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PATIENCE THE SHIELD OF THE PIOUS



Osman Nuri Efendi
Do We Resemble Him In
Our Behavior?

Prof. M. Yasar Kandemir
The Flower of Patience

Melek Zeynep
The Miracles Around Us

Dear Readers,

"If aught that is good befalls you, it grieves them; but if some misfortune overtakes you, they rejoice at it. But if ye are patient and do right, not the least harm will their cunning do to you." (Al-i Imran, 3/120)

The concept of patience, according to Islamic law, is refraining from that which is considered to be unlawful or unacceptable and restricting oneself to that which is lawful and permissible. Patience is a virtue that has many applications in various aspects of life.

Praise and patience are the main requirements for a human being to be successful in this life of trial; this is clearly apparent in the following verses of the Qur'an:

"Every soul shall have a taste of death: and We test you by evil and by good by way of trial. To Us must ye return." (Anbiya, 21/35) and *"Be sure We shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods, lives and the fruits (Of your toil), but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere."* (Baqarah, 2/155)

For this reason, here at Wisdom we have decided to dedicate this issue to the 'Importance of Patience in the lives of Muslims'.

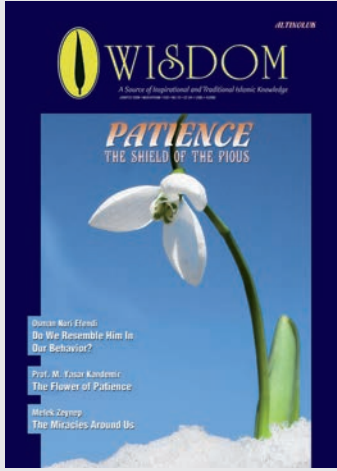
Professor Hasan Kamil Yılmaz's article is concerned with the virtues of being content with everything that Allah has given to us, while Professor M.Yasar Kandemir explains how we need to be patient and advise others to be patient when faced with trials throughout life on the true path. Also in this issue Gusztav Bogнар has written a description of the difficulties and trials of being a Muslim in Hungary.

In this edition you can also read our mentor Osman Nuri Efendi's article from the second part of a four-part series, entitled "This is How Much They Loved Him", which explains the love and the obedience of the Companions of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

May Allah make us of those who have patience in times of hardship and those who are thankful for His blessings.

Amen!

Elif Katici
editor@sufiwisdom.net



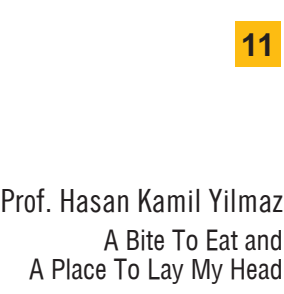
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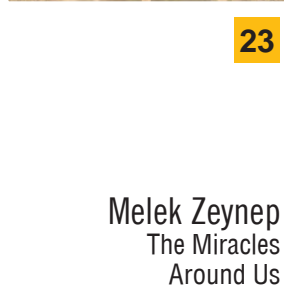
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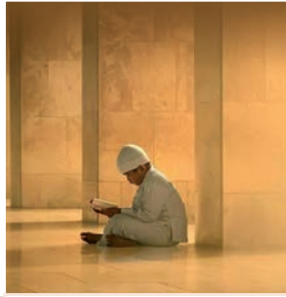
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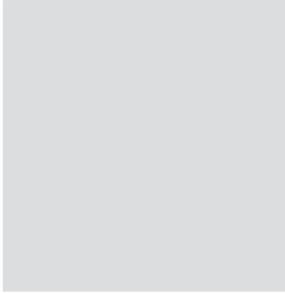
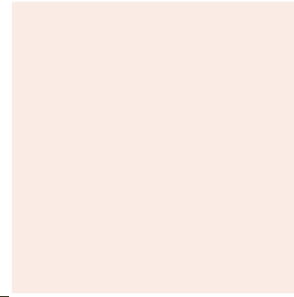
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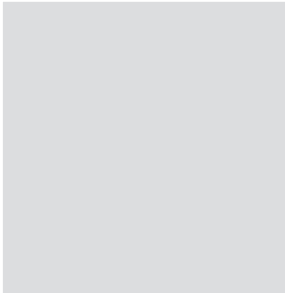
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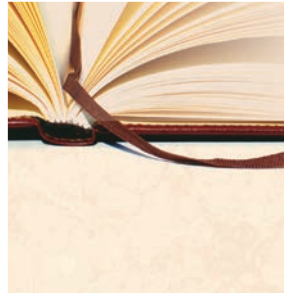
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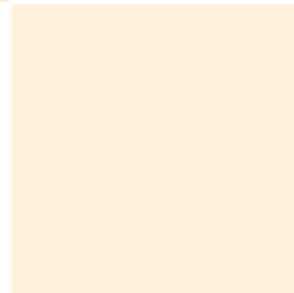


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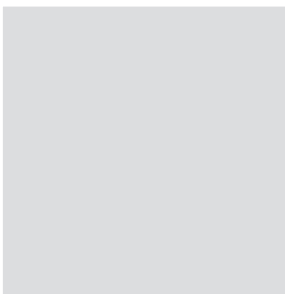


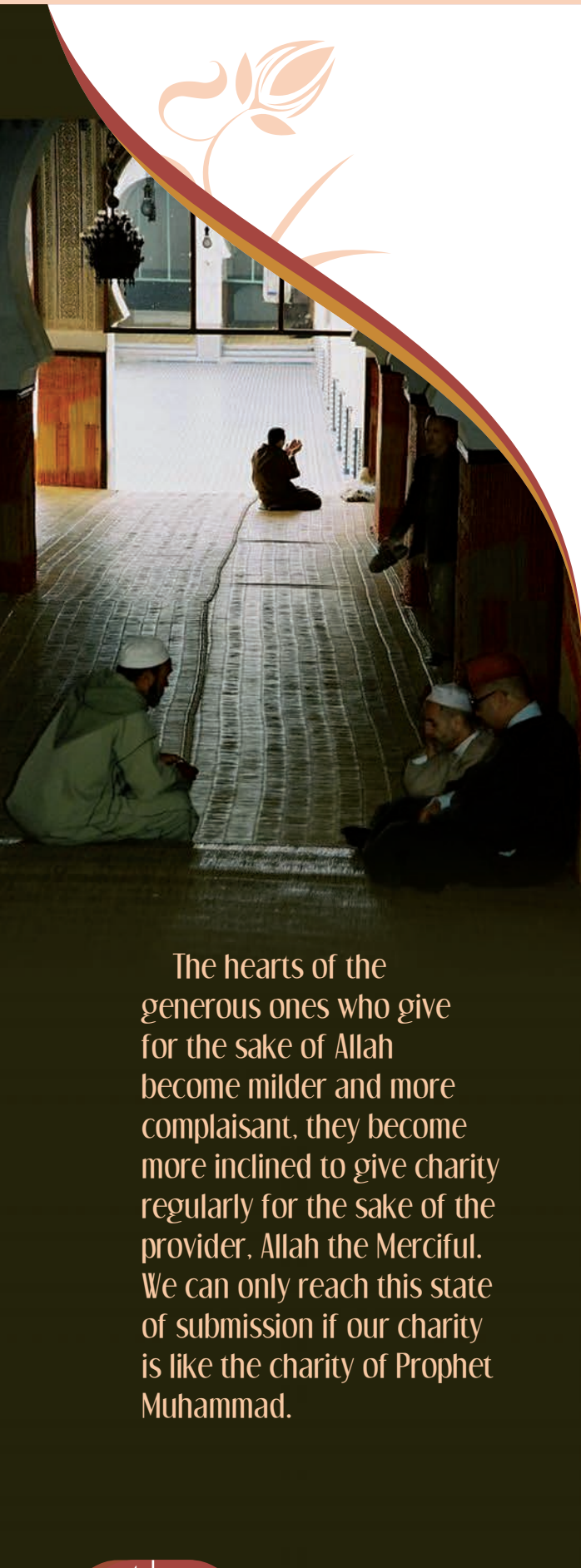
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The hearts of the generous ones who give for the sake of Allah become milder and more complaisant, they become more inclined to give charity regularly for the sake of the provider, Allah the Merciful. We can only reach this state of submission if our charity is like the charity of Prophet Muhammad.

DO WE RESEMBLE HIM IN OUR BEHAVIOR?

A DIFFERENT KIND OF SILENCE...

Mawlana said: "Uthman was a man with a great love for Allah; he would sit where the sermon was to be recited and he would remain silent until the call for asr prayer. All the time that this great Caliph was sitting there nobody could talk or leave the mosque. Solemnity would surround everyone, from the learned to the Bedouins and the ignorant ones; the interior and the dome of the mosque were filled with the light of Allah. The wise ones could see the Divine light of Allah, but the unaware just felt the heat of the blazing sun."

The reason for this vision and its effect was the outstanding behavior and spiritual status of Caliph Uthman; he had a manner that resembled that of Prophet Muhammad. His actions and morality were like those of Prophet Muhammad and this was because Uthman felt so much love and affection towards the Prophet.

PERFORMING TAWAF WITH THE PROPHET

Prophet Muhammad left with the Companions to perform the umrah (lesser pilgrimage) while the Quraysh were still in Mecca. The Quraysh would not let Prophet Muhammad and the Companions complete their pilgrimage, so the Prophet sent Uthman on ahead to Mecca with the hope that he might be able to change their minds. Prophet Muhammad waited in Hudaibia with the Companions.

When Hazrat Uthman reached Mecca he informed the Quraysh of the Muslims' intention to perform the lesser pilgrimage; however permission was not given to them to enter the city and they kept Uthman waiting there. They told him: "You can perform *tawaf* around the Kaaba if you wish!"

But due to his loyalty and affection for Prophet Muhammad, Uthman refused this offer; he told them: "I cannot do this before the Messenger of Allah has had the chance to perform *tawaf* (around the Kaaba)." (Ahmad)

As for his absence from the Ar-Ridwan pledge of allegiance, had there been any person in Mecca more respectable than 'Uthman (to be sent as a representative). Allah's Apostle would have sent him instead of him. No doubt, Allah's Apostle had sent him, and the incident of the Ar-Ridwan pledge of Allegiance happened after 'Uthman had gone to Mecca. Allah's Apostle held out his right hand saying, 'This is 'Uthman's hand.' He stroke his (other) hand with it saying, 'This (pledge of allegiance) is on the behalf of 'Uthman. (Bukhari, 57/48)

A BLESSING FROM HIS STATE OF GLORY

Like the other Companions, Uthman was a reflection of Prophet Muhammad's lofty morals; he was a reflection full of light and sincere affection. It was because of this that during his

caliphate the energy, prosperity and spirituality gained from the silences in his sermons were much more meaningful and powerful than any words could ever be.

The mystery of the great morality of Sayyidina Abu Bakr, Sayyidina Umar and Sayyidina Ali along with the other Companions was due to the essence of love and devotion they felt from submitting themselves to the morality of Prophet Muhammad; this is the greatest character trait a person can ever attain. The attainment of such prosperity is something we can never comprehend; with their devoted actions and spiritual thoughts they became the light of faith.

Thus the main objective in our lives should be to obtain blessings from the way of life and the actions of Prophet Muhammad so that we can be guided in faith; the only way to achieve the sincerity and beauty of faith with morality and guidance is with this great blessing.

Those who gain the blessing of Prophet Muhammad's morality will be a ray of his eternal light and will truly understand the revelations of divinity, while the heedless ones will remain blind and perish in the turbulence of foolishness.

The doors of faith, knowledge, wisdom and true understanding of Allah Almighty will



The main objective in our lives should be to obtain blessings from the way of life and the actions of Prophet Muhammad so that we can be guided in faith; the only way to achieve the sincerity and beauty of faith with morality and guidance is with this great blessing.

only open when a person gains the blessing of Prophet Muhammad's morality and life.

The souls and minds of those who are unaware of his divine light will remain deprived and those who reject Prophet Muhammad, who have not obtained the blessing of his morality in their souls, are among the pitiful ones. Even though Abu Jahil said to him "You are Muhammad, the truthful one", he never accepted the faith, because he had been deprived of the affection, morality and blessings of the Prophet.

As Mawlana beautifully explains:

"The holy wisdom of Ahmad was of no mystery to anyone; everybody knew that this holy person of piety had great wisdom and knowledge, but the spirituality of his divine revelations and advice was not understood by all. His spiritual inspiration and knowledge were so outstanding, so great, that it was not possible for any mind to comprehend completely. This superior essence of truth was beyond the universe of meaning, unreachable by mere intelligence or logic.

"Some people even saw these actions of divine spirituality as madness and were sometimes astonished or surprised; to be able to understand these great truths a person's spiritual knowledge and thought have to be of equal status. In short, spirituality of the mind is necessary.

"Even Moses, who received the word of Allah, faced difficulties accepting the manifestations of the truth delivered by Al-Khidr. So those who supposedly have great intelligence and opinions, tell me, what use is this intelligence that is equal to that of a mouse?

"Never forget that if a grain tried to lift a mountain, the mountain would crush it."

This is reason why the only way to the true path of intelligence and understanding is submission to Allah Almighty and behaving in the manner of his Prophet; the soul of whoever submits with the love of the light of all lights will become the crescent moon of eternity.

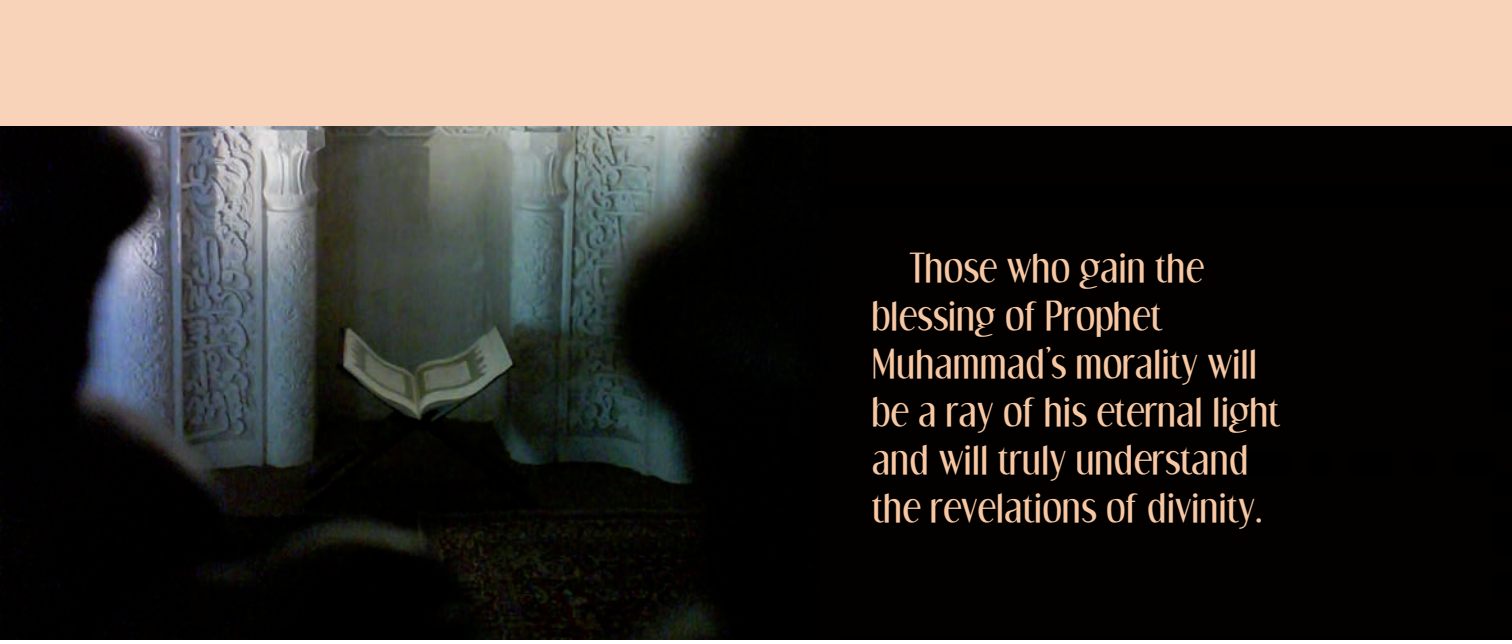
SUBMITTING WITH AFFECTION

Submission to Allah with affection for Prophet Muhammad, while embracing his morality and his light of guidance, should be our way of life. Submitting with true affection means including the spirituality of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his way of living into every aspect of our lives.

This is the only way we can resemble him in our ways and actions, so we must follow his guidance and question ourselves with every action and move that is made throughout our lives.

Even the enemy, those who had drowned in the ocean of their egos, agreed that Prophet Muhammad was a person of truth and one they trusted. They had no choice but to acknowledge the great character of the Prophet.





Those who gain the blessing of Prophet Muhammad's morality will be a ray of his eternal light and will truly understand the revelations of divinity.

ARE OUR PROMISES LIKE HIS?

Allah the Merciful revealed: *"Fulfil (every) engagement, for (every) engagement will be enquired into (on the Day of Reckoning)." (Isra, 17/34)*

"Those who faithfully observe their trusts and their covenants." (Mu'minun, 23/8)

"Whenever ye speak, speak justly, even if a near relative is concerned; and fulfill the Covenant of Allah." (An'am, 6/152)

Even if a person takes great care to comply with just fulfilling a trust, they will find that their actions, on the whole, will change and develop, as complying with the promise given to Allah Almighty means adhering to the path of the righteous in this life.

This is why the Messenger of Allah said that faith and deceit could not exist side by side, and why he put such great importance on keeping words or promises. There are clear accounts that Prophet Muhammad behaved in such a way even before he was blessed with prophethood. Abdullah bin Ebil Hamsa reported: "Before he was blessed with prophethood I traded with the Messenger. I owed him some money and promised that if he waited I would bring him the money. I forgot my promise; when I remembered three days later I went to where I had spoken to Prophet Muhammad and found him waiting in exactly the same place. Although he had waited for such a long time he did not reproach me, all he said was: 'You have caused me some trouble, young man. I have been waiting for you for three days.'" (Abu Dawud)

Due to his loyalty and faithfulness in keeping promises Prophet Muhammad was called 'Muhammad the Trustworthy'; even his worst enemies and those who did not accept his prophethood called him trustworthy and honest.

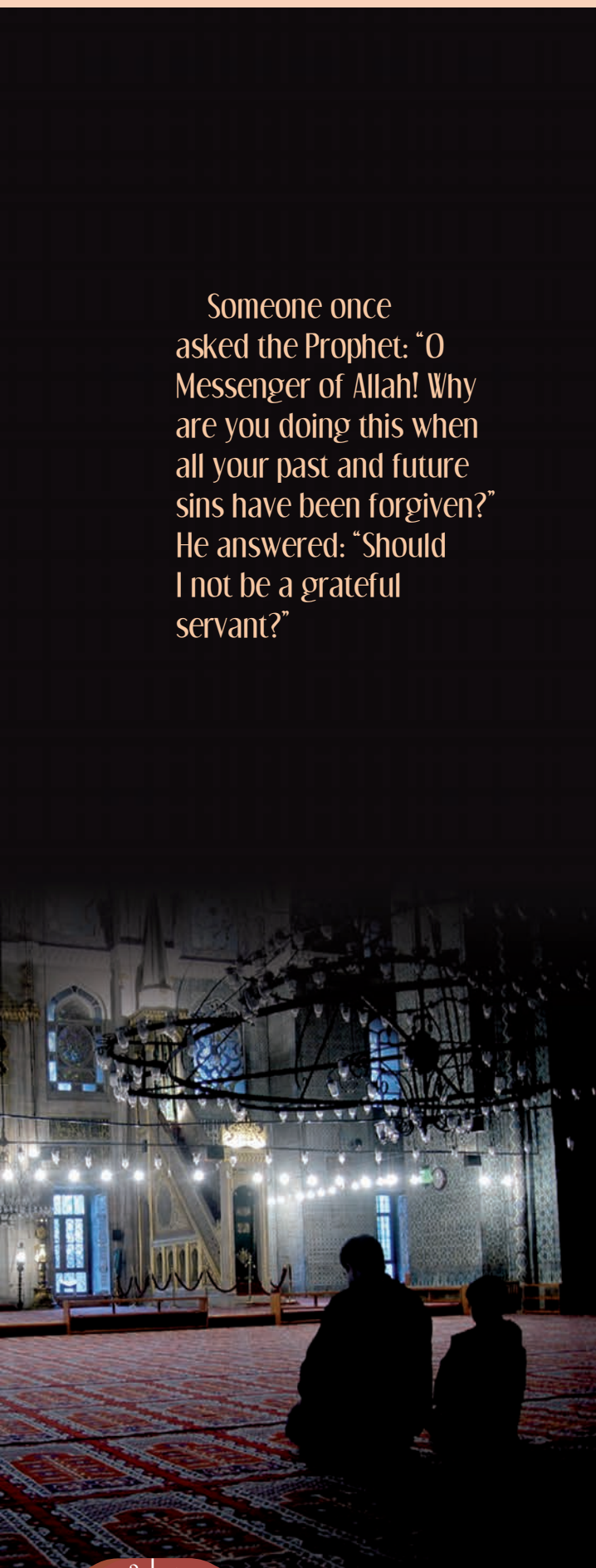
Abu Jahil said: "You never lie! We know you to be trustworthy and truthful, but we don't want what you preach."

This is how the monstrosity of egoism destroys a person's character. Even the enemy, those who had drowned in the ocean of their egos, agreed that Prophet Muhammad was a person of truth and one they trusted. They had no choice but to acknowledge the great character of the Prophet. This is a character that we are all in need of. We must always ask ourselves if our lives are worthy of Prophet Muhammad's? Or do we have a soul that is worthy of the praise of the enemies?

There are many ways of achieving such a character, but the first which comes to mind is prayer...I wonder...

DO WE PRAY LIKE HIM?

The prayer of Prophet Muhammad was a prayer devoid of all evil and bad actions. As described in a verse of the Qur'an, this is a prayer that refrains from 'evil' and 'shame', a prayer that exalts and gains a person eternal unity, a worship that is full of abundance and submission. Prophet Muhammad gave great importance to the performance of prayers. Sayyidina Ali obtained all his knowledge and guidance for prayer from Prophet Muhammad.



Someone once
asked the Prophet: “O
Messenger of Allah! Why
are you doing this when
all your past and future
sins have been forgiven?”
He answered: “Should
I not be a grateful
servant?”

When he stood before his Creator for prayer he would turn pale and become so involved in his worship that he was unaware of everything that went on around him, even the pain of his own body. An arrow pierced Ali's foot in battle, but he was in so much pain that the Companions could not remove it. Ali told them: "Take it out while I am praying!" They did as he asked; they waited and while he was praying the Companions removed the arrow with such ease that after finishing the prayer Ali asked them: "What did you do?" They replied: "We removed the arrow!" Ali had been so transported when praying that he had not realized what his friends were doing. This is the true spiritual power of prayer, being so deep in contemplation that one does not feel even the greatest pain. This is the prayer that Prophet Muhammad taught to his followers...

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) would perform the supererogatory prayers whenever he could; these included the prayer in the middle of the night, the prayer in the early morning, the prayer in the middle of the morning, the prayer of repentance and the prayer of praise. Prophet Muhammad prayed some of these on a regular daily basis.

Those who give charity out of true kindness and gain affection in the heart must give with the generosity of their souls; the hearts of the generous ones who give for the sake of Allah become milder and more complaisant, they become more inclined to give charity regularly for the sake of the provider, Allah the Merciful. We can only reach this state of submission if our charity is like the charity of Prophet Muhammad.

IS OUR CHARITY LIKE THAT OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Sometimes the Prophet would have nothing to give; sometimes he would receive his share from the battle spoils. Keeping the minimum for himself, he would give the rest away to charity even before he reached home. He had compassion that had never been seen in anyone before and an unimaginable kindness; even if he had nothing to give, he gave the charity of a smile.

Prophet Muhammad never made a person feel

degraded because they had been inflicted with the misfortune of poverty; whatever he gave he was giving to Allah, as related in the following verse of the Qur'an:

"Allah doth accept repentance from his votaries and receives their gifts of charity." (Tauba, 9/104)

The people around Prophet Muhammad had the honor of being his devoted Companions because they were blessed with behavior of high esteem. As a result: *"By no means shall ye attain righteousness unless ye give (freely) of that which ye love: and whatever ye give, Allah knoweth it well."* (Ali- Imran, 3/92)

With the revelation of this verse the Companions of Prophet Muhammad began to compete to give everything they possessed to charity, beginning with what they loved the most.

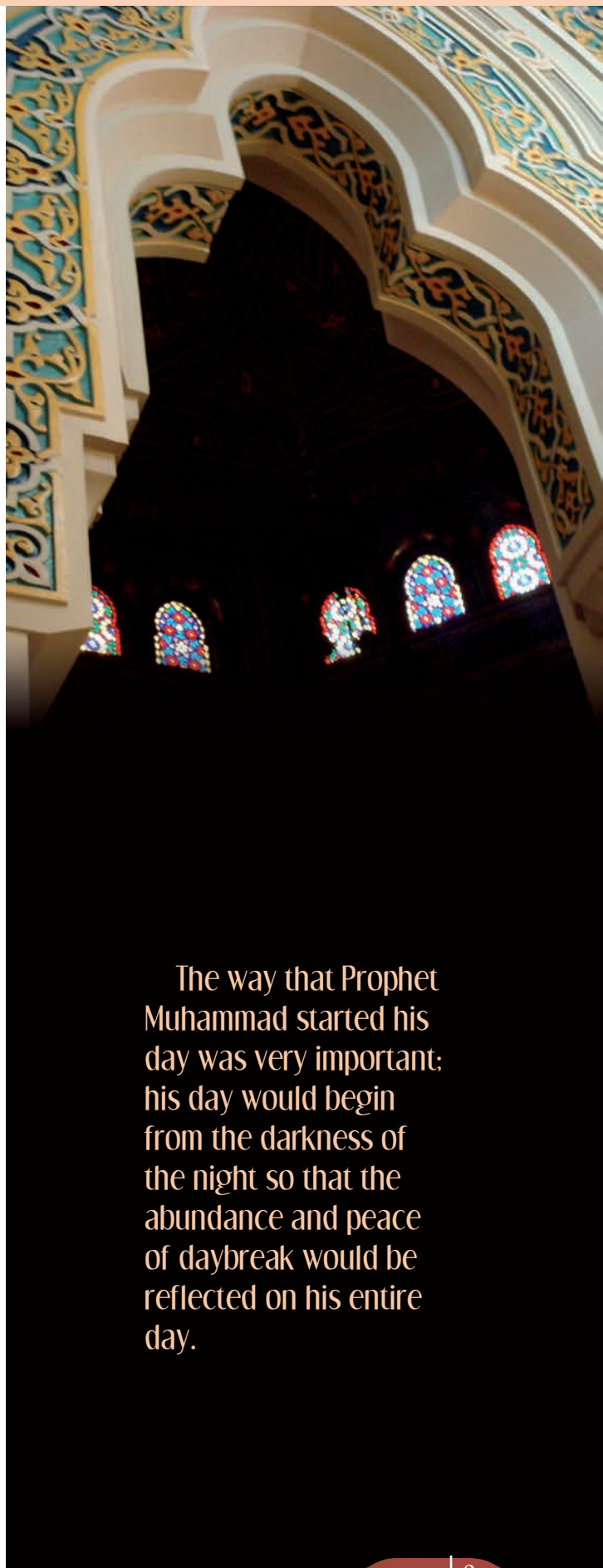
Abu Talha took great pleasure in donating his valuable date orchard, which was near to the Prophet's mosque, to charity. Abu Talha said to Prophet Muhammad: "What I love most among my worldly belongings is my orchard of 600 date-palm trees. As from now, it is no longer mine; I put it at your disposal. You can use it as you wish. You can share it among the poor, as you wish." Then he rushed home to tell his wife his good deed. His wife Umm Sulaim was sitting under a tree in the orchard. She called to Abu Talha, who remained standing outside the orchard wall: "Abu Talha, why are you standing there? Come here!" So he answered, "I cannot. You must gather your belongings and leave the orchard!"

"Why?"

"This orchard is no longer ours. It belongs to the poor people of Medina."

"Did you give it as charity on your own behalf or on behalf of us both?" Umm Sulaim asked and Abu Talha replied: "On behalf of us both."

Umm Sulaim was pleased to hear this: "May Allah be pleased with you. Whenever I see the poor, I think maybe we should give this orchard as charity to them, but I dared not tell you so, as I did not know if you would be willing to give it away. May Allah accept this charity we have given. I will



The way that Prophet Muhammad started his day was very important; his day would begin from the darkness of the night so that the abundance and peace of daybreak would be reflected on his entire day.

collect my belongings and leave the orchard."

The generous behavior of the Companions came from the guidance they received from Prophet Muhammad every day and night; living with him and breathing the air he breathed was the greatest and easiest way of attaining the true understanding of his manners and prosperity.

DO OUR DAYS AND NIGHTS RESEMBLE HIS?

There are many things that happen around us every day and which occupy so much of our time; among all this turmoil we can sometimes lose our true nature or characteristics. Living the way Prophet Muhammad lived gives a person a recognized individuality. The way that Prophet Muhammad started his day was very important; his day would begin from the darkness of the night so that the abundance and peace of daybreak would be reflected on his entire day. He would pray most of the night, praying until his ankles became swollen. Someone once asked him: "O Messenger of Allah! Why are you doing this when all your past and future sins have been forgiven?" He answered: "Should I not be a grateful servant?" (Bukhari)

Prophet Muhammad also said "The best prayer after the obligatory prayers is the night prayer." (Muslim)

"Two *rakahs* in late hours of the night are more valuable than all the riches of this world. If it were not for fear of hardship for my followers, I would have made these obligatory." (Fasal Salat)


"Indeed, in every night is a time when if the worshipper asks Allah for something good He will give it. And this occurs every night." (Muslim)

The grandson of Imam Rabbani, who was a great reciter and memorizer of the Qur'an, would sometimes recite the entire Qur'an in a night. He said: "O Allah! The nights are too short. They are not long enough!"

We must all make an effort to obtain the abundance of the night, spreading the blessings of the night over into the break of dawn and bringing the spirituality of the day into the night. Bayazid- Bistami said: "No mystery was apparent to me until the night turned into day."

May Allah Almighty grant us all the ability of attaining spiritually to improve our days and nights, our minds and souls, our knowledge and wisdom, our universe of mortality and our afterlife with the manner of His Messenger! And may He reward us for our intentions.

Amen!



Prophet Muhammad had compassion that had never been seen in anyone before and an unimaginable kindness; even if he had nothing to give, he gave the charity of a smile.

A BITE TO EAT AND A PLACE TO LAY MY HEAD



The concept of 'a bite to eat and a place to lay my head' is aimed at limiting necessities to this scale and keeping humans from pursuing their needs and desires.

In general, the concept of "a bite to eat and a place to lay my head" in the Sufi tradition and mystic thought means withstanding the charms of the world. As it is in our disposition, mankind is enamoured by the world and charmed by worldly blessings. If this attachment is not restrained, one cannot destroy strong ambitions or long term desires. For this reason the Qur'an warns against falling for the charms of the world and says: *"And enjoin upon thy people worship, and be constant therein. We ask not of thee a provision: We provided for thee. And the sequel is for righteousness."* (Ta-Ha, 20/131) In other similar verses we are counselled against being deceived by this world, told that only way out is through working (Najm, 53/39), and advised towards balance. For this reason the concept of "a bite to eat" should be approached from a few different perspectives in relation to social justice and economy.

If we look at this from the standpoint of social justice, we can see that social justice, which all religions, political and economic systems are trying to put into practice, is not a system protected by law or jurisprudence, but rather is a system that is maintained by individuals who have reached a mature humanity and level of contentment. The concept of "a bite to eat" means to have possessions, share them with others and, because one prefers over themselves, giving whatever one has, except a bite to eat. It does not mean running away from work, but working and abstaining from personal and selfish consumption and preferring one's brother who is in need; this is known as *ithar* (although needy oneself, giving to others; generosity, benevolence).

In a society that nurtures the concept of *ithar*, social justice comes into existence in a true medium of love through the alms of those who are willing to suffice with a bite to eat.

If we approach the subject from an economic point of view, economy is the science of providing infinite needs through limited means. The difficulty of responding to the infinite needs with limited resources is obvious. The appetite and want, and thus, the needs of human beings are inexhaustible. One lifetime will not be sufficient to provide for all of these. Therefore, a human spends his entire life obtaining these necessities and cannot spare time for spiritual needs such as worship, art and spiritual feelings. But, as Bektashi puts it, mankind did not come to this world just to "wash shirts". Thus, when they told Bektashi he needed to wash his shirt he replied by saying "It will get dirty anyhow". When told he could "wash it again" he kept calm and said "it will again get dirty". When he was told once more that he could "wash it again" he replied, "we did not come to this world to wash shirts". A poet says, "We did not come to this world to eat bread, we came to love the beautiful".

In essence, the concept of "a bite to eat and a place to lay my head" is aimed at limiting necessities to this scale and keeping humans from pursuing their needs and desires. Indeed,

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) also limited the essential needs of the human being, which we can call the *hawaij al-asliyyah* (essential provisions for one's self and home):

1. A little food for endurance
2. A garment to protect himself against heat and cold.
3. A home for shelter.

(Ahmed b. Hanbel, Musned V, 81)

The concept of "a bite to eat and a place to lay my head" is like a synopsis of this hadith. Three things are listed here. The Sufi has combined the home and the garment, calling it the *haana bardush* (home on the shoulders) and reduced the number of essentials to two. Although it has been claimed that this concept impels people into indolence or distances them from productivity, on the contrary, it directs people to the pursuit of knowledge, wisdom and worship. It is not difficult to surmise how the human soul has been blackened by the worldly possessions they yearn for but cannot have. However, the Muslim who is content with a bite of food is at least free of the love of possessions and worldly worries; they have attained a certain feeling of surety and faith.

The main points of the concept "a bite to eat" are effective and valid in areas of consumption. Particularly in today's world, the "conspicuous



People in this day and age are pursuing their pleasures and indulging in consumerism because they have lost their spiritual values and their value judgments. They are far removed from spiritual perceptions that are worthy of humanity, such as art, literature, worship and serving others.

consumption" is encouraged endlessly through various mediums of advertisement. Everything is based on consumerism, and therefore people increase the amount of money they waste. With the concept of necessities being only "a bite to eat" the economy will come under control, people will be free of squandering the opportunities offered by technology, the rich will not oppress the poor, and the poor will be free of carrying the burden of poverty and the torment of enviously observing the wealthy.

It is said that, "Those who do not know what they are looking for do not realize what they have found". People in this day and age are pursuing their pleasures and indulging in consumerism because they have lost their spiritual values and their value judgments. They are far removed from spiritual perceptions that are worthy of humanity, such as art, literature, worship and serving others.

The thought of "a bite to eat" is a measure of contentment and compliance in *tasawwuf*. As long as this measure is protected from excessiveness or deficiency certain values, human sentiments and merits can be protected. In truth, the elders of the Sufi tradition condemn the "love of the world" which fills the heart and leaves no room for any other love, rather than condemning the world and worldly possessions. Indeed, Mawlana beautifully defines this measure with the following statement: "What is the world? It is neither cloth, nor money, nor a woman. The world is whatever causes a human to be negligent of Allah." One needs to look for this refinement in the thought of a bite to eat and a place to lay his head.

The concept of "a bite to eat" is a matter of *tawakkul* (entrusting oneself to Allah's). *Tawakkul* is an action of the heart. It is trust in Allah. It is consenting to whatever comes from Allah. In addition, "a bite to eat" is an attitude one takes against their *nafs* (lower self). It is a notion that is described by *ithar*, "one bite to the self" and "a thousand bites to others". Ismail Hakki Bursevi indicates three levels of giving: *Saha*, *juud* and *isar*. *Saha* is to give a part of your possessions, *juud* is to give one half of them and *ithar* is to give everything, if necessary.



The world is
neither cloth, nor
money, nor a woman.
The world is whatever
causes a human to be
negligent of Allah.

The basic condition of training the nafs in *tasawwuf* is giving. The limit in giving is parting from all possessions until one is left with "a bite to eat". There is a saying of the Sufis: "We do not ask (for anything); when it is given we do not turn it down; we do not collect or store what we have." "A bite to eat" is the expression of this philosophy as reflected in life.

This approach teaches us to trust in the owner of the possessions and not the possessions themselves; it teaches us *sabr* (patience, reliance) in face of poverty without complaint. Worldly worries and stress are among the first things that disrupt the balance of the human soul. The foremost reasons that cause stress in a human being are extreme ambition and long term desires. The desires and wishes that come continuously are a source of misery. Accepting situations and people as they are and not as they should be is one of the basic motifs of spiritual contentment. Feeling safe and secure (*itminan*), serene (*sukunat*) and peaceful (*sakina*) are the greatest indicators of a healthy soul. *Iman* (belief) and submission are the fundamental conditions of this. From this point of view "a bite to eat" is an expression of *sukunat*, *itminan* and *sakina*.

There is also an aspect of misfortune and trial in this. Allah Almighty says, "And surely We shall try you with something of fear and hunger, and loss of wealth and lives and crops" (Baqarah, 2/155). It can be understood that wealth and hardship and poverty and abundance are all trials

of Allah and through *sabr*, *iman* can overcome hardship and through *shukr* (thankfulness) it can overcome abundance. True *shukr* is showing *sabr* for "a bite to eat" during times of hardship and giving everything except "a bite to eat" during times of wealth. Although there are dimensions that are reflected outwardly, *sabr* and *shukr* are both actions of the heart. A dialogue that took place between Ibrahim bin Adham and Shakik Al-Belkhi, which is a story one comes across quite often in Sufi anecdotes, has a quality that shakes a person and softens the heart. Ibrahim bin Adham asked Shakik, "How would you describe *shukr*?" Shakik replied, "When Allah gives something we show *shukr*, when He doesn't we show *sabr*. Ibrahim bin Adham says: "Even the hounds of Khorasan do what you have said. They show *shukr* when given and *sabr* when nothing comes." When asked, "Well then, how would you describe *shukr*?" Ibrahim bin Adham replied "We give (to others) when we are given something and we show *shukr* when nothing is given."

Tawakkul stands out in this tradition, which started with the famous Sufis of Khorasan, such as Ibrahim bin Adham, Shakik Al-Belkhi and Fudayl bin Iyad. The description of *tawakkul* as *isqat at-tadber* (abandoning all caution) should be understood to mean "to stop trusting caution". Thus, there is a philosophical manner and an ascetic approach at the basis of the thought: "a bite to eat and a place to lay my head".

There is a saying of the Sufis: "We do not ask for anything; when it is given we do not turn it down; we do not collect or store what we have."

THE CAUSES OF IMPATIENCE AND ITS REMEDY

Struggle in the way of Islam is one of the main areas in which patience which carries much importance. "Verily thy Lord - to those who leave their homes after trials and persecutions - and who thereafter strive and fight for the faith and patiently persevere." (Nahl. 16/110)

Every human being will face a variety of calamities, fears, difficulties and sorrows throughout their lives, thus there will be many times that everyone will have to demonstrate patience. Facing both ease and hardship is one of the rules of life. "So, verily, with every difficulty, there is relief: Verily, with every difficulty there is relief." (Inshirah, 94/5-6)

Particularly if this person is a Muslim, the difficulties and sorrows they will have to face and endure may well increase; it is a reality that throughout history those who are on the true path have been subjected to various kinds of oppression, torture and suffering. It is for this reason that believers must be patient in many areas and in many situations in their lives.

One of the aspects of patience is resisting the desires of the ego; humans have to live in communities according to the guidance of the divine revelations and their own intelligence, which means controlling their actions without unwittingly complying with their inner instincts (Rum, 30/29). Of course, this requires a sound understanding of character, strength of faith and willpower. In reality, faith is an aspect that requires a human being to control their actions and refrain from their inner desires. The Qur'an tells us to do good deeds and to be patient: "Not so do those who show patience and constancy, and work righteousness; for them is forgiveness (of sins) and a great reward." (Hud, 11/11) According to



The Qur'an indicates the compassion, kindness and countless blessings of Allah towards humans as seen in numerous verses in Surah Rahman "Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?"

this, we must be patient and be constant in the remembrance of Allah and the exaltation of His name, worship and glorification.

Another aspect of patience is resistance to suffering; the difficulties humans face should not mean the end or the loss of a person's values or character. Patience is a blessing that helps us to overcome hardships and difficulties, which prevents us from giving up on ourselves; the result of such an action would be depression.

Standing firm and not giving in to various psychological pressures in Islam is a matter which should not be approached with haste; the Qur'an tells us of the patience of the Prophets when they called the people to Islam and were called liars: "Rejected were the Messengers before thee: with patience and constancy they bore their rejection and their persecution until Our aid did reach them." (An'am, 6/34)

Another form of patience is that which is shown against the torment and hardship that Muslims bear due to their belief. Struggle in the way of Islam is one of the main areas in which patience which carries much importance. "Verily thy Lord – to those who leave their homes after trials and persecutions – and who thereafter strive and fight for the faith and patiently persevere." (Nahl, 16/110)

Patience and praise are not just displays of good behavior when performing good deeds; they are also part of the perception of faith. Patience and praise are the display of true emotions before Allah, and this has direct ties with faith and disbelief. It is for this reason that patience is of such great importance in the psychology of a believer.

In this life of trials, praise and patience are the main requirements for a human being; this is clearly apparent in the following verses of the Qur'an: "Every soul shall have a taste of death: and We test you by evil and by good by way of trial. To Us must ye return." (Anbiya, 21/35) and "Be sure We shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods, lives and the fruits (Of your toil), but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere." (Baqarah, 2/155)

In fact, patience is an element of the human trial; to go even further, faith is also an element of this trial. "Do men think that they will be left alone on saying, 'We believe', and that they will not be tested?" (Ankabut, 29/2)

"If aught that is good befalls you, it grieves them; but if some misfortune overtakes you, they rejoice at it. But if ye are patient and do right, not the least harm will their cunning do to you." (Al-Imran, 3/120)

"Or do ye think that ye shall enter the Garden (of Bliss) without such (trials) as came to those who passed away before you? They encountered suffering and adversity, and were so shaken in spirit that even the Messenger and those of faith who were with him cried: "When (will come) the help of Allah" Ah! Verily, the help of Allah is (always) near!" (Baqarah, 2/214)

In many verses of the Qur'an the blessings of Allah that have been given to humans are mentioned; it is also stated that when these blessings are taken away or decreased people react in such a way that it is as if they have been deprived of the compassion of Allah; they show ingratitude with rash decisions and actions.

"If We give man a taste of mercy from Ourselves, and then withdraw it from him, Behold! he is in despair and (falls into) ingratitude, but if We give him a taste of (Our) favors after adversity hath touched him, he is sure to say, "All evil has departed from me:" Behold! he falls into exultation and pride." (Hud, 11/9-10)

This is a weakness that can only be overcome with a maturity of faith. Weakness of patience and tolerance can cause ingratitude to Allah and even cause a person to stray from the true path. Two aspects of this are quite interesting; the first is a form of disbelief that entails rejection as well as ingratitude. Thus, such an unawareness of Allah's blessings results in blasphemy. The second is that this weakness, as pointed out in the Qur'an, drives human beings to say "My Lord has betrayed me."

The unbelievers claim that the Creator cannot be of faultless Divine wisdom or grace due to the



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Belief in fate cannot be used as a shield for irresponsible actions or for helping to relieve hardships and strife; rather, it can be turned into a conscious form of patience and contemplation that enables us to get through the hardships of life

evil and problems in the universe. In this we can see the ungrateful attitude of humans, impatience and pessimism are inclinations of disbelief. It is for this reason that the Qur'an speaks of the blessings of Allah when it calls humans to faith.

"He is the One Who sends to His Servant manifest Signs, that He may lead you from the depths of Darkness into the Light and Verily, Allah is to you Most Kind and Merciful." (Hadid, 57/9)

"If ye would count up the favors of Allah, never would ye be able to number them: for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." (Nahl, 16/18)

"He giveth you of all that ye ask for. But if ye count the favors of Allah, never will ye be able to number them. Verily, man is given up to injustice and ingratitude." (Ibrahim, 14/34)

In many other verses the Qur'an indicates the compassion, kindness and countless blessings of Allah towards humans as seen in numerous verses in Surah Rahman "Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?"

The Causes of Impatience

To be able to understand this subject we must consider the causes of impatience, the reasons why one questions their fate and the inclination towards rebellion against Allah. One of the main factors for this is a weakness of faith or a failure to make oneself familiar with Allah.

The concept of Allah being merely a will in the minds of human beings leads to the idea that there is no good explanation for Divine actions of justice and morality. This psychological condition can lead a person to completely lose their faith in both their life and their religious duties; doubting Allah's compassion, justice and kindness causes the performance of good deeds and worship to be in vain.

Another factor is the hasty actions of human beings and their weaknesses, like fondness for this worldly life, passion or greed. The disappointment we feel when we want more than we already have is much greater than the disappointment of those who have nothing. This is probably the



There is a direct connection between trust and faith in Allah; therefore, faith increases people's ability to be patient and protects against desperation, providing perseverance and determination.

reason why the Qur'an disparages those who have accumulated wealth but refrain from giving to charity; those who have various means, wealth and prosperity, but do not seek the Divine affinity will be deprived of the help of the Almighty when they fall into hardship. As a result, such people will fall into a deep depression from all the sorrows and difficulties they face, and this will make it even harder for them to accept their problems with patience. As revealed in the Qur'an: "To those whose hearts, when Allah is mentioned, are filled with fear, who show patient perseverance over their afflictions, keep up regular prayer, and spend (in charity) out of what We have bestowed upon them." (Hajj, 22/ 35)

Here, as we can see, not only are respect for Allah and patience indicated, the importance of good deeds and the giving of charity is also emphasized; first, we must avoid the attraction of wealth in order to give alms, as it is this that instills a believer with patience. On the contrary, those who have been blessed with wealth but who neglect the virtue of giving in charity show great impatience; they complain at the loss of their wealth and worldly blessings when they are taken away by Allah.

The result of hastiness, over-attachment to this world and ignorance can lead humans to incorrectly expect rewards for their worship and good deeds in this world. Those who expect premature rewards but are unsuccessful and fail to reach their goals think that their

worship and prayers have been ignored, and begin to doubt the justice of Allah; this in turn leads them to neglect their religious duties, merely taking whatever they need or desire in the world, while ignoring the many blessings and opportunities that have been given by Allah. Such a person judges their life from the darkness of their unawareness. Like those who criticized Prophet Muhammad, there are people who say "I prayed to Allah, but my prayer was unanswered." This is an example of one who prays but who, when undergoing the trials of this world, is not successful and they feel disappointed by Allah. As a result they abandon their prayers and religious duties. It is a serious and common mistake to think that there is a valid relationship between religious duties and worldly wealth, between faith and good deeds and worldly blessings.

The Sufis indicate this serious error by separating worship into three categories according to the intentions of the human being. According to them, worship is carried out for three reasons; the first intention is to gain the pleasure and love of Allah, the second to protect oneself from the punishment of Allah, while the third intention is to gain the blessings of the world, to keep the blessings one already has and to attain ease in the universe; the last intention has no real significance and produces no result. We must consider that expecting a reward for deeds that we perform in this world is a mistake that leads to impatience; in fact, it is impatience itself. If one expects a

reward, then one is expecting the rewards of the hereafter in this world and complains when everything does not go in one's favor.

Considering fate to be an obstacle posed against talent or will leads to impatience; the fact that humans rebel against their fate is living proof of this. However, in the Qur'an the responsibilities of mankind are indicated, while at the same time the belief in destiny is presented as a factor that encourages patience and offers relief to the pain of believers. Therefore, belief in fate cannot be used as a shield for irresponsible actions or for helping to relieve hardships and strife; rather, it can be turned into a conscious form of patience and contemplation that enables us to get through the hardships of life.

The Patience of a Believer


A true believer does not doubt the reward they will gain from enduring the hardships of the world; they will never doubt their faith or question the fate that Allah has seen fit for them. A true believer will always question and seek fault in themselves: "Whatever misfortune happens to you, is because of the things your hands have wrought, and for many (a sin) He grants forgiveness." (Shura, 42/30)

A believer's patience becomes apparent within their deepest emotions of faith; one of

the main meanings of faith is to 'trust' or to 'be trusted'. In contrast to the various doubts and fluctuations in faith, a true believer has great trust in Allah and also in their own belief. "Allah is He, than Whom there is no other god; The Sovereign, the Holy One, the Source of Peace (and Perfection), the Guardian of Faith, the Preserver of Safety, the Exalted in Might, the Irresistible, the justly Proud Glory to Allah! (High is Allah) above the partners they attribute to Him." (Hashr, 59/23) One of the names of Allah which is mentioned in this verse is 'the Guardian of Faith'; for those of belief and faith this name indicates the idea of trust.

A true believer first accepts that the calamities they face are an element of a trial given by Allah and trusts in the justice of Divinity; this is mentioned in many verses of the Qur'an: "Say: 'Nothing will happen to us except what Allah has decreed for us: He is our Protector.' And on Allah let the Believers put their trust." (Taubah, 9/51)

"No kind of calamity can occur, except by the leave of Allah: And if any one believes in Allah, (Allah) guides his heart (aright): for Allah knows all things." (Taghabun, 64/11) Trust in Allah increases the patience and tolerance of a believer, strengthening their determination, will power, and stopping them from neglecting



Faith in Allah and His commands in the universe not only remove the anxiety of unforeseen dangers, they are also a source of comfort against calamities, preventing a believer from worry and affliction and ensuring patience.

their duties. Regarding the verse "...If any one believes in Allah, (Allah) guides his heart (aright)..." (Taghabun, 64/11) Ibn Masud said: "These are the calamities which humans face. A true believer knows and accepts them as a trial from Allah, submitting and having patience." A believer is also aware that "We are nearer to him than (his) jugular vein." (Qaf, 50/16) Allah hears this call and responds "When My servants ask thee concerning Me, I am indeed close(to them) : I respond to the prayer of every suppliant when he calleth on Me..." (Baqarah, 2/186)

As a result, when disaster occurs the devoted remember: "Who say, when afflicted with calamity: 'To Allah we belong, and to Him is our return.'" (Baqarah, 2/156)

"Do thou be patient, for thy patience is but with the help from Allah; nor grieve over them: and distress not thyself because of their plots." (Nahl, 16/127) As revealed in this verse, the most important point of the strength of a believer's patience is their belief and their seeking refuge in Allah. It states: "O ye who believe! Seek help with patient Perseverance and Prayer: for God is with those who patiently persevere." (Baqarah, 2/153)

While taking refuge in Allah, the believer resists difficulties and refrains from rebelling with the hope of reward. In contrast to the disbeliever, the believer takes refuge in the greatest and highest authority possible, completely placing their trust in Allah, because "...If any one puts his trust in Allah, sufficient is (Allah) for him..." (Talaq, 65/3). It should also be pointed out that this trust increases the endurance and determination of the believer to face these hardships.

"...When thou hast taken a decision, put

thy trust in Allah..." (Al-i Imran, 3/159). Those who place their trust in Allah are determined because of the Divine address, the compassion, power and help of Allah; this is an indication of faith. According to the interpretation of the following verse "Nor can ye escape through the earth; nor have ye, besides Allah, any one to protect or to help." (Shura, 42/31), Allah never abandons a believer in a state of weakness, and a believer has no friend or aid other than Allah. This is why a believer places all their trust in Allah. The following verse confirms this: "Why should we not put our trust in Allah?

Indeed He has guided us to the ways we (follow). We shall certainly bear with patience all the hurt you caused us. For those who put their trust should put their trust in Allah?" (Ibrahim, 14/12)

"Those to whom men said: 'A great army is gathering against you, so fear them': But it (only) increased their Faith, they said: 'For us Allah sufficeth, and He is the best Guardian.' (Al-i Imran, 3/173)

The incident in this verse shows that a believer's faith increases when faced with oppression and difficulty. As a result, 'Trust in Allah' is the measure of faith; those who speak against trust in Allah speak against faith. In this case, there is a direct connection between trust and faith in Allah; therefore, faith increases people's ability to be patient and protects against desperation, providing perseverance and determination.

Faith in the absolute justice of Allah also prevents disasters and over-indulgence in worldly blessings.

"No misfortune can happen on earth or in your souls but is recorded in a Book before We bring it into existence: That is truly easy for Allah: In order that ye may not despair



A true believer first accepts that the calamities are an element of a trial given by Allah and trusts in the justice of Divinity. Allah says in Qur'an: "Say: 'Nothing will happen to us except what Allah has decreed for us: He is our Protector.' And on Allah let the Believers put their trust." (Tauba, 9/51)

over matters that pass you by, nor exult over favors bestowed upon you. For Allah loveth not any vainglorious boaster." (Hadid, 57/22-23)

This verse, which is embedded in the heart of the believer, explains that while the occurrence of disasters in the universe is the command and creation of Allah, humans are aware of this; this in turn prevents them from becoming immersed in sorrow and pessimism. This condition is valid for the future as it is for the present.

It is quite natural for the unbeliever to experience indecisiveness, pessimism and confusion as to the reason for their existence due to their inability to give a valid explanation for the events in the universe; such a person feels alone and unsupported. This, in many cases, leads one to desperation.

Therefore, faith in Allah and His commands in the universe not only remove the anxiety of unforeseen dangers, they are also a source of comfort against calamities, preventing a believer from worry and affliction and ensuring patience.

Another important factor that increases the patience of a believer is belief in the attributes of Allah; a true believer is aware that worldly blessings are from the grace of Allah and that when they are faced with difficulties or a reduction in blessings they will be rewarded for their patience in overcoming these hardships. This is because the believer is familiar with the beautiful names of Allah, Al-Adl (the Just), Al-Khabir (the All Aware) and Al Muqit (the Nourisher); a believer can never doubt the good intentions, love, compassion, mercy or kindness of Allah.

It is clear that patience decreases the sorrow and pain of a believer. Patience deters humans from depression and suicidal emotions. Sometimes human beings exaggerate their pain and suffering rather than being patient or showing determination; this is a reason for depression and thoughts of suicide, but a true believer must have patience. A believer's responsibility before Allah Almighty enables them to overcome their pain and difficulties, leading them to evaluate the true realities of their life. This is the insight provided by and one of the functions of the true believer's self-accounting.



THE MIRACLES AROUND US

*“To Him belongs the dominion of the heavens
and the earth; it is He Who gives life and
Death; and He has Power over all things.”*

(Hadid, 57:2)

I remember thinking that for there probably would not be any miracles on this earth if it were not for the mothers who begged for them. We returned to Zairina's room to be with her until Allah called for her to return to Him

Today was certainly not a normal day, nor will it be a day I easily forget. It was the day on which I got a rare glimpse of how Allah shows Himself to humanity. Most of us never pay heed; most of us do not look for Allah in our lives, and thus we never see Him. But, that doesn't mean that He does not exist, nor does it mean that He is not continuing to control the world in His own way. Certainly, to understand the above verse is to stand in awe of the fact that "all might and power" belongs to Him.

Last week, I met a girl who was in hospital being treated for cancer. Zairina was young: only twenty years old. Her mother and she were from another city and they asked their doctor if they knew of a mosque she could call to ask if some sisters would come and read Qur'an for her.

It was such a blessing that we knew the Chaplain at the hospital so the hospital contacted us. Little did I understand at that time how important this was going to be in the end.

We went to visit them right away. Zairina was so happy to have visitors, because her friends were very far away from her and could only visit from time to time. We scheduled food to be brought to her mother daily, and a sister volunteered to do the laundry as needed. We were happy to meet them as well, as this was a call from Allah; a blessing indeed, full of rewards.

As time passed, even with all the treatments and medications, Zairina's condition worsened, because the cancer did as cancer does. We began to understand that she was going to pass from this life into the next. We found ourselves standing vigil over her and reading the Qur'an in a different tone.

The doctors were trying everything they could to "save" her. They continued to give some medicine, stopped others, and even started new ones. It came to the point where there were tubes and wires everywhere, while machines monitored every heart beat and every breath.

Finally, the moment arrived when her doctor came to talk to us. He told us that they had done everything they could and that they would not be able to save her; she was in "God's hands now." The mother asked one question: "Is there still a chance for a miracle?"


I remember thinking that for there probably would not be any miracles on this earth if it were not for the mothers who begged for them. We returned to Zairina's room to be with her until Allah called for her to return to Him, and I called the Imam of the mosque to ask him to prepare a *janaza* (funeral), probably for the next day.

It was then that the imam shared the story of his day with me. He, too, had been called to the hospital. He had been called to read the Qur'an and prepare the *janaza* for a young brother from Tunisia who had been shot in the head twice by some men who were robbing him. They shot him and left him to die in the parking lot of his apartment.

The Imam had been reading the Qur'an and waiting for that brother to pass away; however, this was not to be the case. As it turned out, the bullets had passed through his skull without causing much damage. He was actually going to live!

I still am unable to explain my shock the moment I heard this news. But I can recite the verses that came immediately to my mind:

"And verily it is We Who give life and who give death: it is We Who remain Inheritors (after all else passes away)". (Hijr, 15:23); and



Allah showed us something of His Mercy; if you live your life for the sake of Allah and you are patient with Allah's plan for you, then Allah will surely protect your last breath.

"That it is He who Granteth Death and Life."

(Najm, 53:44)

In one room was this young man who the robbers had wanted dead, yet they could not kill him. In the other room was Zairina, whom everyone wanted to live, and yet they could not save her.

Reflecting on her death and *janaza*, I understood something more. This was a girl in a strange city, with no friends, yet the room was full of people reading Qur'an and making *tesbihat* and *dua* for her as she passed. Somehow, they had found their way to her room; a miracle.

At the mosque there were not a few, but rather a hundred people standing in rows for her. Most of them had never met her, but yet they had found their way to her *janaza* as if they had all known her; another miracle.

It was then that I understood the miracle that Allah had given her and her mother. It was not the miraculous healing that her mother had hoped would come, but rather it was a miracle that reached further.

Allah showed us something of His Mercy; if you live your life for the sake of Allah and you are patient with Allah's plan for you, then Allah will surely protect your last breath.

He surrounded Zairina with many friends, even though she was not from here. He made sure she was taken care of and buried among the other Muslims, even when her city didn't have a Muslim cemetery.

He made sure to teach us all that we count in this world when we work for His sake alone.

He taught us that no matter what our will is on this earth, His will over life and death will always happen without fail.

"Nay whoever submits his whole self to Allah and is a doer of good he will get his reward with his Lord; on such shall be no fear nor shall they grieve. (Baqarah, 2:112)



He taught us that no matter what our will is on this earth, His will over life and death will always happen without fail.



Contemplate the Day of Resurrection

How excellent are those whose desire of the Gardens increases them in fasting so that their bodies grow thin and their complexion is changed, preventing them from the desires of the ephemeral world today or tomorrow.

This is the second counsel of Ibn Jawzi to his students and fellow Muslims about their desire to attain meeting Allah in a state of the pleased and the well-pleasing. After increasing lamentations over one's state the following was added to remind the reader of what lies before them; the Day of Resurrection.

My brothers, contemplate the Day of Assembly and Appointment. Think of when the evidence is resurrected: verily at the Resurrection there is distress and at the Assembly there are lamentations of regret, while at the Bridge over the fire of Hell there is many a stumble.

At the Scales there will be admonitions and verily on that Day, all oppression shall become dark shadows over those who committed them.

And the Books of Deeds will encompass even thoughts. Verily, the greatest distress will be over one's misdeeds. One person shall be in Paradise ascending the levels, while another shall be in the Fire descending through its very lowest levels.

And there is nothing between these events except the utterance of "So-and-so has died!" and



you shall cry, "O My Lord, send me back to the world!" It will be said, "It is over."

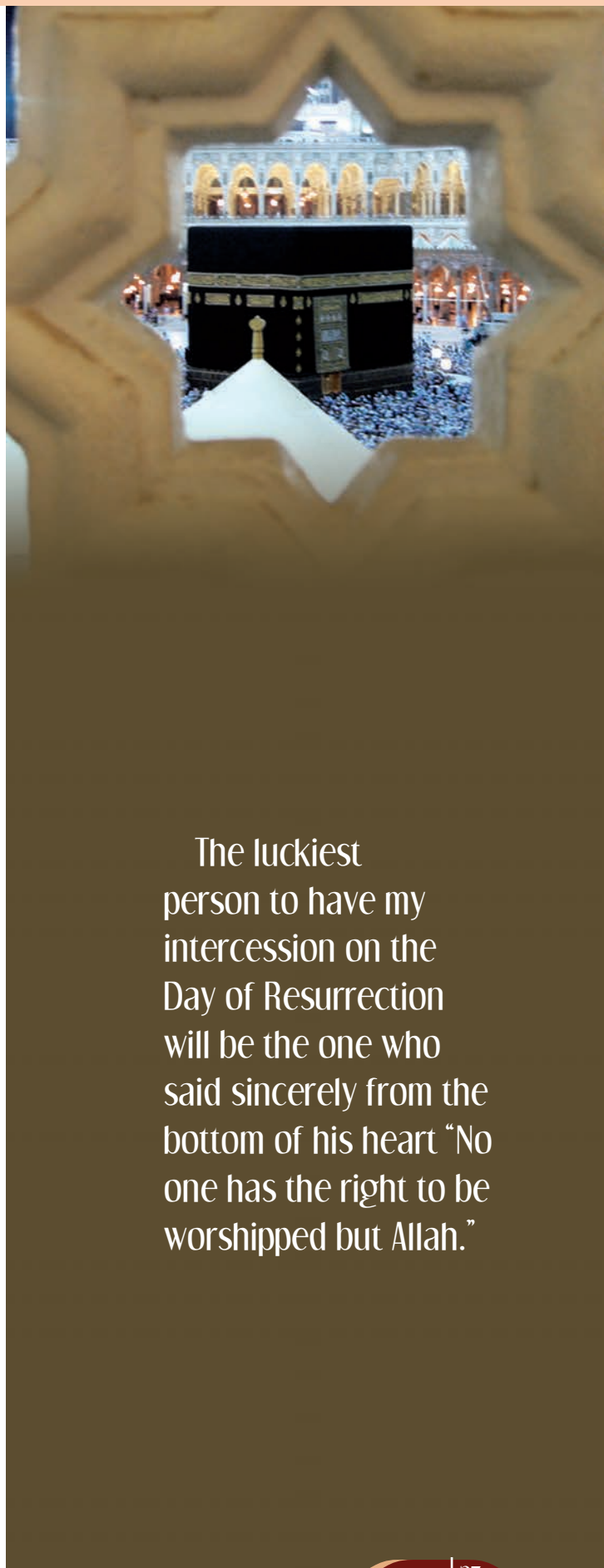
It is narrated by Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim in their Saheehayn from Abu Huraira that the Prophet (pbuh) said, "On the Day of Resurrection mankind shall sweat until the earth has absorbed the sweat for seventy cubits, and it shall rise over them until it reaches their ears."

It is also narrated from Ibn Sa'd that the Prophet (pbuh) said in one tradition, "'...Then the bridge will be laid across Hell.' We, the companions of the Prophet, said, 'O Allah's Apostle! What is this bridge?' He said, 'It is a slippery [bridge] on which there are clamps, hooks and spikes. Some of the believers will cross the bridge as quickly as the wink of an eye, some others as quick as lightning, a strong wind, fast horses or she-camels. So some will be safe without any harm; some will be safe after receiving some scratches and others shall drag themselves across.'"

How excellent are those whose remembrance of the Fire establishes a state that keeps them from sleep, while their desire of the Gardens increases them in fasting so that their bodies grow thin and their complexion is changed, preventing them from the desires of the ephemeral world today or tomorrow. They enter the markets of this world, but they are concerned with neither selling nor making bargains, and they abandon diving into its oceans. They gain in piety through prayer and fasting. Have you anything of their attributes, O people!?

Umm Haytham said, "O my son will you not sleep?" Haytham said, "O mother! One over whom night has descended and who is fearful of the establishment of the truth against him cannot sleep."

When she saw what he suffered, not being able to sleep and constantly weeping, she said, "O my son, perhaps you have killed someone!" and he replied, "Yes." His mother asked, "And who is it that you killed, so that we may ask his family for forgiveness? By Allah, were they to know what has befallen you by way of sleeplessness and



The luckiest person to have my intercession on the Day of Resurrection will be the one who said sincerely from the bottom of his heart "No one has the right to be worshipped but Allah."

weeping, surely they would forgive you!" He said to her, "O, my mother, it is my own self."

Adam al-Shaami would cry and sob in the masjid until his voice was raised and his tears would stream inconsolably.

Then one day the Amir came to him, saying, "You have disturbed the prayer of the worshippers with your superfluous crying and raising of your voice! If you only you could keep it down a little!" To which Adam al-Shaami responded, "Verily it is the despair of the Day of Resurrection that has bequeathed me these profound, tears, for I can only find respite in their streaming."

'Ata al-Sulami was criticized for his excessive crying, to which he replied, "Verily, when I think of the people of the Hell Fire and that which will befall them in punishment from Allah, I imagine myself as being one of them; how can the hand of my soul enter and then withdraw from it and not cry?"

How can we save our souls from the impending destination of the Hereafter? Narrated by Abu Huraira: "I said: 'O Allah's Messenger! Who will be the luckiest person, who will gain your intercession on the Day of Resurrection?' Allah's Messenger (pbuh) said: 'O, Abu Huraira! I thought that no one would ask me about it before you, as I am aware of your longing for the (learning of) the Hadiths. The luckiest person to have my intercession on the Day of Resurrection will be the one who said sincerely from the bottom of his heart "No one has the right to be worshipped but Allah."

So increase in your remembrance of Allah, in your conviction of His Oneness as Lord and in your perception of what that means. Knowing Allah as One and witnessing His Oneness in all that you do gives life to the heart. A heart that has life will give fruit to a soul that is guided, and a soul that is guided will pave the way to the One.



The Books of Deeds
will encompass even
thoughts. Verily, the
greatest distress will be
over one's misdeeds.
One person shall be in
Paradise ascending the
levels, while another
shall be in the Fire
descending through its
very lowest levels.

REALIZING THE ULTIMATE TRUTH

"When I realized that Islam had everything I needed for the betterment of my life, I converted to Islam."

Wisdom: Could you tell our readers how you came up with the idea for your book?

After many years of working in a community-established Islamic school in America, I found myself losing hope for the Muslim youth. In an environment that was designed to help them preserve their identity and strengthen their belief, I saw more and more signs of just the opposite, due to the onslaught of contradictory elements from the surrounding society.

Disheartened, I decided to leave the US so that I might finally live and raise my children in a predominantly Muslim society. I knew moving to Istanbul, Turkey was not going to provide us with the idealistic society established on Islam of which I dream, but at the very least, I had the hope that being a Muslim among Muslims would help us all find our place in a society where we could be a part of some larger effort without compromising our identities or feeling beaten down by the disapproval of neighbors and others regarding our beliefs.

Time after time in the course of my daily routine, I was happily overwhelmed by the pleasant surprise in the faces of the strangers I would encounter.

Najla Tammy Ilhan was born in Texas in 1971 and raised as a Christian. She became a Muslim at 19 years old. She had her BA in Business Administration. She currently resides in Turkey. She is the author of numerous articles about Islam. She also wrote a book about how she came to Islam. The Turkish version, "Teksas'tan Hakikate Yolculuk", was released in September 2008. She is married with two children.

In helping our
children to become
the Muslims they are
supposed to be we
are changing the
world for the better,
one person at a time.

These fellow Muslims were occasionally even moved to tears of joy when they learned that I, as an American, had seen fit to choose their belief, Islam, and come to live in their country to be close to them. Having only a few seconds or minutes to answer the questions of these brothers and sisters, I felt the depth of what I could share with them was being neglected. If simply knowing that I was a Muslim had that much affect, what would happen if they knew the breadth of the story? Could it benefit their lives as well? Could my experiences help others?

While still living in America, the wife of the imam at our masjid had encouraged me to write about how I became a Muslim, but I didn't understand then the depth of the need for this. Once I saw the wisdom of her advice, I decided that one day, InshaAllah, I would take on this task.

Wisdom: What motivated you to write your reversion story and what influenced you most to accept Islam?

I must say that the final motivation to write my story came from much closer to home, from my own family. After years of being a Muslim and growing in my understanding of Islam, why I chose this path and what it means to me are as of yet mostly unknown to my family. My parents and other relatives, for the most part, have not asked these questions. Maybe they don't want to know. Maybe they don't care why.

Regardless, it was out of my love for them and my hope that too they could benefit from this knowledge that I finally started writing. At least in this way, they might be better able to understand my reasoning and realize that I didn't go into this way of life blindly.

When I realized that Islam had everything I needed for the betterment of my life, society, and the world at large, I had two choices. Accept it or lie to myself and deny the obvious benefit it held. Alhamdulillah, I chose to change myself and hopefully, at least, a bit of the world for the better.

Wisdom: If you could write a few sentences to call non-Muslims to Islam, what would it be?

Ask God to guide you and give you the ability to see the answer and the courage to accept it when He does.

Wisdom: Have you ever helped someone become a Muslim?

I have been asked this question several times. Each time I have replied that to my knowledge I have not. But only Allah knows. Maybe I have, but Allah has not revealed that to me in this life. Maybe through some word or deed I have influenced someone to take that final step onto the Straight Path. Maybe Allah is saving that joy and those rewards as a glorious, unexpected treasure in the next life.

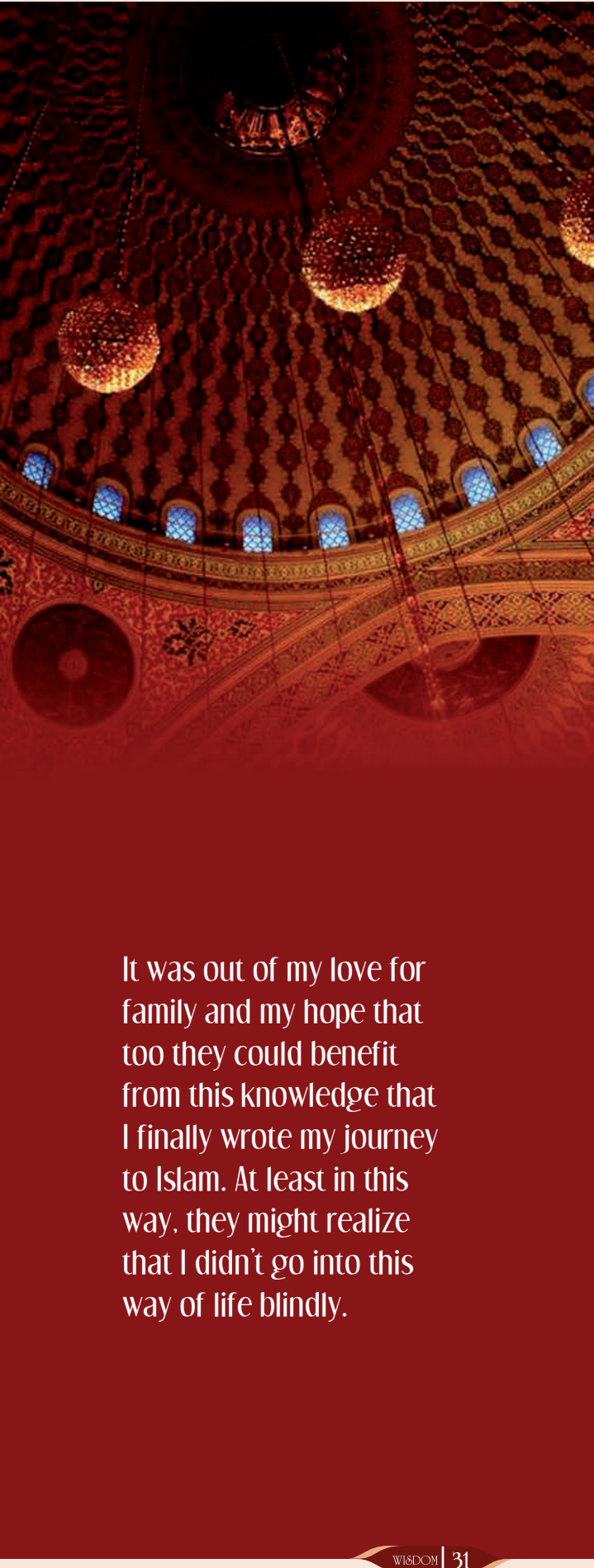
Interestingly though, I have just realized that I am mistaken. Every day for fourteen and twelve years, respectively, I have been helping others to become practising Muslims, my own children. Every day, day in and day out, I have struggled to teach them, support them, and encourage them.

This has taken more effort, patience, and prayer than I would have ever been able to exert for strangers. And what a tremendous loss it would be if I neglected them in an effort to encourage strangers who may not even want to be Muslims.

As Muslim parents, we have been given the extraordinary opportunity to nurture Islam in our homes. The precious and irreplaceable chance to strive to raise a productive servant of Allah should never be overlooked or considered insignificant. In helping our children to become the Muslims they are supposed to be we are changing the world for the better, one person at a time.

Wisdom: Do you have any advice for new authors?

Write for the sake of Allah to benefit mankind.



It was out of my love for family and my hope that too they could benefit from this knowledge that I finally wrote my journey to Islam. At least in this way, they might realize that I didn't go into this way of life blindly.



We have to reflect on the fact that the only way to train our nafs is through patience and by accustoming ourselves to any unforeseen problems and worries that we may come across. Patience is not just a weapon against oppression; patience is also a great help when performing Divine commands.

THE FLOWER OF PATIENCE

The suffering of those who believe in Allah is an eternal trial in this world; the examples of the lives of the past Prophets, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his followers, lives of hardship and trial, are lessons of truth for us. Oppressors in every period have found the opportunity to cause suffering to the believers of Allah; with feelings of enjoyment they inflict pain and try different and new ways of unseen torture against innocent people whose only aim is to live according to the commands of Allah.

Abu Jandal was Sent Back

Prophet Muhammad and his community were abused, sworn at and beaten until they migrated from the beautiful city of Mecca; they were subjected to hardship and torture and suffered greatly at the hands of the unbelievers. If we merely skim through the countless books on Islamic history we can easily imagine the heart-rendering cries of torture and pain that emerge from these worn pages; we can see those who were chained and imprisoned in Mecca by their own fathers and relatives and who were prevented from migrating from the great city; we can picture the trials and hardship of these helpless believers and, in particular, the lament of Abu Jandal, which touches the hearts of Muslims throughout time.

In the 6th year (628 AC) of the migration, the Prophet and 1,400 Muslims made a treaty with Suhail Ibni Amr, the head of the Hudaybiyah community in Mecca; one of the clauses in the agreement was that if "Any of the people of Mecca accept Islam and go to Medina they will be sent back to Mecca." At the time of the signing of this agreement Abu Jandal, the son of Suhail Ibni Amr, came to the Prophet, dragging the chains with which he had been bound after being tortured - by his own father - for accepting Islam. Surprised at seeing his son before him, Suhail Ibni Amr told the Prophet to hand over his son according to the agreement they had made. The Prophet had no choice but to return this young man back to his father and while he was being dragged away, the son cried: "O, Messenger of Allah! O believers! I embraced Islam and took refuge with you; are you submitting me to these unbelievers so that they will make me reject my faith? Can you not see what they have done to me?" Prophet Muhammad gave him the following words of comfort: "Abu Jandal! We made an agreement with them and gave our word. By Allah, it would not be right for us to break our pledge. Be patient! Allah will show you and others like you the way, very soon."

And this is exactly what happened; the flower of patience produced the seeds of many new saplings, springing forth with hope and victory in the hearts of the Muslims. Patience was the shield against the unbeliever's sword of oppression; it soothed pain and gave hope to those who had been oppressed.

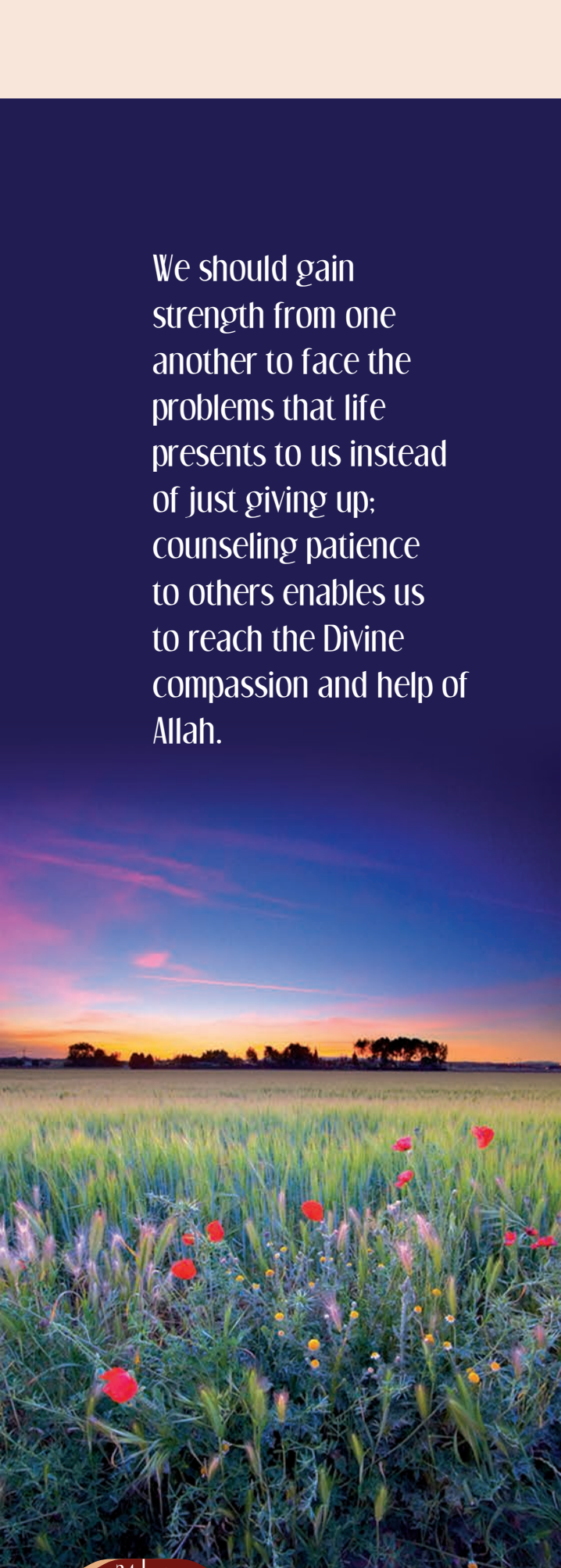
What were the comforting words of the Prophet to the three monuments of faith, Amar, his father Yasir and his mother Sumayah, when his hands were tied against the tyrant when the believers were weak and subjected to oppression and torture? Prophet Muhammad told them: "O family of Yasir! Be patient and your reward will be Paradise!" (Hakeem)

You Will Seek This Period

Oppression has never been absent from the lives of Muslims; not many years after the death of the Prophet an oppressive governor of Umayyad called Hajjaj caused the Muslims great hardship.



Allah commands us to be patient and to advise others to be patient on the true path when faced with the difficulties and forces we may face throughout life.



We should gain strength from one another to face the problems that life presents to us instead of just giving up; counseling patience to others enables us to reach the Divine compassion and help of Allah.

He was not a king or anyone special; he was just a governor who ordered the killing of many scholars and the torture of the Companions of the Prophet. He tortured and even seized the fortune of the beloved Anas bin Malik, who had served the Prophet since childhood.

According to one report Hajjaj killed 120,000 people and this number did not include those he killed in battle. Those fortunate enough to escape his evil treatment protected themselves by taking refuge with the governor of Hajaz, Umar bin Abdulaziz. But Hajjaj had Umar dismissed from office. The governor Hajjaj did everything in his power to continue his rule of Amavi; when this evil oppressor died Umar bin Abdulaziz prostrated in glory to Allah and the famous scholar Ibrahim An-Nahai shed tears of joy.

The appointed judge of the scholars, Zubair bin Adi, said: "We went to Anas bin Malik one day and complained of the injuries we were suffering at the hands of Hajjaj and this is what he told us: "Be patient! For no time will come but that the time following it will be worse until you meet

Your Lord. I heard the Prophet say that." (Bukhari)

Without a doubt this was a revelation given to the Prophet by Allah. The scholars accepted this information as a general principle and said that days of peace, comfort and goodness were to follow. As we can see, in history there were times of peace and ease for the Muslims, but there were also periods of unease and strife, causing hardship to the believers.

Counsel of Patience

Even though this hadith states a harsh reality, it also guides Muslims towards comfort, helping them be patient against forthcoming hardships and difficult times in the future. Allah commands us to be patient and to advise others to be patient on the true path when faced with the difficulties and forces we may face throughout life. (Balad 90:17, Asr 103.3)

Thus, we learn that the only way to overcome the barriers of oppression and hardship in life is with patience and by advising those around us to

follow our example. For instance, if our car runs out of petrol and we have to push the car, we urge each other, saying 'Be patient, just a little longer'. We should gain strength from one another to face the problems that life presents to us instead of just giving up; counseling patience to others enables us to reach the Divine compassion and help of Allah. We must support and help each other during times of strife so that we will not stray from the true path or commands of Allah.

We have to reflect on the fact that the only way to train our *nafs* is through patience and by accustoming ourselves to any unforeseen problems and worries that we may come across. Patience is not just a weapon against oppression; patience is also a great help when performing Divine commands. In the same way that we can sometimes face hardship on the path of Allah, we can also come across some difficulties in abstaining from certain desires of the ego while praying and fasting, but a believer overcomes these difficulties and succeeds with patience, thus gaining the beauty of Allah in Paradise. As related by the Prophet: "Paradise is surrounded by hardships and Hellfire is surrounded by temptations." (Muslim)

In the Qur'an Allah Almighty advises us to be patient because patience is a virtue of goodness; if we perform our duties as believers and demonstrate patience then Allah will show us that the traps and tricks of the enemy cannot harm us. Those who are patient will, in the end, be granted their prayers and be with those they love.

We must never forget that sorrow, hardship and strife are waiting for those who are devoted to Allah; this is a part of their immutable fate. With an increase in troubles and sorrow, it is necessary that we continue to nurture the flower of patience. We have to know that one day this will bloom into a thousand and one colors, spreading its fragrance as a comfort to us all. *"So, verily, with every difficulty, there is relief"* (Inshirah, 94/5)

Patience was the shield against the unbeliever's sword of oppression; it soothed pain and gave hope to those who had been oppressed.



Pearls of Wisdom

**Have patience. All things are difficult before they become easy.*

Sadi Shirazi

**Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it.*

Rumi

**If words come out of the heart, they will enter the heart, but if they come from the tongue, they will not pass beyond the ears.*

Suhrawardi

**If you are patient in a moment of anger, you will escape a hundred days of sorrow.*

Anonymous

**Whoever travels
without a guide needs
two hundred years for a
two-days journey.*

Rumi

**Your journey is
towards your homeland.
Remember you are
travelling from the
world of appearance to
the world of Reality.*

Abd'ul Khaliq Gujduwani

**To be a Sufi is to cease
from taking trouble; and
there is no greater trouble for
thee than thine own self, for
when thou art occupied with
thyself, thou remainest away
from God.*

Abu Sa'id

**Whatever you have in
your mind - forget it;
Whatever you have in
your hand - give it;
Whatever is to be your
fate - face it!*

Abu Sa'id





STORIES

The Songbird

There was once a successful businessman who had everything – a beautiful wife, adorable children and a big house in which they all lived happily. However, the pride of his life was his exotic songbird, which he kept in a cage and fed delicious tidbits when it entertained his guests.

One day the man had to go on a journey far to the south and he asked his wife and children what presents they would like from abroad – they asked for fine silks, honey and clockwork toys. Finally he asked the songbird if he would like him to bring anything back.

"I wish only for one small favor" the songbird replied.

"Anything!" his master declared.

"Just this – when you see my cousins in the trees in the place you're going to, please tell them about my conditions here."

"Are you sure? I could bring you back a fine jewel-encrusted mirror or dried tropical fruit?"

"No – just this, thank you." The songbird replied and the man went away feeling a little disconcerted, but resolved to carry out his pet's wishes.

The man made his trip safely and carried out his business satisfactorily, spending the remaining time there buying the presents his family had requested. Finally, he went to a park and saw some birds in trees that bore a remarkable resemblance to his own songbird. He called up to one of them and told them about how his own bird lived in cage and sang for him.

No sooner had he finished speaking than one of these exotic birds trembled on its perch and tumbled to the ground, ceasing to move. The man held his head in grief; the incident quite spoiled his trip.

He returned home and greeted his wife and family who were delighted with their presents, but he could not share their pleasure, as the forthcoming conversation with his songbird hung over his head. Finally he found the courage to go down to the garden.

"Well?" his songbird asked and, hesitantly, the man told him exactly what had happened. The songbird listened intently, then trembled on his perch and fell to the bottom of his cage, dead.

The man was now beside himself with grief and confusion. Weeping, he opened the door of the cage and took out his beloved songbird. No sooner had he done so, however, then the songbird returned to life and flew up to the branches of the nearest tree, letting out a song of joy at finding its freedom.

The man scratched his head in wonder and eventually asked:

"Okay, you win. But tell me please, what was in the message that contained this trick?"

The songbird looked down at him with pity and said:

"My cousin in Africa showed me that it was my beauty that kept me in the cage. Were it not for the delight of my singing voice you would have lost interest long ago. I had to give up that life in order to become free."

Doing Justice

The people of Baghdad asked Junaid to tell them the meaning of generosity. He said "Let me hear another define it first."

"Generosity is not thinking of yourself and acting as good as possible," said Hasan. The people applauded his wisdom.

Junaid commented: "Hasan has spoken well, but he has not emptied the cup. I feel that generosity is doing justice without requiring justice."



Trust In Him

Habib had one cloak that he used to wear both summer and winter. One day when he went out of his house to make ablutions, he left his cloak behind on the road.

Hasan al-Basri came by and saw Habib's cloak lying in the middle of the road. He thought to himself, "Habib has left his cloak; God forbid that someone take it." Hasan stood there and watched over it until Habib returned.

When Habib arrived, he greeted Hasan and said "O, Imam of the Muslims, what are you doing standing there?" In reply, Hasan exclaimed: "Don't you know that you should not have left your cloak here? Someone might take it. Tell me, in whom did you trust to leave it here?"

Habib smiled, and replied: "In He who appointed you to watch over it."

TÜRELEM (Patience)

Muslims in Hungary are predominantly first generation immigrants from many different countries, therefore there are no well-organized communities, but rather small personal networks full of holes.

Personal Thoughts on Patience In a World Where Past and Present Collide This is the way it is for many historic and hysteric, ethic and ethnic reasons that are not worth scrutinizing here; typically being Muslim implies mild abuse, disrupted personal connections, and restricted living conditions. Planned "conversations" for questioning and terrorizing new Muslims, the warning off of relatives, friends, business partners, hidden operative actions, like launching rumors, causing economic damage to Muslim businesses, and organizing discord and suspicion are all old-school methods of the former Hungarian Communist state security that are now aimed to weaken the Muslim community and to disintegrate the social network of Muslim people in Hungary. What can I do with this knowledge? What should I do?

We discussed this topic with an old friend of mine who had been under observation for many years under Communism as a Catholic priest in a larger Hungarian village. I could not tell him anything new about the tricks that were designed to destroy and isolate a community of believers. "Do harm where harm can be done, catch those whom can be caught, divide where splits can be made and leave dirt and mess everywhere if you are identified: this is the routine of former Communist times" he smiles. Another friend, a former national leader of the secular organization of the third largest Christian church in Hungary, says the same thing: "Now they are doing the same to you that they were doing to

us." And what is the lesson of their story? After twenty years still nothing has been made clear, and nobody has apologized: there is just dirt and mess everywhere, on a large scale. Who wants to touch this kind of mess?

Well, I certainly do not want to. But I promised to write about Muslims in Hungary and it is not possible to avoid this sensitive topic. This is a common experience of new Muslims in Hungary.

The overall number of Muslims in Hungary can only be estimated. There are no empirical surveys or official data; the number most often mentioned is about 30 thousand. Allah knows best. At the 'Eid prayers there were about 4-6 thousand people out of a total Hungarian population of 10 million.

Muslims in Hungary are predominantly first generation immigrants from many different countries, therefore there are no well-organized communities, but rather small personal networks full of holes. On the one hand, they are more exposed to the activity of Hungarian authorities, but, on the other hand, however limited their number, they are still too great to be totally controlled.

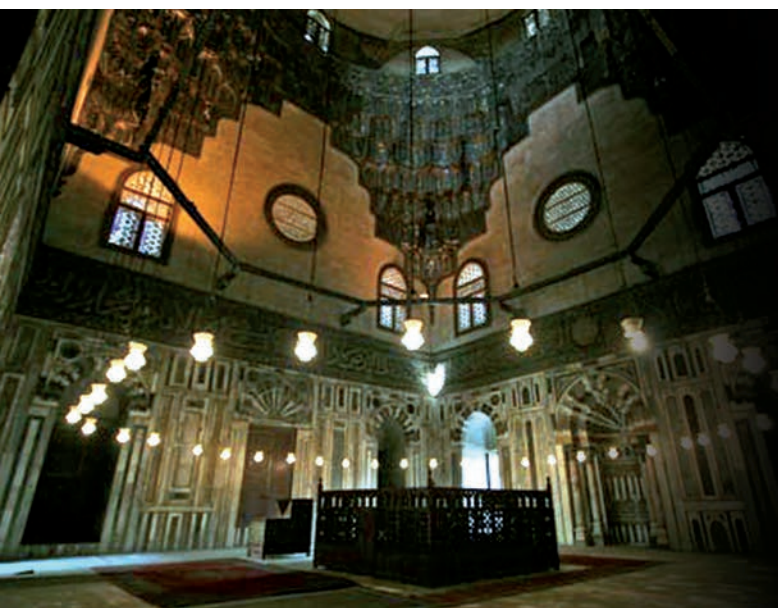
There are divisions according to nation, language, old and traditional rivalries and so many other things that cannot be seen if you

live in a Muslim country in a large community. Now, in Hungary, these dividing factors all can be seen and experienced. Hungarian-born Muslims form a small and divided minority of a thousand, or a few thousand, people inside this small and divided minority. There are mixed marriages, typically with a Hungarian wife, with the children of these marriages being, with a few exceptions, in their childhood or adolescence. I do not know the number of Hungarian Muslim wives, but, my impression is that they form a rather large and tacit multitude. Nevertheless, being a Hungarian-born Muslim means being a new Muslim.


When writing the first draft of this article, I stopped here.

Something was wrong with the tone of my writing. For more than a month I have hesitated. At first, I did not understand what had gone wrong. I tried to continue in many different ways, but none of them solved the problem; there is still a restless feeling.

The topic of being the focus of the state security police has been familiar to me since 1972, when I was held back for many years at my university studies for spreading "subversive ideas" and for being dangerous to the Communist regime. I learned to live with the shadows of Communism. I learned to identify several methods of intervention from the signs, and



I learned to identify several methods of intervention from the signs, and I also learned to immediately identify the calm and persuasive tones. That is, by watching when or at what phrases people turn scarlet or stop short, you can easily find out when they feel threatened by speaking about a certain subject.



The typical attitude of the Hungarian media to Muslims is that they are foreigners with a funny outlook and strange habits and if they are not criminals they must be “sleeping” terrorists. This scheme appears almost automatically, without any bad intention or Islamophobic rage.

I also learned to immediately identify the mild, almost sweet, calm and persuasive tones – just as peasants learn to read the different tracks left in their vegetable-bed. That is, by watching when or at what phrases people turn scarlet or stop short, you can easily find out when they feel threatened by speaking about a certain subject.

Boosted with this acquired skill of mine after 30 years of psychodrama praxis it has become a burden for me that I can see more than I can deal with. I do not warn anyone about every small informer who is listening to phone conversations; I would not like to spread more suspicion in the Ummah, Insha'Allah. But if the occasion arises, I will readily explain to them what the words “jihad” and “Islam” mean for me in the praxis of my present stage of life. Even now I have an occasion to do so, InshaAllah. Because of the relative isolation of my family, living in a farm far away from neighbors, and being dependent on a slow internet connection, I am not well educated in the *ahlaq*, good conduct, which is vital for me and the entire Hungarian Muslim community. *Türelem*, patience, is what is left for me as a weapon.

Now, I do not like to pose as a leading champion of patience, yet still, there is something to be proud of, living for four years at an income of \$1.00/day; an amount under the world poverty standard. This is common for many Muslims in the world, and there are many Hungarians who live their whole lives under this level. However, with higher education you can never be as helpless as “real” poor people are. I learned woodcutting and mowing, while my wife helped children to be born and nurtured, learning many skills by the grace of Allah Almighty. In this way not only were we accepted, but we also became loved by many people in the village nearby, and for me it is still a wonder that despite all the time of poverty, I have been able to maintain the respect and love of a very proud woman, my wife, Alhamdulillah.

Those years are over, and although we do not want them back, Insh'Allah, we still think of them with a kind of nostalgia. In the last few years I have edited schoolbooks and sometimes run organizational development with psychodrama, while my wife has run a kindergarten for mentally

handicapped children in the town, also acting as an author for schoolbooks.

Now I can see my weapon of *türelem* has become damaged.

Is it because my heart is sick that malignant words have come to my writing? Wicked thoughts and spiteful words do not bring me closer to Islam. Cautious, diplomatic words have also failed; submissive silence does not help either. I have to find a solution that brings peace and tranquility of mind and soul to everyone involved in my life, Insh'Allah.

Meanwhile, I have returned to the familiar work of woodcutting, thus giving myself time and solitude enough to think over this difficult problem. Earlier this year, after speaking in a company of Muslims, I discovered two kinds of aftermath. A business partner of mine was frightened away, while the only supplier of broadband to our area was deterred from providing internet to us. Is it this recent wave of pressure that is disturbing my mind? Not really. The loss of business may be a side effect of a neutral intervention; it is just business as usual, adapted from the legacy of Communism, as I mentioned. While the second intervention causes less material damage, it does contain a bad message. Cutting off a family from the broadband represents a surprising new color on the palette of the European exchange of ideas.

The typical attitude of the Hungarian media to Muslims is that they are foreigners with a funny outlook and strange habits, very far from civilized people, and if they are not criminals they must be "sleeping" terrorists. This scheme appears almost automatically, without any bad intention or Islamophobic rage, and works even without manifest expression. The context, by itself, distorts everything you say about Islam.

- Muslims speak about *jihad*, they speak about the enemy, this is very dangerous! They speak about love and patience; look how sneaky they are!

- They are undisciplined; that is dangerous. They are disciplined; this is even more dangerous.

- They seek publicity; that is dangerous. They avoid publicity; they are clearly hiding something.



It is never too late to repent as long as you are alive and can make a choice between good and bad. Forgiveness is from Allah as He wills.

- Some of them are undereducated; that is dangerous. Some of them are well educated; so they are more dangerous.

- They greet each other by saying *salam alaykum*, like real terrorists do.

Based on this broad consent of *zelotizing*, an ambitious young man does not have to be very creative to give Islamic gestures the appearance of a security threat. In the beginning, such a young man can act as a cool-blooded professional who goes into the cave of the lion for information. Just give him clearance and financing, and he will convey information about the "Muslim threat". Obviously, it will appear that the security of nation is at risk. After all, Muslims have connections with Muslim organizations; they have friends from abroad; they clearly speak about spreading Islam. In short, there can be such a person who has based a career of many years on demonizing Muslims. This is not disturbing, just funny. How much cheaper it would have been to place a webcam in every corner of our houses! I could support a large household with the money saved.

I am talking to these young men- me, the man who has helped to build the careers of such young men by not warning others. We are just people. You are not my enemy, and I am not your enemy. I beg your pardon for all the cruel words, but I

did not warn other Muslims of your wrongdoing because there was always a tiny drop of doubt in me about your exact role.

You do not have to believe me, just think about it. Look at it from all angles and you will find that even if every decision of your life has been made by you, the final outcome is posed against you. This has been done with a force that has its own intentions, therefore I speak of "him", Shaytan. His intention is to lead me and you and as many people as he can to his way by making us commit too many wrongs until it will be too late to repent. It is never too late to repent as long as you are alive and can make a choice between good and bad. Forgiveness is from Allah as He wills.

More than one month has passed, and Eid al Adha is coming.

Pilgrims now cast their stones that were collected in the night of Muzdalifah. I can recall that night, and I am not proud of it. It was a lesson for me about patience, something of which we are always short. We can never be patient enough, particularly we Muslims in Hungary, particularly with each other. *Türelem*. May this personal message reach its goal in bringing peace to all Muslims in Hungary, in Europe and in the whole world Insha'Allah.



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If we have Prophet Moses and the Pharaoh in our souls it would be beneficial to remember the truth of the good and evil of these two historical comparisons. The Pharaoh was a captive of his own ego and he pronounced himself as divine, reigning with oppression.

PROPHET MOSES AND THE PHARAOH

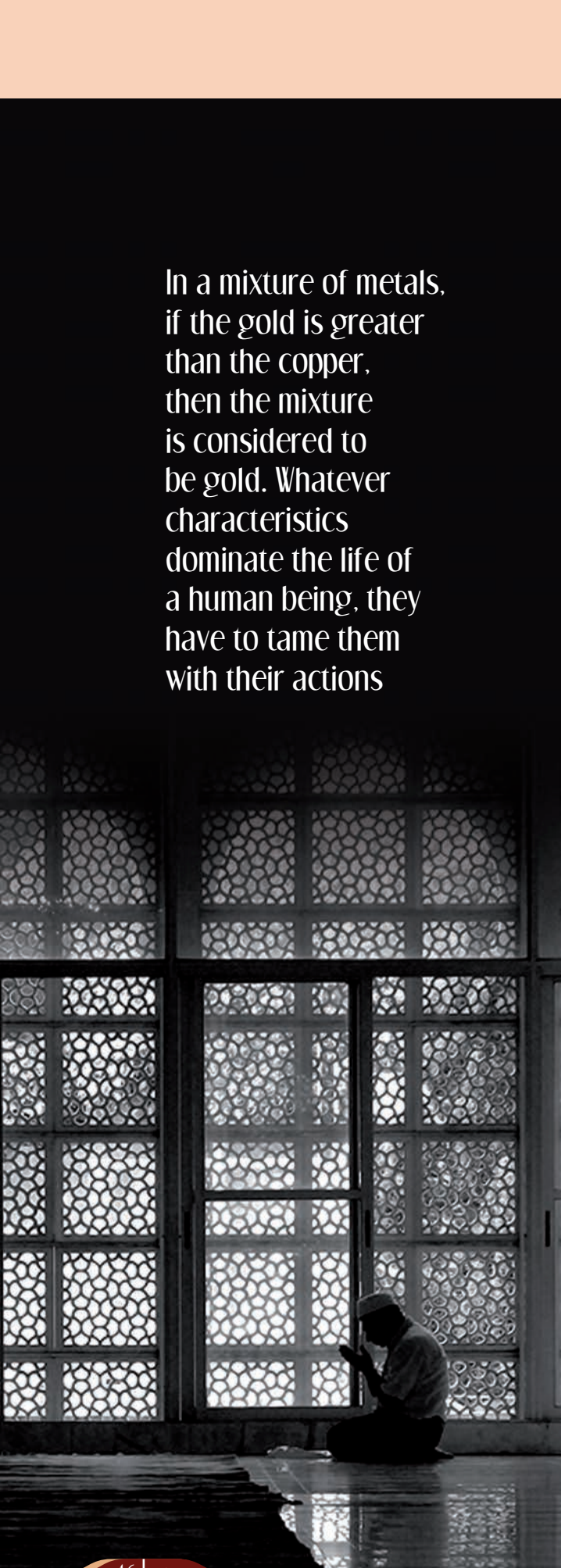
Allah Almighty pledges seven times in the Qur'an that a person's inner soul is inspired for the "bad" and "good" and that those who eliminate evil and choose the right path will find salvation; however, those who submit to the petty desires of their ego and ruin their souls with sin will be the losers.

Looking at the matter from this angle, we can discover two aspects of the human soul. Two completely opposite tendencies, good and evil, are in never-ending conflict trying to eliminate one another.

Mawlana explains the chaos in a person's soul as follows:

"The inner world of a person is like a forest. There are all kinds of animals, from the most vicious and dangerous, to the tamest and most friendly. *"...And breathed into him of my spirit"* (Al-Hijr, 15/29). If you know this verse and prosper from these divine words, then glance at the confused, peculiar souls of human beings! A human's existence has thousands of different characteristics; clean, dirty, beautiful, ugly, affectionate or unfriendly. In the existence of human beings, their personality is formed from their prevailing characteristics. In a mixture of metals, if the gold is greater than the copper, then the mixture is considered to be gold. Whatever characteristics dominate the life of a





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with their actions

human being, they have to tame them with their actions; these actions and feelings live together within all creatures. Humans sometimes emerge like a wild wolf, and other times like a mild angel, beautiful like the face of the moon. Good and evil infect the heart through a secret passage. Like a wild disobedient horse who slows his pace, or a playful bear, or the goat that butts.

The emotions of a human being are reflected even in a dog, and as a result of these emotions and training the dog can either be a savage predator or a sheep dog watching the sheep, under the control of the human. Such characteristics were passed from one of the worthy youth of the Ashab-i kehf to his dog; as a result he went off in search of Allah and he received a Qur'anic declaration.

Affection can be displayed in different ways from time to time. While spirituality makes one like an angel, the turmoil of the ego, in reaction to this, causes one to become like an evil monster and reject the truth. For the lions of significance or the guardians, for those who are well acquainted with the realities of the forest, there is a path that calls the heart. As for the guardians, they recognize this trap and avoid it. They save their hearts from evil desires and misgivings by entrusting them to the truth. O, he whose soul is menial to a dog! Do not despair; if you want to benefit from the forest of truth then follow the path of your soul and separate the coral of wise benefit from the pearls of knowledge. If you are an unbeliever then benefit from these valuable pearls; if you must carry a burden, then carry a burden that is holy."

As implied in these examples, human beings are nothing less than a small version of the universe. With all the truths of the outer world the fate of the human being always lies in the soul. In the same way that a seed hides the trees and forests that it will produce, human beings also hide the truth of the universe in their souls. The Qur'an is the most accurate interpretation of the law and regulations that are applicable for human beings and the universe. Its values and benefits are so vast and great that there is no possible way of describing them. The hearts that follow the Qur'an are the revelation of the Creator's universe.

Throughout history there have been many followers; however, people have been deprived of the qualities of truth. These followers still live in our hearts and are still struggling. The victor of the battle is the one who controls their poise and actions. Mawlana brings this to our attention with the following example of Prophet Moses and the Pharaoh:

"O traveler of truth! If you wish to learn the truth, neither Moses nor the Pharaoh are dead. Today they are living inside you; they hide within your existence and are still at war in your souls!"

On the same subject Muhyiddin-i Arabi said: "My soul is Moses and my mind is Harun. My ego is the Pharaoh, while the eagerness of my desires is Haman, the vizier of the Pharaoh."

So, if we have Prophet Moses and the Pharaoh in our souls it would be beneficial to remember the truth of the good and evil of these two historical comparisons. The Pharaoh was a captive of his own ego and he pronounced himself as divine, reigning with oppression.

Oppression is knowingly or unknowingly causing suffering to the souls or bodies of others. Oppression is in the hearts of those who are deprived of mercy. The source of this is a feeling of ambition, jealousy, resentment and gain, all of which are inferior passions of the *nafs*.

There are thousands of examples in the history of mankind of horrifying massacres that were carried out by oppressors.

The Pharaoh, who because of his barbarity and persecution, lost all sense of remorse; after having a dream he gave orders that any of the newly born sons of Israel should be killed. This very serious oppression soon became a massacre.

Muhyiddin-i Arabi wrote about this in *Fususul Hikem*: "The Pharaoh, in order to destroy the threat of Prophet Moses, killed 980,000 innocent children. All of these children died as saviors of Prophet Moses, strengthening his spirituality. Even though neither the Pharaoh nor his family had any idea who Moses was, Allah Almighty knew. Of course, all of the lives taken were connected to Moses, because he was the objective."

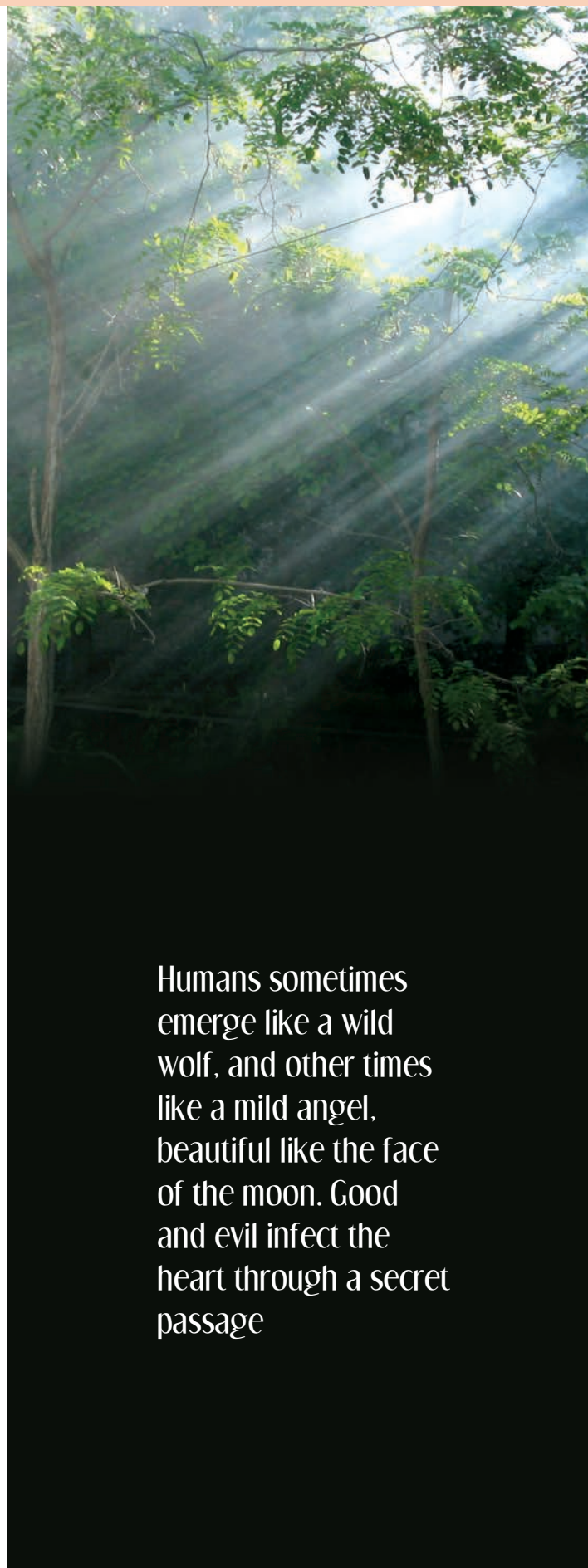
The center of belief is the heart; the jewel of remembrance is also the heart. When remembrance finds its place in the soul, a person finds true peace.



While the Pharaoh was at his strongest, killing all the innocent newborns, Allah Almighty was rearing a new sapling in the Pharaoh's palace: Prophet Moses...! From a very young age Moses was reared in the Pharaoh's palace under the protection of Allah the Merciful. When Moses grew into a young man, while trying to save an Israelite from the oppression of a gypsy and the Pharaoh's baker, Moses accidentally killed the gypsy. Afraid of what he had done, he fled Egypt. During his flight to Madian he met Shuaib; in return for being allowed to marry one of his daughters, Prophet Moses agreed to work on Shuaib's farm for eight years. Later, on his return to Egypt Moses was granted prophethood and he was commanded to invite the Pharaoh to Islam.

In the holy Qur'an, when relating how Prophet Moses called the Pharaoh to Islam, the method of conveying this call was set out by Allah Almighty: *"But speak to him mildly; perchance he may take warning or fear (Allah).* (Taha, 20/44) Communicating, even with an unbeliever, should be expressed in a soft and calm way: *"Go, thou and thy brother, with my signs, and slacken not, either of you, in keeping me in remembrance.* (Taha, 20/42) These two verses show us how to prepare when communicating with others. Even though Moses and Harun were both prophets and Allah Almighty had ordered them to speak of Him, it is quite clear just how important it is for all believers to follow this divine order. The center of belief is the heart; the jewel of remembrance is also the heart. When remembrance finds its place in the soul, a person finds true peace. A verse in the Holy Qur'an says: *"In the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction."* (Rad, 13/28)

O Allah we seek refuge in You from our ego. Put us among those who find peace with Your remembrance, place goodness in our hearts and make us among those who avoid evil...! O divine one, destroy the Pharaoh within us with Your power and mercy, purify our souls of the soil of sin. Amin!...



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