in the hope of receiving more.

However that may be, there is no problem between the donor and the poor recipient until the former comes to regard himself as a benefactor. But should he be so foolish as to see himself in this light, he then begins to manifest all the symptoms of taunting we have described; talking about his donation and advertising it, seeking recompense in the form of gratitude, good wishes, service, respect and veneration, attention to his interests, deferential treatment and subservience in all matters. All these things are the fruits of taunting, the inner nature of which we spoke about earlier.

As for hurtfulness, its outward manifestations are scolding, derision, coarseness of speech, frowning, humiliation by exposure, and every type of ridicule. Its inner source is twofold: (i) reluctance to part with money and the painfulness of the experience, which inevitably causes bad temper, and (ii) regarding oneself as better than the poor man and considering him inferior by reason of his need. Both attitudes stem from ignorance.

Reluctance to part with money is stupidity, for one must be stupid indeed to resent laying out one coin in exchange for the equivalent of a thousand. The outlay is known to be made in the hope of earning the approval of God, Great and Glorious is He, and reward in the abode of the Hereafter, a nobler aim than to spend or to have spent either to purge oneself of the vice of greed or to give thanks in the hope of receiving more. However one views it, there can be no justification for reluctance.

As for the supercilious attitude, this is also a sign of ignorance. One who recognised the superiority of poverty over wealth, and who was aware of the danger to the rich, would surely not despise the poor; rather would he seek their blessing and wish he were at their level. The righteous among the rich will enter Paradise five hundred years later than the poor. That is why the Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'By Lord of the Ka'ba, they are the greatest losers.' When Abu Dharr asked: 'Who are they?' he replied: 'Those with the most wealth . . .' 14 Besides, how could one despise the poor, when God, Exalted is He, has made them a source of profit? One strives to acquire wealth and increase it, and tries to keep as much of it as one needs. Then one is obliged to hand over to the poor in accordance with their needs, withholding any surplus that would be detrimental. Thus the rich are gainfully employed in providing for the poor, from whom they are distinguished only by having wrongs to settle, problems to cope with and surpluses to take care of until they die, when their enemies will devour what they leave behind.

When reluctance is transformed and gives way to joy and gladness at being helped by God, Exalted is He, to pay one's due and to discharge one's obligation through its acceptance by the poor, there is then no more hurtfulness with its scolding and frowning; instead, there is happiness, appreciation and gratitude.

Although we have explained the source of taunting and hurting, you may well say: 'Seeing oneself in the role of benefactor is somewhat vague. Is there some indicator, some test to apply to the heart in order to make sure one is not regarding oneself as a benefactor?' Yes, there is indeed a precise and unambiguous indicator. Suppose, for instance, that a poor man committed an offence against you, or teamed up with an enemy of yours. Would your disapproval and antipathy be all the greater if you had previously given Alms to the man? If the answer is yes, then your Almsgiving was not untainted by resentment, since it has caused you to expect more of him than you would otherwise have done.

This too may seem vague. You may say: 'Nobody's heart is detached from that sort of thing, so what is the remedy for it?' Well, it does have a remedy, both internally and externally. The internal remedy is to become conscious of the truths we have already mentioned: understanding the necessity of the Almsgiving and coming to see that the beneficiary is the real benefactor, in that by his acceptance he enables us to purge ourselves.

As for the external remedy, this consists of some particular good deeds performed by the one who is prone to taunting, for well-intentioned actions have a good influence on the heart. This is why some people used to place their Alms in front of a poor man and stand before him, begging him to accept them, so that they assumed the role of beggars and felt how they would hate to be rejected. Others used to spread their palms, so that the poor man's hand would be uppermost when he took from them. Whenever 'Aisha and Umm Salama, may God be pleased with them, sent a gift to a poor person by messenger, they would tell the messenger to memorise the person's good wishes, then they would wish him the same, saying: 'This in return for that, so that our Almsgiving may be pure.' Such people did not look for good wishes, for these represent a kind of compensation, and so they matched each wish with its equal. 'Umar ibn al-Khattab followed the same practice, as did his son 'Abdullah, may God be pleased with them both. Spiritual specialists in purifying hearts used to treat their hearts this way.

Externally, there is no remedy apart from these good deeds, signifying self-abasement, humility and appreciativeness, while internally the cure lies in the awareness and understanding we have mentioned. It is a matter of action on the one hand, of knowledge on the other. There is no treatment for the heart except the medicine of knowledge and action.

This condition applies to Almsgiving just as humility does to Prayer. The proof is to be found in the words of the Prophet, on him be peace: 'A man profits from his Prayer only to the extent that he does it consciously;' 5 and: 'God does not accept the Alms of a taunter;' 16 as well as in the words of God, Great and Glorious is He : 'Do not make your Almsgiving void by taunting and hurting.' [al-Baqarah, 2: 264]

6 Adopt Humility

The sixth duty is to think little of one's donation, for to regard it highly is to invite that sanctimonious pride which is one of the deadly sins, making good deeds worthless. The Exalted One said: 'And on the battle-day of al-Hunayn, when you were so proud of your numerical strength, it helped you not at all.' [al-Tawbah, 9:25]

(Wa-yawma hunaynin idh a'jabatkum kathratukum fa- lam tughni 'ankum shay 'a.)

It is also said that whenever an act of obedience is belittled, it is magnified in the sight of God, Great and Glorious is He, while a sin considered serious appears small in His eyes. Another saying has it that three things are necessary to make a kindness complete: thinking little of it, doing it promptly, and keeping it out of sight.

To make much of a gift is not the same as taunting and hurting, however. A man who spent his money on the construction of a Mosque or hospice might well think it something to boast of, but taunting and hurting would be out of the question. Sanctimonious pride and self-importance do tend to infect all acts of worship, and their antidote is knowledge and action.

As for knowledge, it must be recognised that ten or two- and-a-half per cent* is a tiny fraction, and that to pay only this is to content oneself with the least generous level of expense, as we have explained above. This is something to be ashamed of rather than to boast about. Even if one rose to the highest level, disbursing all or most of one's wealth, one should still reflect on where it came from in the first place, and for what purpose it is being spent. For all wealth belongs to God, Great and Glorious is He. It is to Him one

should be grateful for being given it and being enabled to spend it, so why pride oneself on spending for the sake of God, Exalted and Glorified is He, what is actually His property all along? And, if one's situation is such that one must look to the Hereafter, spending for the sake of spiritual reward, why boast of giving what one expects to receive many times over?

As for action, one's giving should be done with a sense of shame at one's meanness in holding back the rest of one's wealth from God, Great and Glorious is He. One's demeanour should be humble and abashed, like that of someone who is asked to hand back a deposit but returns only part of it and holds on to the rest. For all wealth belongs to God, Great and Glorious is He, and He would prefer to see us give all we possess. If He has not commanded His servants to do so, it is only because that would be too hard on them by reason of their greed. As God, Great and Glorious is He, has said: 'Were He to press you to give all of it, you would be miserly.' [Muhammad, 47: 37]

7 Give the Best and the Dearest

The seventh duty is to select from one's wealth what is best and dearest to one - the finest and most excellent part - for God, Exalted is He, is Good and accepts only what is good. If the offering has been acquired by dubious means, it may not strictly belong to the donor and will then be disqualified. According to the Tradition reported by Aban on the authority of Anas ibn Malik: 'Blessed is the servant who spends out of wealth he has earned without sin.' 7 Not to make the offering from the best one has is to be guilty of bad manners, since it means that one is keeping the best for oneself, for one's servant or for one's family, and so preferring others over God, Great and Glorious is He. To treat a guest in this fashion, offering him the worst food in the house, would be sure to annoy him.

That is to look at it from the standpoint of God, Great and Glorious is He. If we look to ourselves and to reward in the Hereafter, no sane person is going to put others before himself. Whatever we possess, we may either give it in Alms and so make it truly ours to keep, or consume it for some immediate purpose and say goodbye to it forever. But it is unreasonable to concentrate solely on the present, neglecting to lay by for the future. God, Exalted is He, said: 'You who believe, spend from the good things you have earned, and of what we have produced for you from the earth, and do not choose the bad part to donate when you would not take it yourselves without turning your noses up at it.' [al-Baqarah, 2: 267]

(Ya ayyuha-lladhlina amanu anfiqum min tayyibati ma kasabtum wa-mimma akhrajna lakum mina-r'ardi wa-la tayammamu-lkhabltha minhu tunfiquna wa-iastum bi- akhidhlhi ilia an tughmidu fih.)

That is to say, you would accept it only reluctantly and with a feeling of shame, so do not select it for your Lord.

According to the Tradition: 'A single coin may overtake a hundred thousand.' 8 This happens when a person's offering represents the best and finest part of his wealth, and is made in a spirit of pleasure and happiness in giving. Were he to offer a hundred thousand times as much, but out of the part of his fortune he disliked, that would only go to show that he would not offer to God, Great and Glorious is He, anything he was fond of. That is why God, Exalted is He, finds fault with people who set aside for Him what they themselves dislike.

He said, Exalted is He: 'They set aside for God what they themselves dislike, and their tongues expound the lie that the better portion will be theirs. No ... ' [al-Nahl, 16: 62]

(Wa-yaj'aluna lillahi ma yakrahuna wa-tasifu alsinatuhumu-lkadhiba anna lahumu-lhusna la.)

Some Quran-reciters pause at this negation, stressing the falsehood of what those people say, before continuing with: '... doubt about it: theirs is the Fire.'

(. . . jarama anna lahumu-Inar.)

That is, they have earned the Fire by setting aside for God what they themselves dislike.

8 Seek the Worthy and Deserving

The eighth duty is to seek out a truly worthy recipient for one's offering (sadaqa), rather than be content with just anybody who happens to fall within the eight categories of legally qualified beneficiaries. For among those generally eligible there are some with special qualities. Attention should be paid to these special qualities, which are six in number:

Firstly, one should seek out those pious people who have renounced the world and devoted themselves exclusively to the business of the Hereafter. The Prophet, on him be peace, said : 'Partake of no food but that of a pious man ; and let none

but the pious partake of your own." 9 The reason for this is that your food will support the pious person in his piety; by helping him, you will become a partner in his worship. The Prophet, on him be peace, also said: 'Offer your food to the pious, and favour the believers with your kindness.' 20 Another version has the words: 'Treat to your food those whom you love in God, Exalted is He.' 21

A certain scholar used to make a point of feeding poor Sufis to the exclusion of others. When it was put to him that he ought rather to distribute his charity among the poor in general, he replied: 'No,- these are people entirely devoted to God, Glorified is He. If smitten with destitution, one of them might be distracted, so to revive one man's devotion to God, Great and Glorious is He, is dearer to me than giving to a thousand of those whose sole concern is this world.' These words were related to al-Junayd, who expressed his approval and said: 'This man is one of the saints of God, Exalted is He.' He then went on to say: 'It is a long time since I heard better words than these.' It was later reported that this man had fallen upon hard times and had decided to close up his shop, so al-Junayd sent him some money and said: 'Take this as your capital and keep your shop open; commerce is surely not harmful to men like you.' This man was a grocer who used to serve the poor without charging them anything.

Secondly, the recipient should be chosen from among the people of learning, to support him in his quest for knowledge. Learning is the noblest form of worship, so long as it is based on right intention. Ibn al-Mubarak used to address his charity exclusively to people of learning. 'I know of no rank, after that of Prophethood, superior in merit to the rank of the learned. If one of them became preoccupied with his needs he would not be free to devote himself to knowledge and concentrate on study. It is therefore better to give them the freedom to pursue learning.

Thirdly, the recipient should be sincere in his piety and exclusive worship and devotion to God alone. This singleness of worship and devotion (Tawhid) is apparent when, on accepting a gift, he offers praise and thanks to God, Great and Glorious is He, regarding Him as the source of the blessing rather than any intermediary. Such a man is truly grateful to God, Glorified is He, recognising that all blessings flow from Him. Luqman said, in his testament to his son: 'Set no-one as benefactor between yourself and God, but count the favours you receive from others as a liability.'

If anyone gives thanks to other than God, Glorified is He, it is as if he does not know the true Benefactor and does not realise that the intermediary is under compulsion, subject to the will of God, Great and Glorious is He, Who has endowed him with motivation and enabled him to act. The intermediary is therefore under compulsion to give; he could not choose to do otherwise after God, Great and Glorious is He, had instilled in his heart that his well-being both spiritual and worldly depended on his acting. When the impulse becomes powerful it demands a resolute response; it becomes irresistible and brooks no hesitation. It is God, Great and Glorious is He, Who creates these impulses and arouses them to action. It is He Who strips them of weakness and vacillation, compelling the faculties to respond to their demands. No-one conscious of this could pay attention except to the Cause of all causes.

Such an awareness is more valuable to the giver than the praise and thanks he might receive from others, for that would be mostly useless lip-service, whereas the help extended to this truly dedicated servant of God will not be wasted. As for those who lavish praise and good wishes in return for a gift, they may find fault when they are not satisfied and utter curses when they are disappointed, though cases vary.

It is related that the Prophet, on him be peace, once sent an offering to a certain man, telling the messenger to remember anything he might say. This is what the man said on receiving the gift: 'The praise belongs to God, Who neither forgets those who remember Him nor neglects those who thank Him.' Then he added: 'O God, You have not forgotten so-and-so (meaning himself), so let him not forget You.' When news of this reached God's Messenger, on him be peace, he said in delight: 'I knew he would say that.'" See how this man confined his attention to God alone.

The Prophet, on him be peace, once said to a man: 'Repent!' The man said: 'I repent to God alone; I do not repent to Muhammad.' To this the Prophet, on him be peace, replied: 'The right has been acknowledged where it is due.' 23

When it was Divinely revealed that 'A'isha, may God be pleased with her, was innocent of the slanderous accusations levelled at her in the Episode of the Lie, Abu Bakr, may God be pleased with him, told his daughter: 'Get up and kiss the head of God's Messenger, God bless him and give him peace.' But she said: 'By God, I shall not do so! I shall give thanks to none but God.' The Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'Leave her alone, Abu Bakr.' 24 Ac-

according to another version: ' 'Aisha, may God be pleased with her, said to Abu Bakr, may God be pleased with him: "The praise is God's, not yours nor that of your friend."* God's Messenger, on him be peace, did not object to what she had said, although it was by his tongue that the Divine revelation had reached her.

To see things as emanating from any source but God, Glorified is He, is the mark of the unbelievers. God, Exalted is He, has said:

'And when God alone is mentioned, then contract with aversion the hearts of those who do not believe in the Hereafter, but when those apart from Him are mentioned, see how they rejoice.' [al-Zumar, 39: 45]

(Wa-idha dhukira-llahu wahdahu-shma'azzat qulubu- lladhlina la yu'minuna bi-r'akhirati wa-idha dhukira- lladhina min dunihi idhahum yastabshirun.)

If someone has not inwardly purified himself of seeing the intermediaries except for what they really are, it is as if his secret soul is still attached to a concealed polytheism. He should therefore devote himself to God, Glorified is He, to purify his affirmation of Divine Unity from the taints and stains of associating others with Him.

Fourthly, the recipient should be a person who has remained anonymous and kept his need to himself, not being given to fuss and complaint; or one of those magnanimous people who, though fortune has departed, still remain unaffected and preserve their high standards. As God, Exalted is He, has said:

'The ignorant man accounts them rich because of their restraint, but you shall know them by their mark - they do not beg of men importunately.' [al-Baqarah, 2: 273]

(Yahsabuhumu-ljahilu aghniya'a mina-Ita'affufi ta'rifu- hum bi-simahum la yas'aluna-lnasa ilhafa.)

In other words, they do not make a nuisance of themselves by begging, for they are rich in their certainty and proud in their fortitude. Such men should be sought out by thorough investigation of the religious people in each neighbourhood, and by looking deeply into the circumstances of good and decent people, since the reward for addressing charity to them is many times greater than for spending on those who are vociferous in their begging.

Fifthly, the recipient should be someone saddled with a large family, or else disabled by illness or some other cause, so as to come under the import of the words of God, Great and Glorious is He: 'For the poor who are restrained in God's cause.' [al- Baqarah, 2:

(Lil-fuqara'i-Iladhina uhsiru fi sabili-llah.)

In other words, they are held in confinement on the way of the Hereafter by reason of family responsibilities, hardship or psychological problems. * They 'cannot travel about the earth' [2: 273] because their wings are clipped and their limbs are tied. This is why 'Umar, may God be pleased with him, used to give the household of the Prophet, on him be peace, a flock of sheep - not fewer than ten - while the Prophet himself, on him be peace, would suit his gift to the size of the family." 'Umar, may God be pleased with him, was once asked about the toughest trial and his answer was: 'A big family and little money.'

Sixthly, the recipient should be a close relative, whether paternal or maternal. The offering will then serve the additional purpose of strengthening ties of kinship, the reward for which is incalculable. 'All, may God be pleased with him, once said: To present one of my brothers with a single coin is dearer to me than giving twenty in Alms, while to present him with twenty is dearer to me than giving a hundred in Alms, and to present him with a hundred is dearer to me than emancipating a slave.' Friends and fellows in a good cause should be preferred over mere acquaintances, just as relatives are put before strangers.

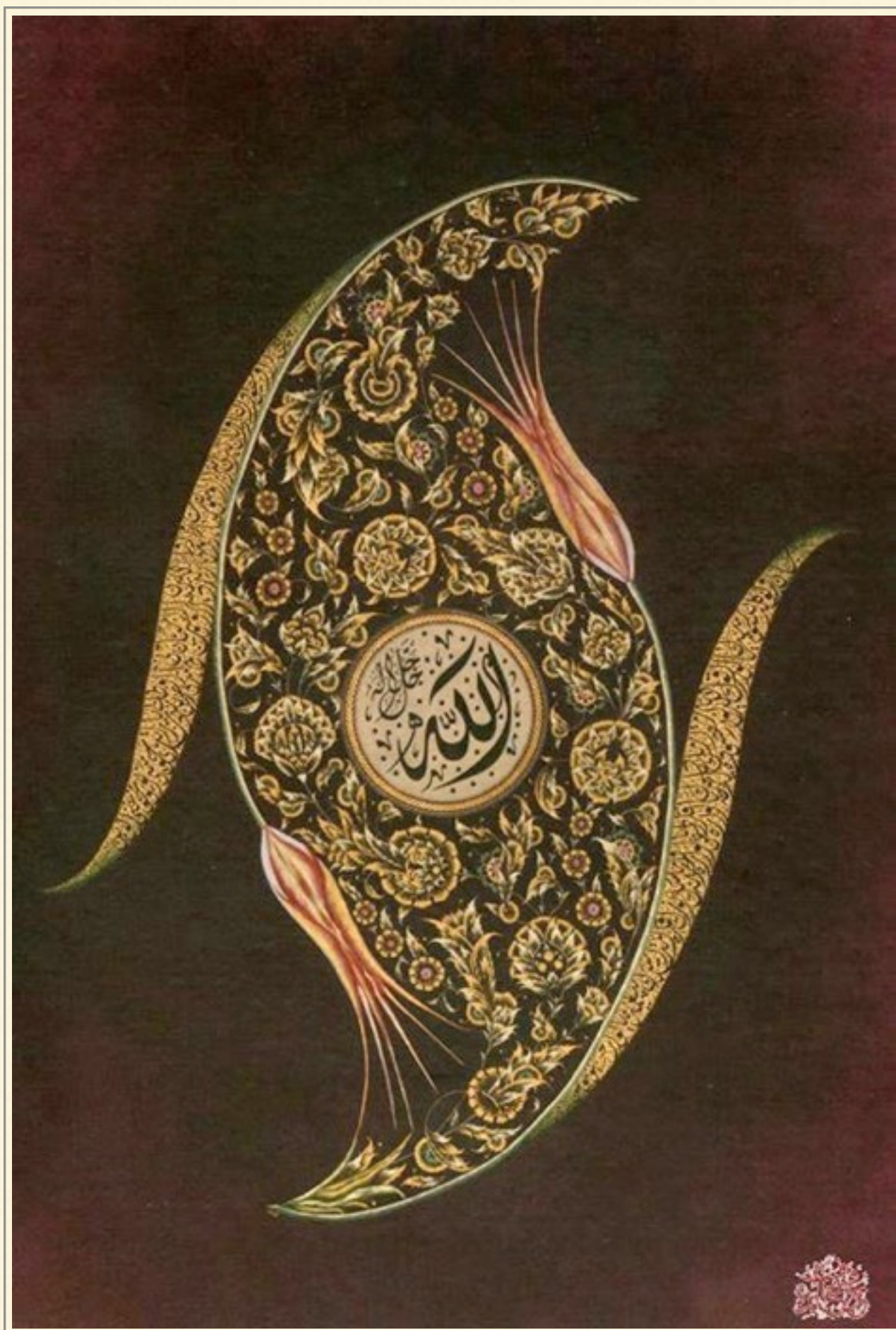
Conclusion

Each of these fine points should therefore be taken into consideration, for they represent the desired qualities. Within each quality there are further gradations, so one ought to seek the highest. If anyone can be found in whom all these qualities are combined, that is the greatest treasure and the supreme prize. If one does one's best and succeeds, one gets a double reward, but even if one fails there is still a single reward for the effort.

One of the two rewards is instant purging of oneself from the attribute of greed, as well as the confirmation in one's heart of the love of God, Great and Glorious is He, and the endeavour to obey Him. These are the qualities that grow even stronger in the heart, making it yearn to meet God, Great and Glorious is He.

The second reward is the benefit derived from the prayers and aspirations of the recipient, for the hearts of the righteous are efficacious both immediately and in the long term. If

one succeeds, therefore, both rewards accrue, while if one fails the first is achieved but not the second. Here, as in other instances, the reward for successful endeavour is twofold. But God knows best!





21

Fasting

Fasting

Three Grades

It should be known that there are three grades of Fasting: ordinary, special and extra-special.

Ordinary Fasting means abstaining from food, drink and sexual satisfaction.

Special Fasting means keeping one's ears, eyes, tongue, hands and feet - and all other organs - free from sin.

Extra-special Fasting means fasting of the heart from unworthy concerns and worldly thoughts, in total disregard of everything but God, Great and Glorious is He. This kind of

Fast is broken by thinking of anything other than God, Great and Glorious is He, and the Hereafter; it is broken by thinking of worldly matters, except for those conducive to religious ends, since these constitute provision for the Hereafter and are not of this lower world. Those versed in the spiritual life of the heart have even said that a sin is re-

corded against one who concerns himself all day with arrangements for breaking his Fast. Such anxiety stems from lack of trust in the bounty of God, Great and Glorious is He, and from lack of certain faith in His promised sustenance.

To this third degree belong the Prophets, the true saints and the intimates of God. It does not lend itself to detailed examination in words, as its true nature is better revealed in action. It consists in utmost dedication to God, Great and Glorious is He, to the neglect of everything other than God, Exalted is He. It is bound up with the significance of His words: 'Say: "Allah!" then leave them to their idle prattling ' [al-An'am,6:91]

(Quli-llahu thumma dharhum fi khawdihim yal'abun.)

Inward Requirements

As for Special Fasting, this is the kind practised by the righteous. It means keeping all one's organs free from sin and six things are required for its accomplishment:

1 SEE NOT WHAT DISPLEASES GOD

A chaste regard, restrained from viewing anything that is blameworthy or reprehensible, or that distracts the heart and diverts it from the remembrance of God, Great and Glorious is He.. Said the Prophet, on him be peace: 'The furtive glance is one of the poisoned arrows of Satan, on him be God's curse Whoever forsakes it for fear of God will receive from Him, Great and Glorious is He, a faith the sweetness of which he will find within his heart.'

Jabir relates from Anas that God's Messenger, on him be peace, said: 'Five things break a man's Fast: lying, backbiting, scandalmongering, perjury and a lustful gaze.' 2

2 SPEAK NOT...

Guarding one's tongue from twaddle, lying, backbiting scandalmongering, obscenity, rudeness, wrangling and controversy; making it observe silence and occupying it with remembrance of God, Great and Glorious is He, and with recitation of the Quran. This is the fasting of the tongue. Said Sufyan: 'Backbiting vitiates the Fast.' 3 Layth quotes Muiahid as saying: 'Two habits vitiate Fasting: backbiting and telling

The Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'Fasting is a shield- so when one of you is Fasting he should not use foul or foolish talk. If someone attacks him or insults him, let him say "I am Fasting, I am Fasting!"' 4

According to Tradition: 'Two women were Fasting during the time of God's Messenger, on him be peace. They were so fatigued towards the end of the day, from hunger and thirst, that they were on the verge of collapsing. They therefore sent a message to God's Messenger, on him be peace, requesting permission to break their Fast. In response, the Prophet, on him be peace, sent them a bowl and said: "Tell them to vomit into it what they have eaten." One of them vomited and half filled the bowl with fresh blood and tender meat, while the other brought up the same so that they filled it between them.

The onlookers were astonished. Then the Prophet, on him be peace, said: "These two women have been Fasting from what God made lawful to them, and have broken their Fast on what God, Exalted is He, made unlawful to them. They sat together and indulged in backbiting, and here is the flesh of the people they maligned!" s

3 HEAR NOT...

Closing one's ears to everything reprehensible; for everything unlawful to utter is likewise unlawful to listen to. That is why God, Great and Glorious is He, equated the eaves-dropper with the profiteer, in His words, Exalted is He: 'Listeners to falsehood, consumers of illicit gain.' [al-Ma'idah,5:42]

(Samma'una li-lkadhibi 'akkaluna li-lsuht.)

God, Great and Glorious is He, also said: 'Why do their rabbis and priests not forbid them to utter sin and consume unlawful profit?' [al-Ma'idah, 5: 63]

(Law-la yanhahumu-lrabbaniyuna wa-I'ahbaru 'an qawlihimu-rithma wa-'aklihimu-lsuht.)

Silence in the face of backbiting is therefore unlawful. God, Exalted is He, said: 'You are then just like them.' [al-Nisa', 4: 140] That is why the Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'The backbiter and his listener are copartners in sin.' 6

4 DO NOT...

Keeping all other limbs and organs away from sin: the hands and feet from reprehensible deeds, and the stomach from questionable food at the time for breaking Fast. It is meaningless to Fast - to abstain from lawful food - only to break one's Fast on what is unlawful. A man who Fasts like this may be compared to one who builds a castle but demolishes a city. Lawful food is injurious in quantity not in quality, so Fasting is to reduce the former. A person might well give up excessive use of medicine, from fear of ill effects, but he would be a fool to switch to taking poison. The unlawful is a poison deadly to religion, while the lawful is a medicine, beneficial in small doses but harmful in excess. The object of Fasting is to induce moderation. Said the Prophet, on him be peace: 'How many of those who Fast get nothing from it but hunger and thirst!' ⁷ This has been taken to mean those who break their Fast on unlawful food. Some say it refers to those who abstain from lawful food, but break their Fast on human flesh through backbiting, which is unlawful. Others consider it an allusion to those who do not guard their organs from sin.

5 AVOID OVEREATING

Not to over-indulge in lawful food at the time of breaking Fast, to the point of stuffing one's belly. There is no receptacle more odious to God, Great and Glorious is He, than a belly stuffed full with lawful food. Of what use is the Fast as a means of conquering God's enemy and abating appetite, if at the time of breaking it one not only makes up for all one has missed during the daytime, but perhaps also indulges in a variety of extra foods? It has even become the custom to stock up for Ramadan with all kinds of foodstuffs, so that more is consumed during that time than in the course of several other months put together. It is well known that the object of Fasting is to experience hunger and to check desire, in order to reinforce the soul in piety. If the stomach is starved from early morning till evening, so that its appetite is aroused and its craving intensified, and it is then offered delicacies and allowed to eat its fill, its taste for pleasure is increased and its force exaggerated; passions are activated which would have lain dormant under normal conditions.

The spirit and secret nature of Fasting is to weaken the forces which are Satan's means of leading us back to evil. It is therefore essential to cut down one's intake to what one would consume on a normal night, when not Fasting, No benefit is derived from the Fast if one consumes as much as one would usually take during the day and night combined.

Moreover, one of the proprieties consists in taking little sleep during the daytime, so that one feels the hunger and thirst and becomes conscious of the weakening of one's powers, with the consequent purification of the heart .

One should let a certain degree of weakness carry over into the night, making it easier to perform the night Prayers (tahajjud) and to recite the litanies (awrad). It may then be that Satan will not hover around one's heart, and that one will behold the Kingdom of Heaven. The Night of Destiny represents the night on which something of this Kingdom is revealed. This is what is meant by the words of God, Exalted is He:

'We surely revealed it on the Night of Power.' [al-Qadr, 97:1]

(Inna anzalnahu fi laylati-lqadr.)

Anyone who puts a bag of food between his heart and his breast becomes blind to this revelation. Nor is keeping the stomach empty sufficient to remove the veil, unless one also empties the mind of everything but God, Great and Glorious is He. That is the entire matter, and the starting point of it all is cutting down on food.

6 LOOK TO GOD WITH FEAR AND HOPE

After the Fast has been broken, the heart should swing like a pendulum between fear and hope. For one does not know if one's Fast will be accepted, so that one will find favour with God, or whether it will be rejected, leaving one among those He abhors. This is how one should be at the end of any act of worship one performs.

It is related of al-Hasan ibn Abi Hasan al-Basri that he once passed by a group of people who were laughing merrily. He said: 'God, Great and Glorious is He, has made the month of Ramadan a racecourse, on which His creatures compete in His worship. Some have come in first and won, while others have lagged behind and lost. It is absolutely amazing to find anybody laughing and playing about on the day when success attends the victors, and failure the wastrels. By God, if the veil were lifted off, the doer of good would surely be preoccupied with his good works and the evildoer with his evil deeds.' In other words, the man whose Fast has been accepted will be too full of joy to indulge in idle sport, while for one who has suffered rejection laughter will be precluded by remorse.

Of al-Ahnaf ibn Qays it is reported that he was once told: 'You are an aged elder; Fasting would enfeeble you.' But he replied: 'By this I am making ready for a long journey.'

Obedience to God, Glorified is He, is easier to endure than His punishment.' Such are the inwardly significant meanings of Fasting.

Importance of Observing Inward Aspects

Now you may say: 'Suppose someone confines himself to curbing his appetite for food and drink and his sexual desire, to the neglect of these inward aspects. According to the experts in jurisprudence his Fast is valid. So what are we to make of this?'

You must realise that those versed in the external requirements of the law base their formal stipulations on evidence less cogent than the proofs we have advanced in support of these internal prerequisites, especially those relating to backbiting and the like. However, scholars of external legality are concerned only with such obligations as fall within the capacity of ordinary heedless people, wholly caught up in the affairs of this world.

As for those learned in knowledge of the Hereafter, the meaning they attach to validity is acceptance, and by acceptance they mean attainment of the goal. According to their understanding, the goal of Fasting is the acquisition of one of the qualities of God, Great and Glorious is He, namely steadfastness (*samadiya*), as well as following the example of the angels by abstaining as far as possible from the desires of the flesh, for they are immune to such passions. The human status is superior to that of the animals, since man is able by the light of reason to tame his lust; yet it is inferior to that of the angels, in that he is subject to carnality and put to the test in combat with its temptations.

Whenever man falls prey to lust, he sinks to the lowest of the low and joins the animal herd. Whenever he curbs his desires, he ascends to the highest of the high and attains the angelic level. The angels are near the presence of God, Great and Glorious is He, so those who follow their example and model themselves on their character will likewise draw near to God, Great and Glorious is He. To resemble one who is near is to be near. This nearness, however, is not spatial but qualitative.

If this is the secret of Fasting among men of profound spiritual understanding, what benefit is to be derived from postponing a meal only to combine two meals after sunset, while indulging in all other passions the whole day long? If there were any good in such conduct, what could the Prophet, on him be peace, have meant by saying: 'How many of those who Fast get nothing from it but hunger and thirst?'

This is why Abul Darda' said: 'How fine is the sleep of the wise and their non-Fasting! Don't they just put to shame the Fasting and wakefulness of fools! A mere atom from those possessed of certainty and true piety is better and weightier than seeming mountains of worship by the misguided.' For the same reason one of the scholars said: 'How many who Fast are not keeping Fast, and how many who do not keep Fast are Fasting!'

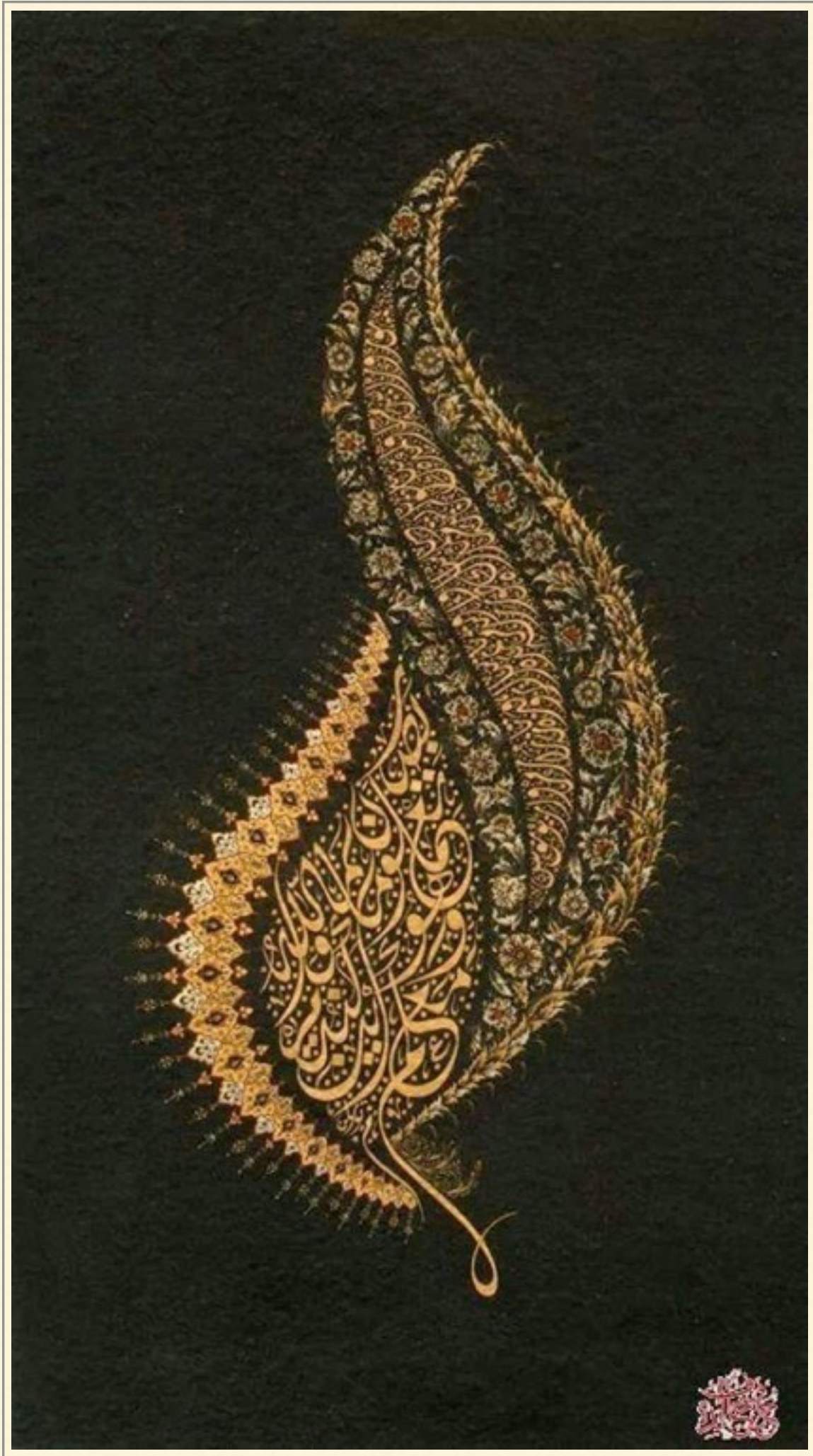
The Fasting non-Faster is he who keeps his limbs and organs pure of sin while still eating and drinking; the non-Fasting Faster is he who goes hungry and thirsty while giving full licence to his limbs and organs. Those who understand the significance of Fasting and its secret meaning are aware that he who abstains from food, drink and sexual intercourse, while breaking Fast by involving himself in sin, is like one who performs his ablution by wiping part of his body three times (in compliance with the external legal requirement), yet neglects what is really important, namely the actual washing. Because of this stupidity his ritual Prayer is rejected. By contrast, he who does not abstain from eating, yet does Fast in the sense of keeping his organs free from all that is unworthy, is comparable to one who washes the proper parts of his body only once each. God willing, his ritual Prayer is acceptable, since he has paid due attention to the essentials, even if he has omitted the details. But he who combines the two may be compared to one who not only washes each part of the body, but does so three times each, for he attends to essentials and details alike, and this constitutes perfection.

The Prophet, on him be peace, once said: 'The Fast is a trust, so let each of you keep this trust!' 8 And when he recited the words of God, Great and Glorious is He: 'Surely God bids you restore trusts to their owners.' [al-Nisa', 4: 58]

(Inna-Ilaha ya'murukum an tu'addu-l'amanati ila ahliha.)

he touched his ears and his eyes, saying: 'Hearing is a trust and sight is a trust.' 9 If speech were not likewise a trust of the Fast, the Prophet, on him be peace, would not have said: 'Say: "I am Fasting!"' In other words: 'My tongue has been entrusted to my care, so how can I release it to answer your insults?' 10

It therefore becomes apparent that every act of worship has both an outer and an inner aspect, a husk and a kernel.





22

HAJJ

The Pilgrimage

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Mercy-giving

(Bismi-llahi-Irahmani-Irahim.)

All praise belongs to God, Who made the affirmation of His oneness a refuge and fortress for His servants; Who made the Ancient House (the Ka'ba) a concourse secure for mankind, ennobled it in honour, virtue and grace by attribution to Him- self, and made the visitation and circumambulation of it a screen and shield between man and his doom.

Benedictions on Muhammad, the Prophet of mercy and Chief of the Community, and on his family and Companions, the leaders of the truth and princes of the people - and many salutations.

The Pilgrimage is one of the pillars and fundamentals of Islam, the worship of a lifetime, the seal of consummation, the completion of surrender and the perfection of religion.

It was during the Pilgrimage that God, Magnified and Glorious is He, sent down His revelation: 'Today I have perfected your religion for you, and completed My grace upon you, and approved Islam as your religion.' [al-Ma'idah, 5: 3]

(Al-yawma akmaltu lakum dinakum wa-atmamtu 'alaykum ni'mati wa-raditu lakumu-l'islama dlina.)

It was concerning the Pilgrimage that the Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'He who dies without having performed the Pilgrimage, let him die a Jew or a Christian, as he wishes.' 1

Thus did he exalt an act of worship the omission of which deprives religion of its perfection, making one who forsakes it equal in error to a Jew or a Christian.

ITS EXCELLENCES AND ITS MERIT

The Excellent Merit of the Pilgrimage God , Great and Glorious is He , said :

'And proclaim among men the Pilgrimage. They will come to you on foot and on every lean camel, coming from every deep ravine.' [al-Hajj, 22: 27]

(Wa-adhdhin fi-lnasi bi-lhajji ya'tuka rijalan wa-'ala kulli damirin ya'tlna min kulli fajjin 'amiq.)

Qatada said that when God, Great and Glorious is He, commanded Abraham, on him be peace - and our Prophet and every chosen servant - to proclaim the Pilgrimage among men, he declared: 'O people! God, Great and Glorious is He, has built a House, so make Pilgrimage to it!'

The Exalted One said: 'That they may witness things beneficial to them.' [al-Hajj, 22: 28]

(Li-yashhadu manafi'a lahum.)

When some referred this to trading at the season of Pilgrimage and reward in the Hereafter, one of the elders said: 'By the Lord of the Ka'ba , may they be forgiven! '

The words of God, Great and Glorious is He, in which Satan is made to say:

'I shall surely sit in ambush for them on Your straight path'[aI-A'raf,7:16]

(La-aq'udanna lahum siratakumu-lmustaqim.)

have been interpreted as meaning that Satan lurks on the road to Makka to keep people from getting there.

The Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'He who makes Pilgrimage to the House - avoiding indecent and immoral behaviour - emerges from his sins like a newborn babe.' ² The Prophet, on him be peace, also said: 'Satan never appears smaller, more abject, more abased and more furious than on the day of 'Arafat.' ³ This is simply because he sees mercy descending and sees God, Glorified is He, overlooking serious sins; for it is said that the only expiation for certain sins is standing at 'Arafat. (Ja'far ibn Muhammad attributes this saying to God's Messenger, on him be peace.) ⁴

One of those saintly people endowed with spiritual insight mentioned that Iblis, on him be the curse of God, appeared to him at 'Arafat in human form. He was thin, jaundiced, tearful and stooping. When asked the reason for his weeping, he said: 'The fact that the Pilgrims have set out towards God alone and not for doing business - I say, they have God alone as their destination. I fear they will not be thwarted, and that makes me unhappy.' He was then asked the cause of his thinness and he said: The neighing of the horses in the way of God, Great and Glorious is He. It would please me better if they were in my service.' The reason for his jaundiced complexion? The way they all assist each other in obedience. It would suit me better if they would help each other to disobey.' And what gave him that stoop? 'When a creature prays: "Grant me, I beseech You, a good conclusion," then I say: "Woe is me!" When he takes delight in his good work I am afraid he may have achieved sagacity.'

The Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'If someone sets out from his home as a Pilgrim or Visitant {mu'tamir) and then dies, he is granted the reward of a Pilgrim or Visitant till the Day of Resurrection. Anyone who dies in either of the Sanctuaries (Makka or Madina) is not subject to review or reckoning, but is told to enter Paradise.' ⁵

And: 'A blessed Pilgrimage is better than this world and all it contains. For a blessed Pilgrimage there is no Teward but Paradise.' ⁶

Also: 'Pilgrims and Visitants are the emissaries and visitors of God, Great and Glorious is He; if they petition Him He gives what they ask, if they seek His forgiveness he forgives them, if they call on Him He answers, and if they seek intercession it is granted.' ⁷

According to a Tradition handed down by the family of the Prophet, on them be peace: *No-one sins more grievously than he who stands at 'Arafat and supposes that God, Exalted is He, has not forgiven him.' 8

According to Ibn 'Abbas, may God be pleased with him and his father, the Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'One hundred and twenty mercies descend upon this House each day: sixty for the circumambulants, forty for those performing Prayers and twenty for those who just look at it.'

Another Tradition says: 'Make frequent circuits of the House, for this will be among the glories of your records on the Day of Resurrection, and the most fortunate action credited to you.'

Circumambulation is therefore commendable on its own account, not only as part of the Pilgrimage or Visitation. Tradition tells us: 'To circuit seven times, barefoot or bare-headed, is as meritorious as freeing a slave, while he who circumambulates seven times in the rain is forgiven all his previous sins.' 11

It is said that when God, Great and Glorious is He, forgives a sin for one servant at the place-of-standing (the plain of 'Arafat), He forgives it for everyone there who is guilty of it. One of the elders said that when the Day of 'Arafat coincides with the Day of Congregation (i.e. falls on a Friday), all those present at 'Arafat are forgiven and it is the most excellent day in the world.

It was on such a day that God's Messenger, on him be peace, made his Farewell Pilgrimage. 12 While he was standing there he received the revelation from God, Great and Glorious is He:

'Today I have perfected your religion for you, and completed My grace upon you, and approved Islam as your religion.' [al-Ma'idah, 5: 3]

The People of the Book said: 'If this revelation had come down to us, we would have made it a festival day.' Said 'Umar, may God be pleased with him: 'I am witness to the fact that it was on a double festival day that this revelation came down to God's Messenger as he was standing at 'Arafat: the Day of 'Arafat and the Day of Congregation. '

The Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'O God, forgive the Pilgrim and those for whom the Pilgrim seeks forgiveness]' 3

It is related that 'AH ibn Muwaffaq made several Pilgrimages on behalf of God's Messenger, on him be peace. He said: 'I then saw God's Messenger, on him be peace, in a dream, and he asked me: "Ibn Muwaffaq, did you make Pilgrimage on my behalf?" When I said yes, he said: "And you cried 'Labbayk' ('Doubly at Your service, Lord!') on my behalf?" I confirmed this and he said: "Then I shall reward you for it on the Day of Resurrection. I shall take you by the hand at the waiting place and lead you into Paradise, while all creatures are in dread of the reckoning." '

According to Mujahid and other scholars, when the Pilgrims reach Makka they are met by the angels, who salute those riding camels, shake hands with those riding donkeys, and embrace those walking on foot. Al-Hasan says that anyone who dies just after Ramadan, just after a holy campaign or just after a Pilgrimage, dies a martyr. 'Umar said: 'The Pilgrim is forgiven, as are those for whom he seeks forgiveness in the months of Dhul -Hijja, Muharram and Safar, and twenty days of First Rabi'.'

It was the customary practice of the elders to see the warriors off on campaign and to greet the returning Pilgrims, kissing them between the eyes and asking for their Prayers; they did this promptly, before they had time to become sullied with sins.

'All ibn Muwaffaq is reported as saying: 'I made Pilgrimage one year and when the Night of 'Arafat arrived I slept at Mina, in the Mosque of al-Khayf. There I dreamt that I saw two angels descending from heaven, clad in garments of green. One of them called out to his companion: "O servant of God!" and the other responded with "At your service, O servant of God!" The first then asked: "Do you know how many came on Pilgrimage this year to the House of God, Great and Glorious is He?" "No." "Six hundred thousand made the Pilgrimage to the House of our Lord. Do you know how many of them were accepted?" "No." "Only six souls."

The two angels then rose into the air and disappeared from my view. At this point I awoke in dismay, feeling deep anxiety and concern. I said to myself: "If only six souls had their Pilgrimages accepted, where am I placed?" I then joined the stampede from 'Arafat, stopping at Muzdalifa. I began to ponder how great was the multitude and how few would find acceptance, till sleep overtook me and I saw the two figures descending as before. They hailed each other, then one said: "Do you know what our Lord, Great and Glorious is He,

has decreed tonight?" "No." "To each of the six he has given a hundred thousand." I awoke this time with a feeling of indescribable joy.'

He is further reported as saying, may God be pleased with him: 'I went on Pilgrimage one year, and after completing all the rites I thought about those whose Pilgrimages would not be accepted. Then I said: "O God, I donate my Pilgrimage and give the merit of it to someone whose Pilgrimage has not been accepted. " I then dreamt of the Lord of might, Glorious is His majesty, Who said to me: "'AH, you would be more generous than I, though it is I Who have created generosity and the generous! I, Who am the most Bounteous of the bountiful, the most Munificent of the munificent, more Worthy of bounty and generosity than the entire universe, I have bestowed all whose Pilgrimages I have not accepted upon those who have won My acceptance." '

Excellence of the Ka'ba and of Makka the Ennobled

The Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'God has promised this House that it will be visited every year by six hundred thousand Pilgrims. If they fall short of this number, God, Great and Glorious is He, makes it up from among the angels. The Ka'ba will be raised up at the Resurrection as if in a bridal procession; all who have made Pilgrimage to it will go around it, hanging on to its coverings, till it enters Paradise and they enter with it.' 4

According to Tradition: 'The Black Stone is a ruby of Paradise. It will be raised on the Day of Resurrection with a pair of eyes and a tongue with which to speak, testifying for all who have touched it with truth and sincerity. 15 The Prophet, on him be peace, used to kiss it often. 16 It is related that he, on him be peace, also prostrated himself upon it. If he rode on a camel, while circuiting around it, he touched it with a crooked staff and then kissed the end of the staff.

'Umar, may God be pleased with him, kissed it, then said: 'I know you are a stone that neither harms nor helps, and had I not seen God's Messenger, on him be peace, kiss you, I would not have kissed you.' Then he wept, sobbing loudly. On turning round he saw 'AH, may God ennoble his countenance and be pleased with him, and said: 'Here tears are shed and Prayers are answered, father of al-Hasan!' But 'AH, may God be pleased with him, replied: 'Oh yes, Commander of the Believers, it does indeed harm and help!' 'How so?'

'When God, Exalted is He, took the Covenant from the descendants of Adam, He com-

mitted it to writing and embedded the document in this stone; it will therefore bear witness for the believer as to his fulfilment, and against the unbeliever as to his repudiation.'

This, they say, is the significance of the words people utter when touching the Black Stone: 'O God, I declare my belief in You, my acceptance of Your document and my fulfilment of Your covenant.'

(Allahumma Imanan bika wa-tasdiqan bi-kitabika wa- wafa'an bi-'ahdika.)

Al-Hasan al-Basri is reported as saying: 'One day of Fasting in Makka is worth a hundred thousand days, one penny in Alms is worth a thousand pounds, and any other good deed is likewise worth a hundred thousand times its value elsewhere.' It is said that to circumambulate seven times is equal to one Visitation, and that three Visitations are equal to one Pilgrimage. According to authentic Tradition: 'A Visitation in Ramadan is like performing a Pilgrimage with me' 8

The Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'I shall be the first for whom the earth will split open, then I shall go to the cemetery called al-BaqP (in Madina) and its occupants will be gathered up with me, then I shall go to the people of Makka and I shall be resurrected between the two Sanctuaries.' 19

According to another Tradition: 'When Adam, on him be peace, had performed all the rites of Pilgrimage he was met by the angels, who said: "Blessed be your Pilgrimage, Adam. We made Pilgrimage to this House two thousand years before you did."' 20

We have it from an early source that God, Great and Glorious is He, surveys the people of the earth every night; the first at whom He looks are the people of the Sanctuary (Makka), and of these He looks first at the people of the Sacred Mosque: those He sees circuiting He forgives, those He sees at Prayer He forgives, and those He sees standing facing the Ka'ba He forgives.

One of the saints, may God be pleased with them, saw a vision and said: 'I saw all the frontier regions prostrating toward 'Abbadan and I saw 'Abbadan prostrating towards Jidda . ' It is said that the sun never sets on a day, nor rises after a night, when a saintly or holy person has not made the circuit of the House, and that when this ceases to be so there will be cause for the Ka'ba to be removed from the earth without trace. This will happen when nobody has come on Pilgrimage for seven years. The Quran will then be removed from the

written books, leaving the pages blank with not one letter showing. Then the Quran will be erased from all hearts, not one word of it remembered. People will then revert to the poems, songs and fables of the time of Ignorance. Then will emerge the Antichrist and Jesus, on him be peace, will come down to kill him. The Hour of Resurrection will be at that moment as it were a pregnant woman on the verge of giving birth.

According to Tradition: 'Make frequent circumambulation of this House, before it is taken up; for twice it has been laid waste and the third time it will be taken away.' 21 It is related on the authority of 'All, may God be pleased with him, that the Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'God, Exalted is He, says: "If I wished to destroy the world I would begin by destroying My House, then I would destroy the whole world in its wake."' 22

The Merit and Demerit of Residing in Makka

may God, Exalted is He, protect her.

Cautiously apprehensive scholars find fault with permanent residence in Makka on three grounds: One, fear of boredom and over-familiarity with the House, for this may tend to douse the ardour of reverence in the heart.

That was why 'Umar, may God be pleased with him, used to beat the people who had completed their Pilgrimage, crying: 'Yemenis, back to Yemen! Syrians, back to Syria! 'Iraqis, back to 'Iraq!' For the same reason 'Umar, may God be pleased with him, was careful to prevent people from excessive circumambulation, saying: 'I am afraid people will get to familiar with this House.'

Two, nostalgia stimulates a yearning to return. God, Exalted is He, has made the House a concourse secure for mankind, i.e. a place where they should congregate, returning to it time and again and never ceasing to aspire to it.

Someone said: 'That you should be in another town, with your heart yearning for Makka, attached to this House, is better for you than being there, bored with long residence and hankering after another town.' As one of the elders said: 'Many a man in Khurasan is closer to this House than those circuiting around it!' It is even said that God, Exalted is He, has servants so close to Him, Great and Glorious is He, that the Ka'ba revolves around them.

Three, fear of committing errors and sins there. That is a grave peril, likely to excite the anger of God, Great and Glorious is He, on account of the nobility of the place.

Wuhayb ibn al-Ward, the Makkan, is reported as saying: 'One night as I was praying by the Black Stone, I heard a conversation between the Ka'ba and its coverings, in which it said: "To God I complain, and then to you, Gabriel, of what the circumambulants fling around me - the thoughts they give vent to, their vanities and their prattling. Unless they desist I shall surely give myself a mighty shake, sending every stone I am built with back to the hills from which they were hewn!"'

Ibn Mas'ud, may God be pleased with him, said: 'In no city but Makka is a man chastised for his mere intention, before he has acted on it.' Then he recited the words of the Exalted One: 'Whoever purposes to violate it wrongfully, We shall make him taste a painful doom.' [al-Hajj, 22: 25]

[Wa-man yurid fihi bi-ilhadin bi-zulmin nudhiqhu min 'adhabin alfm.)

That is to say, punishment is entailed by the mere purpose. It is said that evil deeds are compounded in Makka, as are good deeds. Ibn 'Abbas, may God be pleased with him, used to say: 'Monopolistic hoarding in Makka constitutes violation of the Sanctuary.' Some say the same of lying. Said Ibn 'Abbas: 'To sin seventy times at al-Rakiya would be preferable to me than to commit a single sin in Makka.* Such fear has even led certain residents of Makka to make a practice of leaving the confines of the Sanctuary whenever they need to answer the call of nature. Someone stayed there a whole month without ever reclining on the ground. As a deterrent to long residence, certain scholars have expressed disapproval of renting houses in Makka.

Let it not be supposed that the demerit of residence is at odds with the merit of the place itself. The reason behind the former is human frailty and inability to treat the place with due respect. When we declare it preferable to forsake residing there, we refer to residence associated with inadequacy and boredom. As for its being preferable to residence in all propriety - how utterly absurd! Of course, for when God's Messenger, on him be peace, came back to Makka he approached the Ka'ba and said: 'You are the best spot on God's earth, Great and Glorious is He; most dear to me of all the cities of God, Exalted is He. If I had not had to leave you, I would never have left you.' 23 Of course, for it is an act of worship

just to look upon the House, and good deeds performed there are compounded, as we have mentioned.

The Superiority of Madina the Radiant over Other Towns

After Makka itself, there is no place superior to Madina, the City of God's Messenger, on him be peace. Deeds performed there are also compounded. Said the Prophet, on him be peace: 'One Prayer in this Mosque of mine is better than a thousand Prayers in any other Mosque, except the Sacred Mosque.' 24 Likewise every good action in Madina is worth a thousand. After the City of the Prophet comes the Holy Land of Jerusalem, where one Prayer is equal to five hundred elsewhere, with the exception of the Sacred Mosque. Again, the same is true of other deeds. Ibn 'Abbas relates that the Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'One Prayer in the Mosque of Madina is worth ten thousand Prayers, one Prayer in al-Aqsa Mosque is worth a thousand, and one Prayer in the Sacred Mosque is worth a hundred thousand.' 25

The Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'If anyone endures the rigours and austerity [of Madina], I shall be an intercessor for him on the Day of Resurrection. ,26 Also: 'If someone is able to die in Madina, let him die there, for no-one will die there without my being an intercessor for him on the Day of Resurrection.' 27

Aside from these three places, all other districts are on an equal footing, with the exception of the frontier regions, where it is extremely meritorious to take up station. The Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'Only these three Mosques deserve a special journey: the Sacred Mosque, my Mosque' and the Mosque of al-Aqsa.' 28

God's Messenger, on him be peace, also said: 'All countries are the countries of God, Exalted is He, so take up residence in any place where you find good company, and give praise to God, Exalted is He.' 29

FINE POINTS OF PROPRIETY; INTERNAL CONDUCT

The fine points of propriety are ten in number:

PURITY OF INTENTION AND MEANS

1. The Pilgrim should meet his expenses by lawful (Halal) means and should have his hands free of any worrisome and distracting business concerns, so that his attention may be de-

voted exclusively to God, Exalted is He, and his heart directed in tranquillity to the remembrance of God, Exalted is He, and the veneration of His holy rites.

According to a Tradition handed down by relatives of the Prophet, on him be peace: 'At the end of the age, four classes of people will go on Pilgrimage: their rulers for the outing; their rich men for the trade; their poor men for the begging; their Quran-readers for the benefit of their reputations.' 30

This indicates that all conceivable worldly purposes have some connection with the Pilgrimage. All of this negates the virtue of the Pilgrimage and depersonalises it, especially when the Pilgrimage itself is directly exploited by one who makes it on behalf of another in exchange for payment, seeking worldly gain by the work of the Hereafter. Pious and spiritual people disapprove of this, except where the intention of the person accepting payment is to settle in Makka and he lacks the means to get there; in that case there is no harm in it, the purpose being to use worldly means for religious ends and not vice-versa. In this instance his object must be to visit the House of God, Great and Glorious is He, while at the same time helping his Muslim brother by relieving him of his religious obligation. Relevant in this connection is the saying of God's Messenger, on him be peace: 'God, Glorified is He, admits three to Paradise for a single Pilgrimage: the testator who bequeaths it; the one who carries it out; and the one who performs it on behalf of his brother.' 31

I am not saying that it is unlawful to make Pilgrimage on behalf of someone else, nor that one is forbidden to do so after having discharged one's personal obligation as a Muslim. It is better not to do so, however, and not to make it a livelihood and a business, for God, Great and Glorious is He, gives the world for religion, not religion for the world. According to the Tradition: 'He who goes on campaign in the cause of God, Great and Glorious is He, and takes a wage, is like the mother of Moses, on him be peace, who suckled her child and took her wage.' 32 He who takes hire for the Pilgrimage is similarly comparable to the mother of Moses; there is no harm in his doing so, for he takes it in order to have the possibility of making the Pilgrimage and visiting the Holy Places. He does not go on Pilgrimage to get the hire, but the other way round, just as Moses' mother accepted payment to facilitate her suckling by concealing her condition.

SHUNNING UNLAWFUL TAXES

2. The Pilgrim should not aid the enemies of God, Glorified is He, by paying tolls to those Makkan chiefs who bar the way to the Sacred Mosque, or Bedouin who lurk along the road. To pay these people is to encourage tyranny and to make it easy for them, for it is like giving them moral support. The Pilgrim should therefore devise some means of escape from such payment. If he is not capable of this, then according to some scholars (and it is not a bad opinion) it is better to turn back and abandon non-obligatory Pilgrimage rather than give assistance to tyrants, for this is an heretical innovation and acquiescence would tend to give it the force of custom. This form of taxation is degrading and humiliating to the Muslims.

There is no sense in saying: 'I had to pay up under duress.' If one had stayed at home or turned back one would not have had to pay a thing. Actually, a display of affluence sometimes provokes a lot of demands, whereas these would not arise if one dressed like the poor people; you may have only yourself to blame for putting yourself in a situation of duress.

MODERATION IN EXPENDITURE

3. Liberality in provision and magnanimity in outlay and expenditure, steering a middle course between stinginess and extravagance. I mean the lavish indulgence in exquisite food and drink, characteristic of the opulent. But heavy expense in giving generously is not extravagance, for there is no goodness in immoderation and no immoderation in goodness. Outlay on provision for the Pilgrimage is expenditure in the way of God, Great and Glorious is He, and every penny of it is worth seven hundred. Said Ibn 'Umar, may God be pleased with him and with his father: 'Part of nobility consists in making generous provision for one's journey.' He also used to say: 'The most virtuous Pilgrim is he whose intention is most sincere, his expenditure most proper and his conviction most certain.'

The Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'For the Pilgrimage that is blessed there is no reward but Paradise.' When he was asked: 'O Messenger of God, what makes a Pilgrimage blessed?' he replied: 'Speaking well and feeding the poor.'"

FORSAKING EVIL CONDUCT

4. Forsaking indecency, immorality and wrangling, as spoken of in the Quran. Indecency is a general term, covering all nonsensical, foul and obscene language and including flirtation and dalliance with women as well as discussion of sexual intercourse and its preliminaries. Such talk excites the urge to unlawful intercourse, and incitement to what is forbidden is itself forbidden.

Immorality is another general term, covering all departures from obedience to God, Great and Glorious is He.

Wrangling is excessive quarrelling and argument, causing ill-will, distracting from noble purpose and incompatible with good character. As Sufyan said: 'Indecent behaviour vitiates one's Pilgrimage.' God's Messenger, on him be peace, set decent speech on a par with providing food as a cause of blessedness in the Pilgrimage, and quarrelling is incompatible with decent speech. One should therefore refrain from raising frequent objections against one's fellow traveller, the camels and one's other companions; rather should one take things gently, sheltering others beneath one's wing along the way to the House of God, Great and Glorious is He. Good conduct is essential, and good conduct means putting up with painful things rather than trying to repel them. They say that the Arabic word for 'journey' is safar because it reveals {yusfiru'an) a person's character. That is why 'Umar, may God be pleased with him, asked someone who claimed to know a man: 'Have you accompanied him on a journey that would show up his good qualities?' Since the answer was no, he told him: Then I don't see how you can know him!'

GOING ON FOOT

5. Those who are able should make the Pilgrimage on foot, for this is the most meritorious way. At his death, 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas, may God be pleased with him and with his father, bequeathed this advice to his sons: 'My sons, go on foot when you make the Pilgrimage, because for every step the Pilgrim takes while walking he earns seven hundred of the bounties of the Sanctuary.' When asked what these bounties were, he replied: 'One good deed in the Sanctuary is rewarded a hundred thousand-fold.'

Walking between the various Hajj rituals, and when going to and fro between Makka, 'Arafat and Mina, is even more strongly recommended than on the road to Makka. Going on

foot, in conjunction with putting on the Ihram (entering the state of consecration) on leaving home, is said by some to constitute completion of Pilgrimage. Such was the construction put by 'Umar, 'All and Ibn Mas'ud, may God be pleased with them, on the words of God, Great and Glorious is He: 'Complete the Pilgrimage and Visitation for God.' [al-Baqarah, 2: 196]

(Wa-atimmu-lhajja wa-r'umrata lillah.)

On the other hand, some scholars maintain that transport is better, in view of the outlay and provision involved and because it is less disturbing and painful and more conducive to a safe completion of the Pilgrimage.

This second opinion does not really contradict the first; one must consider which applies to a particular case. It is said that for one who can easily walk it is better that he do so, whereas transport would be preferable if he were weak, and if going on foot might affect him badly and restrict him in the performance of his duties. There is a parallel here with Fasting, which is better kept up even by the traveller and the invalid, unless it would cause weakness and bad temper.

A certain scholar was asked whether, in the Visitation ('Umra), one should go on foot or spend a little money on hiring a donkey. He replied that if one is more attached to the money, it is better to hire the donkey than to walk. But if walking is the more serious matter, as for the rich, then walking is to be preferred. There is something to be said for this view, which seems to make it a question of self-discipline. The best course of all, however, is to walk and spend the money on charity; this is superior to spending it on hiring a donkey. But for those who are incapable of giving up both personal comfort and their money, the opinion cited above is not inappropriate.

MODESTY AND SIMPLICITY OF TRANSPORT

6. The Pilgrim should take a simple riding-beast for transport, abstaining from being carried in a litter unless there is reason to fear that he could not ride the animal. There are two considerations here: (a) sparing the camel from the pain of bearing the litter; (b) avoiding an air of ostentatious luxury. God's Messenger, on him be peace, made the Pilgrimage on a riding camel, with a worn saddle and tattered pad, the cost of it being four dirhams. 3 " He made circumambulation on the camel, so that people could observe his comportment and conduct 35

The Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'Take your rituals from me.' 36

They say these camel-litters were an innovation introduced by Pilgrims over the protests of the scholars of the day. Sufyan al-Thawri reports his father as saying: 'En route from Kufa to Qadistya, bound for the Pilgrimage, I caught up with travelling companions from many lands. All the Pilgrims I saw had beasts of burden, animals carrying luggage, and riding-camels; among them all I spotted no more than two litters. 1 When Ibn 'Umar noticed the new styles and the litters introduced by the Pilgrims, he would say: 'Few Pilgrims, many riders!' Then he would look at a poor man, shabbily dressed and mounted atop some sacks, and say: 'This is the cream of the Pilgrims!'

SHABBINESS IN DRESS AND APPEARANCE

7. The Pilgrim should be shabbily dressed, dishevelled and dusty, not over-adorned nor inclined to things that excite vainglory and rivalry, thereby enrolling among the arrogant and the opulent and parting company with the weak, the poor and the righteous. For God's Messenger* on him be peace, ordained dishevelment and inconspicuousness 37 and banned indulgence and luxury, according to the Tradition of Fadala ibn 'Ubayd. 38 As another Tradition puts it: 'The Pilgrim is nothing if not dishevelled and unkempt.' 39 According to yet another: 'God, Exalted is He, says: "Look at the visitors to My House; they come to Me, dishevelled and dusty, from every deep ravine.'" 40 God, Exalted is He, said: 'Then let them finish their unkemptness . . .' [al-Hajj, 22:29]

(Thumma la-yaqdu tafathahum.)

'Unkemptness' means dishevelment and dustiness, and it is disposed of by shaving, trimming the moustache and clipping the nails. 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, may God be pleased with him, wrote to the army commanders: 'Be smooth and be rough!' i.e. wear worn-out clothes and manage things roughly.

It has been said that the best Pilgrims are those from the Yemen, on account of their humble and gentle ways and because they follow the example set by the elders. Red is to be avoided, especially in attire, as is commonplace notoriety. It is related that God's Messenger, on him be peace, was once on a journey when his Companions made a halt. As the camels were grazing, he noticed the red cloth on their -humps. i, The Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'I see this colour red has got the better of you!' 11 Said the Companions: 'We

therefore got up and removed the red cloth from their backs, until some of the camels bolted.'

KINDNESS TO BEASTS OF BURDEN

8. The Pilgrim must be kind to animals, taking care not to overload them. It is beyond their capacity to carry a litter, and sleeping in one imposes an intolerable weight. Pious people would not sleep on the back of an animal, unless they happened to doze off while riding. Nor would they stay mounted for long while the animal was kept standing. The Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'Don't treat the backs of your animals as chairs!' ⁴² It is recommended that one dismount both morning and evening to give one's beast a rest, following the Prophetic example and the precedents of the elders. ⁴³

One of the elders used to take an animal on hire with the stipulation that he would not dismount. Having paid the full price of hire, he would then get off the beast in order to do it a kindness, one that would be counted among his good deeds and weighed in his scale of the balance, not that of the owner.

Whoever harms a dumb creature and overloads it will be called to account for this on the Day of Resurrection. As he was dying, Abul Darda' said to a camel of his: 'Camel, do not complain of me to your Lord, for I have never overloaded you.'

In short, in every warm heart there lies a reward, so the right of the beast and the right of the hirer should both be respected; to dismount for a spell provides the animal with relief and pleases its hirer at the same time. A man once said to Ibn al-Mubarak: 'Carry this letter for me and deliver it.' But he replied: 'Let me first check with the camel-driver, for I have taken the animal on hire.' Note how cautious he was even about taking with him a virtually weightless letter! This is the prudent approach to piety, for once a door is ajar it gradually opens wider.

SACRIFICING ANIMALS

9. The Pilgrim ought to shed the blood of a sacrificial animal, even if it is not strictly incumbent upon him, endeavouring to find a fine fat creature for the purpose, litne-offering is voluntary he should eat some of it, but not if it is an obligatory sacrifice.* The words of God, Exalted is He: 'That . . . And whoever venerates God's consecrated offerings,' [al-Hajj, 22: 32]

(Dhalika wa-man yu'azzim sha'a'ira-llah.)

have been interpreted as referring to the choice of a fine fat sacrificial animal.

It is preferable to drive the offering in from the assembly point, provided this is not too inconvenient and troublesome. One should refuse to pay sales-taxes, for three things get over-priced and reprehensibly taxed: offerings, sacrificial slaughterings and slaves to be emancipated, since the best of these are the costliest and most precious to their owners.

According to Ibn 'Umar, 'Umar, may God be pleased with both father and son, was going to sacrifice a Bactrian camel. He was offered a price of three hundred dinars, so he asked God's Messenger, on him be peace, if he should sell it and use the money to buy several other animals, but he told him not to do that, saying: 'No, sacrifice it!' 44

The reason for this is that a little of what is excellent is better than much that is inferior. Thirty beasts could have been purchased for the three hundred dinars, which would have represented a lot of meat. But the meat is not the object. The object is to purify the soul, to cleanse it of stinginess and to adorn it with the beauty of reverence for God, Great and Glorious is He, for:

'Their flesh and blood do not reach God, yet your devotion reaches Him.' [al-Hajj, 22: 37]

This devotion is shown by regard for excellence of quality in the value, be the quantity great or small.

When God's Messenger, on him be peace, was asked what makes for a blessed Pilgrimage, he said: 'al-'ajj wa-lthajj (clamour and torrent).' 45 'Clamour' refers to the loud voice used in calling: 'Labbayk' (Doubly at Your service, Lord!), while 'torrent' refers to the flow of blood at the slaughter of a sacrifice. 'A'isha, may God be pleased with her, relates that God's Messenger, on him be peace, said: 'No human action on the day of slaughter is dearer to God, Great and Glorious is He, than the shedding of blood, for it will come on the Day of Resurrection with its horns and its hooves; the blood will fall to some point at which God, Great and Glorious is He, will stop it reaching the ground. So rejoice with it!' 46

According to another Tradition: 'There is a bounty for you in every hair of its hide, and every drop of its blood counts as a good deed to be weighed in the balance, so be of good

cheer!' 47 The Prophet, on him be peace, said also: 'Seek the aid of your sacrificial offerings, for they will be your mounts on the Day of Resurrection . ,48

EQUANIMITY

10. The Pilgrim should face with equanimity the expense he incurs to provision himself and acquire an offering, as well as any financial or physical loss or mishap that may befall him, for that is one of the signs that his Pilgrimage is accepted. Misfortune on the way to Pilgrimage is equated with expenditure in the cause of God, Great and Glorious is He, every penny being worth seven hundred. It is comparable to the rigours encountered en route to the Jihad, so for every hardship endured and for every loss suffered there is a recompense and nothing is lost in the sight of God, Great and Glorious is He.

One indication that a Pilgrimage has been accepted, they say, is when a Pilgrim abandons his sinful ways, exchanging his idle companions for righteous brothers, and forsaking haunts of frivolity and heedlessness in favour of gatherings for remembrance and vigilance.

INNER STATES AT VARIOUS STAGES OF HAJJ

The role of sincerity in intention. The way to respect the noble shrines, the manner in which to contemplate them and to reflect upon their mysteries and meanings, from the start of the Pilgrimage to the end.

The Pilgrimage begins with understanding, by which I mean the understanding of its place in the religion. The subsequent steps are then: yearning for it; resolving upon it; severing the ties that keep one from it; acquiring the seamless garments to be worn during consecration (ihram); purchasing the necessary provisions; hiring transport; setting out from home; crossing the desert; consecration at the assembly point, with the cry of 'Labbayk' ('Doubly at Your service, Lord!'); the entry into Makka; and then the completion of all the rites of Pilgrimage. Every one of these steps serves as a reminder to the mindful, a lesson to the heedful, an exhortation to the faithful aspirant, an instruction and indication to the sagacious. Let us therefore signify their key points, so that when the door to them is opened and their reasons known, some of their mysteries may be revealed to every Pilgrim, sufficient to afford him tranquillity of heart, inner purity and fullness of understanding.

UNDERSTANDING

As for understanding it must be realised that there is no way of attaining to God, Glorified and Exalted is He, except by divesting oneself of desires, abstaining from pleasures, confining oneself to necessities and devoting oneself exclusively to God, Glorified is He, in every movement and rest. It was for this reason that the ascetics of previous religions used to isolate themselves from the people, retiring to mountain caves and preferring solitude to the company of others, in quest of intimacy with God, Great and Glorious is He. For the sake of God, Great and Glorious is He, they forsook worldly pleasures and applied themselves to strenuous exertions in pursuit of the Hereafter. God, Great and Glorious is He, commends them in His Book, where He says: 'That is because among them there are priests and monks, and because they are not arrogant.' [al-Ma'idah, 5: 82]

(Dhalika bi-anna minhum qissislna wa-ruhbanan wa-annahum la yastakbirun.)

But when all that had vanished, and people had become interested only in chasing their desires, shunning exclusive devotion to God, Great and Glorious is He, and getting lax about it, then God, Great and Glorious is He, sent His Messenger Muhammad, on him be peace, to revive the way of the Hereafter and to renew the method of travelling along it in accordance with the practice of God's Envoys.

Members of the earlier religious communities asked God's Messenger, on him be peace, if the ways of the monks and anchorites were followed in his religion and he replied: 'God has replaced them for us with the Jihad and the declaration of His supremacy on every elevated place.' 49 (Alluding to the Pilgrimage.) When asked about the anchorites, God's Messenger, on him be peace, said: 'They are the ones who Fast.' 50

So God, Great and Glorious is He, has favoured this Community by making the Pilgrimage its form of monasticism and has honoured the Ka'ba, the Ancient House, by calling it His own, Exalted is He. He has made it a goal for His servants, consecrating its surroundings as a sanctuary for His House and for the glory of His cause. He has made 'Arafat as it were the pipe supplying water to the pool of His heavenly court. He has emphasised the dignity of the place by declaring its game and its trees inviolate. He has modelled it on a royal durbar, the goal of visitors from every deep ravine and every distant scene, who come dishevelled, dusty and humble to the Lord of the House, meekly submissive to His majesty and might, (acknowledging, of course, that He is beyond being contained

by any house or confined to any town) so that their homage and adoration may be more intense, their compliance and obedience more perfect. That is why they have been enjoined to perform there certain actions to which the soul does not readily conform, and the significance of which is not easily grasped by the mind, like the stoning of the pillars and the running back and forth several times between al-Safa and al-Marwa. The Pilgrim demonstrates through such actions the perfection of his homage and adoration.

The Zakat has the rational appeal of an intelligible humane purpose. Fasting breaks the hold of desire, which is the tool of God's enemy, and is conducive to worship because it dispels distraction. Bowing and prostration in ritual Prayer promote humility toward God, Great and Glorious is He, through actions symbolic of humility, and the soul enjoys intimacy in the veneration of God, Great and Glorious is He. In actions like running to and fro or throwing pebbles, on the other hand, there is no pleasure or satisfaction and nothing to suggest any rational significance. The sole inducement to perform them is therefore the command itself and the intention to comply with it inasmuch as it is an order that must be obeyed.

Rationality is thus put aside, and the natural self is deflected from where its comfort lies; for if this was something readily comprehensible to the mind, there would be a natural inclination towards it. That inclination would then back up the command and provide an added incentive to act upon it, in which case it would hardly represent a perfect demonstration of homage and obedience. This is why God's Messenger, on him be peace, singled out the Pilgrimage when he said: 'Doubly at Your service, through a Pilgrimage in truth, devotion and homage.' 51 He did not say that about ritual Prayer or any other act of worship. If it were necessary to question the wisdom of God, Glorified and Exalted is He, in linking our salvation to actions that run counter to natural inclination and that are subject to the control of the Sacred Law, we would vacillate in the practice of obedience and following the dictates of submission. The performance of inexplicable duties is a form of devotion most effective in purifying the soul, and in deflecting it from its natural propensities into the habit of servitude. If you have grasped this, you will have understood that perplexity concerning these strange actions stems from inattention to the mysteries of devotions. This much will suffice, God willing, to impart an understanding of the essence of the Pilgrimage.

YEARNING

As for yearning: this arises only after understanding and the realisation that the House is truly the House of God, Great and Glorious is He, that it is modelled on the royal durbar so that he who goes there goes as a visitor to God, Great and Glorious is He, and that he who goes to the House in this world deserves that his visit should not be in vain. He will be accorded the object of his visit at the time appointed for him, namely the vision of God's Noble Countenance in the abode of eternity. For the inadequate mortal eye we possess in this earthly abode is unfitted to receive the vision of the Face of God, Great and Glorious is He, lacking the capacity to bear it or the equipment to take it in. But in the abode of the Hereafter, when it has been granted perpetuity and immunity to the causes of change and decay, it will be prepared for that vision and sight. Meanwhile, by betaking oneself to the House and beholding it, one earns the right to meet the Lord of the House in accordance with the noble promise.

To be sure, the yearning to meet with God, Great and Glorious is He, creates a longing for all that will lead to that meeting; for the lover craves everything in any way connected with his beloved. The House is connected with God, Great and Glorious is He, so this connection is surely enough in itself to make one yearn for it, quite apart from the wish to attain the abundant reward that is promised.

RESOLVE

As for resolve: the Pilgrim should be aware that by his resolve he is purposing to leave his family and homeland behind, forsaking pleasures and desires as he sets out to visit the House of God, Great and Glorious is He. He should hold in high esteem both the House and the Lord of the House. He must know that he has resolved upon a matter of high consequence and an affair of great moment. Where great things are at stake, the risks are also greatest. He should make sure his resolve is purely for the sake of God, Glorified is He, untarnished by hypocrisy and desire for fame. Let him be fully aware that only what is sincere in his intention and action will find acceptance, and that there is no offence more outrageous than to visit the House of God and His Sanctuary for ulterior motive. He should check with himself to verify his resolve: the verification is in his sincerity, and his sincerity lies in shunning all taint of hypocrisy and desire for fame. Let him therefore be careful to replace what is unworthy with something better.

SEVERING TIES

As for severing ties: this means the rejection of all iniquities and sincere repentance to God, Exalted is He, for all acts of disobedience, for each iniquity is a tie, and every tie is like having a creditor with you, clinging to your collar. He cries: 'Where are you heading for? Are you bound for the House of the King of kings, when you are neglecting His command here at home, belittling and ignoring it? Are you not ashamed to approach Him as a disobedient servant, since He will reject you and refuse you?' So if you hope to have your visit accepted you should carry out His commandments, cast off iniquities, repent to Him first of all for all acts of disobedience, and sever your heart's connection from concern with what is behind you. You can then turn your heart to face Him, as you turn your visible face in the direction of His House. Unless you do this, you will get nothing from your journey except trouble and hardship at the outset and dismissal and rejection at the end.

The Pilgrim should sever all ties with his homeland, cutting himself off completely as if he were going into exile, never to return. He should also write down his will and testament for his children and family, for the traveller and his money are at risk unless protected by God, Glorified is He.

While severing ties for the journey of Pilgrimage, one should also remember to be detached for the journey to the Hereafter, for that is soon to come. All that is suggested for this earthly journey is desirable in preparation for the other, which is to eternity and the ultimate return. One should therefore not be heedless of that final journey while getting ready for the Pilgrimage.

PROVISIONS

As for provisions: these must be acquired from a lawful source. If the Pilgrim feels himself impelled to take a lot, seeking enough to last him the whole journey without spoiling or going bad before he reaches his destination, let him remember that the journey to the Hereafter is a much longer one than this and that the provision for it is true piety. Apart from piety, whatever one supposes to be provision will be left behind when you die, leaving you in the lurch. It will no more keep than the fresh food that goes bad on the first leg of the journey, leaving one dismayed and helpless in the moment of need. Beware therefore, in case the deeds which make up your provision for the Hereafter do not go with you after death, but get spoiled instead by the taint of hypocrisy and the turbidity of remissness.

TRANSPORT

As for transport: when the Pilgrim procures a riding-beast, he should give heartfelt thanks to God, Great and Glorious is He, for putting animals at his disposal to relieve him of pain and hardship. At the same time he should call to mind the vehicle that will carry him to the abode of the Hereafter, namely his coffin, for the Pilgrimage presents a certain parallel to the final journey. He should therefore consider whether the journey he is about to make, riding this mount, will help to equip him for that other journey aboard that other vehicle.

How close at hand it is! For all he knows, death may be so near that he will be riding the coffin before he has time to ride the camel. The coffin-ride is a certainty, whereas there is doubt about whether one can secure all one's needs for this trip. So where is the point in making careful preparations to equip oneself with provisions and transport for a doubtful journey, while neglecting the matter of one that is sure and certain?

PURCHASE OF IHRAM

As for the purchase of the two seamless garments of consecration: when buying his 'ihram' the Pilgrim should recall the shroud in which he will be wrapped for burial. When he nears the House of God, Great and Glorious is He, he will put on the two sheets, wearing one of them over one shoulder and the other as a sarong. While he may never finish his journey to the House of God, what is certain is that he must go to meet God, Great and Glorious is He, wrapped in the cloth of the shroud. He should therefore remember: just as he goes to meet the House of God, Great and Glorious is He, in unusual garb and attire, so after death he must go to meet God, Great and Glorious is He, dressed in a fashion different from that of this world. And the Pilgrim-garb is close to the other, being unstitched like the shroud.

LEAVING HOME

As for leaving home: the Pilgrim should know that he has now left hearth and home, bound for God, Great and Glorious is He, on a journey unlike any worldly voyage. He should be conscious in his heart of what he wishes, where he is heading and Whom he intends to visit. He should be aware that he is wending his way toward the King of kings, along with a host of visitors who have been summoned and have answered the

call, in whom a great longing has been awakened, who have been roused and have risen, who have severed connections and said farewell to relations, and who have set out for the House of God, Great and Glorious is He, which is splendid in majesty and of lofty esteem. To encounter the House consoles them for not meeting its Lord, till they are granted their ultimate wish and rejoice in the contemplation of their Master.

The Pilgrim should also nourish in his heart the hope of attainment and of finding acceptance, not by virtue of his deeds in faring far from his family and property, but through trust in the bounty of God, Great and Glorious is He, and in hope of confirming His promise to those who visit His House.

He should nurture the hope that, if fate overtakes him en route and he does not arrive, he will meet God, Great and Glorious is He, coming to him, since He says (Glorious is His Majesty): "Whoever sets out from his home, migrating to God and His Messenger, then death overtakes him, his recompense is incumbent upon God." [al-Nisa', 4: 100]

(Wa-man yakhruj min baytihil muhajiran ila-illahi wa- rasulihithumma yudrikuhu-lmawtu faqad waqa'a ajruhu 'ala-llah.)

CROSSING THE DESERT

As for crossing the desert to the assembly point, with all attendant hardships: the Pilgrim should there recall the crossing at death between this world and the assembly point on the Day of Resurrection, with the terrors and trials that intervene. The terror of highway robbers should remind him of the terror of the inquisition by Munkar and Nakir;* the savage beasts of the desert should make him think of the scorpions and worms of the tomb, with its vipers and serpents; his separation from family and relatives should put him in mind of the desolation of the tomb, of its agony and solitude. Through all these terrors he should equip himself by word and deed for the horrors of the tomb.

PUTTING ON IHRAM AND CRYING 'LABBAYK'

As for donning the garb of consecration and crying 'Labbayk' from the assembly point onwards: the Pilgrim should know that this signifies a response to the summons of God, Great and Glorious is He. Hope, therefore, to be accepted and dread being told: 'No favour or fortune for you!' Oscillate between hope and fear; rid yourself of your power and

strength, and rely on the grace and generosity of God, Great and Glorious is He. The moment of talbiya (calling 'Labbayk') is the real starting point - this is the critical instant.

Sufyan ibn 'Uyayna said: "All, the son of al-Husayn, may God be pleased with them both, once went on Pilgrimage. When he had put on his ihram and his camel was ready for him to ride, he suddenly turned pale and began to tremble. He shivered and quaked and could not utter "Labbayk", and when they asked him what was wrong he said: "I dread being told: 'No favour or fortune for you!'" When he did eventually cry "Labbayk", he fainted and fell from his camel. This kept on happening to him until he had completed his Pilgrimage.' Ahmad ibn Abil Hawari said: 'I was with Abu Sulayman al-Diranl, may God be pleased with him, when he wished to enter the state of consecration. He did not utter "Labbayk" until we had travelled a whole mile. He fell in a swoon, saying when he came to: "Ahmad! God, Glorified is He, inspired to Moses, on him be peace: 'Tell the wrongdoers among the Children of Israel to remember Me seldom, for I shall remember with a curse those of them who remember Me.' Alas, Ahmad, I have heard that to those who make Pilgrimage on ill-gotten gains, God, Great and Glorious is He, says: 'No favour or fortune for you, until you return what you have in hand . 'And we cannot be sure that this will not be said to us. " ' "

On raising his voice at the assembly point with the cry of 'Labbayk', the Pilgrim should recall that he is responding to the summons of God, Great and Glorious is He, since He said: 'And proclaim the Pilgrimage among men.' [al-Haij, 22:27]

(Wa-adhdhin fj-Inasi bi-lhajj.)

He should also recall that mankind will be summoned by the trumpet's blast, gathered up from the tomb and crowded together at the site of the Resurrection , responding to the call of God, Glorified is He, divided into the favoured and the abhorred, the accepted and the rejected, and oscillating initially between fear and hope - like the Pilgrims at the assembly point, when they do not know whether or not they will be enabled to complete the Pilgrimage and have it accepted.

ENTERING MAKKA

As for entering Makka: The Pilgrim should remember at this time that he has arrived safely at the Sanctuary of God, Exalted is He. As he enters he should hope to be safe from the punishment of God, Great and Glorious is He, and should

dread not being worthy to approach Him, for in that case his entry into the Sanctuary would leave him frustrated and fit to be abhorred. At all times his hope should be uppermost, for God's generosity is comprehensive, the Lord is Compassionate, the honour of the House is tremendous, the visitor's right is respected, and protection is secure for all who seek refuge.

SEEING THE KA'BA

As for setting eyes upon the House: at this moment the Pilgrim should be conscious in his heart of the majesty House, venerating it with such intensity that he anticipate beholding the Lord of the House. He should hope that God, Exalted is He, will grant him the vision of His noble countenance, just as He has afforded him the sight of His mighty House. Thank God, Great and Glorious is He, for bringing you to this high degree, and for including you in the company of those who reach Him. Remember at the same time how at the Resurrection people will stream towards Paradise, all hoping to enter there, and how they will be divided into those who are admitted and those who are turned away, just as the Pilgrims are divided into the accepted and the rejected. In all that you see, take care to recall the things of the Hereafter, for every aspect of the Pilgrimage reflects some aspect of the Hereafter.

CIRCUMAMBULATING THE HOUSE (TAWAF)

As for the circumambulation of the House: realise that it is a ritual Prayer. While making it, you should fill your heart with reverence, fear, hope and love. Know that in your circuit you resemble the angels near the Divine presence, who ring the Throne and circle around it. Do not suppose the purpose to be your bodily circumambulation of the House. No, the true purpose is the circling by your heart in remembrance of the Lord of the House, till remembering begins with Him alone and ends with Him alone, just as the circumambulation starts from the House and ends at the House. Know that the noble circumambulation is the circling by the heart in the Divine presence, and that the House is the external symbol in the visible world for the unseen Divine court which lies in the invisible universe. For those to whom God opens the door, the material and visible world is but the threshold of the invisible, angelic universe. This parallel is suggested by the correspondence between the Populous House (al-bayt al-ma'mur) in heaven and the Ka'ba.

The heavenly circling of the angels is like the human circumambulation of this House, but since most people are incapable of achieving that level of circumambulation, they have been commanded to imitate as best they can, with the promise that: 'He who imitates a set of people is one of them.'" Of those who are capable of that kind of circumambulation, it is said that the Ka'ba visits them and makes circuit around them; visionaries have seen this happen to certain intimates of God, Glorified and Exalted is He.

TOUCHING THE BLACK STONE

As for touching the Black Stone: believe when you do this that you are swearing allegiance to God, Great and Glorious is He, and vowing obedience to Him. Make firm your resolve to be loyal to your oath, for the wrath of God is the traitor's due. Ibn 'Abbas, may God be pleased with him and his father, relates that God's Messenger said: 'The Black Stone is the right hand of God, Great and Glorious is He, on earth; with it he shakes hands with His creatures, just as a man shakes hands with his brother.'"

STANDING AT MULTAZAM

As for clinging to the coverings of the Ka'ba, and pressing one's breast against its wall (at the part called al-multazam): your intention in the latter should be to draw close in love and yearning to the House and the Lord of the House, seeking grace through the contact and hoping for immunity from the Fire, not in the House but in every part of your body. In clinging to the coverings of the Ka'ba, your intention should be earnestly to seek forgiveness and to beg for mercy, just as one who has sinned against another will cling to his clothes while imploring his pardon, demonstrating that he has no refuge or recourse except to his munificence and forgiveness and that he will not let go until he is granted pardon and the assurance of future protection.

RUNNING BETWEEN AL-SAFA AND AL-MARWA (SA'Y)

As for running between al-Safa and al-Marwa in the courtyard of the House: this resembles the constant to-ing and fro-ing of a servant in a royal palace. The Pilgrim demonstrates devotion to duty and hopes to be viewed with compassion, just like one who enters the presence of a king and leaves without knowing whether the sovereign has decided to accept or to reject him. He keeps going back across the courtyard time after time, hoping to receive mercy the second time if not the first. While going back and forth between al-Safa and al-Marwa, the Pilgrim should recall how he will oscillate between the two scales

of the Balance at the site of the Resurrection. He should let al-Safa represent the scale of good deeds and al-Marwa the scale of bad deeds. Let him recall how he shall go from one of these to the other, seeing which is heavier or lighter, fluctuating between punishment and forgiveness.

STANDING AT 'ARAFAT

As for standing at 'Arafat: recall - when you behold the thronging crowds, hear the loud voices speaking in many tongues, and see the various groups following their Imams through the ritual observances, matching their actions to theirs- recall the site of the Resurrection, the gathering of the communities with their Prophets and leaders, each community following its Prophet, aspiring after his intercession, all wavering with equal uncertainty between rejection and acceptance. After that recollection, set your heart on supplication and entreaty to God, Great and Glorious is He, that you may be resurrected in the company of the mercifully successful ; make certain your hope of being answered, for the place is noble and mercy reaches all creatures from the majesty of the Divine presence through the venerable hearts of the mainstays of the earth .

The standing-place is never devoid of a generation of the saintly and holy, nor of a generation of the righteous and magnanimous. When their aspirations are joined, their hearts devoted exclusively to humble supplication and entreaty, their hands raised to God, Glorified is He, their necks outstretched and their eyes turned heavenward, as they aspire of one accord in quest of mercy, do not suppose that He will disappoint their hopes, frustrate their endeavour or begrudge them an overwhelming mercy. That is why it is said that it is a most grievous sin to be present at 'Arafat and to imagine that God, Exalted is He, does not forgive one. It would seem that the conjunction of aspirations, and the strength derived from contiguity with the saintly and holy people assembled from all quarters of the earth, constitute the secret of the Pilgrimage and its ultimate purpose, for there no way to obtain the mercy of God, Glorified is He, in such abundance as by the conjunction of aspiration and the simultaneous mutual support of all hearts.

CASTING PEBBLES (RAMY)

As for the casting of pebbles (at pillars representing the Devil): your purpose in this should be obedience to the Divine command, to demonstrate submissiveness and servitude and readiness to comply without any obvious rational or psychological justification .

It should also be one's intention to imitate Abraham, on him be peace, since it was in this place that Iblis, on him be the curse of God, Exalted is He, appeared to him to insinuate doubt about his Pilgrimage or to tempt him to disobey, whereupon God, Great and Glorious is He, commanded him to throw stones at him to repel him and thwart his design. If it should occur to you to think: 'Satan appeared to him and he actually saw him - that was why he stoned him - but the Devil is not showing himself to me,' you must realise that this very notion comes from the Devil; it is he who has lodged it in your heart, to weaken your determination in casting the stones, to make you imagine that it is a useless action, like some kind of game, so why should you bother with it? Therefore you must drive him from your soul by being earnest and brisk in stoning him, putting the Devil's nose out of joint.

You should be aware that, while outwardly casting pebbles at the pillar, you are really throwing them in the face of Satan and dealing him a mortal blow, for the only way to spite him is through your compliance with the command of God, Glorious and Exalted is He, in simple deference to His order without psychological or intellectual justification.

SACRIFICING ANIMALS

As for the slaughter of the sacrificial offering: be aware that this is a means of drawing close to God, Exalted is He, by virtue of obedience, so make the sacrifice perfect and hope that for every part of it God will deliver part of you from the Fire. A promise to this effect has come down to us. ³⁴ The bigger the sacrificial animal and the more ample its parts, therefore, the more comprehensive your redemption from the Fire.

VISITING MADINA

As for the visit to Madina: when your eyes alight on the city walls, remember that this is the town which God, Great and Glorious is He, selected for His Prophet, on him be peace, that he made it the goal of his migration, that this was his home where he promulgated the binding decrees of his Lord, Great and Glorious is He, established his own exemplary precedents, strove against his foes and proclaimed his religion until God, Great and Glorious is He, took him to Himself. It then came to house his tomb, and the tombs of two of his aides who upheld the truth after him, may God be pleased with them.

Envisage, next, the footprints of God's Messenger, on him be peace, as he went about the city. Aware that his precious feet have trodden in every place where feet may tread, you

must walk with dignity and caution. Recall how he used to walk about its streets, picturing to yourself his humility and his graceful gait. Think of the tremendous wisdom God, Glorified is He, entrusted to his heart, how He has exalted his memory along with His own, Exalted is He, even linking remembrance of him to remembrance of Himself,* and how He frustrated the work of those who showed him disrespect, if only by raising their voices above his. Reflect then on the great favour God, Exalted is He, bestowed on those who enjoyed his fellowship, and who were so fortunate as to see him in the flesh and to hear him speak. You should feel a great regret at having missed his companionship, and that of his Companions, may God be pleased with them. Go on to recall how you have missed seeing him in the Hereafter. Perhaps you will see him, but only in remorse, prevented from being accepted by him because of your evil conduct, for as he said, on him be peace: 'God will raise certain people to me and they will say: "O Muhammad!" I shall say: "Lord, these are my Companions." But He will say: "You do not know what practices they introduced after you had left them." Then I shall say: "Let them be far removed from me! ""

If you have ceased to respect his Sacred Law, be it only for one instant, you have no guarantee that you will not be debarred from him because of your deviation from his way. Great should be your hope, nonetheless, that God, Exalted is He, will not keep you from him after He has granted you faith and sent you forth from your homeland in order to visit him, not for purposes of trade or worldly gain, but purely from love of him and longing to behold his relics and the wall of his tomb. Since you embarked on this journey for that reason alone, having missed the opportunity of seeing him in the flesh, you surely deserve the compassionate regard of God, Exalted is He.

On reaching the Mosque, you should recall that this is the site selected by God, Glorified is He, for His Prophet, on him be peace, and for the first and most virtuous of the Muslims. Remember that the laws decreed by God, Glorified is He, were first observed at this spot, and that the best of God's creatures, living or dead, have gathered here. Be most hopeful, therefore, that God, Glorified is He, will mercifully bless your , entrance, and make that entrance in all humility and veneration. How worthy is this place to inspire humility in the heart of every believer! As Abu Sulayman is reported to have said: 'Uways al-Qarani, may God be pleased with him, went on Pilgrimage and entered Madina. When he stood at the gate of the Mosque he was told: "This is the tomb of the Prophet, on him be

peace. " He fell in a faint, and when he revived he said: "Send me away, for I cannot enjoy myself in a town where Muhammad, on him be peace, lies buried!"

VISITING GOD'S MESSENGER

As for visiting God's Messenger, on him be peace: you must stand before him in the manner we have described, visiting him in death as you would have visited him in life. Do not approach his tomb except as you would have approached his noble person if he had been alive. Just as you would have considered it respectful to refrain from touching or kissing his person, rather standing back and bowing before him, you should now act accordingly. Touching and kissing tomb's is a custom of Christians and Jews. Realise that he is aware of your presence, of your standing there and of your visit; that he is receiving your greeting and benediction. Imagine his noble form as it lies in the tomb in front of you. Feel in your heart his tremendous dignity. For he is reported as saying that God, Exalted is He, has appointed to his tomb an angel who conveys to him the salutations of those members of his Community who salute him. 56

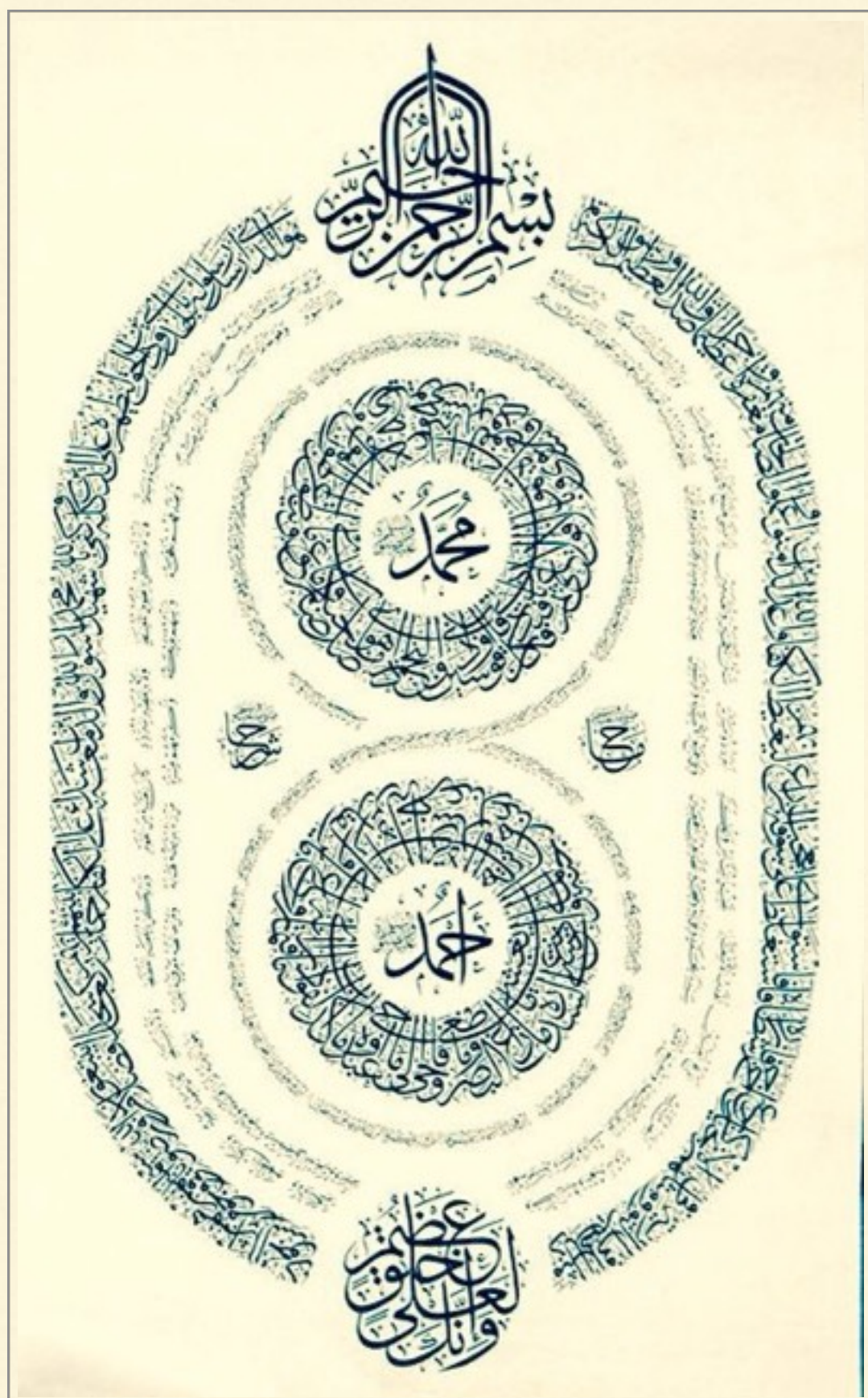
This refers to those who are not actually present, so how about those who leave home and cross desert wastes from longing to meet him, content merely to behold his noble shrine since they have no possibility of witnessing his noble countenance? He said, on him be peace: 'When someone blesses me once, God blesses him ten times.' 57 This refers to the reward for oral benediction, so how about the reward for coming in person to visit him?

Next, you should go to the pulpit of God's Messenger, on him be peace, imagining you can see the Prophet, on him be peace, ascending it. Picture to yourself his radiant appearance, as if he were there on the pulpit, surrounded by the Emigrants and Helpers, may God be pleased with them, as he urges them in his sermon to be obedient to God, Great and Glorious is He. Ask God, Great and Glorious is He, not to part you from him at the Resurrection.

Conclusions

Such are the duties of the heart at all stages of the Pilgrimage. When all have been completed, your heart should be beset with sadness, anxiety and fear, for you do not know whether you have had your Pilgrimage accepted and been firmly placed in the company of the loved ones, or had your Pilgrimage rejected and been included among the outcasts. The Pilgrim should discover this from his heart and its conduct. If he finds his heart ex-

tremely adverse to this world of delusion and inclined to that of intimacy with God, Exalted is He, and if he finds its conduct to have been weighed with the balance of the Sacred Law, then he may count on acceptance, for God, Exalted is He, accepts only those He loves. To those He loves He extends His care and the marks of His affection, guarding them from the onslaught of His enemy Iblis, on him be the curse of God. If these signs are apparent, they point to acceptance. Otherwise, it would seem likely that the Pilgrim has nothing to show for his journey but trouble and toil. From that we seek refuge with God, Glorified and Exalted is He'





23

The Night Vigil and Other Acts Of Ibadah

The Night Prayer

Qiyam al-Layl

QURANIC VERSES

The pertinent Quranic Verses are these words of God, Glorified and Exalted is He: 'Your Lord knows that you keep vigil nearly two-thirds of the night, or half or one-third of it, as do a group of those with you . . .' [al-Muzzammil, 73: 20]

'The first part of the night is indeed the time when impressions are strongest and speech most direct.' [al- Muzzammil, 73: 6]

'Their sides forsake their couches as they call on their Lord in fear and hope . . .' [al-Sajdah, 32: 16]

'Is he who devotes the night-hours to worship, prostrating himself and standing up in Prayer, aware of the Hereafter and hoping for the mercy of his Lord . . .?' [al-Zumar, 39: 9]

'And who spend the night before their Lord, prostrating themselves and standing up . . .'
[al-Furqan, 25: 64]

'Look for help in patience and Prayer* . . .' [al-Baqarah, 2:45]

TRADITIONS OF THE PROPHET

Relevant Traditions include the following sayings of the Prophet, on him be peace:

'While any one of you is sleeping, Satan ties three knots on the nape of your neck, and all night long he strikes the spot where each knot is tied, keeping you asleep. But if you wake up and remember God, Exalted is He, one knot is undone; if you perform the ritual ablution, a second knot is untied; if you perform the Prayer, the third knot is loosened and in the morning you will be fresh and in good spirits - otherwise the morning will find you bad-tempered and slothful.'

(On hearing about a man who used to sleep all night right through till morning): 'Satan has urinated in that man's ear.' 2

'Satan has a kind of snuff, a kind of syrup and a kind of powder. When he gets a man to take this snuff, the man becomes badly behaved; when he administers the syrup, the man becomes sharp- and evil-tongued; when he applies the powder, the man sleeps right through the night till morning.' 3

'Two cycles of Prayer performed in the middle of the night are better for a man than the world and all it contains. But for the hardship it would have caused my Community, I would have made them compulsory. 14

'There is an hour of the night when, if any Muslim asks God, Exalted is He, for something good, He is sure to grant it to him.' Or, in another version: '. . . asks God, Exalted is He, for something good of this world or the Hereafter. And that is every night. '

According to Mughira ibn Sha'ba, God's Messenger, on him be peace, would get up to pray until his feet were splitting. Someone said to him: 'Surely God has forgiven you your former and your latter sins?' But he replied: 'Should I not be a grateful servant?' 6 What is clearly implicit here is an allusion to increase in stature, for gratitude is the cause of augmentation. In the words of God, Exalted is He: 'If you give thanks, I will surely give you more . ' [Ibrahim , 14:7]

(La-in shakartum la-azidannakum.)

The Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'Abu Hurayra, do you wish to enjoy God's mercy in life and in death, in the tomb and at the Resurrection? Then get up at night and pray! Do you wish for your Lord's approval, Abu Hurayra? Then pray in the corners of your house; your house will be as radiant in heaven as the light of the planets and stars is to people on earth.' 7

The Prophet, on him be peace, also said: 'It is incumbent upon you to observe night vigil, for it was the practice of your righteous predecessors. Night vigil brings us close to God, Great and Glorious is He, atones for our sins, drives disease from the body and puts a stop to transgression.' 8

The Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'Whenever a man is overtaken by sleep while performing Prayer at night, the reward for his Prayer is recorded in his favour and his sleep is reckoned as Alms.' 9

God's Messenger, on him be peace, said to Abu Dharr: 'If I were intending to make a journey, would I get provisions ready for it?' 'Yes,' said he. 'Well, Abu Dharr, how about the journey on the way to the Hereafter? Shall I not tell you what will be useful to you on that day?' 'Of course! You are more to me than my father and mother.' 'Fast on a very hot day, in preparation for the Day of Resurrection; perform two Prayer cycles in the darkness of night, in readiness for the desolation of the tomb; make a Pilgrimage, for portentous events; do an act of charity, by giving Alms to a pauper, by speaking a word of truth, or by holding back a word of evil.' 10

It is related that in the time of the Prophet, on him be peace, there was a man who, when others took to their beds and closed their eyes, would get up to pray and recite the Quran, saying: 'Lord of the Fire, deliver me from it.' When this was mentioned to the Prophet, on him be peace, he said: 'Notify me when this happens.' Then he came to him and he heard for himself. When morning came he said to him: 'So-and-so, have you not asked God for Paradise?' But he replied: 'Messenger of God, I am not there, nor do my deeds amount to that.' Shortly after this, Gabriel, on him be peace, descended and said: 'Tell so-and-so that God has already delivered him from the Fire and admitted him to Paradise.' 11

It is further related that Gabriel, on him be peace, said: 'Ibn 'Umar would be such a good man if only he would pray at night!' The Prophet, on him be peace, informed him of this

and from then on he always kept night vigil. 12 ^

Nafi' said: 'Ibn 'Umar would pray through the night, then say: "Nafi', is it time for the pre-dawn meal?" When I said "No," he would resume his Prayers. Then he would ask me again, and when I said: "Yes," he would sit down and beg forgiveness of God, Exalted is He, till the dawn broke.'

Said 'Ali ibn Abi Talib: 'Yahya, the son of Zakariya, on both of them be peace, ate his fill of barley and went to sleep without reciting his devotions. When morning came, God, Exalted is He, said to him by inspiration: "Yahya, have you found a dwelling better for you than My dwelling? Or have you found a neighbourhood better for you than My neighbourhood? By My might and majesty, Yahya, if you took one look at Paradise your fat would melt and your soul would expire from yearning, while if you took one look at Hell your fat would melt, you would weep pus after tears and wear leather after haircloth. '"

God's Messenger, on him be peace, was told: 'So-and-so prays during the night and in the morning he steals.' Said he: 'His good action will cause him to desist.' 13

The Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'God grants His mercy to a man who gets up in the night to pray, then wakes up his wife to pray also, sprinkling water on her face if she is unwilling.' 4 He also said, on him be peace: 'God grants His mercy to a wife who gets up in the night to pray, then rouses her husband to pray also, sprinkling water on his face if he is unwilling.' 5 Further: 'If a man wakes up at night and rouses his wife, and they both perform two cycles of Prayer, they are recorded among the men and women who remember God very often.' 6

The Prophet, on him be peace, also said: 'The best Prayer after the (five) prescribed is the night vigil . '"

Said 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, may God be pleased with him: 'The Prophet, on him be peace, said: "If someone misses his portion of Quran-recitation, or part of it, through sleeping at night, then makes up his reading between the dawn- and midday-Prayers, it will be recorded in his favour as if he had done his reading at night. " ' 15

TRADITIONS OF THE COMPANIONS AND THEIR FOLLOWERS

Among the Traditions of the Companions, it is related that 'Umar, may God be pleased with him, would be going over the Verse from his nightly recitation till he fainted and dropped, so then he would be visited because of this for several days as a sick man receives visits. When others' eyes were asleep, Ibn Mas'ud, may God be pleased with him, would get up and until morning a droning sound could be heard from him like the droning of bees. It is said that Sufyan al-Thawri, may God grant him His mercy, ate his fill one night, saying: 'When the donkey gets extra fodder, it works all the harder. ' Then he kept vigil that night through till morning. When Ta'us, may God grant him His mercy, reclined on his bed he would feel as restless as peas in a frying-pan, so he would jump up and pray till morning. Then he would say: 'The recollection of Hell sends the sleep of the worshipful flying!'

Said al-Hasan, may God grant him His mercy: 'We know of no harder act of piety than enduring through the night and offering up our money.' He was asked: 'How is it that those who observe the Prayers of night vigil are among the people with the most beautiful faces?' To this he replied: 'Because they commune with the All-merciful and He clothes them in light from His light.'

A certain righteous man came home from his travels. His bed was laid out for him and he fell asleep on it, missing his recitations. He swore that never again would he sleep on a bed. 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Rawwad used to go to his bed when night had fallen, saying as he stroked it with his hand: 'You are soft indeed, but by God there is in Paradise a softer one than you!' Then he would spend the whole night in Prayer. Said al-Fudayl: 'To approach the night at the outset and the length of it appals me; then I start on the Quran and it is already morning before I have satisfied my craving. '

Said al-Hasan: 'A man commits a sin and because of it he is deprived of night vigil.' Al-Fudayl said: 'If you are incapable of keeping night vigil and of Fasting by day, you must know that you are under interdiction because of your many faults.' Sila ibn Ashyam, may God grant him His mercy, used to pray throughout the night. Shortly before dawn he would say: 'My God, it is not for the likes of me to ask for Paradise, but deliver me by Your mercy from the Fire!' A man said to one of the wise: 'I am really too weak to keep night

vigil.' So the wise man told him: 'My brother, do not disobey God, Exalted is He, and you need not stay up at night.'

Al-Hasan ibn Salih had a slave-girl, whom he sold to some people. This slave-girl got up in the middle of the night, crying: 'People of the house, Prayers, Prayers!' They said: 'Is it morning already? Has the dawn broken?' Said she: 'Do you mean to say you only observe the five set Prayers?' When they said yes, she went back to al-Hasan, saying: 'Master, would you sell me to people who only observe the set Prayers? Take me back !' So he took her back.

Said al-Rabl': 'I spent many nights in the house of al-Shafi'i, may God be pleased with him, and he never slept more than a very short part of the night.' Abul Juwayriya said: 'I kept company with Abu Hanifa, may God be pleased with him, for six months and there was not one night in all that time when he laid his side on the ground.' Abu Hanifa used to stay awake half the night, but as he was passing some people he heard them say: 'This man stays awake the whole night,' so he retorted: 'I am ashamed to be credited with something I do not do.' From then on he took to staying awake all night long. It is related too that he had no bedding for the night.

They say that Malik ibn Dinar, may God be pleased with him, spent the whole night through till morning repeating this Verse:

'Or do those who commit bad deeds suppose that We shall make them like those who believe and do good works . . .' [al-Jathiyah, 45: 21]

(Am hasiba-lladhlina-jtarahu-lsayyi'ati an naj'alahum ka-lladhlina amanu wa- 'amilu-lsalihat.)

Said al-Mughlra ibn Habib: 'I noticed Malik ibn Dinar performing ablution after the late evening Prayer, then he went and stood at his place of Prayer. He took hold of his beard, and choking with tears, began to say: "My God, pre-serve Malik's grey hairs from the Fire! You know the inhabitant of Paradise from the inhabitant of Hell-fire, so which of the two is Malik?" He went on saying this till break of day.

Malik ibn Dinar also said: "One night I went to sleep, for-getting my recitations. In my dreams I found myself with a most beautiful girl. In her hand she held a piece of paper and asked me: 'Can you read well?' When I told her I could, she handed me the paper, on

which these lines were written: Have pleasures and desires distracted you from Paradise with maidens fair and sweet?

There you shall dwell eternally and sport with all the lovely ladies you shall meet.

From dreams awake and - better far than sleep - recite Quran until the dawn you greet."

It is said that when Masruq went on Pilgrimage he spent every night prostrating himself in worship. And it is related on the authority of Azhar ibn Mughith (one of those devoted to constant Prayer) that he said: 'I dreamt I saw a woman unlike earthly women, so I said to her: "Who are you?" and she replied: "One of the maidens of Paradise." I then asked her to marry me and she said: "Put your proposal to my master, and pay me my dower." "And what is your dower?" I asked. "Long Prayers of night vigil," she replied. ۱

Yusuf ibn Mihran said: 'I have heard that beneath the Throne there is an angel in the shape of a cock. Its talons are of pearl and its spurs of green topaz. When the first third of the night has passed it flaps its wings, crows and says: "Let those who get up arise! " When half the night is gone by it again flaps its wings, crows and says: "Let those who keep vigil arise!"

Then when two-thirds of the night have passed it once more flaps its wings, crows and says: "Let those who pray arise!" Finally, when dawn breaks it flaps its wings, crows and says: "Let the heedless arise, bearing the weight of their sins!"

They say that Wahb ibn Munabbih al-Yamam never laid his side on the ground in thirty years, and that he used to say: 'I would rather see a devil in my house than a pillow, for that is an invitation to sleep.' He had a leather cushion, on which he would place his breast when sleep overpowered him. After nodding a few times he would then make haste to pray.

Someone said: 'I saw the Lord of Glory in a dream and heard Him say: "By My Glory and Majesty, I shall surely honour the abode of Sulayman al-Taymi, for he has prayed to me each morning for forty years without breaking his ablution made for late evening prayer.'" He is said to have held the view that when sleep penetrates the heart it invalidates the ritual ablution.

In one of the ancient scriptures, these words are attributed to God, Exalted is He: 'My servant who is truly My servant is he who does not wait for the cock to crow before he gets up.'

Invoking Blessings upon God's Messenger

The merit of invoking blessings upon God's Messenger, God bless him and give him peace; his special virtue, God bless him and give him peace

God, Exalted is He, said: 'God and His angels bless the Prophet. O you who believe, bless him also, and greet him with peace.' [al- Ahzab, 33:56]

(Inna-llaha wa-mala'ikatahu yusalluna 'ala-lnabfyi ya ayyuha-Uadhina amanu sallu 'alayhi wa-sallimu tasllma.)

According to Tradition: 'The Prophet, on him be peace, came one day - his face aglow with good tidings - and said: "Gabriel, on him be peace, came to me and said: 'It will surely please you to know, Muhammad, that no member of your Community ever invokes a single blessing on you without my invoking ten upon him, and that no member of your Community ever salutes you with peace without my saluting him ten times.'" 1

The Prophet, on him be peace, also said: 'When anyone blesses me, the angels invoke the same blessings on him; so let him give and receive accordingly, whether little or much, 72 Said he, on him be peace: 'The person most worthy of me is he who blesses me most often.' 3

The Messenger, on him be peace, said: 'It is the height of meanness in a believer for him to hear me mentioned and not to bless me.' 4 He said, on him be peace: 'Multiply benediction upon me on the day of Congregational Prayer (Friday). 5 i

The Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'Ten good deeds are recorded in favour of any member of my Community who blesses me, and ten bad deeds are erased from his record.' 6 And he said, on him be peace: 'If anyone says, when he hears the Call to Prayer and the Signal to begin Prayer: "O God, Lord of this Perfect Call and steadfast Prayer, bless Muhammad, Your servant and Your messenger; grant him mediation, merit, exalted rank and intercession on the Day of Resurrection" - he is entitled to my intercession. 77

God's Messenger, on him be peace, said: 'If anyone blesses me in writing, the angels will not cease asking forgiveness for him as long as my name is in that book.' 8 He said, on him be peace: 'There are angels on earth who travel around to bring me salutation from my Community.' 9 And he said, on him be peace: 'No-one salutes me without God's restoring my spirit to me so that I may return his salutation. "

When they asked him: 'O Messenger of God, how should we invoke blessings upon you?' he replied: 'Say: "O God, bless Muhammad, Your servant, and his family and his wives and his offspring, as You have blessed Abraham and the family of Abraham. Bestow Your grace upon Muhammad, his wives and his offspring, as you have bestowed Your grace upon Abraham and the family of Abraham. You are indeed Praiseworthy and Glorious."' 1

It is related that, after the death of God's Messenger, on him be peace, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, may God be pleased with him, was heard weeping and saying:

'You are more to me than my father and mother, O Messenger of God! There was once a palm tree stump on which you used to stand when you addressed the people. But when the people grew in number, you adopted a pulpit to let them all hear you. The tree stump then mourned your separation, until you laid your hand upon it and it was reassured. Still greater right has your Community to pine for you now you have parted from them.

'You are more to me than my father and mother, O Messenger of God! So great is your merit in His sight that He has equated obedience to you with obedience to Himself, for He said, Great and Glorious is He: "Whoever obeys the Messenger obeys God." [al-Nisa', 4: 80]

'You are more to me than my father and mother, O Messenger of God! So great is your merit in His sight that He told you you were pardoned before He told you the offence, for He said, Great and Glorious is He: "God has pardoned you - why did you grant them leave (of absence from military: duty)?"* [al-Tawbah, 9: 43]

'You are more to me than my father and mother, O Messenger of God! So great is your merit in His sight that He sent you as the last of the Prophets, yet mentioned you among the first of them, for He said, Great and Glorious is He: "Then We exacted a covenant from the Prophets - from you, from Noah, from Abraham . . ." [al-Ahzab, 33: 7]

'You are more to me than my father and mother, O Messenger of God! So great is your merit in His sight that the people of Hell dearly wish they had obeyed you; as they suffer torment among its layers they say: "If only we had obeyed God, and had obeyed the Messenger!" [al-Ahzab, 33: 66]

'You are more to me than my father and mother, O Messenger of God! While God gave Moses, son of 'Imran, a rock from which streams gushed forth, this is not more miraculous than when water welled from your fingers, God bless you. 12

'You are more to me than my father and mother, O Messenger of God! It is true that God gave Solomon, son of David , "the wind whose morning course was a month's journey and its evening course a month's journey." [Saba', 34: 12] Yet this was not so miraculous as Buraq, on which you ascended to the seventh heaven, then ended your night by performing the morning Prayer in the valley bed - God bless you. 13

'You are more to me than my father and mother, O Messenger of God! God did indeed grant Jesus, Mary's son, the power to bring the dead to life. Yet this is no greater miracle than when the poisoned sheep spoke to you, roasted as it was; for its leg said to you: "Do not eat me! I am poisoned." 54

'You are more to me than my father and mother, O Messenger of God! Noah once cursed his people, saying: "Lord, leave none of the unbelievers on the earth!" [Nuh, 71: 26] Had you cursed us like that, we should have perished. Yet, though your back was trampled, your face bloodied and your teeth broken,' 5 you refused to say anything but good; your words were: "O God, forgive my people, for they do not know." 16

'You are more to me than my father and mother, O Messenger of God! Though your years were few and your life-span short, you were followed by many more than followed Noah, for all his great age and longevity. Many believed in you, but only a few believed along with him.

'You are more to me than my father and mother, O Messenger of God! If you had sat with none but your peer, you would not have sat with us; if you had married only your equals you would not have trusted us. And yet, by God, you did sit with us, marry among us and trust us. You dressed in wool;' 7 you rode the donkey and I rode behind you; 18 you set your food on the ground; 19 you licked your fingers in all humility 10 - God bless you and give you peace.'

Someone said: 'I used to write down Tradition, invoking blessings upon the Prophet, God bless him and give him peace, but not saluting him with peace. Then I saw the Prophet, God bless him and give him peace, in a dream, in which he said to me: "Do you not complete the benediction for me in your writing?" Since then I have never written without invoking upon him both blessings and peace.'

Abul Hasan is reported as saying: 'I saw the Prophet, on him be peace, in a dream, and I said: "O Messenger of God, with what was al-Shafi'i rewarded on your behalf, for saying in his book, al-Risala: 'And God bless Muhammad - as the mindful remember and the heedless forget to mention?'" Said he, God bless him and give him peace: "He was rewarded on my behalf with not having to face the Reckoning."

The Merit of Seeking Forgiveness

ISTIGHFAR

God, Great and Glorious is He, says: 'Those who, when they have committed an indecency or wronged themselves, remember God and seek forgiveness for their sins . . .' [Al 'Imran, 3: 135]

According to 'Alqama and al-Aswad, 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud said 'In the Book of God, Great and Glorious is He, there are two Verses. If a servant recites them after committing a sin, and if he seeks God's forgiveness, God will forgive him. They are:

"Those who, when they have committed an indecency or wronged themselves . . ." [Al 'Imran, 3: 135]

(Wa-lladhlna idha fa'alu fahishatan aw zalamu anfusahum.)

and:

"He who does evil or wrongs himself, but then seeks forgiveness of God, will find God Forgiving, Compassionate." [al-Nisa', 4: 110]

(Wa-man ya'mal su'an aw yazlim nafsahu thumma yastaghfiri-Ilaha ya jidi-Haha ghafurun rahima.)

God, Great and Glorious is He, says: 'Celebrate the praises of your Lord and seek His forgiveness. Surely He is Ever-relenting.' [al-Nasr, 110: 3]

The Exalted One also says: Those who seek forgiveness in the early morning hours . . . ' [Al 'Imran, 3 : 17] -, God's Messenger, on him be peace, would often say: 'O God, to You be all glory and praise! O God, forgive me. Surely You are the Ever-relenting and Compassionate One.'

Other sayings of the Prophet, on him be peace: 'To one who often seeks His forgiveness, God, Great and Glorious is He, grants relief from all troubles, a way out of all distress, and sustenance beyond his expectation.' 2

'I seek forgiveness of God, Exalted is He, and turn to Him in repentance seventy times a day.' 3 (Even though his past and future sins had been forgiven!)

'My heart becomes clouded unless I seek forgiveness of God, Exalted is He, one hundred times a day.' 4

Though your sins be as many as the flecks of foam on the sea, the grains of sand in the desert, the leaves on the trees or the days of the world, God will forgive them if you say three times at bedtime: "I seek forgiveness of the One Almighty God, the Ever-living, the Self-subsisting, and I repent to Him." 5 (According to another Tradition, this will obtain forgiveness 'even for one who deserts the ranks. ') s

Hudhayfa said: 'I used to speak harshly to my family, so I said to God's Messenger, on him be peace: "O Messenger of God, I fear that my tongue may lead me to Hell. " The blessed Prophet replied: "How about seeking forgiveness? I beg God's forgiveness a hundred times each day.'"

'A'isha, may God be pleased with her, said: 'God's Messenger, on him be peace, said to me: "If you have committed a sin, seek forgiveness of God and repent to Him. Repentance of sin means feeling remorse and seeking forgiveness.'"

God's Messenger, on him be peace, used to seek forgiveness with this Prayer: 'O God, forgive me my mistakes, my ignorance, my extravagance and what You know better than I. O God, forgive me my frivolity and my over-earnestness, my faults and wrong intentions and all my shortcomings. O God, forgive me what I have done in the past and what I shall do in the future, what I have done in secret and what I have done in public, and what You know better than I. You are the Advancer and the Delayer and over all things You have power.' 7

'Ali, may God be pleased with him, said: 'I am the sort of man who would benefit as much as God allowed from hearing a Tradition from God's Messenger, on him be peace. When one of his Companions told me a Tradition, I would ask him to swear to its authenticity. I would trust him once he had sworn.

Abu Bakr, may God be pleased with him, was always truthful. He once told me he had heard God's Messenger, on him be peace, say: "If someone commits a sin, but then takes a thorough ritual ablution, performs a Prayer of two cycles and seeks forgiveness of God, Great and Glorious is He, his sin will be forgiven." Then Abu Bakr recited the Verse: "Those who, when they have committed an indecency or wronged themselves . . ."[Al 'Imran, 3:135]

According to Abu Hurayra, may God be pleased with him, the Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'When a believer commits a sin, a black spot forms on his heart. If he repents and mends his ways and seeks forgiveness, the spot is purged from his heart. But if he goes on sinning, the spot will grow until it covers his heart all over.' That is the 'rust' which God, Great and Glorious is He, mentions in His Book: 'No indeed! What they have earned is rust on their hearts.' [al-Mutaffifin, 83: 14]

(Kalla bal rana 'ala qulubihim ma kanu yaksibun.)

According to Abu Hurayra, may God be pleased with him, the Prophet, on him be peace, said: 'God, Glorified and Exalted is He, will raise His servant to high rank in Paradise and he will say: "My Lord, how have I deserved this?" Then God, Great and Glorious is He, will say: "By virtue of your son's Prayer for forgiveness on your behalf.'" 8

According to 'A'isha, may God be pleased with her, God's Messenger, on him be peace, said: 'O God, make me one of those who rejoice when they have done a good deed, and who seek forgiveness when they have done something bad.'

God's Messenger, on him be peace, said: 'When a man commits a sin and says: "O God, forgive me!" God, Great and Glorious is He, says: "My servant has committed a sin, but he knows he has a Lord who takes account of sin and forgives it. O My servant, do what you want, for I have already forgiven you.'" 10

Other sayings of the Prophet, on him be peace: 'A man who seeks forgiveness is not a persistent sinner, even if he lapses seventy times a day . " 1

'A man who has never done a good deed looks heavenwards and says: "Surely I have a Lord. O Lord, forgive me!" and God, Great and Glorious is He, says: "I have already forgiven you."' 12

If a man commits a sin, but knows that God sees him, he will receive forgiveness even without asking for it."

'God, Exalted is He, says: "O My servants, you are all sinners except for those I have pardoned. So seek My forgiveness and I will forgive you. I will gladly forgive anyone who knows that I possess the power to forgive him."' 14

'If a man says: "Glory be to You! I have wronged myself and done something bad, so forgive me, for there is no one to forgive sins but You," his sins are forgiven, even if they are like a trail of ants. " s

It is related that the best Prayer for forgiveness is this: 'O God, You are my Lord and I am Your servant. You created me. I am fulfilling my covenant and promise to You as best I can. I take refuge with You from the evil I have perpetrated. I acknowledge You as the source of my blessings, and I acknowledge my own responsibility for my sins. I have wronged myself and I confess my sin, so forgive me my sins those I have committed in the past and those I shall commit in future. Surely no one forgives all sins but You.' 1 *

Other wise sayings: Khalid ibn Ma'dan said: 'God, Great and Glorious is He, says: "Dearest to Me of My servants are those who love one another for love of Me, whose hearts are bound to the Mosque, and who seek forgiveness at the break of day. When I wish to punish the rest of earth's people, I shall remember them; I shall leave them alone and turn the punishment away from them.'"

Qatada said: 'The Quran shows you your sickness and your medicine. Your sickness is sin and your medicine is the Prayer for forgiveness.'

'All, may God ennoble his countenance, said: 'It puzzles me that a man should perish when he possesses the means to save himself.' When they asked him to explain, he said: 'The Prayer for forgiveness!'

He also used to say: 'God, Glorified and Exalted is he, never inspires a man to seek forgiveness if He intends to punish him.'

Al-Fudayl said: 'When a servant says: "I seek God's forgiveness," the meaning of his words is: "Let my sins be few!"'

A certain scholar said: 'Man is between sin and grace. Nothing can improve matters except praising God and seeking His forgiveness.'

Al-Rabi' ibn Khaytham said: 'Beware of saying: "I seek God's forgiveness and I repent to Him," for it is a sin and a lie if not acted upon. It is better to say: "O God, forgive me and turn towards me . "'

Al-Fudayl said: 'To seek forgiveness without renunciation is the repentance of liars. '

Rabi'a al-'Adawiya, may God be pleased with her, said: 'Our Prayer for forgiveness needs many Prayers for forgiveness. '

A wise man said: 'To seek forgiveness without feeling remorse is to mock God, Great and Glorious is He, without being aware of it.'

A Bedouin was heard to say, as he clung to the covering of the Ka'ba: 'O God, I seek Your forgiveness, although I shamefully persist in sin. How could I stop begging Your forgiveness, when I know how generously You pardon? What loving kindness You bestow on me, when You have no need of me at all! How often I offend and anger You, although I need You so badly! What a Lord - He fulfils all His promises, yet pardons when he threatens! Take my great sin into Your mighty pardon , O Most Compassionate of the compassionate !'

Abu 'Abdullah al-Warraaq said: 'Though your sins be as numerous as raindrops and the flecks of foam on the sea, they will be wiped away from you, God willing, if you offer this supplication to your Lord in all sincerity: "O God, I beg Your forgiveness for every sin, for I have lapsed again after turning to You in repentance. I seek Your forgiveness for all the promises I have made to You, but failed to carry out. I ask Your forgiveness for every action I intended to do for Your sake alone, but that I mixed with something other than You. I seek Your forgiveness for every blessing You have bestowed on me, but that I used in disobedience of You. O Knower of the invisible and of the visible, I beg Your forgiveness for every sin I have committed by the light of day and in the darkness of night, in public and in solitude, in secret and for all to see. O Benevolent One!"' Some say this is the

Prayer for forgiveness used by the Prophet Adam, on him be peace. According to others, it is the supplication of the Prophet Khidr, on him be peace.

Abbreviations used in Notes to Traditions cited:

AD - Aba Da'ud

IHib -IbnHibban

Ah -Ahmad

IM - Ibn Maja

B -al-Bukhari

'Ir - al-'Iraqi

Baz - al-Bazzar

M -Muslim

Bhq - al-Baihaqi

Mbrk - Ibn al-Mubarak

Drq - al-Daraqutni

Nas - ai-Nasa'i

Hkm -ai-Hakim

Tbr - al-Tabarani

Hrth - al-Harith

Trm - al-Tirmidhi

Hsnb.SaTd- Hasan ibn Sa'id

Notes

Chapter 1: The Prayer

1 Trm: hasan.

2B.

3Tbr/Hsnb. Sa'id: da'if.

4 B/M.

5 AD/Nas/IMetai.

6M.

7M.

8 Malik: mursal.

9 Tbr - different wording.

10 Bhq etal: da'if.

11 B/M.

12 Ahmad.

13 AD.

14 Tbr - latter part only.

15 Baz - doubtful isnad.

16 Ah/Bhq.

17 Hkm.

18 Untraced.

19 Bhq - uncertain isnad.

20 Mbrk -mursal.

21 Hrth: spurious ace. 'Ir.

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- 22 Ah-sahih.
- 23 Ibn'Adi.
- 24 Tbr/Bhq- da'if.
- 25 B/M.
- 26 B/M.
- 27 M.
- 28 Not traced beyond Sa'id ibn al- Mu-
sayyab.
- 29 Trm.
- 30 Mbrk -mursal.
- 31 IM/M.
- 32 M.
- 33 M.
- 34 M/IM/Ah.
- 35 B/M - slightly different version.
- 36 Trm/Nas.
- 37 AD/Trm: hasan-sahih.
- 38 IM/Hkm/Bhq.
- 39 Tbr-sahlh (slight variant.)
- 40 Azdl- mursal.
- 41 Untraced in this wording.
- 42 Trm -da'if.
- 43 IM ~ sahih ; also B/M - without
comparison to grouse's nest.
- 44 Tbr -da'if.
- 45 B/M. '
- 46 Drq -da'if.
- 47 B/M.
- 48 IHib/Hkm.
- 49 Abu Na'frn- da'if. Variant with sound is-
nad goes back to the Companions.
- 50 IM/Hkm- sahfh .
- 51 Emphatic particle innama, followed by
the definite article al-.
- 52 Nas.
- 53 Ad/Nas.
- 54 B/M.
- 55 'Welfare due': seep. 53.

AL -GHAZALI, Abu Hamid Muhammad (450/1058-505/1111), a towering figure in Islam, was born at Tus near Mashhad in Iran, in the early Seljuq era and studied theology and law at Nishapur. His formidable intellectual abilities soon won him honour and respect. In the court of the famous Seljuqi Prime Minister, Nizam al-Mulk, and, while still in his early thirties, he became Professor at Madrasa Nijamiyya in Baghdad and attained great prominence there, But soon he abandoned his professorship for a decade of contemplation and study. He returned for a while in lecture at the Nizamiyya in Nishapur before his death.

He wrote a large number of works, which include *Al-Munqidh min al-Dalal* (a biographical account), *Tahafat al Falasifa*; but his magnum opus remains the *Ihya Ulum al Din* (The Revival Of Religious Sciences) in four volumes, compiled during his period of retirement and contemplation.

This published book is called “Inner Dimensions Of Islamic Worship” (translated by Muhtar Holland) consists of selections from Al-Ghazali's *Ihya Ulum al-Din*, translated into English, wherein he leads us in his characteristically powerful and inspiring way into those dimensions of Islamic worship rites Prayer, Almsgiving, Fasting, Pilgrimage, etc. which are essential to the fulfillment of their inner quality and reaping the harvests of spiritual, moral and social upliftment that must be their reward.

The book will be of immense help to the countless young men and women of our times who are rapidly growing in their commitment to Islam and ever trying to bring their lives under the sovereignty of the One God - a task which is impossible unless one can develop the immense inner resource; which Islamic worship offers.

