

SUFI WISDOM

A Source of Inspirational and Traditional Islamic Knowledge

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THE BEST EXEMPLARY GENERATION OF ALL TIMES

OSMAN NURI EFENDI

THE UNIQUE ROLE MODEL:

PROPHET MUHAMMAD ﷺ

AHMET TASGETIREN

THE FIRST GENERATION

OF ISLAM

H. KAMIL YILMAZ

ASHAB AL-SUFFAH

JACQUILINE V. FRANK

FOLLOWING THE EXEMPLARY

COMPANIONS

MUSLIM HERITAGE

THE GREAT

MOSQUE OF KAIROUAN





Dear Readers,

This issue of Sufi Wisdom has been dedicated to the Companions of the Messenger of Allah (pbuh). Our Beloved Prophet had so much admiration for his Companions that he referred to them as his shining stars.

For us the Companions are like beacons of light that illuminate our lives with true guidance... they stand out brightly because of their purity of heart and faith; they were rightly-guided in all manners of life, charity and happiness. Concerning this the Prophet (pbuh) once said, "*Not one of my companions will die in a land without being raised as a leader and a light for its people on the Day of Resurrection*" (Tirmidhi).

The Companions were the first generation to reflect the Nur-i Muhammedi (Light of Muhammad) and there will be no other generation like them with that level of faith until the Day of Judgment.

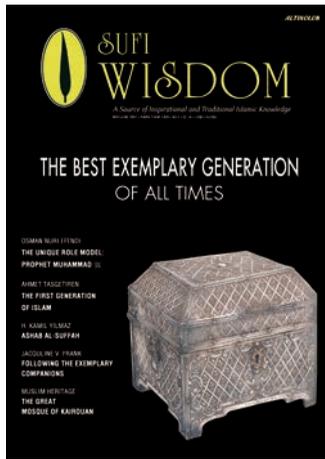
This is the reason why we are dedicating this edition to spreading the light of those whom the Prophet loved most dear, in hopes that learning about them and learning about our need to follow them will help increase our spiritual enthusiasm.

We have added a new section which will become a regular part of every edition, inshallah; a discussion of specific prayers for every occasion. This section starts with the prayers for ablution.

This edition also contains a spiritual interview with Rabia Brodbeck, a famous Sufi writer from Istanbul. Some regular readers may know her from past articles she has written for Sufi Wisdom, but for the new reader, she will certainly give your mind something to think about and your heart a spiritual lift.

May the love and affection that the companions had for the Prophet (pbuh) enter our hearts and fill us with the *Nur-i Muhammedi* so that we too can become guided and blessed in this life, being among the "highest companions."

Elif Kapici
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- **COVER PAGE:** Silver Box for the sacred strands of Hair of Prophet Muhammad. • Topkapi Palace, Istanbul-Turkey

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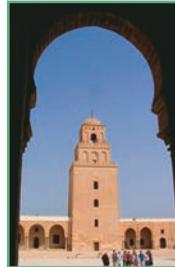


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LOFTY MORAL LESSONS FROM PROPHET MUHAMMAD ﷺ THE UNIQUE ROLE MODEL (II)

OSMAN NURI EFENDI

The Lord Almighty has bestowed all of creation, especially human beings, with a tendency towards affection. The degree to which a human being can spiritually transcend in this world, a school for the divine test, is the equivalent of the love they direct towards the Lord Almighty and goodness. The core of true and ultimate affection, in which the soul can find peace and tranquility, is the Lord himself who has blessed humans from His soul. For this reason any kind of mortal love that does not reach Allah, that does not end in Him and which is searched for on dead-end roads are a heaviness and weariness for the soul.

Mawlana Jalaladdin Rumi describes a servant's heedlessness with an example:

"It is not a matter of surprise if a lamb runs away from a wolf. The wolf is an enemy and a hunter of lambs. What is surprising is if a lamb falls in love with a wolf!"

For this reason one needs to have a soul that makes all forms of mortal affection a step towards divine love, without forgetting Allah Almighty, Who is the center of love. This is a requirement of the creation of a human being.

The shortest and truest way to divine love is through loving the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and as an outcome of this love, through obeying him. As per the rule "One who is in love, loves everything about his beloved", it is an obligation to be obedient and devoted to the Prophet in every way. This obedience and devotion is the backbone of divine love.

The love felt for the Prophet is reflected as tranquility in worship, courtesy in human relations, refinement in morality, compassion in the heart, a light in the face, spirituality of the tongue and a depth in the gaze.



The most bountiful fountain, from which all these blessings are derived, is the Prophet (pbuh) himself. Souls can fully learn the lesson of love from him only when they become like butterflies burning with his love, spiraling in his Light of Existence. Mawlana gives examples from the manifestations of love in the universe for us to measure our love for the Prophet:

"For love, many moths have thrown themselves into fire. Flapping their wings in the fire and burning, they say, 'be like me.'"

"The candle was burning and crying at the same time. It gave itself to fire and to agony. But while it cried, it was radiating light around itself. The same candle was saying: "What will you earn scattering gold and silver, trying to benefit from this world. If you want spiritual profit you must burn and melt like me!"

We should love the Prophet, who lived his entire life saying "My Ummah", with a similar love. His love and compassion for his Ummah was much stronger than the love of a compassionate mother for her children. The future of his Ummah worried him so much that he said: *"I am the Prophet who has suffered the most."* Again, he said to the companions:

"Beware! I am a means of security for you in my life. After I die I will cry "My Ummah!" until the time when the first blow of the trumpet is heard on the Day of Judgment!" (Ali el-Muttaki, *Kanzu'l-Ummal*, v.14, p. 414)

Showing faithfulness to the Prophet's love for his Ummah is a primary obligation of conscience for every believer. We should love him more than our lives, obey his sunnah and encircle ourselves with his morality in accordance with the hadith (saying of the Prophet) **"A person is with the person who s/he loves"**. This is the most delicate scale and indicator of our love for him.

Here are two of his recommendations, full of wisdom, that are a means of eternal happiness and salvation.

1. My Lord has ordered me to forgive he who oppresses me. (I advise you to be the same way)

To forgive is to pardon instead of taking revenge when one is able to punish the guilty. It is a beautiful display of love shown to the creation for the sake of the Creator. It is the maturity of taking oneself out of the equation in responding to the transgressor and hoping for Allah's forgiveness, trying to make the transgressor a recipient of divine compassion and forgiveness. Of course, this maturity is in those great believers who have reached the point of **"nothingness"** in the presence of Allah Almighty and who have encircled themselves with divine morals. It is the determination of being worthy of forgiveness by forgiving over and over again. Sayyidina Umar said:

"Those who are not merciful will not receive mercy. He who does not pardon faults will not be pardoned himself. He who does not forgive will not be forgiven..." (Bukhârî, *al-Adabu'l-Mufrad*, p. 415, nb: 371)

The love felt for the Prophet is reflected as tranquility in worship, courtesy in human relations, refinement in morality, compassion in the heart, a light in the face, spirituality of the tongue and a depth in the gaze.



Overcoming anger and forgiveness is difficult for the self-ego (nafs). It is an exceptional virtue to be able to show this discretion for the sake of Allah Almighty, because the greatness of the outcome will be equal to the difficulty faced in reaching it.

A person who was struck by such weakness wanted advice from the Messenger of Allah. The Messenger said: "Do not get angry!" The man repeated his wish a few times and the Prophet gave the same answer each time. (Bukhârî, Adab 76)

The Messenger of Allah invites believers to overcome their anger and gain the attribute of forgiveness with the following hadith:

"Do not become simple people, who always follow others as examples and say, if humans do good we will do good, if they oppress us we will oppress them too. But become accustomed to doing good to people when they are good and not oppressing (forgiving) people when they do you wrong." (Tirmidhî, Birr, 63/2007)

In the light of these truths the elders say: "It is easy for everyone to be good to a person who does good to them. It is only an attribute of those honorable ones to forgive those who do you wrong!" This moral is an important spiritual method in training. If the person to whom you respond in goodness is an enemy, this will break the hatred and enmity in their heart and it will incline them towards fellowship. If it is a person who is in between, then their heart will fill with feelings of fellowship and closeness. If it is a close friend, it will increase affection. In a verse the Lord Almighty says:

"Nor can goodness and Evil be equal. Repel (Evil) with what is better: Then will he between whom and thee was hatred become as it were thy friend and intimate!" (Qur'an:41/34)

İbn-i Abbâs explains this verse as:

"What is meant by 'what is better' is forgiveness during times of wrongdoing and patience during anger. Allah Almighty will protect those who can do this, have their enemies obey them and make them like close friends." (Bukhârî, Tafsîr, 41/1)

Throughout history the act of "forgiving" has produced many results in deterring people from doing harm and injustice. It has helped inspire truth and goodness in them. This act has been the means of awakening many people who are unaware of the Truth.

The Messenger of Allah declared a general amnesty the day Makkah was conquered. He asked the people who gathered around Ka'ba:

"O People of Quraysh! What do you think I will do to you?"

The people of Quraysh answered:

"Hoping for your goodness and blessings we say you will 'do good'. You are a brother who is kind and generous, a son of a brother who is kind and generous!" After hearing this, the Prophet (pbuh) responded:

"I will say to you as Joseph said to his bothers: '...He said: This day let no reproach be (cast) on you: Allah will forgive you, and He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy!' (Qur'an:12/92) You are free to go!"

The Prophet (pbuh) always forgave wrongdoings done to him in person. But when a crime was committed against the public, it was impossible to appease him until justice prevailed.



The qualities we own should be like the supreme qualities of an olive tree. A tree with a very thin trunk, the olive tree starts producing fruit a year after it is planted and continues this service throughout its lifespan.



Allah Almighty brought the mushrikeen (those who attribute partner or partners to Allah) to their knees in front of the Prophet (pbuh); but for so many years they had shown oppression to the Muslims. Yet the Prophet (pbuh) forgave them and freed them all. In face of this compassion many hearts of stone softened, many dark souls lit up with the light of guidance (hidayah).

One of the blessed daughters of the Prophet, Zainab, was making hijrah (emigration) to her father when an enemy of Islam, Habbar bin Aswad, ran after her. He threw a lance at her canopy on top of a camel. She fell on a rock and was seriously wounded. She was pregnant at the time and had a miscarriage. Afterwards, these wounds caused her death. Habbar had committed many crimes like this. After Makkah was conquered, he ran away and could not be found.

One day, the Prophet (pbuh) was sitting with his companions in Madina. Habbar came in front of him, declared that he became a Muslim and asked for forgiveness. The Messenger of Allah forgave him. Furthermore, the Prophet forbade anyone to insult him for what he had done before. Because Allah Almighty says:

"Keep to forgiveness (O Muhammad), and enjoin kindness, and turn away from the ignorant" (Qur'an:7/199)

The Prophet (pbuh) always forgave wrongdoings done to him in person. But when a crime was committed against the public, it was impossible to appease him until justice prevailed. One can only forgive those crimes committed against oneself. If a crime is committed against society, then the rights of those people need to be protected. Forgiving such a criminal will open the door to much greater offences against

society, which will result in oppression. Forgiving for the sake of his Lord was the most important characteristic of the Messenger of Allah (pbuh). While inviting people to Islam and conveying Allah's religion to them he forgave many people who had insulted him and oppressed him. He prayed to his Lord for their guidance. When he went to Taif to invite them to Islam, the ignorant and idolatrous people of Taif stoned him, leaving him covered in blood. The Angel Gabriel came to the Prophet, telling him he was waiting for the order to destroy these people. The Prophet of Compassion (pbuh) replied: *"No! I pray to Lord Almighty to bring about a people from their descendants who will not take companions in Allah's worship and who will pray only to Him."* (Bukhârî, Bad'ü'l-Halk, 7; Muslim, Jihâd, 111)

The people of Taif were honored with Islam after some time, due to this show of compassion.

Abu Bakr was helping a poor man named Miftah. Miftah was among those who had slandered Prophet's wife Aisha, a symbol of chastity. These people committed one of the worst crimes against her by vilifying and defaming her name. Abu Bakr was greatly saddened by Miftah's role in all of this. The woman who was the target of this slander was a mother to the Ummah, a wife to the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) and his own daughter, the apple of his eye. After this ingratitude, Abu Bakr vowed not to give alms to Miftah again, whom he had helped for many years. When Abu Bakr stopped helping him, Miftah and his family became destitute.

Thereupon, the verses advising people of virtue to forgive those who have wronged them were revealed: **"...do you not wish that Allah should forgive you?"** (Qur'an: 24/22) Abu Bakr said:

"-Yes! I swear by Allah that I want Him to forgive me." And he paid a fee for breaking his vow and continued to help Miftah. (Bukhārī, Magāzī, 34; Muslim, Tauba, 56)

The true owner of mercy is Allah Almighty. Believers take pleasure in forgiving in proportion to the love of Allah felt in their hearts. Those who wish to attain a taste of Divine Unity are the ones who disperse the scent of forgiveness from the roses of their spiritual gardens. True victory and happiness of the soul are reached through forgiving those who oppress you for the sake of Allah Almighty.

2. My Lord ordered me to enjoin what is right (and forbid what is wrong).

The most important service to humanity is to enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong. This is a result of the compassion and mercy felt towards the creation for the sake of the Creator. The greatest need of humanity is the "salvation of iman (belief)". For this reason, it can be said that calling people to Islam is a holy mission that can be called a "prophet's trade". In a verse Lord Almighty says:

"Then shall we question those to whom Our message was sent and those by whom We sent it." (Qur'an:7/6)

The Prophet devoted his life to tabligh. At his last sermon, asking the congregation three times, he confirmed that he had completed his duty: "Did I make tabligh?" This holy mission is now our responsibility as we are his Ummah. In the Qur'an Allah Almighty says:

"Who is better in speech than one who calls (men) to Allah, works righteousness, and says, 'I am of those who bow in Islam'?" (Qur'an:41/33)

"Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong: They are the ones to attain felicity." (Qur'an:3/104)

The Prophet (pbuh) says:

"I swear by Allah that if He enables you to become a vehicle for a person to find the Truth, this is far better for you than to own red camels (the best of worldly possessions)" (Bukhārī, Ashābu'n-Nabi, 9).

It is a great blessing for the believer to be the address of such good news and favor. In another hadith it is stated that:

"A person who invites people to the right path receives the same blessings as those people who follow him from Allah. This will not reduce the blessings of those followers." (Muslim, IIm, 16)

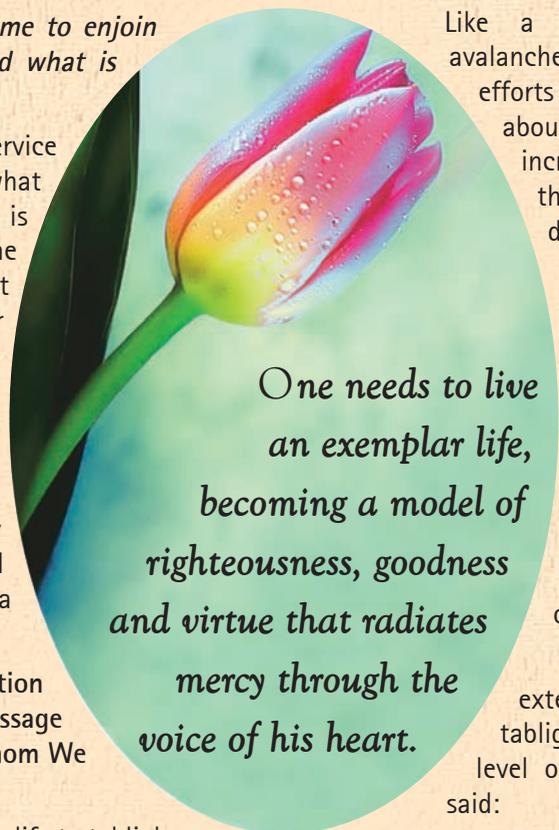
Like a snowball becoming an avalanche, blessings for genuine efforts spent in making tabligh about the truth and goodness increase rapidly. This means that helping those who are deprived of the blessing of iman or those who are believers, but live their religion with shallow and rough measures, due to their ignorance and heedlessness, is the greatest favor we can do for these people. It is also a great blessing and a debt of thankfulness for our iman.

On the other hand, the extent of our efforts in making tabligh is an indication of our level of iman. In a hadith it is said:

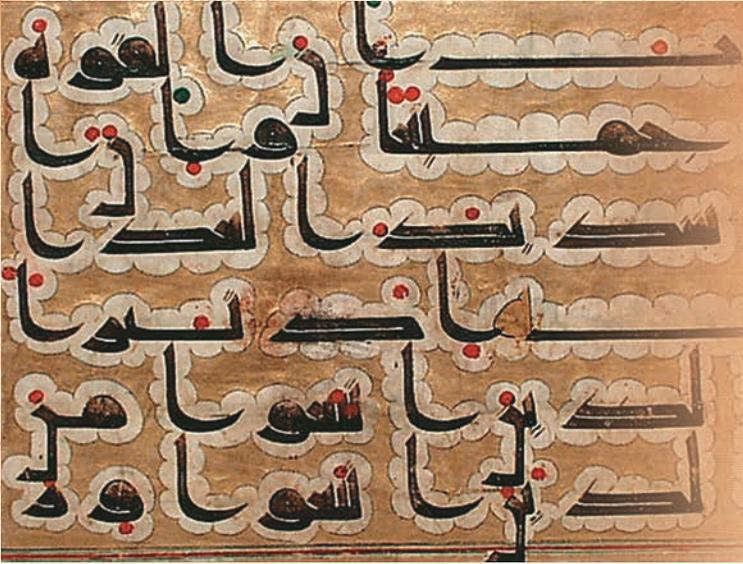
"Whoever among you sees a wrongdoing should correct it with his hand; if he cannot achieve this he should correct it with his tongue; if he cannot achieve this he should despise it with his heart and this is the weakest of iman" (Muslim, Iman, 78)

There are many harsh warnings against those who are neglectful about conveying the Message of Islam. The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said:

"I swear onto Allah Who has given me life that, you will either enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong or Allah Almighty will send a punishment



One needs to live an exemplar life, becoming a model of righteousness, goodness and virtue that radiates mercy through the voice of his heart.



It is not possible for the tabligh of an ignorant person to be free of mistakes. Therefore, **scholarly and spiritual wealth** is the first condition.

onto you. You will pray to Him but your prayers will not be accepted." (Tirmidhi, Fitān, 9)

The methods and the manners of conveying the Message of Islam (tablighh) should be followed carefully. Otherwise, it can cause more harm than good. To be able to convey the Message and encourage goodness, one should have an accurate knowledge about each of them. It is not possible for the tablighh of an ignorant person to be free of mistakes. Therefore, a **scholarly and spiritual wealth** is the first condition. As one cannot serve an empty glass, one cannot benefit from a tablighh that is void of enlightenment and insight.

Moreover, it is wrong for a person who is spiritually selfish and who has similar spiritual weaknesses to try to make tablighh. These people do more harm while they are trying to invite others to goodness. One should have a smile that reflects the grace of Islam and a tender heart that is kneaded with Qur'anic wisdom to be able to make acceptable tablighh. Again one needs to live an exemplar life, becoming a model of righteousness, goodness and virtue that radiates mercy through the voice of their heart.

Tablighh should be made so that it represents the elegance and grace of Islam, with kindness and beneficence. Mankind is conquered by beneficence and captivated by a dignified personality and character.

On the other hand, whatever evil an individual has committed, the person making tablighh should not deprive their acquaintance of the tablighh. No one should be left out; rather we should reflect on how flowers and trees can grow on hard rocks and walls. One should not forget the eternal mercy of Allah Almighty.

The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) did not close the door of tablighh even to those like Habbar bin Aswad, who caused the death of his daughter Zainab by making her fall from a camel, or to Ikrimah bin Abu Jahl, who displayed all kinds of enmity against the Muslims until the conquest of Makkah, or to Wahshi, who martyred his uncle Hamza or even to Hind, daughter of Abu Sufyan, who chewed his uncle's liver in rage. Therefore, even if a person is like the Pharaoh in his blasphemy (kufr) he still should not be deprived of tablighh. Allah Almighty ordered Moses (pbuh) to go to the Pharaoh and to gently make tablighh to him.

Those who are crushed under the weight of sins, thinking that there is no escape for salvation, need to be inspired about the greatness of Allah Almighty's mercy and grace. Our Lord says:

"Say: "O my Servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah. for Allah forgives all sins: for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. Turn ye to our Lord (in repentance) and bow to His (Will), before the Penalty comes on you: after that ye shall not be helped." (Qur'an:39/53-54)

Those who are drowned in the swamp of sins should be invited to the sanctuary of Islam, which is hope and mercy, by graceful, wise words and with a method of kindness.

Muslims need to be persistent in their endeavor without falling into despair and laziness or showing weariness and exhaustion. They should leave the results to Allah Almighty and put their trust in Him. Furthermore, Muslims should take refuge in their Lord from the selfishness of being satisfied with their own salvation instead of making tablighh about the beauty, truth and goodness of Islam.

The Lord Almighty reveals many truths and wisdom to us about His innumerable creation. It is an art of the soul to be able to read this world of secrets and wisdom. For those whose hearts are naturally inclined to taking lessons and warnings, the universe is a magnificent school. Those who are like Hadhrat Rumi and Shah Naqshband have become unique students of this school of universe. By gathering wisdom and secrets from this universe, they scatter spiritual scents to the souls that are thirsty for the knowledge of Allah Almighty. Our Lord has opened the entire universe for them, like a book.

He displays many warnings and wisdom in every creation for the eye that sees and for the heart that feels. Through these our attention is turned primarily on "unselfishness".

For example, a bee that has a life span of forty-five days makes honey for itself but produces more than two hundred times what it needs. By doing this, in one way, it states that its true aim is to serve others. Again, one should think that the fruit of a plum tree is at the same time its seed and designed for the continuation of the species. While only one fruit is enough for a new plum tree to grow, it produces many so that others can benefit from this blessing. These are beautiful examples of unselfishness which the Lord Almighty has displayed in His creation.

Our Lord gives an example of the life on this world with a "plane tree". Big and magnificent, the plane tree sheds all its leaves with the arrival of winter and in silence, cries out the truth of death. In spring, while coming into leaf, it becomes a symbol of resurrection after death. However, despite all its awe, the plane tree is fruitless. It cannot even be used as timber; it is only used as firewood. In short, its benefits are minimal.

In this state the plane tree says: "Realize your transitoriness and do not be fruitless like me".

The qualities we own should be like the utmost qualities of an olive tree. A tree with a very thin trunk, the olive tree starts producing fruit a year after it is planted and continues this service throughout its lifespan. Likewise, a rose bush says to us: "I am always pleasant with my scent and my color because I bear the thorns. Be like me!"

Richness that is removed from generosity and unselfishness; health that is removed from gratitude; posts, knowledge and the like which become a means to splendor are a "splendor of the barren plane tree". For believers it is important to be like a fruit tree and even more, being in such a state, to try to increase their fruit every second.

Surrounded by these thoughts and feelings, one should question oneself: How much do I think about myself and how much do I think about others around me? Since human beings are far more dignified than bees or trees, they need to work much more than what they need, trying to be useful and helpful to others. In a verse in the Qur'an it says:

"...(Oh Muhammad!) They ask thee how much they are to spend; Say: "What is beyond your needs."" (Qur'an:2/219)

May our Lord help us become like those servants who cherish every second and spend their lives productively, winning the pleasure of their Lord through accepted deeds. May He join us with the pious believers who help others with their hands, tongues, behavior and demeanor. May He compile our thoughts, feelings and behavior with approval. Amin!



*The Lord Almighty reveals many truths and wisdom to us about His innumerable creation. It is an art of the soul to be able to read this world of **secrets and wisdom.***

THE FIRST GENERATION OF ISLAM

「AHMET TASGETIREN」



Weshould understand the difficulties of the generation first called to Islam by the Prophet. Imagine that one day someone comes up to you and says, "Allah sent me as a Prophet to you." "Allah has sent a revelation to me" ... The atmosphere was such that even the Prophet was afraid that people would not believe in him.

In this atmosphere, to say "I believe in you," or "if Muhammad says so, then it's true," was an extraordinary act. In an atmosphere like this it is possible that anything might come into one's mind. Some might think "Why wasn't the Prophethood delivered to me or to my tribe?" Some others might think "Why Muhammed?" Some might be of the opinion that the prophethood should have been delivered to the wealthiest in the tribe or to the one who had the most children or property. It is reasonable that people were confused when Prophet Muhammad spoke of his Prophethood. And this confusion continued long after the conquest of Makkah.

There is a difference in understanding the consistency of revelation and attaching oneself to the one who brought it. First of all, one must understand Allah.

This is the difference in the first generation of Islam. For the ones who came later, the task was much easier. The faith, in a way, had been totally uncovered and revealed, and hearts were now used to belief. A path had been blazed with the footsteps of the first travelers for future travelers. Thus, we all now have the ease of stepping into the footprint of the first generation. We owe them many thanks.

The first generation learned everything from scratch. They had to learn all the definitions of Islam, even what Islam meant. What is revelation? What is piety? What is prayer? What is fasting? What is relief? What does it mean to believe in only one God? What is idolatry? They experienced all the difficulties of abandoning one religion and equipping oneself with a totally new religion.

They did not have a textbook in front of them. Think how hard it is to learn a new subject from scratch, even with a textbook. So what must have it been like to be prepared to change one's own personality according to a new norm; a measurement which might be revealed at anytime, from an unknown place ... Is it possible to describe such an attitude with any other words than "submission of the soul"?

The Sahabah (Companions of the Prophet) was a generation that believed in revelation, that waited for revelation and applied revelation to every part of their lives. This was a generation that touched the revelation and had contact with it at all times. For them, revelation was like a soul that brought a new life to their existing personalities. For 23 years, they lived as if they were in a laboratory. "Abandon the idols you worshipped," they were told, and they did. They were told "Stop killing your daughters", and they stopped. "Abandon alcohol and interest", and they did. "Stop killing people unjustly", and they did. "Separate some of your money for the poor", and they did. "Don't care about the difference between you and your slaves, belief wipes away those kinds of differences; let them be your brothers." So they did. "Stop seeing your children, your properties and your tribes as tools for your dignity". And they stopped. These were the former traditions of the people. A person suddenly comes up to you and asks you to abandon all your old traditions and beliefs in economical, social, political, psychological matters. Such a call

doesn't cause an automatic change in society. Some people will reject it, saying: "Are you trying to destroy the beliefs of our ancestor?" Such people respond with hatred.

How would you say "I believe in you" to a Prophet whom people have rejected and accused of destroying traditions? And if people treat this man with hate? To believe in him, to proclaim this belief is an act of heroism, a display of great courage. It would be brave to be guided by a revelation, to dare to become brothers with the slaves if one lives in a society where people reject human values; how much courage is needed to say: "stay away from dissolute people", "keep yourself away from arrogance that is caused by possessions". It would be bravery to risk falling out with parents and relatives. How can one explain the risk of migration, even death, by anything other than bravery? To carry the Hereafter into this life means to risk death. This was a generation that displayed the bravery of their realization in the Hereafter. That realization was not at all easy.

To be acquainted with the revelation is not only important for being different from the society one belongs to. It is also important that the "surrendered" generation becomes educated in the divine revelation. Each part of the revelation was a different reform. Think about the revelation that was sent to the Prophet's wife, Aisha. The lines of revelation confirming Omar and honoring Abu Bakr's friendship in the cave, in Battle of Uhud, Badr and Huneyn... The revelation that recorded the difficulties of Ammar ibn Yasir, telling people to take it as an example for themselves.

For example, when Aisha was accused of adultery, she only said "Let Allah declare my innocence." Aisha took refuge in Allah; the One Who confirms the truth, not in her husband or in her father... That generation had a very close relationship with the revelation.

*A path
had been blazed with the
footsteps of the first travelers for
future travelers. Thus, we all now
have the ease of stepping into
the footprint of the first
generation.*

And that generation was shaped by the one whom Allah describes as "the best of examples". This generation was directed to truthfulness, their mistakes were immediately corrected. They lived the revelation with Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). They had the best of teachers when they needed to solve a problem. They were a fortunate generation and they knew that Allah was witnessing His Prophet's characteristics of truthfulness, reliability, intelligence and purity...

The Prophet was an example who made no mistakes, not even one, in his lifetime. This generation knew that they were reborn everytime they learned a new thing. There was a new life in his call.

That's how they were educated.

Among them, Abu Bakr was the person whom the Prophet Muhammad described as: "If a Prophet would be sent after me that would be Abu Bakr". From this statement, we can understand that as a human being Abu Bakr was the closest to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). It is possible to see this generation as countless stars, with only the brightness of their light showing the difference between them. That is also how Prophet Muhammad describes them.

Allah says in Qur'an: "And the first to lead the way, of the Emigrants and the Helpers, namely, those who were present at [the battle of] Badr, or all the Companions, and those who follow them, up to the Day of Resurrection, by being virtuous, in deeds, God will be pleased with them, for their obedience of Him, and they will be pleased with Him, for His reward [to them]; and He has prepared for them Gardens - with rivers flowing beneath them - to abide therein forever: that is the supreme triumph." (Qur'an:9/100)

Such is the statement of quality that Allah has given directly to them.

If the Prophet is the living Qur'an, than the Sahabah are the projection, the color, the tone... A piece of perfection... A beam of light...

This was the closest generation to its source and these are the ones who carried the Prophet's love with them.

However, when one asks "How can the revelation take on the form of a human body? Who is the living Qur'an?" the answer is undoubtedly Prophet Muhammad. But other than him, there is no doubt that the lives of Sahabah are the best lives as far as the revelation is concerned. They had the honor of being leaders in Islam for generations. Because of that, Prophet Muhammad called them the stars of our hearts. At the same time, their life style is a commentary of the Qur'an. This is because the Sahabah were the means of the revelation coming to the people from the Prophet. If the Prophet is the living Qur'an, than the Sahabah are the projection, the color, the tone... A piece of perfection... A beam of light...

Our question is: After 1400 years, how many colors does this light have? How would we have behaved if the first notification from the Prophet Muhammad had been directly to us? What would happen if we had been the Sahabah? But the best thing is to try to catch the light of Abu Bakr, Omar, Ali, Uthman, Aisha, Khadija, Fatima...

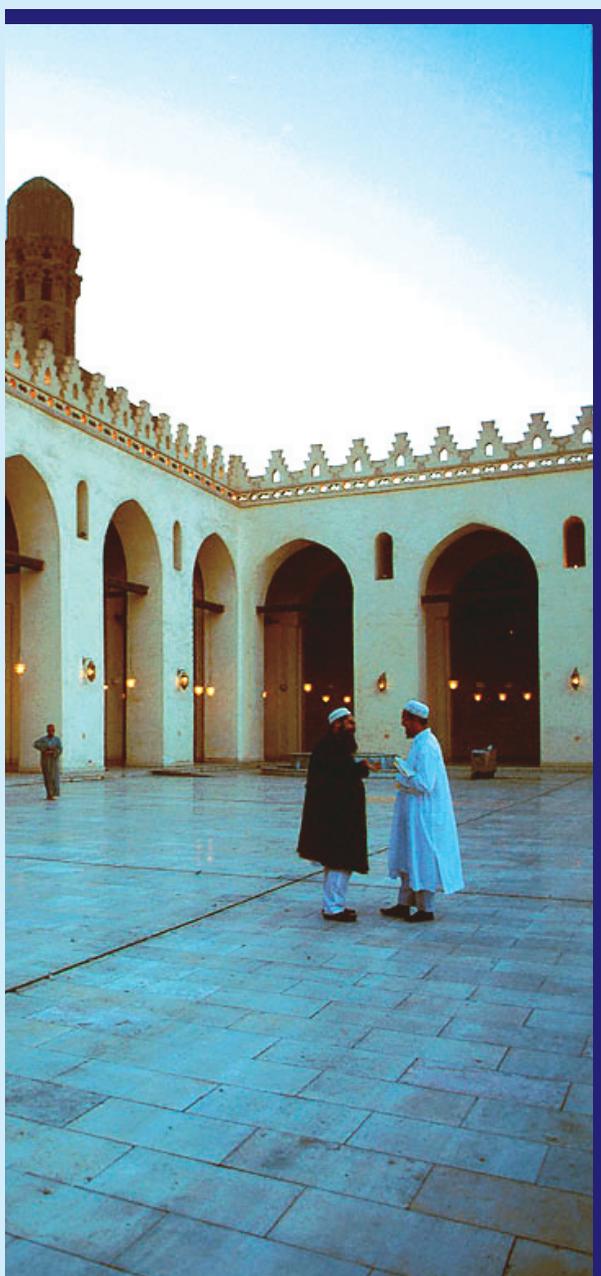
May Allah give us all success ...

Amen!

ASHAB AL-SUFFAH:

A Dedicated Group
of Companions
of the
PROPHET ﷺ

┌ PROF. HASAN KAMIL YILMAZ ┐



The Companions of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) constituted 'the exemplar generation', and were perfectly shaped by 'the exemplar person', Muhammad (pbuh) in accordance with his example. It was the generation on which his sight alighted. They were honored to become Muslims through meeting him face to face.

Among the exemplar generation, the ashab al-suffah has a distinct place, after the four Rightly-Guided Caliphs, and then the Companions of Muhammad who were promised Paradise.

The ashab al-suffah were those companions who lived in the suffah next to Prophet Muhammad's mosque (or masjid). Suffah is an Arabic word used to define various places for sitting in houses, such as couches or benches. The suffah that is referred to here was the annex outside the Prophet's mosque in Madina, where people were able to sit in the shade.

The Sahabah (Companions of the Prophet) were building a new society, and those who lived in the suffah constituted the core team of this society, working on science, morality and military development.

As well as being a place of worship, in the Prophet's time the mosques functioned as schools, places of assembly, hospitals, and even as places for sport or relaxation.

The suffah was the shelter for those single, homeless companions who continuously attend the lectures and dhikr in the Mosque. They were

able to live there with the aid of companions who were financially better off.

The need for such a place arose as a result of social, scientific, military and moral causes. It had become inevitable that a place be built to accommodate the poorer immigrants from Makkah, and those who had come to learn about Islam and see Muhammad (pbuh). Therefore the suffah also served as an inn at that time. The dervish chambers that were in the tekkes and dormitories today are a continuation of this suffah model, though with some minor changes.

Although the Ansar (the Muslim inhabitants of Madina) sincerely opened the doors of their homes to the immigrants from Makkah and shared everything with them, there were still some immigrants left in need of shelter. The Prophet (pbuh) accommodated these people in the suffah of his masjid.

We have no clear information regarding the number of the companions that resided in the suffah. The various narratives that mention such numbers give figures ranging from 10 to 400; we can infer that the number of ashab al-suffah kept changing throughout the period.

The ashab al-suffah were the people closest to the source of the religion, and they were the most frequent attendees at the Prophet's sessions. Their progress in learning Islam, therefore, was much faster.

The Prophet (pbuh) himself would serve their needs, share time with them, sit down with them, eat with them and encourage people to show hospitality to them. Allah mentioned them in various verses in the Qur'an, and asked the Prophet to show special concern and compassion towards them. The verses given in the following section are said to have been revealed in relation to the ashab al-suffah:

1- "(Alms are) for the poor who are straitened

for the cause of Allah, who cannot travel in the land (for trade). The unaware may think that they are rich, due to their dignity. But you can recognize them by certain signs; they never beg from the people persistently. Whatever charity you give, Allah is fully aware thereof." (Qur'an:2/273)

The Prophet (pbuh) would give any charity delivered to him to the companions of the suffah. He would also allocate a substantial proportion of the treasury and his own wealth to them. If he were unable to entertain them in his house, he would ask the other companions to do so. Thus, the ashab al-suffah were also called the adyaf al-mu'minun (guests of the believers).

The ashab al-suffah were fortunate people who fed their hearts from the divine fountain of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and who were educated at his divine school. They were prosperous people who dedicated all their time to the study of divine knowledge and moral training. They were saints who were never influenced by the charms of this world.

2- "And do not dismiss those who implore their Lord day and night, devoting themselves to Him alone." (Qur'an:6/52)

The pagans once asked the Prophet (pbuh) to dismiss the poor ashab al-suffah who were around him at the meeting (the pagans looked down upon them and thought their presence was not proper at the meeting). Allah then warned the Prophet with the aforementioned verse. Ebû Nuaym Isfahâni, the author of Hilyat al-Awliyâh, narrates the incident quoting from Habab bin Irs:

Akra bin Habis and Uyaynah bin Huseyn came to meet the Prophet (pbuh). The Prophet was then talking with some companions of the suffah, including Bilal, Ammar, Suhayb and Habbab. When Akra and Uyaynah saw the scene, they insulted the suffah and told the Prophet (pbuh) "We demand a meeting that is honorable

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in the eyes of Arabs! We would feel ashamed to sit down with these looters when prominent Arabs visit you! So dismiss them when we come here. They can come back when we leave." The Prophet accepted their demands. Then they asked him to record this agreement in a document. When the Prophet went to get paper to do so, the Archangel Gabriel came down and brought the aforementioned verse: "And do not dismiss those who implore their Lord day and night, devoting themselves to Him alone. ... If you dismiss them, you will be a transgressor."

3- Upon the revelation of this verse, the Prophet (pbuh) threw down the paper and called the suffah back. They came in and sat down very close to him. They sat this way for a while and Allah revealed the following verse:

"You shall force yourself to be with those who worship their Lord day and night, seeking Him alone. Do not turn your eyes away from them, seeking the vanities of this world. Nor shall you obey one whose heart we rendered oblivious to our message; one who pursues his own desires, and whose priorities are confused." (Qur'an:18/28)

Uyaynah and Akra represent those who are blamed here.

4- Another occasion when Allah addressed His Prophet regarding the ashab al-suffah was concerned with Abdullah ibn Maktum, one of these companions. The verse read:

"He (The Prophet) frowned and turned away when the blind man came to him." (Qur'an:80/1-2).

As we know, Abdullah ibn Maktum came to the Prophet to learn something about Islam while the Prophet (pbuh) was explaining the message of Islam to the prominent people of Mecca. The Prophet was not pleased with his visit at such a time and turned away from him. Whenever the Prophet (pbuh) saw Abdullah Ibn Maktum after the revelation of these verses, he (pbuh) would tease him saying "O, the person for whom My Lord scolded me!"

The Suffah companions were quite strong people and would never refrain from any strenuous task, including carrying wood from the mountains on their backs. Because they were so concerned about their chastity and dignity, they avoided any behavior that might affect their personality. They would never beg.

Alongside the poor and homeless companions, there were also wealthy companions who would come to see the Prophet and stay at the suffah from time to time. Those who married among the ashab al-suffah would leave there and move to their new homes.

Although one may think that the Prophet was concerned only about their livelihood, he was in fact more concerned about the moral needs and education of these people. A Hadith narrated by Ibn Majah and Darimi provides evidence to this fact: "One day the Prophet went out from home

and came into the Masjid. Some people were then reading the Qur'an and spending time in dhikr and prayer, while some others were studying and teaching the divine knowledge. The Prophet said 'Both groups are performing good deeds', showing his pleasure in both groups. Indicating the first group, he said: 'These are reading the Qur'an and spending their time in remembrance of Allah and prayer. Allah may or may not accept their pleas. But those are', indicating the other group, 'are learning and teaching divine knowledge. I surely have been sent as the teacher.' Both groups were from the ashbab al-suffah. They spent the whole day studying and worshipping, and they used the suffah as a place for scientific discussion and accommodation." (Abu Dawud)

The subjects the ashbab al-suffah studied consisted for the most part of reading the Qur'an, memorizing the Hadith and learning religious knowledge. In terms of morality, they were so close to the Prophet that they became almost identical to him. The important instructors among them included, other than the Prophet, Ubay bin Ka'b, Abdullah bin Mas'ud, Muaz bin Jabal, and Ubada bin Samit.

Due both to their interest in learning and the convenience of their location, the ashbab al-suffah took what was in essence an intensive and accelerated course in Islamic studies. That is why

the muhthiruun (those companions who narrated the most Hadiths) come from this group. Abu Hurayrah, a prominent muhthiruun, says "Do not overstate too much the magnitude of my narrations of Hadiths. They are many because I worked only to earn my basic needs, so that I could listen to the Prophet's blessed words and recommendations all the time and memorize them, while the other immigrant companions went out for trade, and the ansar companions for farming. I had the chance to witness incidents they could not have." (Bukhari)

There were even those, like Abdullah b. Omar, who preferred to stay at the suffah instead of in their parents' home. Bilal Habashi and Abdullah bin Umm Maktum, both muezzins of the Prophet, were also among the ashbab al-suffah.

The ashbab al-suffah comprised the most honored members of all tribes. They were the saints who grasped the meaning of piety and the very essence of Islam through ascetic discipline. It is even said that the angels visited them.

These well-educated companions were employed in various activities with respect to their level of knowledge, ability and specialization. Teachers were selected from the ashbab al-suffah to teach the Qur'an and Islam to the tribes which had newly become Muslim.



They were the saints who grasped the meaning of piety and the very essence of Islam through ascetic discipline. It is even said that the angels visited them.

A group of seventy scholars and hafiz (people who had memorized the Qur'an) were martyred from among these people. They were on their way to transmit this knowledge when these sad incidents happened.

Those who came briefly to Medina to learn about Islam would talk to the ashab al-suffah about scientific subjects in addition to their meetings with the Prophet (pbuh).

The ashab al-suffah was, as Abu Nuaym Isfahani pointed out, "such a rare group that Allah had purified from all the dirt of the world; He had made them as a true model for the poor and as friends to advise others; they were not concerned about worldly possessions or family, and trade would not prevent them from remembrance of Allah."

All the sources agree that poverty and hunger were two common features of these people.

They were always so poor that none of them had more than two outfits or two meals at a time.

Fudalah bin Ubayd says: "During the prayer with the Prophet, there were even those from ashab al-suffah who could hardly stand up due to hunger and poverty."

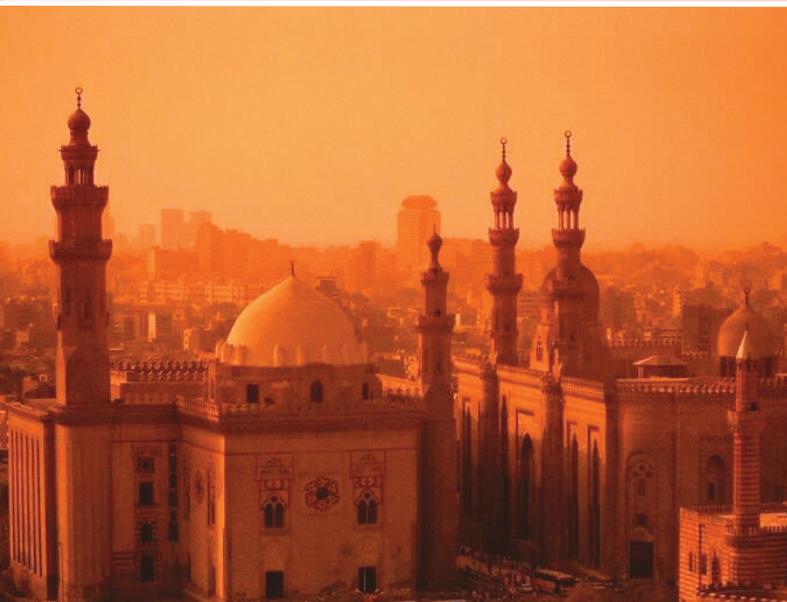
According to the narrative of Enes bin Malik, the Prophet would tie stones onto his stomach so as not to feel hunger while teaching the Qur'an to the ashab al-suffah. These suffah people would always be striving to learn, understand, read and explain the Qur'an.

Some say that the terms Sufi and Sufism derive from the word suffah, while the Sufi way of life and Sufi thought are thought to have originated in the life of the ashab al-suffah.

May Allah grant us to follow the footsteps of these precious companios of the Prophet (pbuh).



FOLLOWING THE EXEMPLARY COMPANIONS



They took to their heart the words “I hear and I obey” to the point that it became effortless for them to give of themselves, their possessions and their livelihood for the sake of Allah; a true and permanent brotherhood took hold forever in their hearts.

Al together hold fast the rope of Allah (Faith of Islam) and be not divided among yourselves. Remember Allah’s favors upon you when you were enemies; He united your hearts, so by His favor you became brethren; you were at the brink of the fiery pit and He saved you from it. Thus Allah makes His revelations clear to you, so that you may be rightly guided.” (Qur’an:3/103)

No Muslim would disagree with the statement that our Beloved Prophet (pbuh) is the best example to follow when trying to live one's life within the scope of Islamic principles. He was the best example of a leader, a teacher, a guide, a friend, a father and a husband. His high character has been, and is still recognized today by both Muslims and non-Muslims alike throughout the world and across every level of society. Those who were blessed to know him during his life time were forever changed by being in the presence of his light. They became the 'Sahaba', the Companions, and the first generation of the Ummah of the Prophet (pbuh).

By the mere fact that the lives of his Companions were changed so drastically and

completely, without reversal even after his death, it becomes clear that the blessed and beautiful character of the Prophet was a point of perfection toward which all Muslims could strive. Furthermore, it is clear that these miraculous changes were the wisdom of Allah. The reason for this is that while this early and small group of Muslims needed only one example, the future generations would be endowed with, and surely blessed by, having literally hundreds of examples of how to ascend from their lower selves and desires to a level of esteem and *taqwa* (God consciousness).

Each of the Prophet's closest companions acted as a ray of light emanating from the source that was our Prophet! They repeated his words to each other; they followed his every action and movement, forsaking their own character flaws in order to replace those flaws with perfection of character. They took to their heart the words “I hear and I obey” to the point that it became effortless for them to give of themselves, their possessions and their livelihood for the sake of Allah; a true and permanent brotherhood took hold forever in their hearts.

Even the Prophet (pbuh) would point to his many companions and comment on their beauty and ability to be examples. He would recommend seeking them out and learning from them. Often the beloved Prophet would merely point out the level of regard he had for many of his companions. Such statements were recorded in hadiths, some of which are narrated below:

Narrated by Jubair bin Mutim: A woman came to the Prophet who ordered her to return to him again. She said, "What if I came and do not find you?" (as if she wanted to say, "If I find you dead?"). The Prophet said, "If you should not find me, go to Abu Bakr."

Narrated by Abdullah bin Amr: The Prophet neither talked in an insulting manner nor did he ever speak evil intentionally. He used to say, "The most beloved to me amongst you is the one who has the best character and manners." He added, "Learn the Qur'an from (any of these) four persons: 'Abdullah bin Mas'ud, Salim the freed slave of Abu Hudhaifa, Ubai bin Ka'b, or Mu'adh bin Jabal."

Narrated by Sad: The Prophet said to 'Ali, "Will you not be pleased by the fact that you are to me like Aaron was to Moses?"

Narrated by Jabir: The Prophet said, "Every prophet used to have a disciple (hawaari), and my disciple is Az-Zubair bin Al-'Awwam."

Narrated by Imran bin Husain: Allah's Prophet said, "The best of my followers are those living in my generation (i.e. my contemporaries), and then those who will follow the latter."

Narrated by Anas: The Prophet said, "Love

for the Ansar (Companions from Madina) is a sign of faith and hatred for the Ansar is a sign of hypocrisy."

Thus, it is easy to understand that Muslims should be inspired to emulate the examples of those whom they love, the example of those whom the Prophet himself loved; this should be their purpose. This is the reason why every Muslim is honor-bound to learn as much as possible about Prophet Mohammad's (pbuh) life and character. It is also the reason why it is imperative for today's Muslims to look to the Companions for clues about how to apply the wisdom and knowledge that emanated from the Prophet (pbuh). These Companions are examples to us of how to be a student, a servant for society and leaders in a growing and mixed Ummah. They are examples of how selflessly one must love Allah and the Prophet of Allah in order to find success in this life and in order to ready a place in the afterlife.

According to some narrations, it became a habit of those around the Prophet (pbuh) to make comparisons between each other and the Prophet as to determine who was best in emulating his character, his charity, his looks and his actions. One such hadith says:

Narrated Ibn Umar: We used to compare people to see who was better during the lifetime of Allah's Prophet. We used to regard Abu Bakr as the best, then 'Umar, and then 'Uthman.

There are many stories of the Companions and their bravery in the face of loss, their humility in the face of bounty, their shining moments of self-control even in the most heated battles, the



They are examples of how selflessly one must love Allah and the Prophet of Allah in order to find success in this life and in order to ready a place in the afterlife.

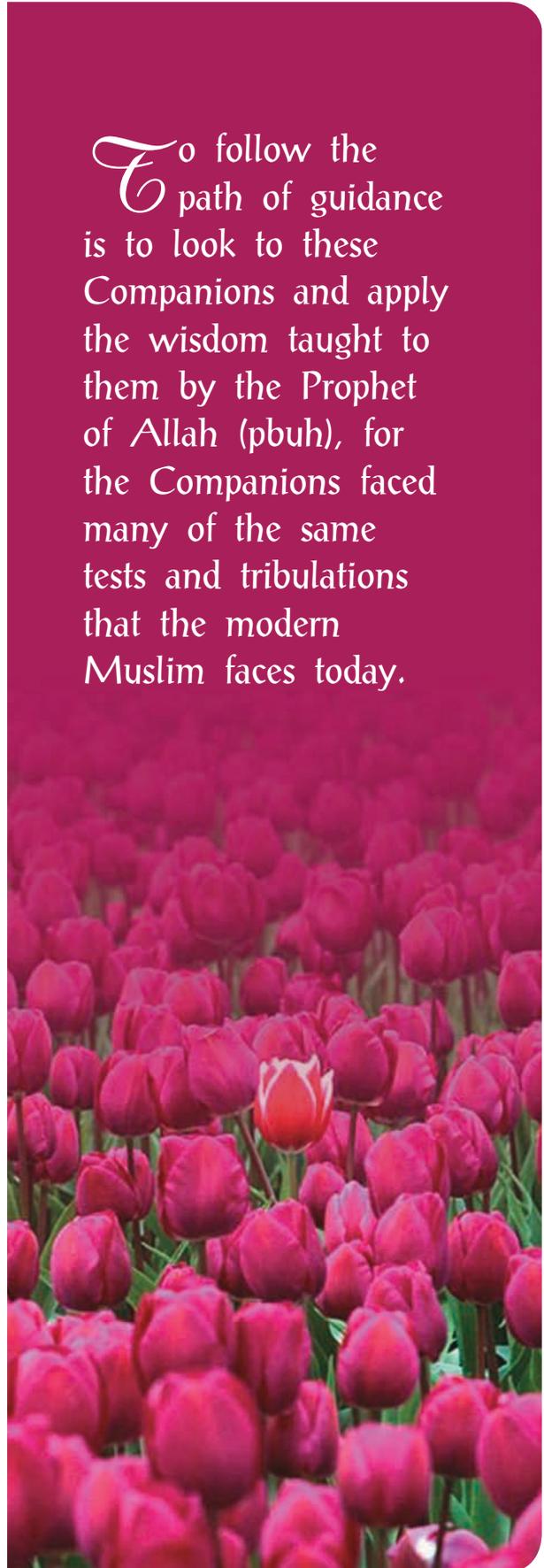
depth of their sadness at the loss of their friend and light. These stories are examples left for future generations of Muslims so that they will not get lost on the path which was laid out for us to reach Allah. These are stories of epic change and growth, love and endurance and faith, beyond all bounds, in the truth. Pinnacles of forgiveness, these Companions abandoned every negative characteristic when they were asked to do so, and restrained themselves from even the slightest feelings of revenge.

The Prophet himself gave permission to seek guidance and council from the Companions, and he himself would make *istishar* (consult) with them, that is he would talk with them at the time of important decisions. He did this out of respect for their knowledge, their level of understanding, their ability to find guidance from Allah and their ability to apply the conditions of Islam to every action and deed. The Prophet (pbuh) spent much of his life teaching the Companions to have the greatest characters in all matters.

Today, life is very complicated for Muslims. The need for guidance is great. The need to be connected to these "beams of light" is very strong. To follow the path of guidance is to look to these Companions and apply the wisdom taught to them by the Prophet of Allah (pbuh), for the Companions faced many of the same tests and tribulations that the modern Muslim faces today. Even though Muslims today live in a world of advanced technology and science, the Companions can be looked to for guidance. This is because, although technology has advanced, the basic principles of life still apply. These Companions, and the generation that followed closely behind them, also lived in a world of advancement in science and technology. Yet, they were able to live here without losing their cohesion as an Ummah, without losing their value as Muslims, and without losing their focus on Allah, or on the life that will follow this life.

Today, Muslims face many challenges in trying to adhere to a life that seems strange to most. But is that not exactly the example that the Companions left for all Muslims of future times? Was their life not also strange in their time? If a Muslim wants to find peace in themselves, their home, job, community, or country, they should follow the path of those who have already found that peace. The lifesaving rope was tossed to the Muslims of today by the Companions...won't you hold fast to it?

To follow the path of guidance is to look to these Companions and apply the wisdom taught to them by the Prophet of Allah (pbuh), for the Companions faced many of the same tests and tribulations that the modern Muslim faces today.



THE LOYALTY OF THOSE WHO LOVED HIM

ELIF KAPICI



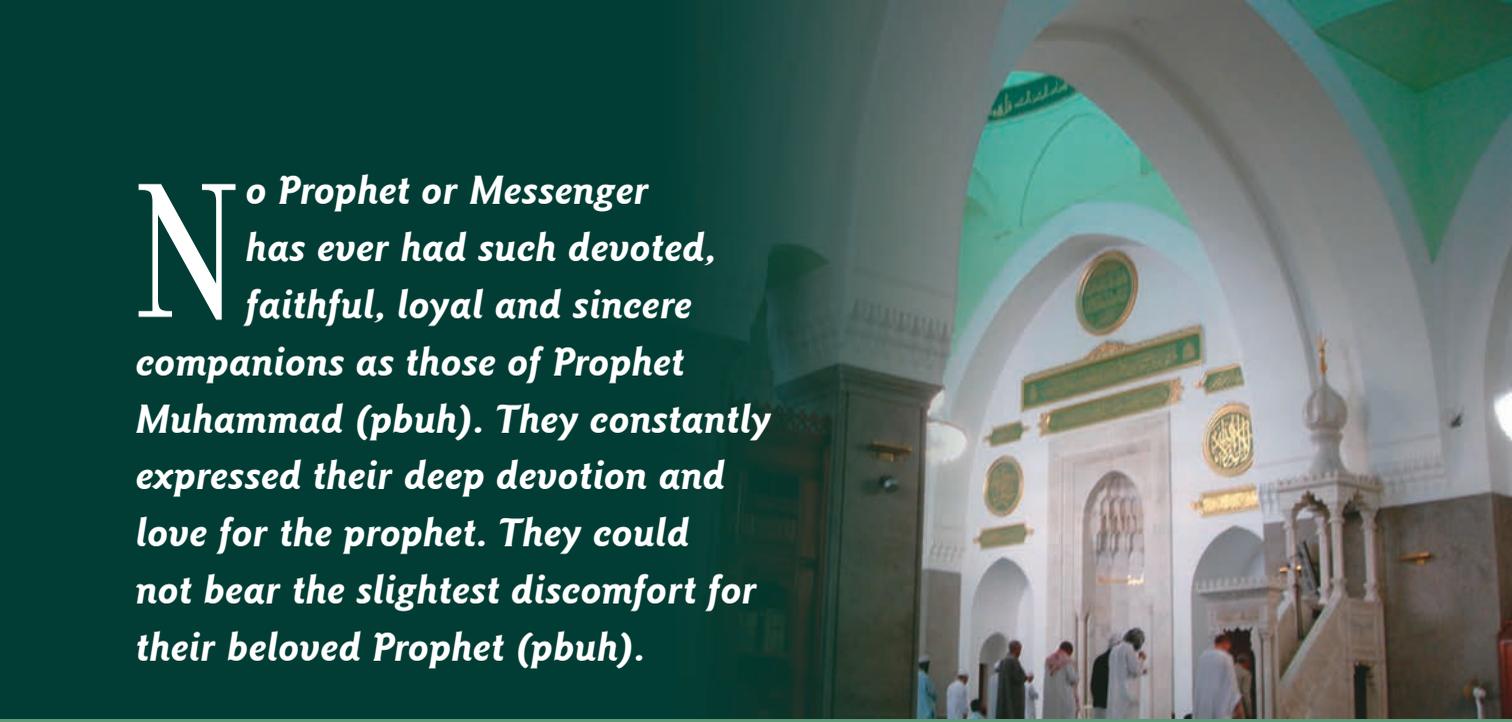
The sacred strands of Hair of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)

The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was deeply loved and respected by those who followed him. None would turn their back on him, nor would any abandon the religion to which he had brought them. This deep love and reverence continues in the heart of every Muslim to this day. This love and loyalty can be shown with many examples from his life time.

One day the holy Prophet was saying his prayers in the Ka'ba. He was completely lost in thoughts of Allah. Abu Jahl and some other chiefs of Makkah were sitting in the courtyard of the Ka'ba. "I must finish with Muhammad today," said Abu Jahl. So saying, he took a long piece of cloth. He put it around the holy Prophet's neck. Then he twisted it hard. He was going to strangle the Messenger of Allah. The other chiefs looked on and laughed.

Abu Bakr happened to see this from a distance. He at once ran to the help of the Prophet. He pushed Abu Jahl aside and took off the cloth from around the holy Prophet's neck. Thereupon Abu Jahl and the other enemies of Islam fell upon Abu Bakr. They beat him very badly. Indeed, the beating was so severe that Abu Bakr fell down senseless. He was carried home. He did not regain his senses for several hours. And when he did come to himself, the first question he asked was, "Is the Prophet well?" Abu Bakr did not care about his own suffering. He was glad that he had been able to save the Prophet's life. Abu Bakr knew full well that if any harm came to the Prophet, the only hope of mankind would be gone. This made him risk everything he held dear for the safety of the Prophet and for the spreading of his message.

No Prophet or Messenger has ever had such devoted, faithful, loyal and sincere companions



No Prophet or Messenger has ever had such devoted, faithful, loyal and sincere companions as those of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). They constantly expressed their deep devotion and love for the prophet. They could not bear the slightest discomfort for their beloved Prophet (pbuh).

as those of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). They constantly expressed their deep devotion and love for the prophet. They could not bear the slightest discomfort for their beloved Prophet (pbuh).

It was the fourth year after the move to Medina. The towns of Adal and Qarah asked the Prophet (pbuh) to send some scholars to teach them. This was a trap, and on the way eight of the scholars were killed. Two of the scholars, Zaid bin Ad-Dathinnah and Khubaib bin Adi, were taken back to Mecca. There they were tortured by having pieces of flesh cut from their bodies, and they were taunted by the crowd that encircled them. They were asked, "Don't you wish now that your Prophet was in your place?" to which Zaid bin Ad-Dathannah responded calmly, as blood poured from his body, "No, I would hate to enjoy life while my beloved Prophet (pbuh) was suffering even from the prick of a thorn."

Abu Sufyan, the Prophet's (pbuh) great enemy, said, "In this world I have never seen a person with friends who loved him this much."

A short while later Abu Sufyan had a change of heart, and he himself became a Muslim. He followed the Prophet (pbuh) everywhere he went, and would sit on his doorstep with his small son just to see the Prophet as he entered or exited. He even once found himself in a position to defend the Prophet (pbuh). He fought standing next to Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) mule, wielding his sword with his right hand, and holding his friend's saddle with his left. Abu Sufyan loved the Prophet (pbuh) so much that after the latter's

death Abu Sufyan went and dug his own grave, dying three days later.

When the Prophet (pbuh) cut off his hair, Khalid bin Walid asked permission to take some locks of hair to keep. And he took the locks and put them on his eyes.

He kept these locks of hair all his life and carried them in his turban until he died.

It is narrated that Khalid bin Walid lost this turban in the Battle of Yarmuk and he told everyone to look for it. But they could not find it anywhere. He ordered them again to look for it and finally they found it. When they brought it to Khalid bin Walid they asked:

'O Khalid! It is a torn and old turban. Why did you waste our time for this old turban?'

Khalid said: 'Once I took some locks of hair from the Prophet (pbuh) after he had cut them off. I kept them in my turban and since then whichever battle I have joined, I have been successful; the secret of my victories is my love for the Prophet.'

The Companions listened to what the Prophet said. They acted as the Prophet instructed. They practiced what the Prophet showed them. They loved the Prophet more than their own souls.

They served and saved the faith with their great sacrifices and sincere deeds and practices.

May Allah grant us the guidance to follow in the footsteps of the brightest stars, the Companions of the Prophet, at all times.

RABIA BRODBECK

A SUFI WRITER IN THE 21ST CENTURY



Rabia Brodbeck was a modern dancer before she converted to Islam. After her conversion, she moved to Turkey and she has been living in Istanbul for 14 years.

*At the time of the Prophet (pbuh) the **reality of Sufism** existed in **everyone**, but the name did not exist. Today **we know the name**, but the reality does not exist.*

SW: What led you to Islam in the first place?

The inner beauty of people; I learned on my spiritual path that all beauty pertains to Allah. All existence is His wisdom, His beauty. The majority of people are satisfied with second-best, imitation, short-lived or borrowed beauty. What I encountered in the Sufi-circles from the very first entry into the ceremonies of divine worship, were these Sufi teachers with the bright

luminous radiance in their faces. They were joyful, with heightened energy, intoxicated with pure love! I observed them and I said inside to myself: these are the people I have been looking for all my life. They radiated Allah's Grace and Compassion. They looked extremely intelligent. Such whole-heartedness I could never find in Christian religious circles. I was totally fascinated, so much so that I fell in love!

SW: What worries did you have after you converted to Islam and how did you cope?

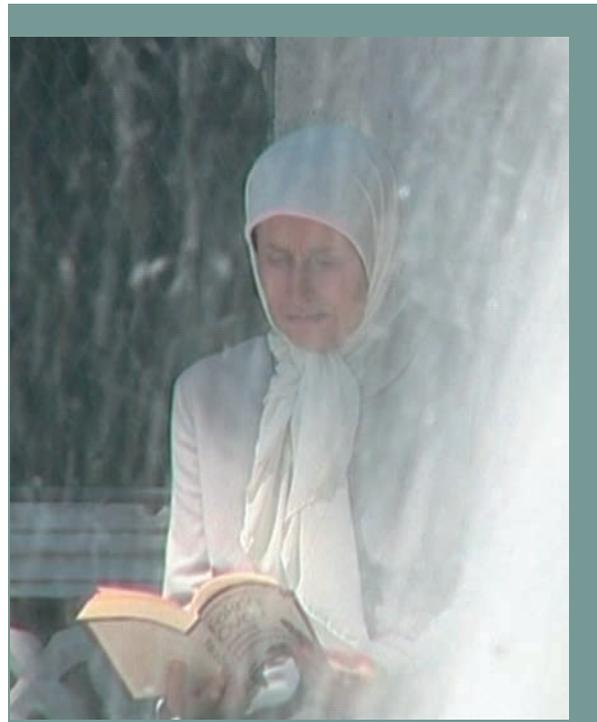
On the contrary, I felt the release of an unbearable burden. As time passed I felt more and more comfortable, quiet, happy, more at peace and harmony. My whole life started to make sense; it started to take a direction. As I always say in interviews, I did not convert, I did not

change my belief , I simply discovered the hidden treasures inside me. I did not travel from the West to the East, I came from unawareness and I encountered the reality of my own being. I came from the life and discovered that everything one looks for is on the other side; that is to say, I came from dryness into an infinite ocean of love. It is 'knowledge of the heart', the direct vision of eternity, which reveals the truth to us.

I can say, that I never encountered outer, external difficulties! Elhamdulillah. All along my spiritual path I only had inner problems, worries, dissatisfaction; that is to say, the difficulties were with myself! My inner struggle was and is my only concern until today. For example, my parents and sisters do not understand anything about my religious life or especially about Islam. But this is nothing compared with the companions of our blessed master, who were tortured and killed. This problem with one's family is very natural and logic. It never worried me deeply because I feel that it is the working of Allah's Divine destiny; whatever happens, it is His doing! "And all what Allah has arranged is in His loving concern", as Ibn Arabi said.

SW: What role does Sufism have in the shaping of Muslim identity?

You only become a real Muslim when you apply the wisdom of Sufism. The commitment to the Law of the religion, the 5 pillars, the Islamic Law, causes one to become a Muslim believer. Therefore the Islamic Law and Sufism are inseparable, they co-exist. The Islamic Law is the bread of the believer and Sufism helps them to digest it. The Islamic Law is the Divine Law which leads to the ultimate perfection of the human being. Unfortunately, time and people have separated the basics from the way, the form from the inner meaning. Allah the Highest has sent a universal message to humanity. He has sent divine guidance for all nations. He has sent His beloved Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as a mercy to the entire world. We know from Divine reports that at the time of the Prophet (pbuh) the reality of Sufism existed in everyone, but the name did not exist. Today we know the name, but the reality does not exist. So if Muslims exclusively practices the form and pays no attention to the inner reality, the realm



of meanings, they will become like a machine, they will be dead inside, like a lifeless picture with no spirit.

I observe that there is nothing more misunderstood than Tasawwuf. The great awliyah Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani gives us the following advice;

"Spiritual culture (Sufism) is not acquired through long conversations, but through going hungry and giving up things that are familiar and pleasant."

SW: What is your advice to new Muslims and how should they shape their lives?

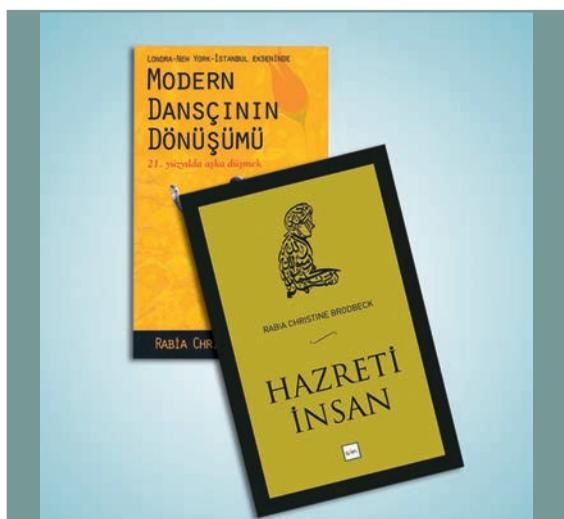
Because the religion of Islam provides answers to all questions, there are endless teachings, advice, instructions to give. Islam gives the recipe for sainthood. It opens up all the door for the spiritual fulfillment of spiritual life. For example, try to fly with two wings! Especially on the spiritual path in the beginning, there are the religious practices to learn. So my advice is try to contemplate the meanings of the formal rituals to the same degree that you carry them out. Pay as much attention to the inner realities as you concentrate on the external aspects. We have to try to combine the earthly struggle, our physical and psychological nature with our divine roots, our spiritual nature. Within religious circles since the beginning I observed that the people who love worship do not pay attention

to contemplation, whereas the people who ran from *sohbet* to *sohbet*, practically devouring the books, do not devote much value to the ritual prayers. There are those who love and perform constant self-sacrifice, but they cannot find true awareness or divine knowledge. In the religion of Islam a perfect balance of the inner and the outer, the world and the hereafter is provided. Religion is not only a philosophy, a belief-system; it is a transformation. We have to change ourselves. We must become students in the school of life. Most of all, we have to combine all religious duties and voluntary acts with love. Then religion becomes pure joy.

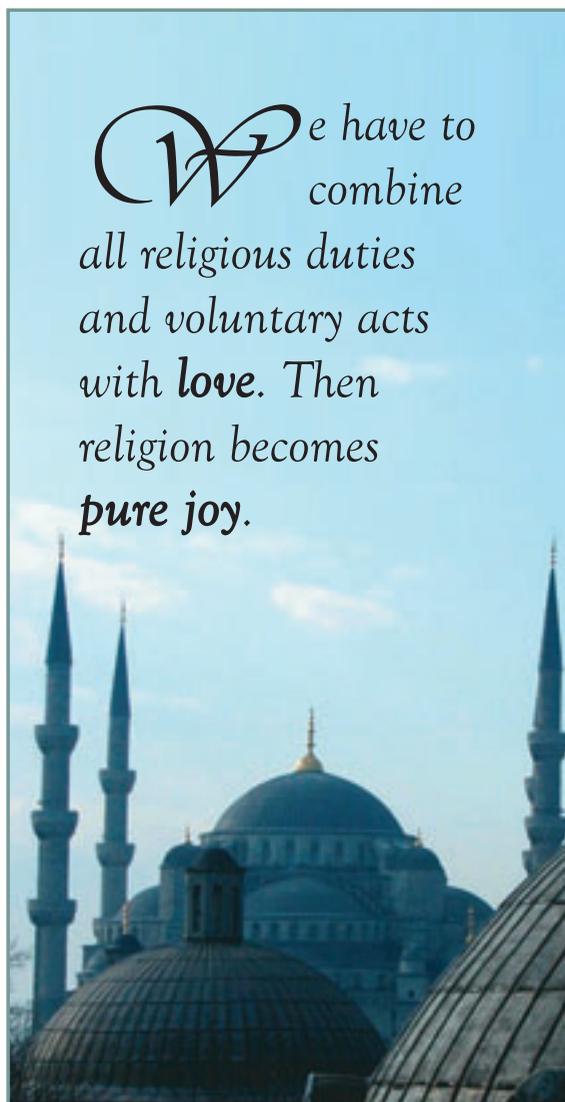
Furthermore it is essential to take the advice of our most beloved Prophet Muhammad (pbuh): *"When you know yourself you know your Lord."* To work on self-awareness is absolutely necessary for every beginner.

Furthermore, within religion one must try to be utterly flexible, generous, soft-hearted, attentive, receptive, and humble. One must try to adapt a student mentality and one must wish wholeheartedly to learn. One must avoid ambition for spiritual success, such as trying to gain high levels. On the contrary, the higher one progresses the more one must become humble, respectful, kind and modest. In the religion of Islam we learn that loss is our gain, giving is richness, poverty is pride, hunger is food. If we submit lovingly, Allah will reward our helplessness with help, our insufficiencies with strength.

Furthermore, we should try to love the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) more than anything else in our lives.



We have to combine all religious duties and voluntary acts with **love**. Then religion becomes **pure joy**.



SW: If we compare ourselves to the Companions, their enthusiasm was like an ocean, but ours is a drop of water. How can we try to be like them and emulate them?

The Prophet's own family and his Companions shared his essential reality, which was "ubudiyya," that is, servitude, in a heroic way. Such an overwhelming sacrifice of body, mind, emotions, the soul, property, status and belongings is something peculiar to the religion of Islam. Nothing touches us more than their supreme courage, their readiness to sacrifice all and everything in Allah's cause. Through their devoted servitude, they neither worried about nor were afraid of getting hurt, being tortured, mistreated, falling ill or even being killed; they answered with goodness to anyone who treated them badly, they were content with misery and



My advice is try to contemplate the meanings of the formal rituals to the same degree that you carry them out. Pay as much attention to the inner realities as you concentrate on the external aspects.

poverty, they covered the faults of those around them, they never asked to be helped or comforted by Allah, even when they were being tortured or in the greatest danger; when they had nothing left to eat or wear they still gave away their very last belongings; during their greatest trials they continued to worship as if nothing had happened. In other words they were unaware of pain because they were filled with the highest love for Allah and Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

They even received the greatest joy in dying for the sake of Allah as martyrs. It is reported in a holy tradition:

"O Lord, send us back into the world, so that we may repeat our martyrdom. Then send us yet again, that we may be martyred once more. O Lord, we implore you to let us taste over and over again the joy we know in our moment of martyrdom." What is this pure joy they felt? Only one who has tasted it can know.....

Such devoted companions had no ulterior motives for their good actions. They did not expect any rewards nor did they want anything in return. Whatever they did was an expression of their need for love.

Islam has produced countless such luminous beings, a treasury of humans, all who were infinitely and heroically generous. Our beloved master made sultans into slaves, wealthy people into servants, vulgar people into saints, murderers into believers. Nowhere else in history have such magnificent and wonderful personalities appeared on the world stage.

In one person were found generosity and power, leadership and modesty, high intelligence

and submission, ownership and mercy, wealth and humbleness. These miraculous characteristics were nothing but the true inheritance of the noble character of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

Therefore, we can say that the greatest miracle of creation culminated in the 'ahlaqi-Muhammadi', that is, in the noble character of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). There are no virtues other than those of Prophet Muhammad!

Comparing the heights of the religion of Islam with modern societies today, we can hardly find a more staggering or enlightening contrast. Look at the present personalities on the world stage, our political rulers, and compare their behavior with the most telling statement of the sultan of the Ottoman Empire, Yavuz Sultan Selim Khan;

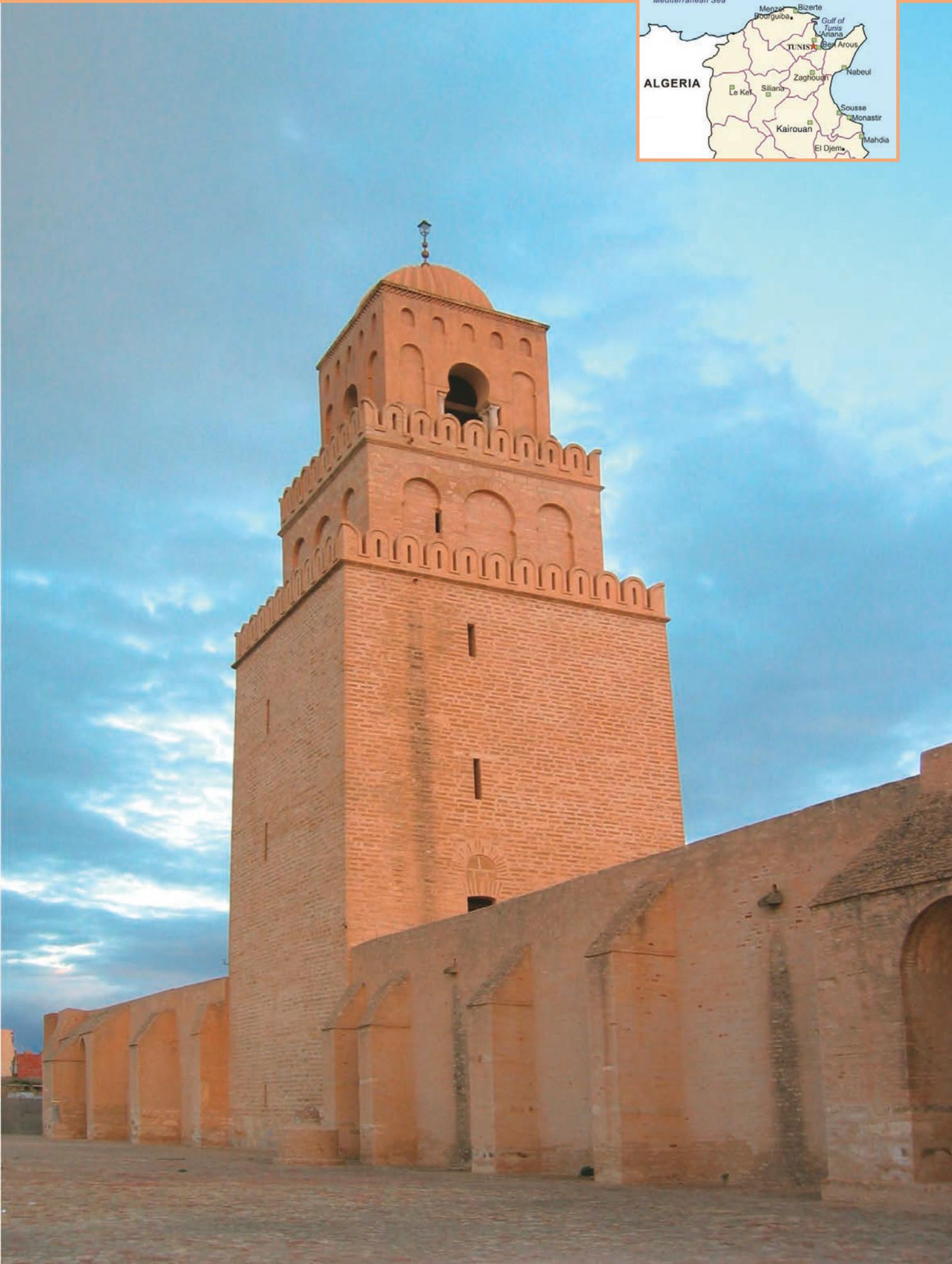
"Becoming the king of this world is but a useless struggle.

Being the slave of a saint is superior to all else."

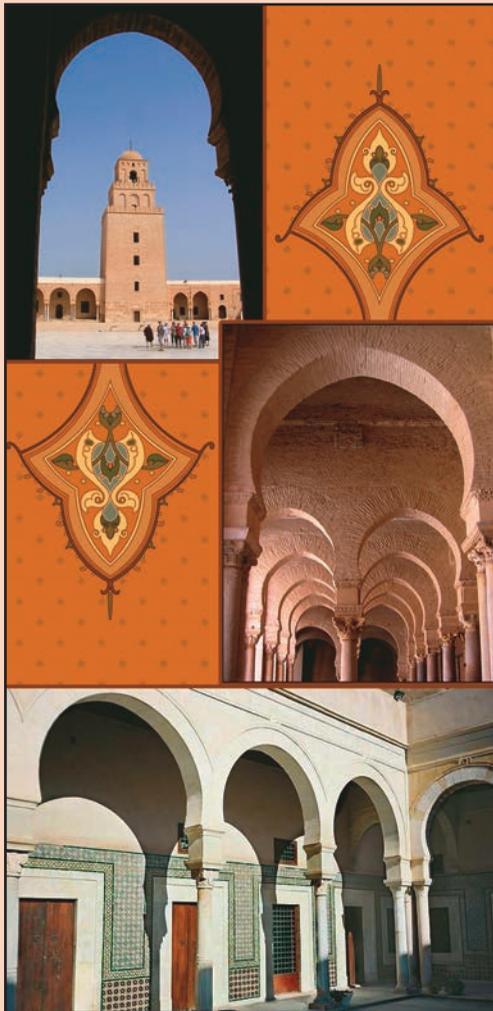
This submissive spiritual joy is what our modern world is lacking. In other words, we have been deprived of beauty and blessings. The abundant treasures of love have vanished from people's hearts, in other words we have lost the secret of love. The seed of eternal love is born in the deepest part of the human being. It represents our divine origin; it is the wealth of human goodness. Therefore, it is our essential duty to discover the secret of love, because we exist due to the love Allah has for us.

SW: Thank You Very Much

It is my pleasure.



THE GREAT MOSQUE OF KAIROUAN



The Arab conqueror, Uqba ibn Nafi crossed the deserts of Egypt and began the first Muslim conquest of the Maghreb region of North Africa in 670 AD. Establishing military posts at regular intervals along his route, Uqba ibn Nafi came to the site of present day Kairouan and there decided to encamp his soldiers for some days .

The legend tells of warrior's horse that stumbled on a golden goblet buried in the sands. This goblet was recognized as one that had mysteriously disappeared from Makkah some years before. When the goblet was dug from the desert sand, a spring miraculously appeared and the waters of this spring were said to issue from the same source that supplies the sacred Zamzam well in Makkah. The power of these miracles exercised a magnetic effect upon the early North African Islamic people and thereby established the site of Kairouan as a pilgrimage destination for ages to come. Between the 9th and 11th centuries, the city became one of the most important cultural centers in the Arab world, witnessing a flowering of sciences, literature and the arts. It became the greatest Muslim city in North Africa and the 4th holiest city of Islam after Makkah, Madina and Jerusalem.

The Great Mosque, also known as the Sidi Uqba mosque, had its simple beginnings in 670 AD, during the time of Uqba ibn Nafi, the original founder of Kairouan.

(Kairouan, also spelled Qayrawan, means "camp" in Arabic)

The Great Mosque of Kairouan takes the general form of a rectangle with sides of 242, 229, 410 and 406 feet. This enormous space contains a prayer hall, a courtyard and a soaring minaret. Surrounding this sacred area is an enclosing wall reinforced by projecting buttresses and two stone towers and pierced by nine doorways. The marble-paved courtyard is flanked by three porticoes made up of long naves whose roofs are supported by arches. These arches are in turn supported by dozens of lovely marble columns. The minaret is three stories tall, 103 feet high by 34 feet wide, with its lower stories composed

of stone blocks taken from classical Roman buildings. This minaret, built from 724 to 728 AD, is the oldest standing minaret in the world and is widely recognized as one of the greatest gems of Islamic architecture. The prayer hall, built in the 9th century, is 123 feet deep and 230 feet wide.

Commenting on the interior of the Prayer Hall, the historian Paul Sebag says: "Arabic writing lends itself here to the fantasy of the calligrapher and reveals its incomparable qualities as decoration. These elements are juxtaposed and mingled to compose a decor which is enchanting..."

ABU BAKR AS-SIDDIQ

"Never has the sun risen or set on a person, other than a prophet, greater than Abu Bakr."
Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)

┌ UMM YUSUF ┐

As the Noble Prophet of Allah (pbuh) edged towards his final days and his return to the Creator, he drew himself forward in his weakness among the people, placed himself on his pulpit and called out to them, saying, "There is no one among the people who has been more generous to me with his life and his property than Abu Bakr and if I was to take an intimate friend, I would take Abu Bakr as my intimate friend. But, the friendship of Islam is better. Block off every door in this Masjid except the door of Abu Bakr."

Such generous praise of the Prophet (pbuh) in both word and deed for Abu Bakr is clearly manifest in this revealing event, but hardly unexpected when one ponders the greatness of this companion and his exertion in the Way of Allah, and his dedication to the Prophet of Allah (pbuh) for the sake of Islam, nor is it an isolated expression of love; Amr bin Al-Aas narrated, "The Prophet of Allah (pbuh) deputed me to lead the army of Dat as-Salasil. I came to him and said: "who is the most beloved person to you?" He said: "Aa'isha" I asked "Amongst men?" He said: "Her father (Abu Bakr)".

Abu Bakr was the first of adult men to embrace Islam. He was also the first to give of his wealth in the way of Allah. While other Muslims gave large fortunes in support of their faith, Abu Bakr was the first to give everything he had. When asked what he had left for his children he answered:

"Allah and His Prophet." On hearing this Umar said: "None can surpass Abu Bakr in serving the cause of Islam."

He was first in kindness and compassion to his fellow believers. A very wealthy merchant, he always watched out for the poor and the weak. He freed seven slaves before leaving Makkah, among them Bilal. He not only spent large amounts to buy their freedom but he then took them into his own household and educated them.

He was the first to honor and defend the Messenger (pbuh). Narrated by Urwa ibn Az-Zubair: "I asked Amr bin As: What was the severest thing the unbelievers ever did to Allah's Messenger (pbuh)? He answered: "Once, when the Prophet (pbuh) was praying in the court of the Kaaba, Uqba ibn Abi Mu'eet came and put a piece of cloth around his neck and began choking him severely.

Abu Bakr came along grabbed his shoulders and pushed him away from the Prophet (pbuh) saying: 'Do you kill a man just for saying my Lord is Allah?' In addition to this it is stated that once Ali asked his companions who they considered to be the bravest. They replied that Ali was the bravest. But he answered: "No. Abu Bakr is the bravest. On the day of the battle of Badr, when there was no one to stand guard where the Holy Prophet prayed, Abu Bakr stood with his sword and did not allow the enemy to come near."

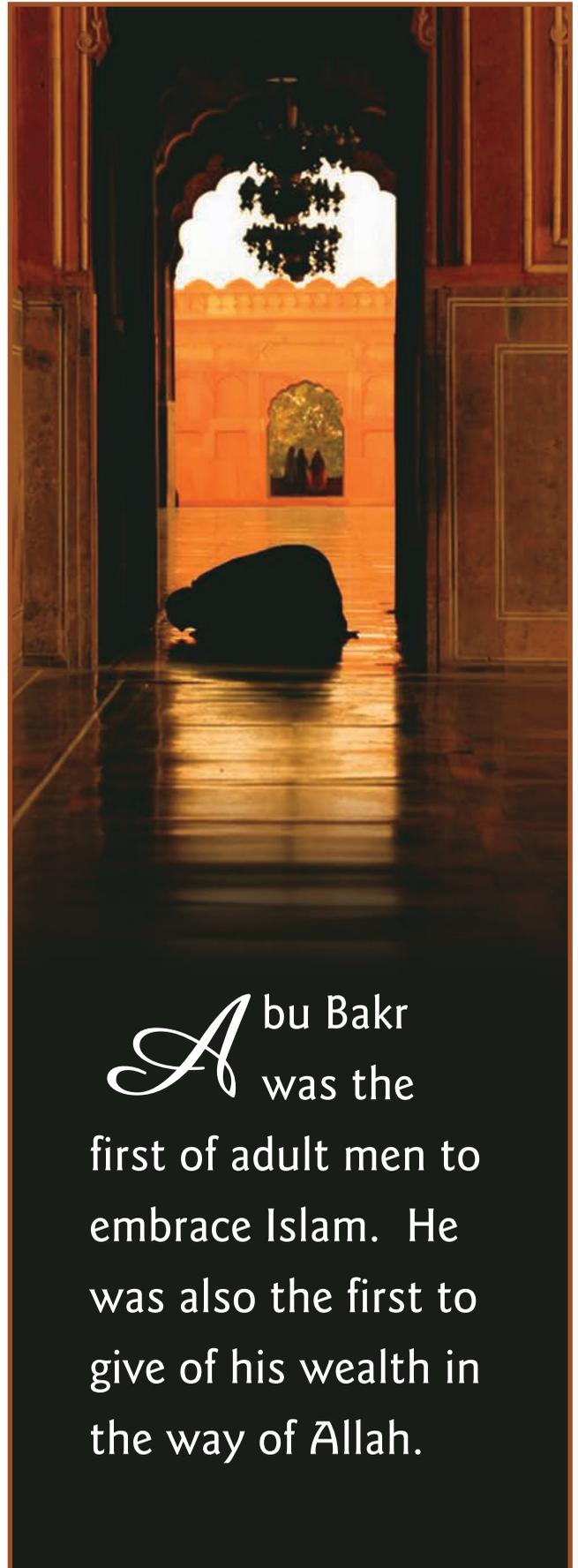


The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said, "Gabriel came to me, took me by the hand, and showed me the gate through which my Community shall enter Paradise." Abu Bakr said: "Would that I were with you to see it!" The Prophet said: "Did you not know? You will be the first of all my Community to enter it."

Although he ranked as first in so many ways, perhaps his greatest honor was when he was ranked second. Allah referred to him as the "second of the two" in the cave, upon his accompanying the Prophet (pbuh) during the migration from Makkah to Madina. Allah stated: "If you help not (your leader), (it is no matter): for Allah did indeed help him, when the unbelievers drove him out: he had no more than one companion; they two were in the cave, and he said to his companion, 'Have no fear, for Allah is with us': then Allah sent down His peace upon him, and strengthened him with forces which ye saw not, and humbled to the depths the word of the unbelievers. But the word of Allah is exalted to the heights: for Allah is Exalted in might, Wise. (Qur'an:9/40)

Sayyidina Umar said: "I wish all the deeds of my life were equal to his deed on that one day."

Abu Bakr's service to Allah and His Messenger (pbuh) did not end with the departure of the Prophet (pbuh) to His Lord, but continued into his Caliphate, until his very last breath. He thwarted the uprising of the apostates and destroyed some of the false prophets soon after the death of the Prophet (pbuh), he then went on to enact the first phase of the compiling the Holy Qur'an in one book. But perhaps most importantly, it was Abu Bakr's wise, caring and nurturing role upon the death of the Prophet (pbuh) that was the most important. The community mourned the loss of its beloved Prophet (pbuh) and this grief soon transformed into disbelief that the Prophet (pbuh) could possibly have departed from their company. In turn this led to near pandemonium, to the extent that even the usually composed Umar ibn al Khattab threatened to chop off the head of anyone who said the Prophet (pbuh) was dead. Upon arriving at the mosque, and encountering such chaos, Abu Bakr took his stand in a corner of the courtyard and called out to the people: "O people! If anyone among you worshipped Muhammad, let him know that Muhammad is dead. But those who worship Allah, let him know that He lives and will never die.



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Let all of us recall the words of the Qur'an. It says, 'Muhammad is only a Messenger of Allah; there have been Messengers before him. What then, will you turn back from Islam, if he dies or is slain?' When Abu Bakr repeated the words of Allah the Muslims were brought back to their senses and calm was restored once again.

It was also under his noble Caliphate that the lands of Syria and Iraq were opened to the Muslims, and all this was achieved despite the fact that his Caliphate lasted only a little over two years. He administered his Caliphate with great concern and justice. He undertook this great position, making his first address to the people: "O people! I have been elected your leader although I am not better than anyone among you. If I do any good, then lend me your support. If I go wrong, then set me right. The weak among you are powerful in my eyes, as long as I do not get their due, Allah Willing. And the powerful among you are weak in my eyes, as long as I do not take from them what is due to others, Allah willing."

Abu Bakr was born as Abdul Ka'ba, but came to be known as Abu Bakr. Upon his conversion to Islam, the Noble Prophet of Allah (pbuh) changed his name to Abdullah, although calling him by his sobriquet and by other names like Atiq Allah (Allah's freedman from the fire) and As-Siddiq. This last name, meaning the Truthful One, was a name given to him after the *miraj* of the Prophet (pbuh) (a journey that took place at night time, and which was miraculous in many ways) made his. When those who disbelieved heard of the Night

Journey, they reveled in the apparent absurdity of such a claim and sought to maximize the damage for the Blessed Prophet (pbuh) by both deterring those inclining towards Islam and by demoralizing those already committed; such actions were soon brought to a halt when they approached Abu Bakr, laughing at the claim, asking him if he honestly believed in such "nonsense", to which he responded, "If the Prophet said it, then I believe him, yes, and I do believe him regarding things greater than that. I believe the news of heaven he brings, whether in the space of a morning or in that of an evening journey."

The praise of Abu Bakr by the Prophet (pbuh) was for the support of the praise that Allah Himself made of Abu Bakr in the Qur'an. Ibn al Jawzi stated that it was Abu Bakr who is being referred to when Allah the Highest states, "As for him who gives and keeps his duty, we facilitate for him the way to ease." And His saying "And (away from the fire) shall be kept the most faithful who gives his wealth, thereby purifying himself, and seeks to gain no pleasure or reward other than the Presence of his Lord, the Most High." Ibn Hatim was also of the opinion that the verse, "And for him who fears to stand before his Lord there are two gardens" was revealed with reference to Abu Bakr. Ibn Abbas also attributed verses of the Qur'an to Abu Bakr's station with Allah. He said that the verse: "We have enjoined on man kindness to his parents: in pain did his mother bear him, and in pain did she give him birth. The carrying of the (child) to his weaning is thirty months. At length, when he reaches the

age of full strength and attains forty years, he says, "O my Lord! Grant me that I may be grateful for Thy favor which Thou hast bestowed upon me, and upon both my parents, and that I may work righteousness such as Thou mayest approve; and be gracious to me in my issue. Truly have I turned to Thee and truly do I bow (to Thee) in submission" and "Such are they from whom We shall accept the best of their deeds and pass by their ill deeds: (they shall be) among the Companions of the Garden: a promise of truth, which was made to them (in this life)" were revealed as descriptions of Abu Bakr.

Abu Bakr was also one of those mentioned in the Qur'an who "responded to Allah and His Messenger after being injured." Sayyidina Aisha reports regarding Allah's statement: "Those who responded to Allah and His Messenger (pbuh) after they had been afflicted with injury - to those who did good and feared Allah among them is a great reward." She said: "... after the Prophet (pbuh) was injured at Uhud and the unbelievers backed off, although it was feared they would return - the Prophet (pbuh) said: "Who will go after them?" Seven men responded to that and among them were Abu Bakr and Az-Zubair."

Some of his sayings are as follows:

"No speech is good if it is not directed toward the pleasure of Allah. There is no benefit from money if it isn't spent in the cause of Allah. There

is no good in a person if his ignorance overcomes his patience. And if a person becomes attracted by the charms of this lower world, Allah will dislike him as long as he keeps that in his heart."

"We have found generosity in *Taqwa* (God-consciousness), richness in *Yaqin* (certainty), and honor in humbleness."

"Beware of pride because you will be returning to the earth and your body will be eaten up by the worms."

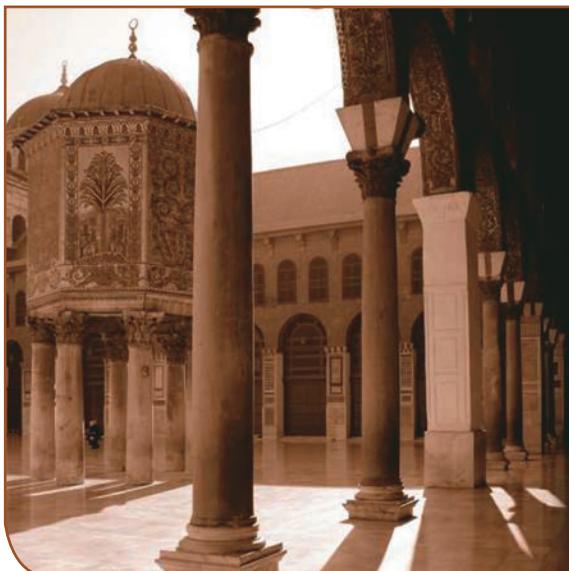
When he was praised by people he would pray to Allah saying: "O Allah, You know me better than I know myself, and I know myself better than these people who praise me. Make me better than what they think of me, and forgive those sins of mine of which they have no knowledge, and do not hold me responsible for what they say."

"Death is the easiest of all things after it, and the hardest of all things before it."

"Do not look down upon any Muslim, for even the most inferior believer is great in the eyes of Allah."

"He who avoids complaint invites happiness"

May Allah grant Abu Bakr an envious position in Hereafter as He granted him one in this world, and may He grant us the ability to emulate this most exquisite of examples. Amin!



It was also under his noble Caliphate that the lands of Syria and Iraq were opened to the Muslims, and all this was achieved despite the fact that his Caliphate lasted only a little over two years.

THE PRAYER DURING TO BE READ ABLUTION

MAHMUD SAMI EFENDI

- While washing the hands:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الْعَظِيمِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ عَلَى دِينِ
الْإِسْلَامِ وَعَلَى تَوْفِيقِ الْإِيمَانِ وَعَلَى
هُدَايَةِ الرَّحْمَنِ. الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي جَعَلَ
الْمَاءَ طَهُورًا وَجَعَلَ الْإِسْلَامَ نُورًا

In the name of Almighty Allah, praise be to Merciful Allah Who keeps us in the religion of Islam and gives us victory by having Iman and guides us. Praise be to Allah who makes the water clean and makes the Islamic Light.

- While rinsing the mouth:

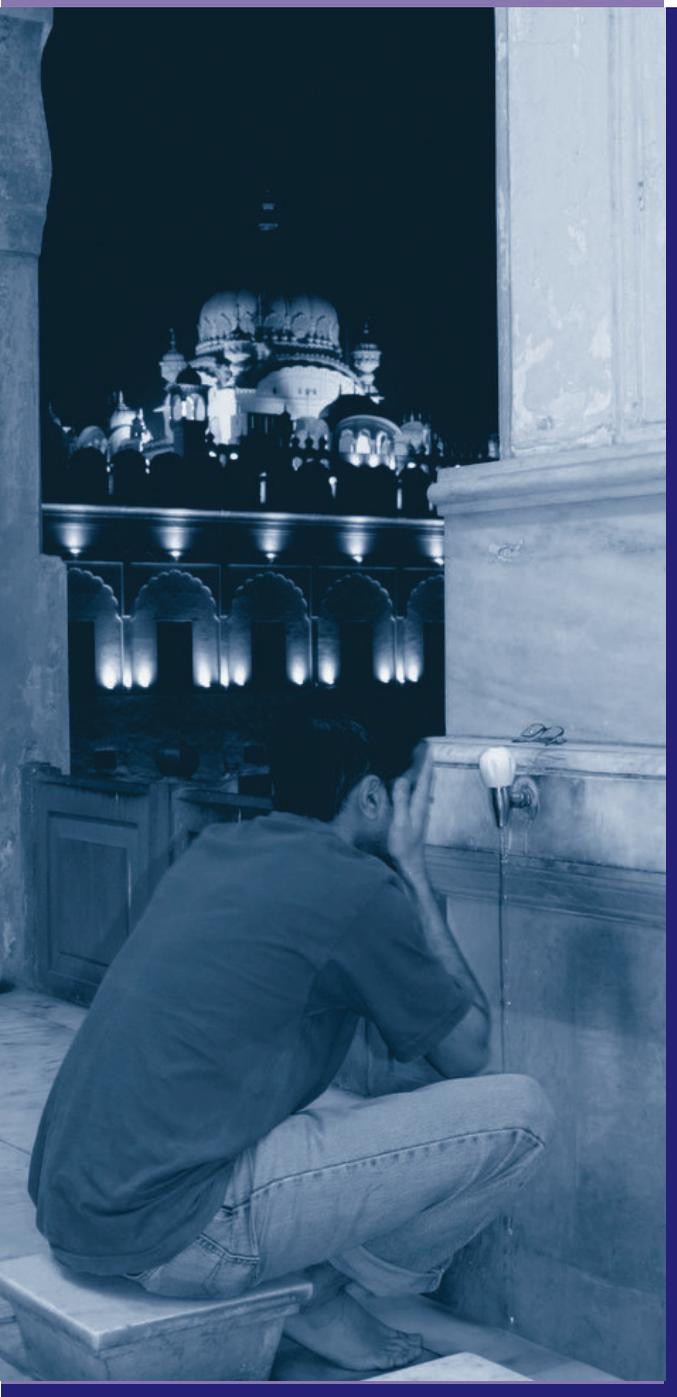
اللَّهُمَّ اسْقِنِي مِنْ حَوْضِ نَبِيِّكَ كَأْسًا
لَا أَظْمَأُ بَعْدَهُ أَبَدًا

O Allah! Make me drink one bowl from the pond of Your Messenger so that I will not become thirsty forever.

- While rinsing the nose:

اللَّهُمَّ أَرِحْنِي رَائِحَةَ الْجَنَّةِ وَأَرِزُقْنِي
مِنْ نَعِيمِهَا وَلَا تُرِحْنِي رَائِحَةَ النَّارِ

O Allah! Make me aware of the smell of Paradise and bless me with the bliss of Paradise.



- While washing the face:

اللَّهُمَّ بَيِّضْ وَجْهِي بِنُورِكَ يَوْمَ تَبْيَضُّ
وُجُوهُ وَتَسْوَدُّ وُجُوهُ

O Allah! Make my face white with Your Light on the day on which some faces will be white and some will be dark.

- While washing the right arm:

اللَّهُمَّ اعْطِنِي كِتَابِي بِيَمِينِي وَحَاسِبِي
حِسَابًا يَسِيرًا

O Allah! Give my book into my right hand and make my account easy for me on the Day of Judgment.

- While washing the left arm:

اللَّهُمَّ لَا تُعْطِنِي كِتَابِي بِشِمَالِي وَلَا مِنْ
وَرَاءِ ظَهْرِي وَلَا تُحَاسِبْنِي حِسَابًا شَدِيدًا

O My Lord! Give my book neither into my left hand nor from behind me and do not make my account hard on me.

- While wiping the head:

اللَّهُمَّ حَرِّمْ شَعْرِي وَبَشْرِي عَلَى النَّارِ
وَاطْلِنِي تَحْتَ ظِلِّ عَرْشِكَ يَوْمَ لَا ظِلَّ إِلَّا
ظِلُّكَ «اللَّهُمَّ غَشِّنِي بِرَحْمَتِكَ وَأَنْزِلْ
عَلَيَّ مِنْ بَرَكَاتِكَ»

O Allah! Protect my hair and my face from the fire. Shade me under the shadow of Your Throne on the day on which there is no protection but Yours. O My Lord! Cover me with Your Mercy and send blessings to me.

- While washing the ears:

اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْنِي مِنَ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَمِعُونَ
الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ أَحْسَنَهُ

O Allah! Make me one of those who listen to the good words and follow the best words.

- While wiping the neck:

اللَّهُمَّ أَعْتِقْ رَقَبَتِي مِنَ النَّارِ وَاحْفَظْنِي

O Allah! Release my neck from slavery and protect me from chains and fetters.

- While washing the right foot:

اللَّهُمَّ ثَبِّتْ قَدَمِي عَلَى الصِّرَاطِ يَوْمَ
تَزَلُّ فِيهِ الْأَقْدَامُ

O Allah! Make my feet stable on the Bridge of Siraat where many feet will slide.

- While washing the left foot:

اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْ لِي سَعْيًا مَشْكُورًا وَذَنْبًا
مَغْفُورًا وَعَمَلًا مَقْبُولًا وَتِجَارَةً لَنْ تَبُورَ

O Allah! Give me work that will make You pleased with me, forgive me my sins and give me a trade in which there is no harm.

- After finishing the ablution:

اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْنِي مِنَ التَّوَّابِينَ وَاجْعَلْنِي مِنَ
الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ وَاجْعَلْنِي مِنْ عِبَادِكَ الصَّالِحِينَ
وَاجْعَلْنِي مِنَ الَّذِينَ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا
هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ. سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ وَبِحَمْدِكَ
أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ وَحْدَكَ لَا شَرِيكَ
لَكَ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُكَ وَرَسُولُكَ أَسْتَغْفِرُكَ
وَأَتُوبُ إِلَيْكَ

O Allah! Make me of those who return to You often in repentance and make me of those who remain clean and pure and make me of those who are righteous and who fear not, nor do they grieve. How perfect You are O Allah, and I praise You; I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped except You alone, without a partner and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger. I seek Your forgiveness and turn in repentance to You.

MAHMUD SAMI EFENDI'S LOVE FOR THE PROPHET

صلى الله
عليه
وسلم

┌ MUSA TOPBAS EFENDI ┐



The character and conduct of our respected Sheikh Mahmud Sami were in complete accord with that of the Prophet. This conformity was extraordinary. Such conformity is only possible by Divine Grace and cannot be the result of human endeavour.

Mahmud Sami Efendi would continually recite praises and prayers for the Prophet (pbuh). In his daily life he always took the Prophet as his guide

in eating and drinking, in travelling, and in his devotions, such as fasting and performing the obligatory prayers. He took the Prophet as his sole role model in his relations with his family and his wife and in his dealings with others. He would do so out of a very deep love for the Prophet (pbuh). The life of the Prophet was a mirror through which he would evaluate his own actions.

Allah Almighty says: 'He who obeys the Messenger, obeys Allah: But if any turn away, We have not sent thee to watch over their (evil deeds)' (Qur'an:48/80)

'Say: If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you and forgive you your faults, and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.' (Qur'an:3/31)

The Believers who wish to receive Allah's Grace should follow and imitate both the religious and the worldly practices of the Prophet (pbuh) in their lives. A small amount of worship and prayer in accordance with the Sunnah of the Prophet is better than a great deal of worship that does not follow his example. Those who followed the Prophet (pbuh) with care attained very high spiritual degrees and stations because of their obedience to the Sunnah; those who did the opposite failed to reach the high stations because of their neglect of the observance of the Sunnah.

The Prophet always chose moderation in his daily life, and with regard to this he said, "The best of conduct is that which is done in moderation." There is a famous hadith concerning three Companions of the Prophet who decided that they would lead pious lives by following an exaggerated form of asceticism. So they decided to not marry, and dedicated all their time to devotion and other prayers, as well as fasting. The Prophet (pbuh) did not approve of this excessive form of practise. He said on this matter:

"A little amount of action in accordance with my Sunnah is better than many actions that are not in accordance with it. Every act which is against my way is misguidance, and every misguidance will end in the Hell-fire."

Many people think that attaining higher degrees on the spiritual path corresponds to the performance of a great deal of worship. However, true progress on this path depends on leading a life in which the disciple feels that they are standing in front of their Lord at all times, observing the Sunnah of the Prophet, and doing what is necessary at each specific time of the day and in each situation. There are many people who perform a great deal of voluntary worship, fast continuously, perform the supererogatory prayers and undertake other kinds of devotions; but they cannot progress because they speak ill of their friends behind their backs, they do not observe the injunctions of Allah, and they do not undertake their dealings with others in an Islamic way. Many people also pay no attention as to whether what they eat is *haram* (forbidden) or *halal* (permitted). It is preferable that they pay more attention to the *halal* and *haram* matters and gave more importance to attaining an Islamic character, rather than carrying out such voluntary acts of worship while neglecting these other things.

The Prophet (pbuh) said:

"Whoever earns from lawful means, eats from what is lawful and follows my example so that the people feel safe from the work of his hands (with no harm there from), such a person will definitely go to Paradise."

The great saints of this path have spent their lives in devotion, praying and fasting, taking only a little food and sleep. These saints first purified

He took the Prophet as his sole role model in his relations with his family and his wife and in his dealings with others. He would do so out of a very deep love for the Prophet (pbuh).





True progress on this path depends on leading a life in which the disciple feels that they are standing in front of their Lord at all times, observing the Sunnah of the Prophet, and doing what is necessary at each specific time of the day and in each situation.

their inner worlds, then their exterior worlds by the grace of Allah. In this way they annihilated their mundane selves and freed themselves from the shackles of the physical body.

The following hadiths stress the importance of following the Sunnah of the Prophet. In order to follow him one needs to remember the Prophet with their tongue first by saying prayers for him:

"He informs us that those who are closest to me are those who mention my name by praying for me." (saying: Sall Allahu 'Alaihi wa Sallam)

"For those who pray for me, Allah will give them a light on the Bridge of Sirât."

"When a person prays for me once, Allah shows that person compassion ten times over."

"Let those who are in difficulty pray for me, since praying for me erases difficulties and it allows sustenance to be abundant."

"For those who take up my morality and follow my way when my community is morally corrupted, there will be reward equal to that of a hundred martyrs."

Sayyidina Umarsaid: "I heard that a supplication which is not accompanied by a prayer on behalf of the Prophet will be suspended between the earth and sky and will not reach Allah."

In many other hadiths the Prophet (pbuh) advises us to say prayers (reciting supplications such as *Allâhumma salli 'alâ Sayyidi-nâ wa Nabiyi-nâ Muhammad*) on the his behalf. He also added that reading prayers and salutations for him is like giving to charity. The Prophet also asked his Ummah to request *wasîlah* (intercession) for him from Allah. When the Companions asked, "What is *wasîlah*?" He replied, "*Wasîlah* is the highest grade in Paradise, and only one person will attain this level. I hope it will be me."

The Prophet (pbuh) further advised:

"Those from my community who follow my example, who earn their livelihood by lawful means, and those with whom people feel safe (i.e. from them doing harm) will enter Paradise. Those who practise the contrary to these things will enter Hell. Those who follow my example will receive the reward of a hundred martyrs. The best Believer is the one who follows my example in the best way. I love those who follow my path and who love my Sunnah. They will enter Paradise alongside me. Those who follow my Sunnah in practice and with care will attain the good of both this world and the next. You cannot be a perfect Muslim unless you love me more than your parents and children and all the people of the world."



AL-AZIZ

The Almighty

SARAH NUR

Allah bears witness that there is no deity but Him, as do the angels and the people of knowledge, maintaining His creation in justice. There is no deity but Him, the Almighty, the All-Wise. (Qur'an:3/18)

Allah has decreed: "Indeed, I will be victorious, I and My Messengers." Allah is the Strongest, the Almighty. (Qur'an:58/21)

Do not imagine that Allah will break His promise to His Messengers. Allah is the Almighty, the Lord of Retribution. (Qur'an:14/47)

This name, Al-Aziz, means that Allah is the One who can never be defeated or refuted. In fact, He is the only One who possesses true Power. The greatness and real nature of His Power is far beyond our comprehension. Allah created the universe and all the order in it –much of which we are unable to understand, or are not even aware of. He created the Earth and all the beings on it. All the creatures from different eras have come into existence through the Power of Allah. In fact, time itself is His creation. But for His infinite Power the enormous, unimaginable task of creation is incredibly easy and effortless. His Power manifests itself in the whole of creation, and compared to this Power, every created being, no matter how great or important they think themselves, is feeble and insignificant. The existence or survival of a creature, even one single breath of each created being, is only possible with His Power and Command.

According to Imam Ghazali, this Name also implies that its Owner has the quality of being rare, needed intensely and difficult to access.

Indeed, nothing is rarer than Allah Himself, since He is the One, the Singular. And no one is more needed than Him, since everything depends on Him for existence. And He is indeed difficult to access, as no one knows Allah perfectly but Allah.

If humans have a share in this quality then their position is eminent and lofty. One can have share in this quality in proportion with how much they follow the guidance of Allah, obey Him and struggle to get close to Him. However, we should understand that everyone, no matter how well-respected, wealthy or powerful, is helpless and weak in front of Allah. No worldly power or influence can help us before Him.

If we wish to have the honor of having a share in this quality we should heed the advice given by Imam Ghazali:

"The Al-Aziz among men is one whom the servants of Allah have need of in respect to their most important objectives, that is the life that is to come and eternal happiness. The achievement of these goals certainly is rare since their attainment is difficult. Those among men who lead others to these goals form the rank of the prophets – may the blessings of God be upon them. Those who are unique in approximating the rank of the prophets during the course of their lifespan are the caliphs and the scholars, the heirs of the prophets. Each one of them is given responsibility commensurate with the level of their rank, the ease of their attaining it and sharing it and in proportion to their efforts in guiding people."



BLIND OLD MAN

explanation: "Oh you with sightless eyes, how can you read the lines? I can see that your finger in motion makes it evident that your eyes are resting on the words."

The blind man replied: "Oh you who have been separated from the body's ignorance, how can you wonder at the work of God? I begged of God, 'O You, whose help is sought, I am as covetous of reading the Book as I am of life. I do not know it by heart: please give me back my eyes at that moment, so I may take the Book and read it plain."

The Divine Presence replied: 'O you have hope of Me in every grief, whenever you want to read the Qur'an. At that moment I will restore your eyesight, so you may read'. And so He did.

Every time I open the Book to read, that incomparable King at once gives my sight back to me."

On this account, the saint knows that whatever He takes away, He sends compensation.

If He burns your vineyard, He will give you grapes; in the middle of mourning, He will give you joy.

To the handless paralytic He gives a hand, to the person who is a mine of grief, he gives the joyous heart of an intoxicated one.

In as much as heat comes to me without fire, I am content if He extinguishes my fire.

In as much as He gives light without any lamp, if your lamp is gone, why are you lamenting?

Once upon a time a dervish saw a Qur'an in an old blind man's house. He became the blind man's guest and the two ascetics were together for several days. The dervish said to himself, "This man is blind and cannot read, I wonder what he can do with the Qur'an?"

His perplexity increased while he was occupied with this reflection, and again he said to himself: "No one lives here except him. He is alone, yet he has hung the Qur'an on the wall. I am not so unmannerly or muddled in my wits as to ask him the reason, I will be patient, so that through patience I may find out, for patience is the key to joy!"

At midnight he heard the sound of recitation of the Qur'an; he got up and beheld a marvel. The blind man was reciting correctly from the Qur'an. He became impatient and asked for an

FATE

Prophet Solomon's servant came breathlessly into the court, "Please! Let me borrow your fastest horse!" he said to the Prophet. "I must be in a town ten miles south of here by nightfall!"

"Why?" asked Prophet Solomon.

"Because," said his shuddering servant, "I just met the Angel of Death in the garden! The Angel looked me in the face! I know for certain I'm to be taken and I don't want to be around when the Angel comes to claim me!"

"Very well," said Prophet Solomon. "My fastest horse has hoofs like wings. Take him." Then Solomon walked into the garden. He saw



the Angel of Death sitting there with a perplexed look on its face. "What's wrong?" asked Prophet Solomon.

The Angel replied, "Tonight I'm supposed to claim the life of your servant whom I just now saw in your garden. But I'm supposed to claim him in a town ten miles south of here! Unless he had a horse with hoofs like wings, I don't see how he could get there by nightfall . . ."



Once upon a time in a land far away there lived a sheikh who had a daughter. The King of Kerman came and asked for her hand in marriage. The sheikh requested three days' grace, and during those three days he went from mosque to mosque, till at last he caught sight of a dervish praying earnestly. The sheikh waited patiently until he had finished his prayers, then he addressed him.

"Dervish, do you have any family?"

"No," the dervish replied.

"Do you want a wife who can recite the Qur'an?"

"Who is there who will give such a wife to me?" said the dervish. "All I possess is three dirhams."

"I will give you my daughter," said the sheikh. "Of those three dirhams, spend one on bread and one on attar of roses, then get married."

TRUE FAITH

They agreed accordingly. That same night the sheikh sent his daughter to the dervish's house. Entering the house, the girl saw some dry bread beside a jug of water.

"What is this bread?" she demanded.

"It is left over from yesterday. I saved it for tonight," the dervish told her.

Thereupon the girl started to leave the house.

"I knew," the dervish observed, "that the daughter of the sheikh would never be able to live with me or put up with my poverty."

"Sir, it is not on account of your lack of means that I am leaving you," the girl replied. "I am leaving because of your lack of faith and trust, in that you set aside bread from yesterday, not relying on Allah's provision for tomorrow. At the same time I am surprised at my father. For twenty years he has kept me at home, always saying 'I will give you to a God-fearing man.' Now he has given me to a fellow who does not rely on Allah for his daily bread."

"Is there any atonement for this sin?" the dervish asked.

"Yes," said the girl. "The atonement is that only one of the two remains in this house—myself, or the dry bread."



PEARLS OF

The tear of the sinner is more beloved to Allah than the arrogance of the righteous man.

Ibn Ata'illah

*Do a good deed,
Throw it into the sea.
If the fish don't know,
The Creator will.*

Anonymous

Allah's generosity is connected to gratitude, and gratitude is linked to increase unless the gratitude of the servant ceases.

Imam Ali

Don't grieve. Anything you lose comes around in another form.

Rumi

When your brother is out of your sight, mention him as you would like him to mention you when you are out of his sight.

Sufyan Thawri

*Love your friend with some reserve, for he might become inimical to you someday.
Despise your enemy with some reserve, for he might become your friend someday.*

Imam Ali

WISDOM

Be not like the hypocrite who, when he talks, tells lies; when he gives a promise, he breaks it; and when he is trusted, he proves dishonest.

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)

The hypocrite looks for faults; the believer looks for excuses.

Imam Ghazali

Knowledge is not what is memorised; knowledge is what benefits.

Imam Shafi

Anyone who criticizes you cares about you, anyone who makes your faults seem unimportant does not care about you.

Ibn Hazm

It is about you, your Lord and the grave; nothing else matters.

Sheikh Nuh Keller

If someone's state does not lift you up, and his words do not lead you to Allah then do not keep his company!

Ibn Ata'illah

We love to serve, not to be served. When we serve, Allah is happy with us, and this brings more attraction in the Divine Presence and Allah opens that state more for us. However, to be served, brings pride and weakness to the heart and distances us from the Divine Presence.

Shah Naqshband.



ACCOUNTING AT THE END OF THE DAY (I)

「SORAYYA AZIZ」

The best of the creation, that is, the human being, can only reach happiness by eliminating the things that disturb his soul, experiencing servitude with contentment, the peace of worshipping Allah, and the real taste of faith. Therefore, man should live his life on earth with the perfect behavior, politeness and thoughtfulness. Because our life is not endless, and we are not left by ourselves. There is no doubt that man was sent on this earth to pass Divine test, and he will taste death and travel on to the next world. Thus, man should live in this world according to human morals and the wisdom of existence and should respect the trust Allah has given him.

Man has many thoughts and ideas occupying his mind, but it's death and the next world that overwhelms him most. Death is the inevitable journey that takes us to the Hereafter. Our most important task in this life is to prepare our heart consciously for the call of death.

The friends of Allah describe those who cannot see reality with this example:

This world has turned its back towards us and going away from us, but the Hereafter is approaching. How strange is the situation of the one, who turns his back to someone who comes to him and rushes towards the other, who is going away from him!

It is only possible to realize Divine power in the world when looking from the peak of virtue and a noble life. Without a deep understanding of the wisdom behind creation, and to understand the characteristics of creatures spiritually and physically.

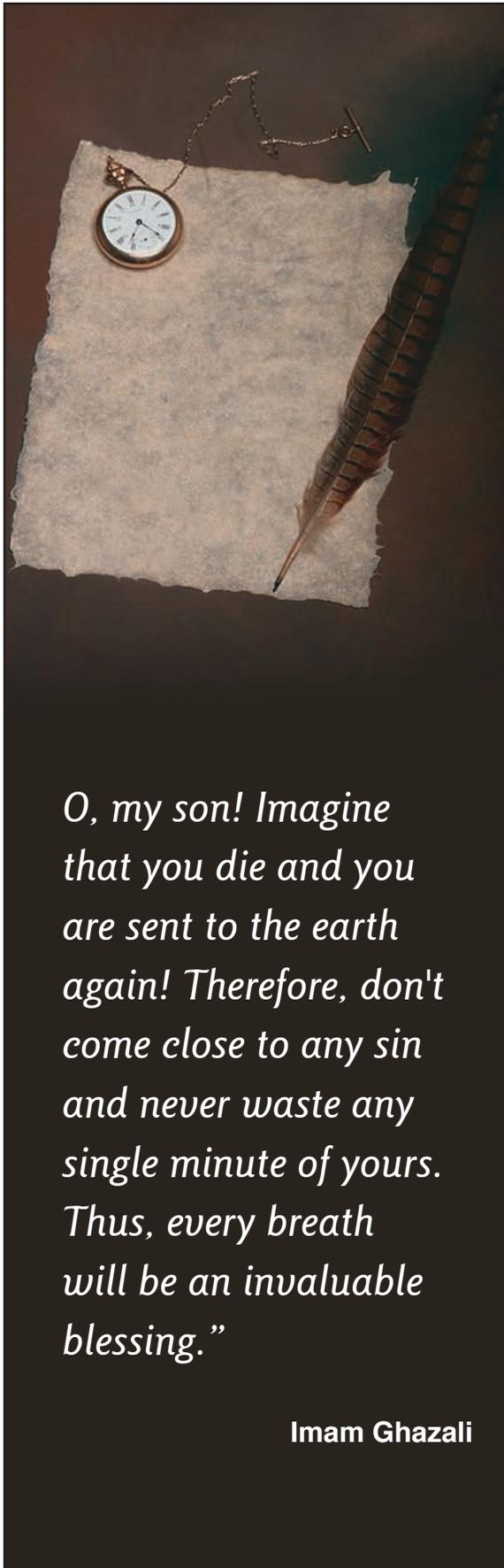
We have to understand the meaning of life and death so that we can really understand creation. This is only possible for the intelligent ones with the help of Divine light.

Alas for the man who has even the tiniest understanding in his heart, and who came to this world endowed with the best qualities and was created in the best of forms, if he does not understand the terrible loss of turning into dust in the end, and does not grieve this loss!

There is a great difference between going to an unknown world being unaware of the events one may come across, and going there with foreknowledge and expectation, with peace in his heart.

That's why the people of the straight path struggle to become closer to Allah and to increase their spirituality by subduing their nafs. They also make effort to die on the straight path for the good pleasure of Allah.

Allah describes these people in the Noble Qur'an:



O, my son! Imagine that you die and you are sent to the earth again! Therefore, don't come close to any sin and never waste any single minute of yours. Thus, every breath will be an invaluable blessing."

Imam Ghazali

"Verily, those who say, 'Our Lord is Allah (alone)', and then they remain steadfast, on them the angels will descend (at the time of their death) (saying), Fear not, nor grieve! But receive the glad tidings of Paradise which you have been promised!" (Qur'an:41/30)

Those believers who have the preoccupation of Hereafter in their heart live between two fears. The first is worrying about their past sins which they will face in the Divine Court, the ones that have been recorded and sealed in the Book of Records and cannot be changed any more. The only solution to these sins is to hate them with burning heart and to seek refuge in repentance.

On the other hand, we can never take it for granted that we will have the chance to repent before we die, and even we repent, we cannot be certain that it is accepted by Allah.

Rumi describes how sins prevent people from reaching a higher spiritual stage:

"Yes, there is forgiveness. But where is the brightness of the light of hope that the servant's face may be full of light because of his taqwa?"

Even if a thief is forgiven, he is happy to have saved his life, and he is not grieving for the rank of the minister."

The second is what the future brings in our fate, what kind of things we will see.

A believer should be concerned about getting the good pleasure of Allah, and how to change his past mistake to goodness.

The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said, "Religion is advice." Thus best among the people are the ones who invite others to the worship of Allah and impose Divine love to humanity. Zunnun Misri says:

Three things are among the signs of faith:

1- to be concerned about other Muslims' problems,

2- if your friends or relatives grieved you, forgive them and pray for good for them,

3- try to educate people with soft words and smiling face, even if because of their nafs they don't know that they are ignorant.



*The Day of Judgment
will be the market
place of Paradise.
Everybody can buy that for
which his deeds are sufficient.
The more capital you bring, the
more blessings you can get.*

The advice from the friends of Allah who live according to these three qualities is a great blessing to believers. Loving the friends of Allah who have high ranks with Allah is the most important way to get spiritual benefits from them. Taking their life as an example, following in their footsteps with great love, to attain spiritual togetherness with them, and having a place in their hearts can cause us to gain Allah's love.

One of the friends of Allah, Hasan Basri, saw a man laughing and joyful, and asked him, "O my brother! Have you passed the bridge of Sirat?" The man answered:

"No."

"Do you know if you go to Paradise or Hell?"

The man answered:

"No."

Then Hasan Basri said to him, "May Allah bless you! Then why are you laughing so much? Don't forget that the Day of Judgment is a fearful day?"

Fudayl ibn Iyas used to say this hadith very often: "Death is enough of an advice to anyone". One day someone asked him for an advice, and Fudayl ibn Iyas asked, "Is your father alive?" The man answered, "No, he is dead". "Isn't this advice enough for you?"

Ahmed ibn Harb said, "The earth amazes two people. One, who has a dispute about a land with his brother. The earth says to him, "This land had other owners before you, so many people lived on it, but did not belong to anyone forever".

The second is the one who prepares his bed carefully before sleep, and the earth says to him, "O son of Adam! Why don't you remember me? One day you will sleep in me without any pillow or blanket!"

Rumi advised the following to be able to spend our life in the good pleasure of Allah:

"Don't leave any good deeds for tomorrow which you should do today! Be intelligent and don't put stones instead of precious jewelry (good deeds) into the sack you are taking to the next world.

Sooner or later you will understand it, but it is better to understand the last day today.

The one who sees the future can be happy. He never goes astray from the Path of Allah.

If you don't want to stray from the True Path, follow a perfect person, and the use the dust from his footstep as kohl on your eyes.

Don't use your capital today, but save for the afterlife and the pleasure of Allah.

O, the one who likes traveling! The traveler is the one who keeps his way and his destination in his mind. His mind is always in front of his steps.

When the time of death comes, when all power is taken from you, everything finishes. Therefore be intelligent and don't waste the capital of your life.

All your power and the capital of your life is your good deeds. Use your life, don't miss this chance."

Shaikh Sadi says in his book 'Bostan' that we should not waste this life on falsehood:

"If you are intelligent, incline the meaning of everything! Because appearance will go but the meaning remains. Prepare your supplies for the next world in this life! Because after you die your relatives, driven by their worldly desires, may not use your wealth for good.

Share your property while you are alive! After you die you don't own them any more. If you don't want to have pain, don't forget the ones who suffer in the graves. If you have treasures now, spend for the sake of Allah, don't leave it to tomorrow! For by tomorrow you may lose the key of the treasury! Don't expect your relatives have compassion for you after your death, and spend what's left on you on the way of Allah!

The one who brings his sustenance to the next world can reach great blessings.

If a needy person comes to your door, don't send him away empty-handed. May Allah forbid, one day you may become needy, going from door to door.

A mature person thinks that he might need others tomorrow, so he is generous to the needy today.

Be compassionate to the broken hearted, for you can be one of them tomorrow.

Rejoice the sorrowful, for you may be in grief tomorrow.

Be thankful for not having to go to others' door to beg, so be generous to the needy who come to your door.

The one who does not plant the seed of love today will not taste the fruits from the tulip tree of Paradise.

The Day of Judgment will be the market place of Paradise. Everybody can buy that for which his deeds are sufficient. The more capital you bring, the more blessings you can get.

If you are from the ones in loss, you can only gain shame and sorrow on that day.

Your past is behind you, what's over can never come back. At least make use of the days that are left.

If the dead could speak, they would cry and scream to you, "O the living ones! Remember Allah while you can use your tongue! We wasted our time on falsehood, don't be like us! Use your every breath in the remembrance of Allah, and regard this world as a great messing!"

The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) described the regret of the pious in the Garden in this hadith: "People of the Garden will not regret anything, except the time they spent in this world without remembering Allah" (Haithami:10/73-74)

This is the regret of the people of the Garden. How will it be for the ones who cannot enter Paradise?

Imam Ghazali often reminds us that a believer should account with himself in daily life, and gave this advice:

"A believer, after performing the morning prayer, before performing his daily work, should stay alone with his nafs for a while and come to an agreement with it. A merchant would do the same if he is to trust his capital to his partner. Meanwhile, he does not disregard to give some warnings to him. Man should also give these warnings:

"My capital is my life. When my life finishes, my capital will go away. But today is the beginning of a new day. Today Allah gave me a permission to live, if He made me die, surely I would wish to come back to the earth to do good deeds constantly.

O, my son! Imagine that you die and you are sent to the earth again! Therefore, don't come close to any sin and never waste any single minute of yours. Thus, every breath will be an invaluable blessing."

*People
of the
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remembering
Allah.*

QUIZ FOR CHILDREN

1. Who was the first person to become Muslim after the event in the Hira Cave?
a. Hz. Khadijah b. Hz. Zaid c. Hz. Abu Bakr d. Hz. Bilal
2. Who was with the Prophet (pbuh) during the hijrah?
a. Hz. Fatima b. Hz. Bilal c. Hz. Abu Bakr d. Hz. Aisha
3. Who was the first to use the adhan to call the people to prayer?
a. Hz. Umar b. Hz. Zaid c. Hz. Bilal d. Hz. Abu Bakr
4. From whom did the Prophet recommend learning the Qur'an?
a. Hz. Ali b. Hz. Ibn Masud c. Hz. Fatima d. Abu Talib
5. Who became a famous leader for the Muslim army?
a. Hz. Walid b. Hz. Bilal c. Hz. Jabir d. Hz. Aisha
6. Who used to run races with the Prophet when she was young?
a. Hz. Aisha b. Hz. Khadijah c. Hz. Aminah d. Hz. Maryam
7. Whose voice did the Prophet (pbuh) hear during the Miraj?
a. Hz. Umar b. Hz. Fatima c. Hz. Jabir d. Hz. Abu Bakr
8. Who was once considered the adopted son of the Prophet (pbuh)?
a. Hz. Zaid b. Abu Talib c. Hz. Ali d. Hz. Hussain
9. Who was the Ansar who fought in battle at the age of 80?
a. Hz. Ayyub b. Hz. Abu Bakr c. Hz. Hussain d. Hz. Ali
10. Who was the first martyr of Islam?
a. Hz. Sumayya b. Hz. Aminah c. Hz. Khadijah d. Hz. Zeynep

Hey Kids! Maybe you can win a prize!

The first 25 entries that have all the correct answers will win a prize. Circle your answers, fill out the form, and mail it to: Sufi Wisdom - Quiz, 6773 So. 70th E. Ave. Tulsa, OK 74133 USA.

Name: _____ Age: _____

Address: _____

Parent's Name (for consent purposes only): _____

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