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WISDOM

A Source of Inspirational and Traditional Islamic Knowledge

ALTIKOLUK



PURIFICATION OF THE HEART AND SOUL

Osman Nuri Efendi:
The Role Of The Heart

Ahmet Tasgetiren:
Unity of Heart and Life

Professor Hasan Kamil Yilmaz:
Ease of Heart

EDITORIAL

*D*ear Readers,

Imam Rabbani states, “One half of the heart is conducive to Satan’s establishing himself therein, [the place] where he is obeyed and where carnal attributes are harboured, while the other half is conducive to being adorned with angelic qualities and enabling angels to dwell therein.”

In other words, half of the heart is temporal while the other half is celestial. Two qualities are present in the heart also. In this respect, the answer to be given to the question, “What kind of heart does the Qur’ân demand?” Is “The Qur’ân demands a sound heart (*qalb al-salim*)?” A sound heart is one in which each and every point of this arena that is the site of the struggle between the satanic and angelic, is covered in sublime attributes. It constitutes the silencing of all carnal and satanic whisperings.

Awareness of the difference between the emotions directing the heart and an understanding of which emotions should be admitted and which should be barred is thus critical.

It is essential that one have control over the heart that is the centre of the knowledge of Allah (*ma’rifa*), compassion and love within the human being. This is because the heart is the command centre of human action and behaviour. If this centre is kept under control, so too is human behaviour.

For this reason, here at Wisdom we have decided to dedicate this issue to the ‘Purification of the heart and soul’.

Our teacher Osman Nuri Efendi explains us the role of the heart in his article. Professor Hasan Kamil Yılmaz’s article is concerned with the virtues of being content with everything that Allah has given to us, while Mustafa Eris explains how the prescribed prayer purifies the heart. Also in this issue Professor Henry Francis B. Espiritu has written why we need to cling onto people who are truthful and who will remind us continuously to focus upon our true aim in life.

May Allah purify our hearts. May Allah grant us forgiveness and show mercy on us. Amin.

Elif Kapici

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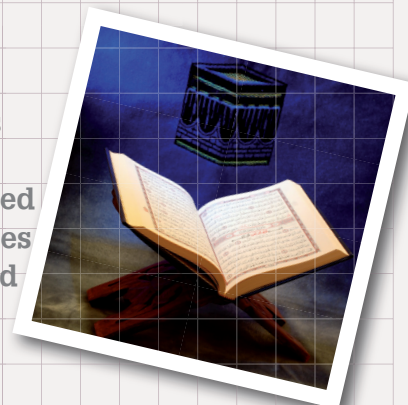


**Professor
Henry Francis
B. Espiritu**

**Attaining
Allah's
Pleasure:**

Mustafa Eris

**The Prescribed
Prayer Purifies
the Heart and
the Qur'ân**



Omer Celik

**The Angels
Seek
Forgiveness For
Us**

**Halime
Demiresik**

**Sayyidina
Ummu
Habibah Bint
Abu Sufya (I)**



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The Role of the Heart

In order to be a refined Muslim, it is imperative for the heart, the center of feeling and sensing, to receive spiritual training and act as a guide to reason; for the heart gives direction to thinking, while thinking provides direction to willpower.

In Islam, *iman*, that is faith, takes place through the affirmation of the heart and pronouncement of the tongue. What that means is that the true precinct where faith becomes manifest is not reason, but the heart, the center of spiritual sensing and feeling. This point is very important, for *iman* is a sublime feeling, whereas reason, in contrast, consists in providing means to overcome certain initial phases of understanding to reach that feeling of faith.

True faith is not accomplished unless the Divine truths accepted by reason receive their affirmation in the heart. A faith not entrenched in the heart does not transform into deeds and provide a direction to one's behavior. A faith as such carries no worth in the sight of the Almighty, who condemned the past scholars of the people of Israel for not practicing what they studied and learned of the Divine truths due to not having digested those truths in their hearts, comparing them with donkeys burdened with volumes of books.¹

Knowing Divine truths, therefore, does not mean stashing them in the mind. To know is to decipher, through contemplating and sensing, the mystery of the tremendous order in the universe and in life and acting accordingly. And only a heart enlightened with the light of *iman* can live up to that.

What reason reaps through contemplating man, the universe and the Holy Quran, which effectively mirrors the truths of both, is comparable to raw minerals acquired from the earth. Processing these minerals into things of value, on the other hand, is part and parcel of the heart.

The heart is the center of spiritual sensing, of feeling. The function of the heart, also indicated by the terms intuition and inspiration, is to unify the proofs presented by reason and thereby enable a perfect comprehension of the truth, a process comparable to bringing the pieces of a broken vase together and revealing its true shape and pattern.

It is thus clear that the most perfect manner to reach the true and the good requires reason to be trained under revelation and a heart with a maturity of *iman* to step in and make amends for its inadequacy.

The value of contemplation, too, depends on it being reinforced with spiritual sense. Simply put, it rests upon a harmonious and

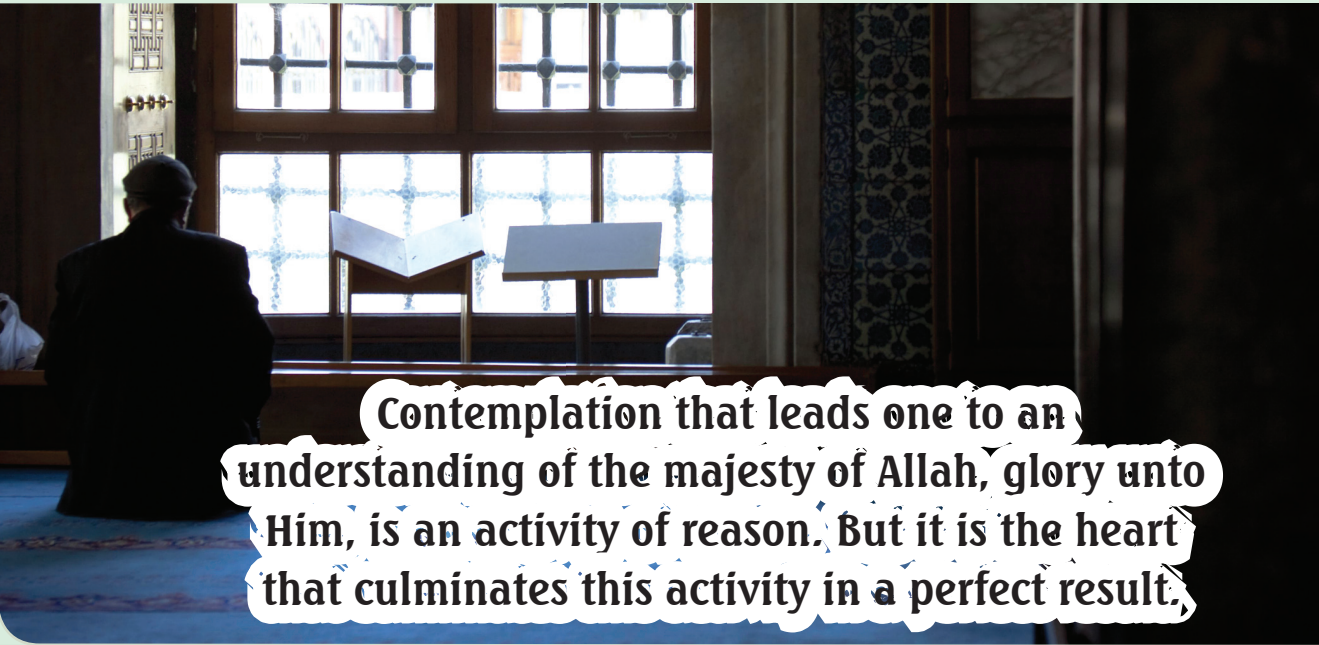
balanced exertion of both the heart and reason. A balance swinging heavily in the way of reason may make someone a good man of the world, a self-seeking person. But in order to be a refined Muslim, it is imperative for the heart, the center of feeling and sensing, to receive spiritual training and act as a guide to reason; for the heart gives direction to thinking, while thinking provides direction to willpower. This effectively means that deeds of intent have their primary incentive in the heart; in effect, they are nothing but feelings embedded therein. Rectifying the heart in accordance with Divine commands is therefore of greater importance than setting other parts of the body in proper balance.

A kind of pseudo contemplation, based on desires egotistic in nature, vulnerable to spiritual diseases like pride and conceit and devoid of the guidance of the heart, digresses from its natural course, misleading man to devilish transgressions and depravity.

Rumi says:

"Had Lucifer's love been as immense as his reason, he would not have been the Satan he is today."

It is therefore clear that reason alone holds no value. To take the helms of reason and give it an unswerving direction, it is vital to spiritually refine the feelings embedded in the heart.



Contemplation that leads one to an understanding of the majesty of Allah, glory unto Him, is an activity of reason. But it is the heart that culminates this activity in a perfect result.

To be concise, true contemplation begins at the point where a revelation inspired reason meets with a spiritually matured heart.

Contemplation (التَّفَكُّر) means to derive a lesson from any given thing or experience and focus on it, so as to gain a depth of understanding.

Deliberation (التَّأَمُّل) means to stop and think and to further the investigation by virtue of persisting in contemplation. It denotes a process of delicate thought conducted on the universe and surrounding events, with the aim of deriving a lesson and thereby reaching the core of the given matter.

Forethought (التَّدَبُّر) is to reflect on the pending consequences of a given event.

The Importance of Contemplation

Both the Book of Allah, glory unto Him, and the *ahadith* of the Blessed Prophet – upon him blessings and peace- emphatically command and encourage investigating, contemplating and deriving lessons from one's surroundings. In just two *ayat* from among hundreds of others mentioned in the Holy Quran in this regard, the Almighty states:

“Do they not reflect within themselves: Allah did not create the heavens and the earth and what is between them two but with truth, and (for) an appointed term? And most

surely most of the people are deniers of the meeting of their Lord.” (ar-Rum, 8)

“Say: I exhort you only to one thing, that rise up for Allah's sake in twos and singly, then ponder: there is no madness in your companion; he is only a warner to you before a severe chastisement.” (as-Saba', 34/46)

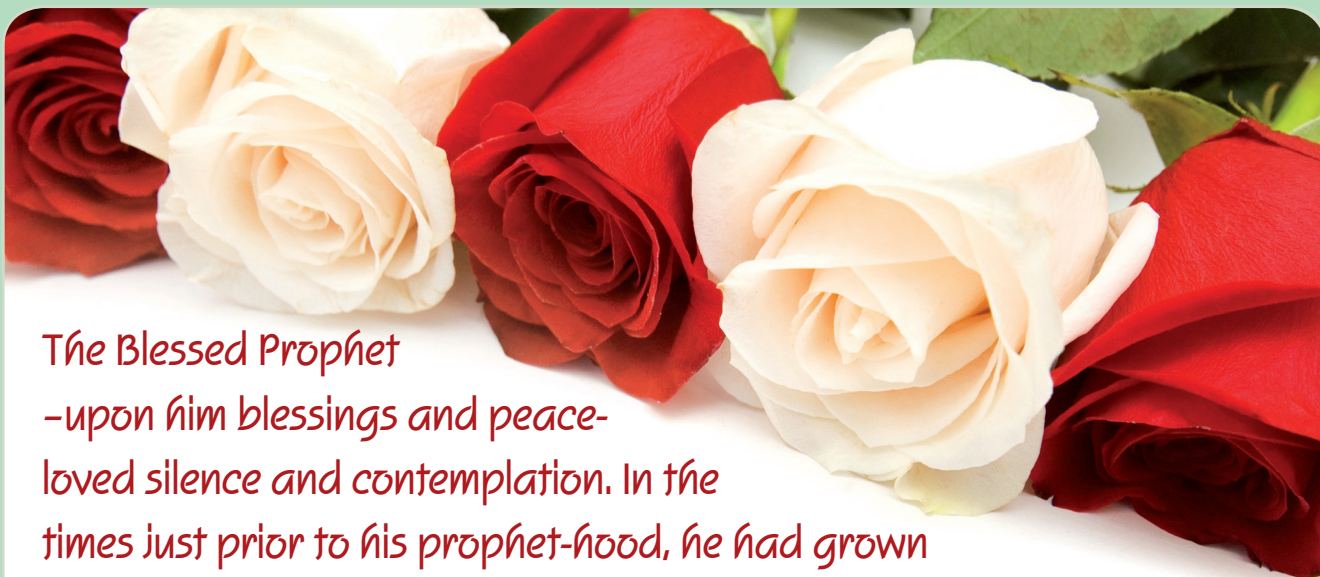
In the above, humans are enjoined to serve the Almighty, both individually and communally, and contemplate and focus on reality.² Those who do this are promised salvation even if this be the only command they adhere to.

The Prophet of Allah was in a Constant State of Contemplation

The Blessed Prophet –upon him blessings and peace- loved silence and contemplation. In the times just prior to his prophet-hood, he had grown even a more intense desire to retreat. He would remain for days on end in the Cave of Hira, approximately around 5 kilometers away from Mecca. His worship in these times of retreat was comprised of contemplation, gazing at the Kabah and reflecting on the treasures of the heavens and earth in the footsteps of his great ancestor Ibrahim –upon him peace-.³ Through this manner, the Almighty was preparing him for his sacred mission.



The most beneficial of all contemplation is to reflect on Divine Majesty, Splendor and Sovereignty, by which one begins to think of ways of setting his or her life right and leaving all things detrimental to her or his eternal happiness.



The Blessed Prophet
 –upon him blessings and peace-
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 times just prior to his prophet-hood, he had grown
 even a more intense desire to retreat.

The contemplation of the universe, its Creator and creation in which the Prophet –upon him blessings and peace- immersed himself during those days, did not cease for the remainder of his life.

Hind ibn Abu Hala –Allah be well-pleased with him- explains:

“The Messenger of Allah was in a continuous state of sorrow and thought. Comfort for him was irrelevant. He never spoke in vain. His silence was longer than his speech. He would always begin and end his talk by mentioning the name of Allah...” (Ibn Sa’d, I, 422-423)

To encourage Muslims to embark upon contemplation, The Prophet of Allah –upon him blessings and peace- has said:

“My Lord has commanded my silence to be of contemplation.” (Ibrahim Canan, Hadis Ansiklopedisi, XVI, 252/5838)

“There is no worship like contemplation.” (Bayhaki, Shuab, IV, 157; Ali al-Muttaqi, XVI, 121)

“Be like wayfarers on this earth! Adopt mosques as homes! Accustom your hearts to sensitivity! Contemplate and cry in lots! Let not your desires of the ego change you!” (Ebû Nuaym, Hilye, I, 358)

The Blessed Prophet –upon him blessings and peace- again narrates from the ten leaves of Revelation given to Ibrahim –upon him peace-:

“An intelligent man ought to have certain hours: A portion of those hours ought to be spared for praying to and seeking from the Lord, another portion for contemplating the sublime art and power of the Almighty, another portion to reflect on what has been committed in the past and planning what to do in the future and another for earning a living in a manner permissible.” (Ebû Nuaym, Hilye, I, 167; İbn-i Esîr, el-Kâmil, I, 124)

Luqman –upon him peace- used to love sitting by himself in a secluded place to contemplate, something he frequently did. Upon being asked, “You keep to your self most of the time. Would not it be better if you mixed in with people and spoke with them?” Luqman –upon him peace- gave the following response:

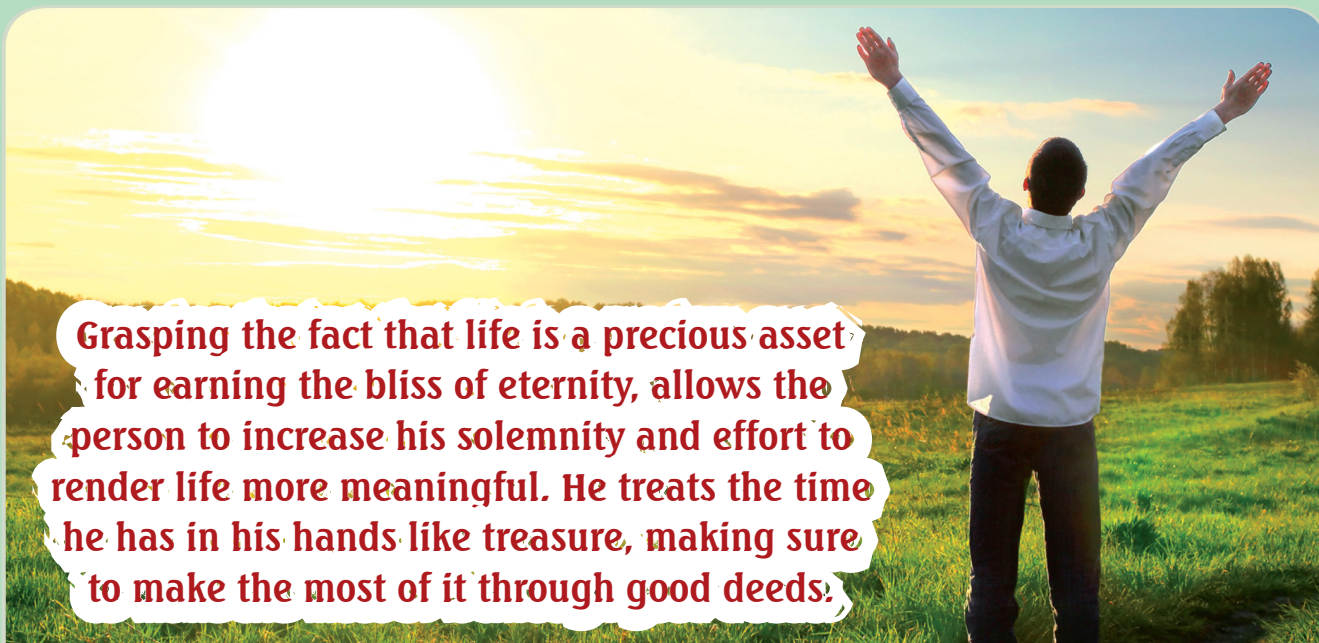
“Remaining alone for long period of time is more suitable for contemplation. And remaining in contemplation for a long period of time is a guide that leads one to Paradise.”⁴

Abu’d-Darda –Allah be well-pleased with him- used to say:

“An hour of contemplation is superior to forty nights of supererogatory worship.” (Deylami, II, 70-71, no: 2397, 2400)

Said ibn Musayyab, a prominent scholar of the Tabiun generation, was once asked which deed of worship held greater virtue.

“Contemplating the creation of Allah”,



Grasping the fact that life is a precious asset for earning the bliss of eternity, allows the person to increase his solemnity and effort to render life more meaningful. He treats the time he has in his hands like treasure, making sure to make the most of it through good deeds.

he replied, “and growing insightful into His religion.” (Bursevî, Rûhu'l-Bayân, [an-Nûr, 44])

Bishr ibn Khafi used to emphasize the significance of contemplation in the following words:

“Had human beings properly contemplated the majesty of Allah, they would not have been able to rebel against him and commit sins.” (Ibn Kathîr, I, 448, [Âl-i Imrân, 190])

As explained earlier, contemplation that leads one to an understanding of the majesty of Allah, glory unto Him, is an activity of reason. But it is the heart that culminates this activity in a perfect result. Since the heart is the noblest part of the body, it is only natural for its deeds to stand in greater worth than those carried out by other parts. The heart, after all, is the precinct of Divine Sight.

It remains an incontestable fact that a contemplation exerted by a reason trained under revelation is the first glimmer of the rays that enlighten the heart. It is the first and only means on the path that leads one to prudence and wisdom. Again, a contemplation of such caliber is a means to purge the heart from everything except for the Almighty (*masiwallah*) and thereby attain Divine Love.

The most beneficial of all contemplation is to reflect on Divine Majesty, Splendor and

Sovereignty, by which one begins to think of ways of setting his or her life right and leaving all things detrimental to her or his eternal happiness.

Contemplating the blessings, commands, prohibitions, names and attributes of Allah, glory unto Him, flourishes love and wisdom in the heart and begins to elevate one spiritually. The thought of the Hereafter, its honor and eternity compared to the stage of test that is the life of the world increases desire for the life after and enables one to value the world only as much as is merited. One then realizes that the life of the world is but a sprint race from the mother's womb to the grave. Grasping the fact that life is a precious asset for earning the bliss of eternity, allows the person to increase his solemnity and effort to render life more meaningful. He treats the time he has in his hands like treasure, making sure to make the most of it through good and beneficial deeds.

Abu'l-Hasan Harakani says it beautifully:

“At any given time, it is necessary for at least one limb of a Believer to be preoccupied with the remembrance of the Almighty. A Muslim ought to remember Allah either with the heart or the tongue, or see something the Almighty would like him to see, or do deeds of generosity with the hand, or visit people with his feet, or put his mind to service of

fellow Muslims, or offer a prayer with an unwavering *iman*, or contemplate so as to attain wisdom, or do a sincere deed, or warn people of the adversities of Judgment Day.

Such a person will surely enter Paradise the moment he raises his head from the grave, dragging his shroud from behind him; of that I am his guarantor!⁷⁵

Contemplation Must Lead to Practice

Through a contemplating and sensing that is conducive to practice, man becomes cured from the disease of looking on at the marvels of the universe simplistically.

An ordinary man, who is impressed with man made paintings, which after all are based on an imitation of nature, can not feel the same way when gazing at the universe in connection with its Creator. Things that should evoke awe are, for him, just ordinary happenings.

The pious, whose hearts are purified, on the other hand, have no business in acclaiming paintings made by artists with an interest of acquiring fame, and instead turn their interest and acclaim to the Real Artist and His masterpiece. They enjoy the zest of beholding the Divine art embroidered in the innumerable wonders of nature. They gaze at the multicolored flowers and leaves of plants,

the inexhaustible difference of color, smell and shape each tree has, the unique taste of each fruit, even though they all spring from the very same soil, and look on admiringly at the wonderful patterns on the wings of a butterfly and the incredibility of human creation. They lend an ear to the mysterious words expressed through the silent language (*lisan'ul-hal*) of Divine wonders like eyesight and understanding, seen by many as just ordinary happenings.

For such people, the entire universe is like a book waiting to be read. Having surpassed knowledge of the written, they eye the knowledge of the heart; just like Rumi, who as a scholar buried in his books and minding his own business in the Saljuk Madrasa, was suddenly ignited by the enlightening call of an enamored, mystic dervish named Shams, and found himself ablaze in the fire of love... Reborn in the atmosphere of love, it was the same Rumi in whose sight the value of written books dropped to where they rightly belong, as he began reading the mysterious patterns of the universe with his very own eye of the heart. It was only after this stage that the masterpiece that is the *Mathnawi*, a cry exposing the mysteries of the Qur'an, universe and man, came to be.

A contemplation matured through inner, spiritual sensing is the source of spiritual expansion and inner peace. Only

The most beneficial of all contemplation is to reflect on Divine Majesty and Sovereignty, by which one begins to think of ways of setting his or her life right and leaving all things detrimental to her or his eternal happiness.



a contemplation of such nature can deliver one to wisdom. The beginning of wisdom, on the other hand, is the fear of Allah, glory unto Him, coupled by feelings of piety and awe. Contemplation, in a word, carries a believer to the pleasure and love of the Almighty.

A person who duly reflects on the universe and the events that take place thereon seeks answers to questions like 'What is life?', 'Why was I created?', 'What is the truth behind these passing days?', 'Which path is it that leads to happiness?', 'What must I seek to be?', 'How must I live?', 'From where have I come and where am I headed?', and so forth. These thoughts detach him from the passing desires of the world and take him to the right path that leads to eternal happiness.

May Allah, glory unto Him, grant each of us a horizon for contemplation! May He resurrect our hearts by giving us the ability

to read the underlying wisdoms of the Quran, universe and man with a perceptive eye! May He include all of us among His blissful servants who live a life of *muraqabah* and are delivered to *Marifatullah*!

Amin!

Endnotes: 1) See, al-Juma, 5. 2) Opinions held by society or the majority can tend to exert their influence on personal opinion, Relief from this influence and finding a pathway to the truth lies in requesting the guidance of the experts of that path and spending time alone with the heart so as to enter the domain of contemplation. Each person must therefore voice his own opinion and critically assess the accuracy of general opinion. 3) Ayni, *Umdatul-Qari*, Beirut, I, 61; XXIV, 128. 4) Imam Ghazzali, *Ihya-u Ulumi'd-Din*, Beirut 1990, Darul-Khayr, VI, 45. The place inside a historical mosque in Tarsus where Luqman –upon him peace– retreated to itiqaf to contemplate is still visited today. 5) Abu'l-Hasan Haraqani, *Seyr u Süluk Risalesi*, prepared by Sadik Yalsizuçanlar, p. 107, Sufi Kitap, Istanbul, 2006.

Since the heart is the noblest part of the body, it is only natural for its deeds to stand in greater worth than those carried out by other parts. The heart, after all, is the precinct of Divine Sight.



Unity of Heart and Life

The Qur'ân, refers to the purification of the self on the one hand, while making mention of the contamination and purification of the heart on the other, thus presenting a continuous site for striving and struggle, a constant mission of building character.

The central place of the heart in Islam is put forth by the following well-known tradition of the Messenger of Allah. He says:

“Beware, there lies within the body lump of a flesh; if it is sound, the whole body is sound, and if it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt, and this is the heart.” (Bukhârî, Iman, 39)

The heart assumes a central place because an assessment of each deed or action performed within the context of Muslimness pertains to the heart.

As indicated by Allah's Messenger, «Actions are judged according to intentions,» and the site wherein intention is formed is the heart.

The question of the acceptability of one's actions is in reference to the «sincerity» (*ikhlas*) these actions carry within them. In other words, one's deeds are worthy of being accepted only with their being solely for the sake of Allah. And the place where sincerity settles is the heart.

As the Messenger of Allah makes known to us, “Allah does not judge according to your bodies and appearances, but He scans your hearts and looks into your deeds.” That is to

say, the heart is the focus of Allah's regard. (Muslim, Birr, 33)

It is as though the heart contains a hidden measure in determining the quality of such human action as sin and deeds of righteousness. This is because Allah's Messenger states, "Sin is that which wavers in the heart, and which you do not want for people to come to know of," (Muslim, Birr, 14,15) while "Goodness is that with which the soul and heart find peace and comfort." (Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Musnad, IV, 227-228) The Messenger of Allah indicated the Companion Wabisa's chest three times and said, "Consult your soul, consult your heart, O Wabisa." Furthermore, he indicated his own chest three times and said, "Piety is right here." (Muslim, Birr, 32)

The quality to be acquired by the heart, which holds such a vital place in terms of our Muslimness and which by nature is readily changeable, has been determined to the smallest detail by the Power which bestowed the heart upon the human being.

What form, then, is "the realm that is the site of the Divine gaze" to take?

To begin with, are those things that it should *not* be:

It should not be darkened.

It should not be diseased.

It should not be hardened.

It should not be ensheathed.

It should not be locked.

It should not be sealed.

In other words, it should not be in a state of hypocrisy, unbelief and denial.

How, then, should it be?

It should be as soft as a bird's heart.

It should be a heart that trembles when Allah's name is mentioned.

It should be humble.

It should be sound.

It should be at rest.

In other words, it should be the heart of a believer.

A 'sound' (*salim*) heart, free of disease, is required when appearing before Allah, on the Day of Judgement. This is what is demanded and proclaimed to be the only heart that is acceptable in the Hereafter. (Shuara, 26:89)

A sound heart is a purified pure heart, one that has attained peace and contentment and one that has been freed of need and agitation.

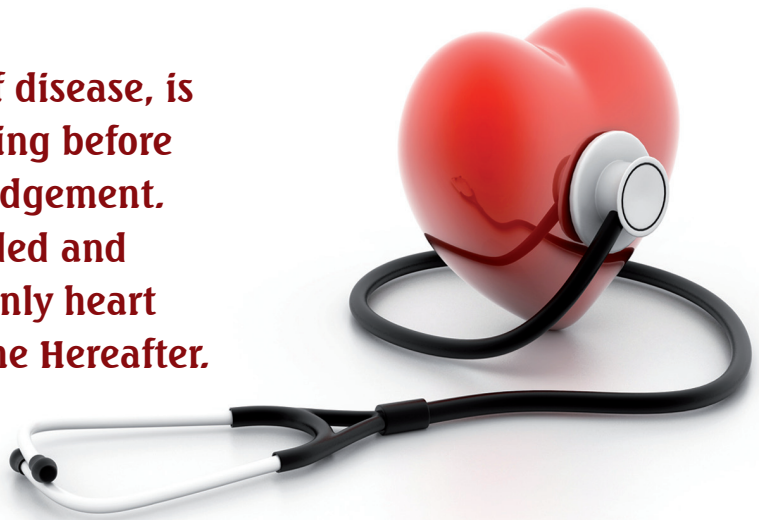
All of these hearts are hearts that have involved great exertion and that point to the same measure of temperament.

The Divine Word, the Qur'ân, refers to the purification of the self on the one hand, while making mention of the contamination

The Prophet warned Muslims about the causes dragging people into diseases of the heart and advised them with respect to the behaviour required to render them immune from such diseases.



A ‘sound’ heart, free of disease, is required when appearing before Allah, on the Day of Judgement. This is what is demanded and proclaimed to be the only heart that is acceptable in the Hereafter.



and purification of the heart on the other, thus presenting a continuous site for striving and struggle, a constant mission of building character.

Qad aflaha man tazakkā. “Prosperous indeed is he who purifies himself (of sins, and of his wealth by spending from it in Allah’s cause and for the needy).” (87:14)

Qad aflaha man zakkāhā. “He is indeed prosperous who has grown it in purity (away from self-aggrandizing rebellion against Allah).” (91:9)

Whilst salvation, according to the Divine criteria is contingent upon the purification of the heart, the consequence of its defilement is darkness:

Waqad khāba man dassāhā. “And he is indeed lost who has corrupted it (in self-aggrandizing rebellion against Allah).” (91:10)

Contamination and cleanliness are not limited merely to the confines of the heart – the spiritual centre – and the carnal soul. It does not start and end here.

That which begins in the heart reflects on the exterior and on the behaviour that enables individuals to subsist in society. On the contrary, a person’s behaviour determines the inner temperament of their heart and carnal self.

Contamination is a consequence, while purification is the realisation of the will to eradicate this outcome.

The Messenger of Allah presents the process of the heart’s contamination in the following manner:

“When the believer commits sin, a black spot appears on their heart. If they repent and give up that sin and seek forgiveness, their heart will be polished. But if they continue sinning, the black spots also increase until they envelop the heart entirely. This is the rusting that Allah mentions in His Book: ‘By no means! But what they themselves have earned has rusted upon their hearts (and prevents them from perceiving the truth).’” (Mutaffifin, 83:14) (Ibn Majah, Zuhd, 22)

Sins are comprised of a person’s behaviour which deviates from the rules prescribed. These rules are prescribed by Allah the Exalted. The sphere of sin, is entered upon the transgression of the Divinely-ordained limits (*hudud Allah*), and each sin reflects upon the heart in the form of a dark spot, an impurity. As a person commits sin, a concentration of impurity develops on the heart until ultimately the heart is completely overrun.

This means that whilst a person wallows in sin and wrongdoing, it becomes increasingly difficult for their heart to remain clean. And it becomes impossible in the long term, with a sullied heart, to maintain excellence and goodness in one’s actions.

The heart’s remaining pure is only possible by way of an awareness of sin and

by freeing the heart of its invasion as soon as possible. The fact that deliverance is in repentance is made clear. Repentance, or *tawba*, denotes turning to Allah with the “will to become purified”. It is, in other words, the expression of the will to deliver the heart from the disunity of sin and reunite it with its fundamental connections, and render it an addressee of Divine regard once again.

For the heart to remain clean, either a person is not to sink into sin, or if they have done so in one way or another, to immediately cling to the rope of repentance and strive to pull oneself out. In order to maintain excellence in one’s actions and behaviour, the heart, which functions as an inner guide, must be able to soundly and accurately show the way.

The Messenger of Allah first and foremost, followed by the friends of Allah, Muslim leaders and Muslim scholars possessing keen sensibility of heart who receive their spiritual emanation from him, have warned Muslims about the causes dragging people into diseases of the heart and advised them with respect to the behaviour required to render them immune from such diseases. This is how they have trained those who they have guided.

For instance, the Messenger of Allah who served as a teacher for all time, strove to deliver the people from such maladies of heart as unbelief, hypocrisy, pride, heedlessness, anger, enmity, jealousy and love of leadership. At the

same time, by instructing them in belief, piety, God-consciousness, love, compassion, seeking forgiveness, remembrance and supplication, he endeavoured in the way of ensuring the adornment and strengthening of hearts.

The Qur’ân declares that the heart of those who have “taken [their] lusts and fancies for [their] deity” would be “sealed”. (Jasiyah, 45:23)

That is to say, by venerating as an idol one’s idle passions and lusts on the one hand, or being a slave to one’s pleasures and vain desires, it is not possible to keep the heart open to Divine favour and to remain pure.

Allah, the All-Glorious, teaches the Messenger of Allah, upon him be peace and blessings, the following supplication:

“(My Lord!) And do not disgrace me on the Day when all people will be raised up to life. The Day when neither wealth will be of any use, nor offspring, But only he (will prosper) who comes before Allah with a sound heart (free of all kinds of unbelief, hypocrisy, and associating partners with Allah).” (Shuara, 26:87-89)

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, entreats Allah in one of his supplications with the following words:

“O Allah, cleanse my heart with the water of snow and hail, and cleanse my heart of sin as a white garment is cleansed of filth.” (Bukhârî, Da’awat, 39, 44, 46)





ATTAINING ALLAH'S PLEASURE: the *Ultimate Goal Of The Believer's Life And Death*



We all have a divine schedule that cannot be erased nor be delayed by even a fraction of a second of our life—we have an appointment that cannot be rescheduled or ignored, for this appointment is a divinely guaranteed schedule set by Almighty Allah Himself.

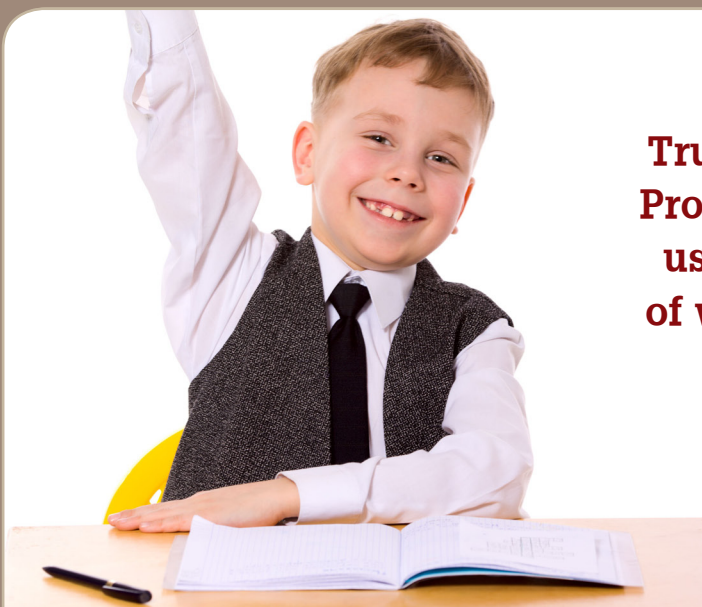
Say: Truly, my prayer and my service of sacrifice, my life and my death, are (all) for Allah, the Cherisher-Sustainer of the Worlds.

(Holy Qur'ân, Surah An'am [6]:162)

Reflection on Death as Potent Cure for our Spiritual Carelessness, as Divine Reminder to our Spiritual Forgetfulness and as Powerful Awakener against our Heedlessness

We all have a divine schedule that cannot be erased nor be delayed by even a fraction of a second of our life—we have an appointment that cannot be rescheduled or ignored, for this appointment is a divinely guaranteed schedule set by Almighty Allah Himself. The Holy Qur'ân explicitly proclaims to all members of humanity:

Every soul shall have a taste of death: and We test you by evil and not only by good; by way of trial. To Us must ye return. *(Surah Anbiyaa [21]:35)*



Truthful companions are like Prophet Noah's ark that helps us cross the troubled ocean of worldliness to the shore of everlasting bliss.

Death is no respecter of persons—whether such a one is high or lowborn. The Angel of Death respects no age, wealth nor familial prestige. In the poignant, yet meaningful words of warning coming from the Indian Sufi saint, Hazrat Ashiq Sultan Bahu al-Punjabi:

Remember this oh Ashiq Bahu, whoever comes into this world, Death whispers to him right away; "Be careful how you walk in the path of life for I, Death, am right behind your back watching your every move, your every step, and your every turn!" (*Abyat-e-Sultan Bahu*, [Poetic Compositions of Sultan Bahu]. Multan: *Matba'e-Lughat-e-Awliyaullah*, 1963; p. 18.)

For a moment, let us consider for ourselves what will happen some few years after we die and after we have already been relegated to our lonely and cold grave—deserted by loved ones and family alike. Together let us take heed of the lessons that this short reflection on death (*muraqabah-ul-mawt*) and the temporariness of life can teach to our heedless and carefree spirits. Years after our death, the grave marker bearing our engraved name whose honor and fame we carefully preserve and protect all throughout our lives will be long gone by now—and we will be hardly remembered by the living unless we live a life worthy of spiritual emulation and remembrance! Our

skeletons like forlorn and forgotten remains, already eaten by the “vulture of Time” will be etched upon our wretched weakened frame of dilapidated bones! At this juncture, reflect on a skull of a former beauty titlist, it is now cracked and dry—what was before a face painstakingly decorated by cosmetics or skin-powders, the face which was once beautified by countless shades of make-ups, and makeovers, spa-massaged and meticulously washed by choicest perfumed soaps and lotions had by now entirely eaten by worms and maggots! The impure fluids emanating from the melted face had long blended into dust without any trace of mundane beauty and worldly charm which was once the object of adulation by others and the subject of meticulous yet capricious care by its owner in the past! Consider well how you take good care of your prized hair as the crown of your glory while yet alive, the hair that was once coiffured according to the changing fashions of this world had by now all fallen to the ground, and is now separated from that cracked skull. What will happen to the skeleton of a heedless person in the years to come? It will be scattered in the graveyard of spiritual ignominy, negligence and carelessness of living!

Oh, believer on the path towards our Beloved Allah, please take heed and pay attention for the Holy Qur’ân has solemnly warned us by these words:

...the Death from which ye flee will truly overtake you: then will ye be sent back to the Knower of things secret and open: and He will tell you (the truth of) the things that ye did! (*Surah Jumu'ah* [62]:8)

Whereas death is a great calamity and a harrowing catastrophe for the unbelievers and the unprepared; it is grace, mercy and a divine favor for a genuine believer and true lover of Allah Almighty. The great Turkish saint and spiritual teacher, Rumi tells us:

Death is a ni'mat-ul-mumineen (grace and favor bestowed on the faithful). Death is the bridge of love connecting the true lover to his Beloved Lord. (Mathnawi Sharif, quoted in *Abyat-e-Sultan Babu*, [Poetic Compositions of Sultan Babu]; p. 24.)

Therefore, it is incumbent upon us believers to prepare assiduously for the eventual meeting of our Beloved Allah at the time of our death. We should not curse nor detest death but consider the Angel of Death (*Malak-al-Mawt Hazrate Azrail*) as our confidential and close friend that will bring us closer towards our meeting, final encounter and blissful reunion with our All-Merciful Allah.

The Real Purpose (Maqsud-e-Mutlaq) and Ultimate Finality (Maqsud-e-Akhir) of the Believer's Life and Death is Gaining Allah's Pleasure, Favor and Love

The Holy Qur'ân openly proclaims Allah's divine character and attributes in these words:

He is the First and the Last, the Ascendant and the Intimate, and He is, of all things, the All-Knowing. (*Surah Hadid* [57]:3).

This holy *ayah* (verse) declares in unequivocal term that Almighty Allah is our Real Goal in life; furthermore He is the Finality of all our longings and the Answer to all our deepest desires. Our souls long for Allah's nearness, and we will only be truly satisfied if we reach the intimacy of Allah's Divine Presence. Therefore, in order to live a life of genuine *iman* (faith) and *ihsan* (purity) we must always remember Allah as the Real Goal and Aim of our life and existence. The ultimate cause, objective and finality (*Awwal-wal-Akhir*) of the whole cosmos (*alamin*) and of the whole humanity is Allah, the Most Merciful. Because He is our Creator and the Lord of the universe (*Rabb-ul-Alamin*), Allah Almighty is therefore our true *Maqsud-e-Mutlaq* (Absolute Goal) and our *Maqsud-e-Akhir* (Ultimate Finality). Therefore we should make it our daily goal to live and to die for the sake of pleasing Almighty Allah. All things that hinder, impede and prevent us from loving and pleasing our Lord should be renounced since these are separating walls that our enemy, the accursed Satan has placed upon us so that we will not be able to reach Allah's nearness and divine favor.

In order to live a life of genuine iman and ihsan we must always remember Allah as the Real Goal and Aim of our life and existence. The ultimate cause, objective and finality of the whole cosmos and of the whole humanity is Allah, the Most Merciful.





In order for us to be able to focus on the goal of our servanthood to Allah, we must constantly remind our hearts and minds that we have an appointment with death; and this eventual appointment with death should make our minds and hearts to fear and love Allah Almighty.

The accursed Satan always misleads us into forgetting the reality of our death by tempting us with all the illusory charms of this temporary world as his effective tool in preventing the achieving of our proximity with Allah Almighty. By tempting us with the fleeting pleasures of this world and by fixing our minds on the lust of our mundane existence, we become negligent in reflecting the occurrence of our death (*muraqabah-ul-marwt*), thinking of death as something that will not happen to us in the near future. This attitude of carelessness (*ghaflat*) will make us more attached to our evil-commanding-self (*nafs-e-ammara*) and to this sinful world (*dunya*); thereby forgetting our True Aim in life—Allah Himself and winning His good pleasure. Our love for this world and attachment to its impermanent enjoyments and temporal goods will make our souls wallow more in sins and willful disobedience against Allah's holy laws to such an extent that our hearts detest our final meeting with our beloved Lord. By disliking death which is the opener of the eternal door towards Union with our Beloved, we are in fact saying that we value this miserable earthly life compared to the joys of meeting our Beloved Allah in His Heavenly Abode. This wrongful prioritization will cost the loss of our souls for the rest of eternity! No matter how we try to extricate ourselves from death; this attitude of wanting to escape death is just a wishful thinking, a fruitless illusion, a futile

affair, for at the time of death, our selfish ego that lived in negligence and carelessness with respect to following Allah's commandment may indeed wish so very hard to escape death, but the Angel of Death will catch-up on us and he will drag us to our graves despite our protests! In the words of the Holy Qur'an:

...that day whereon neither wealth nor sons will avail (to help him). But only will he prosper that brings to Allah a sound heart. (*Surah Shu'ara* [26]:88-89)

In order to live a life that is fully aware of and truly prepared for our ultimate meeting with Allah Almighty, we must strive to remember the real aim of our human existence and act in such a way that our daily living must be in conformity to the true objective of life—pleasing Allah Almighty and gaining His good pleasure. However, living a life that truly pleases Allah is difficult for as long as we think that this present world is our eternal dwelling place. It is easy to forget the divine goal of our existence in this day-and-age when many forms of forbidden pleasures and sinful activities are readily available and are continually being committed by negligent souls in this world. Our Holy Prophet Muhammad (upon him peace) exhorted us in this manner:

Remember Allah in abundance and likewise remember the coming of the Destroyer of pleasure (Angel of

Death) upon waking-up and before sleeping.

(Cited by Hazrat Maseehullah Khan Chishti in his book *Malfoothat-e-Murideen-e-Chistiyyah Thanwiyyah va Ashrafiyyah*. [Spiritual Advice for Chistiyyah, Thanwiyyah and Ashrafiyyah Disciples] Lahore: Pakistan, 1971; p. 53.)

May we motivate ourselves towards good deeds by constantly reminding ourselves that the only Being that existed before time began and will exist throughout all eternity (*Al-Hayy-ul-Qayyum-wa-Al-Baqi*) is our Beloved Allah. May we fill our hearts with the thought of our death and non-existence daily, thereby prodding us to live in full awareness of our real Goal which is Allah and our eventual meeting with Him in the Hereafter. Let us remember this very well: irrespective of whether we are ready or not to depart in this world, we shall be dragged permanently from our temporary homes despite our firmest resistance against the Angel of Death. The pitiful wailings and tears of our family and loved-ones will not be able to help us at this hour. All our material wealth and earthly resources will not avail any help to us in the hour of our death.

We must focus on the real goal of life-becoming Allah's obedient slave to win His favor and gain his pleasure. Therefore in order for us to be able to focus on the goal of our servanthood (*ubudiyyah*) to Allah, we must constantly remind our hearts and minds

that we have an appointment with death; and this eventual appointment with death should make our minds and hearts to fear and love Allah Almighty. Says Allah, the Most High:

Oh ye who believe! Fear Allah and be with those who are true (in word and in deed)! (Surah Taubah [9]:119)

This *ayah* (verse) tells us that we must have respectful fear in Allah and we likewise need to be wary whom we choose as our friends and companions in our journey through life. Why does our Beloved Allah require us to only befriend those who are "true in word and in deed"? This is because our friends have immense impact in our earthly and spiritual life. Wrong friends will lead to wrongful prioritization, wrong belief systems, wrongful habits and bad attitudes with evil consequences that will stretch all the way to eternity. Wrong friends will cause us to forget our real objective. Wrong friends will make us deluded by making us want to be young forever. Wrong friends will confuse us with regards our value systems making us weaken our faith in Allah. Because of our wrongful companions, the temporary will be given preference over the permanent. Enjoyment and relaxation will take precedence over family, and business will be given preference over the demands of our spiritual life. Shamelessness will be promoted, immodesty will be flaunted and prudence (*haya*) will be

Let us daily think of death in abundance; for our meditation on death will effectively keep us away from all sorts of sinfulness, worldliness, arrogant pride, carelessness, and negligence.



frowned upon because of the influence of our wrong set of friends.

Allah Almighty informs us:

O ye who believe! Guard your own souls: If ye follow (right) guidance, no hurt can come to you from those who stray. The goal of you all is to Allah: it is He that will show you the truth of all that ye do. (*Surah Maidah* [5]:105)

We need to cling onto people who are truthful and who will remind us continuously to focus upon our true aim in life: meeting with Allahu Taala. True friends who are also believers (*mumin*) speak about Allah, remind one another against committing sin and vice. And of course, true believer friends celebrate with us in all those things that are permitted by Almighty Allah and they share with us the joys of life as we journey together on the way to Allah. We need true company of believers in our life of faith, for the companionship of faithful and believing friends inspires us, motivates us, and encourages us towards our goal of attaining Allah's pleasure.

Truthful companions are like Prophet Noah's ark that helps us cross the troubled ocean of worldliness to the shore of everlasting bliss. Allah, the Most High knows the importance of being in one accord with faithful believing friends when He commanded us in this manner:

And hold fast, all together, by the rope which Allah stretches out for you, and be not divided among yourselves; and remember with gratitude Allah's favors on you; for you were enemies and He joined your hearts in love, so that by His Grace, you became brethren; and you were on the brink of the pit of Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus Allah makes His Signs clear to you, that you may be guided.

(*Surah Abl-Imran* [3]:103)

Final Words: Never Forget the Ultimate Objective of Human Life and Strive Faithfully (Mujahadah-wa-Riyazat) to Live a Pure Life Pleasing to our Beloved Allah

Says Allah Most High:

O humankind! Do your duty to your Lord, and fear (the coming of) a Day when no father can avail aught for his son, nor a son avail aught for his father. Verily, the promise of Allah is true: let not then this present life deceive you, nor let the chief Deceiver deceive you about Allah. (Holy *Qur'an Surah Luqman* [31]:33)

My dear sisters and brothers in Islam, acting upon the order given by the verse above, we must always place Almighty Allah and his good pleasure as our ultimate aim in life.



In order to live a life that is fully aware of and truly prepared for our ultimate meeting with Allah, we must strive to remember the real aim of our human existence and act in such a way that our daily living must be in conformity to the true objective of life—pleasing Allah Almighty.

We must live a life that merits Allah's love and mercy upon us, his poor and unworthy creatures. Let us daily think of death in abundance; for our meditation on death will effectively keep us away from all sorts of sinfulness, worldliness, arrogant pride, carelessness, and negligence. The inner realization of our temporary human existence will aid us in becoming good Muslims whose sole purpose in life is winning Allah's favor, grace and love. Let us keep company with the truthful and believing Muslim friends. We must seek-out friends who dedicate their lives in pleasing Allahu Taala and thereby Allah is also pleased with them. We need believing friends who will give us courage and encouragement to live a life of perfect submission and servanthood to Allah's Rulership. Furthermore, without being rude, unkind, vain and self-righteous, we should discreetly avoid all kinds of people who will distract us from our lofty goal of attaining Allah's mercy, grace and favor.

Insha'Allah, by making ourselves pleasing to Almighty Allah, both our worldly life and life-to-come will become joyous and peaceful. However if we live a life of obstinacy, heedlessness and sinfulness oblivious of whether or not we have become

an enemy of Allah by our actions, then by our deeds of heedlessness, we will be reaping material misfortunes in this world and spiritual calamities in the Hereafter. Is it wisdom of a circumspect person to live a life of so-called worldly fun and play but thereafter followed by misery and torture in the combustible fires of *Jahannam* (Hell)? Only an unthinking person will decide to choose such a calamitous option! My fellow Muslim brothers and sisters: we must firmly resolve that in this life, we will live and die only for the sake of Allah—only for the sake of gaining His good pleasure, mercy, love and grace. Let us resolve to live a pure life that reflects our being genuine believers in Allah's Lordship (*Rubbubiyyah*). While still alive, we still have the chance to please Allah by our good deeds and repent of our failures to live in the manner of godly life befitting true believers of Allah's Lordship. Now is the time to make Allah the Center (*Markaaz*) of our life; now is the opportune time to turn to Almighty Allah before we return our insignificant life to be judged by Him—to either blissful reward in Paradise or sorrowful punishment in the Hell-fire.

May our All-Merciful Allah guide us so that we may make Him the ultimate objective of our living and dying. Indeed, our Almighty Allah is worth dying for and worth living for. Amen, a thousand times Amen!

**We need to cling onto
people who are truthful
and who will remind us
continuously to focus upon
our true aim in life: meeting
with Allahu Taala.**





The Prescribed Prayer Purifies *the* Heart and the Qur'ân *Polishes It*

The words of Allah's friends are living. They possess warmth and vigour and have an intense effect on those who hear them. They also serve as a remedy for diseases of the heart.

We are in the twenty-second year after the passing of the venerable and respected *Ustad* Mahmud Sami Ramazanoğlu, may his secret be sanctified. May Allah accept his intercession for us on the Day of Judgement.

Allah the Exalted does not allow those who He has chosen as His friends to be forgotten after their death. Those who are heedless of His remembrance, however, are forgotten. This reality is expressed in a verse from the Qur'ân as follows:

“And do not be like those who are oblivious of Allah and so Allah has made them oblivious of their own selves.” (Hashr, 59:19)

“But as for him who turns away from My remembrance (and from the Book), his will be a suffocated life, and We will raise him up blind on the Day of Resurrection. He says: ‘My Lord, why have You raised me up blind, while I used to be seeing (in my life of the world)?’ (Allah) says: ‘Just so. Our Revelations came to you but you disregarded them, so today you will be disregarded.’” (TaHa, 20:124-126)

The friends of Allah provide instruction without ever hurting anyone. For those who are able to take lesson of course! They are angered when the truth is made apparent, and want for the covenant and word made to Allah to be honoured.



Mahmud Sami Ramazanoğlu, may his secret be sanctified, illuminated his surroundings with his words and actions, as well as the students that he raised in line with the Qur'ân and Sunna, and served as a means for the propagation of the beauty of Islam to the rest of our society. This great friend of Allah is remembered in the February of each year with tens of thousands of complete Qur'ân readings (*hatm*), recitations of shorter chapters from the Qur'ân and repetitions of the Declaration of Faith recited for his soul. Becoming acquainted with new information from his private memoirs that each serve as a criterion for one's life invests a person with a new excitement and dynamism. In view of serving as a means to spiritual vitality and proximity, I would like to share with you a few of these:

I had heard from his nephew Abdullah Ramazanoğlu who had visited the respected *Ustad* Mahmud Sami Ramazanoğlu, may his secret be sanctified, as a child. The manner in which a friend of Allah connected with children, his cheerful approach to and close interest in them, attracted my attention. He was a fine example of how children needed to be approached in Islamic education and instruction and the value that needed to be attached to them.

He had related a childhood memory of his own, one which inspired others to enter the world of children, address their souls and speak to them at their level with a view to

endearing Allah and His Messenger to our children:

“[It was during the time where] we used to live in Erenköy. We were still children. We used to frequently visit that great friend of Allah, as one of our family elders. His door was open to everyone. My older brother and I used to rush to *Sami Dede* at every opportunity. At the time, Erenköy was filled with large summer residences with separate gardens. My brother and I used to call him Sami Dede. And we would visit him frequently as our house was very close to his residence. When we knocked on the door, he would invite us in with a cheerful countenance. He would spend time with and take a keen interest in us. He would seat us in his presence as though we were not children and would address us with such esteem. He would present us with gifts to make us happy. And we were very comfortable in his presence, sometimes even behaving mischievously. But our Sami Dede not once chided us. He would excuse our actions and ascribe them to our childhood.

When I was about twelve years old we went to visit him again. We rang the doorbell and the door was opened. A voice from inside called out: “Your Sami Dede is having his ablution, you can wait in his room.”

We went into his room. A while later, Sami Dede walked in, wiping his hands and face with the towel he held in his hand. Presumably so as not to keep us waiting, he

The friends of Allah lead their lives according to the principle of, 'Blame for oneself and lenience for others.' They delight in being of service to and honouring Allah's servants.



dried himself on the one hand and greeted us with a big smile on the other. We loved spending time in his company and seeing his cheerful face. He repeated the following sentence, as though wanting to teach us something: 'The prescribed prayer purifies the heart and the Qur'an polishes it.'

Sami Dede loved us, always treated us with compassion and sent us away with gifts.

The friends of Allah viewed every moment in life as an opportunity to convey the beauty of Islam. They sought to teach whoever came to see them, young or old. They would address everyone in accordance with their level of comprehension, in a manner that they would readily understand. This is because they acted upon the principle that people need to be addressed according to particular understanding.

Here too, by repeating these short lines, I suspect that he wanted to instil a love of the prescribed prayer and the Qur'an in the hearts of children.

The words of Allah's friends are living. They possess warmth and vigour and have an intense effect on those who hear them. They also serve as a remedy for diseases of the heart. I once heard from my brother who lived in Erenköy for many years. He related:

"It was the year 1970, that we visited Istanbul from Ankara in a group of ten people. We were received in the room of the esteemed *Ustad* Mahmud Sami Ramazanoğlu, may his

secret be sanctified, in *Güllü Köşk* (lit. Rosed Pavillion), in groups of two. I was in the last group to enter. My Companion and I entered and sat in his presence. Out of respect, we were only occasionally able to look at his radiant face, which shone like light.

The esteemed *Ustad*, may Allah have mercy on him, said all that he had to say by looking at me directly. It was as though I was the only person seated before him and he acted as though there was no one else in the room. I had not been able to understand the wisdom that I was certain existed behind this conduct. I had not been able to gauge this from the signs. In seeing us off, he said:

'You have brought this brother here to receive special instruction (*ders*), but we cannot provide such instruction without performing the *istikhara* prayer (by which one seeks of a good outcome for a particular action from Allah).'

In haste, I said, 'Esteemed sir, our brother already has a set of daily recitations assigned to him.' Upon hearing this, the venerable *Ustad's* face suddenly changed. Angrily turning to my companion, he said:

'So you have ceased observance of your daily recitations, then?' He then related the following words from Shah Naqshband, may his secret be sanctified:

'Whosoever receives a specific recitation from us and then abandons it, will depart from this world with an evil end.'

Mahmud Sami Efendi said, “If a Sufi loves their fellow Sufi, he will become his spiritual guide and will receive spiritual illumination (fayz) from him.” What beautiful standards serving to consolidate Muslim fellowship are these!



“This is a covenant and must be taken seriously,” he added. He aimed at alerting my companion to such a dangerous predicament. A deep silence had overcome this brother in a sense of shame, as he had come to realise what he had lost. His remorse was visible all over his face.

Receiving him in compassion once more, the respected *Ustad* said, “Now go do the *istikhara* prayer and you may then receive your daily recitation from Musa Bey.”

I had known of my companion’s having received a specific *ders* at ‘Arafat in the year 1963. This meant that he was not doing his daily recitations. Human beings sometimes fail to appreciate the blessings they receive and cannot, therefore, give the necessary thanks for these. This brother lamented just how weak a creation human beings really were.

The friends of Allah provide instruction without ever hurting anyone. For those who are able to take lesson of course! They are angered when the truth is made apparent, and want for the covenant and word made to Allah to be honoured.

They are heroes who have forever struggled to live their lives in the way of honouring their promise.

The friends of Allah lead their lives according to the principle of, ‘Blame for oneself and lenience for others.’ They delight in being of service to and honouring Allah’s

servants. They love their (spiritual) children who are representatives of love and surrender. I had heard the following account from the late Mahmud Kalfa, who passed away a few years ago in the city of Makka during the month of Ramadan:

“I was present with Sami Efendi at the Güllü Köşk one morning for breakfast. The late *Ustad* used to offer the food that was served on his plate to those around him. His grandson Mahmud Bey was then a small child and he said to his grandfather, ‘Why do you always feed us and not eat yourself?’ The esteemed *Ustad* smiled and said, “There is healing in (the act of) honouring others. Eat, eat!” And thus continued offering that which was on his plate to everyone else around him.

Similarly, the late Mahmud Kalfa reported that Sami Efendi said, “If a Sufi loves their fellow Sufi, he will become his spiritual guide (*murshid*) and will receive spiritual illumination (*fayz*) from him.” What beautiful standards serving to consolidate Muslim fellowship are these!

The venerable *Ustad* Mahmud Sami Ramazanoğlu, may his secret be sanctified, used to earn his own livelihood. He used to keep the accounts at the shop of Mustafa Alemdar Efendi, in Tahtakale. Alemdar Efendi relates an incident that took place in that shop as follows:

“A woman wearing a revealing garment once walked into the shop. I did not attend

to her. Presumably having sensed my attitude towards her from my facial expressions and manner, the lady left the shop immediately. As soon as this customer left, the *Ustad* approached me, I suspect because he noticed my attitude towards the customer, and said:

‘Mustafa Bey, Allah’s grace is with the customer. They need to be treated well.’

The friends of Allah perpetually led their lives upon such sensitivity, refinement and grace. In this way, they have taught us the human standard in the matter of the necessary behaviour in commercial life. May Allah be well pleased with them all. *Amin*.

A human being acquires honour by virtue of their remembrance of Allah. One cannot become a perfected human being (*insan al-kamil*) by leading a sheep-like existence comprised merely of eating, drinking and sleeping. We must undertake constant remembrance of Allah so that our hearts can soften and be revived. The heart cannot soften with an insufficient amount of remembrance. Allah, glorified and exalted be He, decrees, “remember and mention Allah much.”

The earth does not consume the body nourished with remembrance of Allah. The human being must not allow the earth to consume their body.

“(Those guided are) men (of great distinction) whom neither commerce nor exchange (nor any other worldly preoccupations) can divert from the remembrance of Allah.” (24:37)

“We Did Not Come to the World to Rest”

Those great friends of Allah, as possessors of a sound heart (*qalb al-salim*), did not hurt or offend anyone throughout their entire lives and likewise were not hurt or offended by anyone. They aspired to become faithful servants to Allah and to exert endeavour in way of maintaining their honour with respect to belief and morality. This is why they constantly felt themselves to be under Divine watch and led lives of vigilant awareness whereby they trained their hearts with the need for rigorous action, spending their entire lives calling their carnal self to account for its actions. They sought to instruct their spiritual progeny in such scrupulousness also. This is why *Ustad* Mahmud Sami Ramazanoğlu, may his secret be sanctified, said the following to a student who applied to him for guidance. A student from whom I heard this account said:

“I had called upon the respected *Ustad* in order to receive my specific spiritual instruction (*ders*). The supplications and litanies that were given to me seemed like a lot. When I asked, ‘Efendim, is this not a lot?’ he said, ‘Dear son, we have not come to this world for rest. We must strive and not allow the earth (God willing) to consume our bodies.’”

May our Lord enable us to be in the company of those righteous servants. May Allah allow us to take lesson from their lives and their morality.

We must undertake constant remembrance of Allah so that our hearts can soften and be revived. The heart cannot soften with an insufficient amount of remembrance. Allah decrees, “remember and mention Allah much.”





“The Heart: *The Essence of* the *Human Reality*”

The most important characteristic of the heart, beyond all of these, is its being the “focus of the Divine gaze”. In other words, its being that aspect of the human being which is directly addressed by Allah.

WISDOM: What is the place of the concept of the heart in Islam?

Adem Ergul: The concept of the heart has more so come to be known as a Sufi concept. But this ought not be viewed as surprising, given that Sufism is not a construct outside of Islamic knowledge but, like jurisprudence (*fiqh*) or scholastic theology (*kalam*), constitutes one of the disciplines of Islamic scholarship. As with the other Islamic disciplines, the foundational sources of the Sufi way are the Qur’ân and the Sunna. As the Sufis have established the pivotal point of spiritual journeying (*sayr suluk*) as being “the heart’s being purified of everything save Allah and its constant togetherness with Him,” and have directed all their exertions to this end, they are the particular group coming to mind at the mention of the term. As a matter of fact, the sole agent propelling the Sufis towards such a sphere is the Qur’ân and Sunna in and of themselves. From this standpoint, it can be argued that the concept of the heart is a matter of such importance emphasised in the Qur’ân and Sunna that it

The Qur'ân stresses, at every opportunity, the need for the believers to take great care with regards to their heart.



makes up the separate discipline of Sufism.

The heart is presented as such a concept in the Qur'ân that it appears to be a key term to which many other concepts expressing religious life are ascribed. For example, central theological notions such as belief (*iman*), unbelief (*kufir*) and hypocrisy (*nifak*) are ascribed to the heart. Piety (*taqwa*), which determines a human being's honour and esteem before Allah, is centred on the heart. Such noble character traits as humility, compassion and mercy, as well as evil characteristics including pride, hatred and jealousy are also related to the heart. The most important principles of the religion and devoutness such as love, surrender, sincerity and reliance upon Allah, are all matters pertaining to the heart. Even such functions differentiating human beings from other creatures as perception, insight, contemplation and reflection, have perpetually been attributed to the heart in the Qur'ân. Perhaps the most important characteristic of the heart, beyond all of these, is its being the "focus of the Divine gaze" (*nazargah-i ilahi*). In other words, its being that aspect of the human being which is directly addressed by Allah. All these qualities ought to be considered the definitive expression of the heart's being the essence of the human reality. The term 'heart's coming to mean "the essence of a thing" can be considered an indication of the validity of such an argument. How can it at all be possible, after all the characteristics hitherto enumerated, for 'heart' not to be

accepted as a fundamental concept?

A concise answer to your question can more accurately be given by means of one particular verse from the Qur'ân and two Prophetic Traditions. Allah Almighty declares:

"The Day when neither wealth will be of any use, nor offspring, But only he (will prosper) who comes before Allah with a sound heart." (26:88-89)

The Messenger of Allah states: "Truly, in the body is a piece of flesh, if it is sound then the entire body will be sound, and if it is corrupt then the entire body will be corrupt. Indeed it is the heart." (Bukhârî, Iman, 39)

"Allah, glorified and exalted be He, will consider neither your physical appearance nor your possessions. He will only consider your hearts and your actions." (Muslim, Birr, 34)

WISDOM: What kind of relationship does the Qur'ân establish between the believer and the spiritual life?

Adem Ergul: The Qur'ân stresses, at every opportunity, the need for the believers to take great care with regards to their heart. It presents the trembling of the hearts of believers upon mention of God's name, as though it were a condition of being a believer. It indicates that the hearts of believers can only attain repose through the remembrance of Allah and the mention of His names. It declares that hearts that are unmoved,

darkened, hard and unfeeling should not be found within a believer. Holding the Prophets up as an example, it affirms the need to set one's heart on Allah (a mindful heart – *qalb al-munib*) and to reach the Divine presence with a pure and sound heart (*qalb al-salim*), one that has completely surrendered to Allah and that would not put its possessor to shame before Him. By indicating the pitiful state of diseased hearts, it reminds believers that they need to be vigilant against the heart's ailments.

It draws attention to the heart's intention as a condition of its inner soundness, as opposed to the external conditions of one's actions, or in other words, to the concept of sincerity. In constant reference to the heart's being the focus of the Divine gaze, it proclaims the need for wakefulness of heart as well emphasising the fact that heedlessness does not befit the believer.

WISDOM: What are the manifestations of the heart and the spiritual life in the life and actions of Allah's Messenger?

Adem Ergul: The spiritual life presented by the Qur'ân, with respect to its being in one sense its tangible manifestation, can be said to have found expression in the life of the Messenger of Allah. One of his missions being to guide humanity in spiritual development, the Messenger of Allah, upon him be peace and blessings, did not only put the Qur'ân

in practice himself, but also attached great importance to the training of the heart with his words, actions, and confirmations, so that the Qur'ân might be put into practice by others.

The most striking aspects of his life with respect to the heart can be briefly enumerated as follows:

* The heart is the centre of righteousness and corruption. The bodily limbs and faculties are shaped according to it. Deeds of righteousness are an outward manifestation of a sound heart (*qalb al-salim*).

* The heart is of a constantly changeable constitution. There is thus a need to turn to Allah Almighty constantly in supplication and entreaty for the steadfastness of the heart. His supplication, "O Overturner of Hearts, make my heart steadfast in your Religion," was a litany, as it were, constantly on the lips of the Messenger of Allah.

* The heart is darkened and becomes diseased, is hardened and sealed by sin. Hence, constantly seeking forgiveness – the remedy for a darkened heart – is imperative in this regard. The Prophet (upon him peace) said, "When the believer commits sin, a black spot appears on their heart. If they repent and give up that sin and seek forgiveness, their heart will be cleansed and purified. But if they persist in sinning the black spot increases until it eventually covers their entire heart.



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**The Qur'ân
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contentment.”**

This is the ‘rusting’ of the heart that Allah mentions in His Book: ‘By no means! But what they themselves have earned has rusted upon their hearts.’” (Tirmidhî, Tafsîr, 83)

* Allah’s Messenger advised believers to keep alive their heart’s ability to feel. He has indicated that vain speech, in which Allah is not remembered or invoked, leads to the hardening of the heart, and advised one of the Companions who complained of a hardened heart to show mercy to an orphan. All these serve to demonstrate the utmost importance that he attached to sensibility of heart.

* The Prophet (upon him peace) beseeched Allah, glorified and exalted be He, for a “sound heart” and, in so doing, taught his community in practice, through his every state and action, that Allah Almighty has full power over everything, that everything comes from Him and that the servant must forever maintain the consciousness of poverty (*faqr*) and helplessness (*‘ajz*) before Him.

WISDOM: In looking at people and our society today, is it possible to say that sufficient importance is not placed upon the heart?

Adem Ergul: There are of course those who are aware of their servanthood and who strive on this path. May Allah increase them in number. However, if we are to presume that the ‘outer’ is a reflection of the inner, or that one’s actions reveal much about the state of their heart, it is safe to say that we, as

Muslims, are wanting in terms of paying the necessary attention to the heart.

Even many of those who speak of the heart in our day, in the name of Islam, appear to have left the heart, so to speak, to the Sufis. Even if the misrepresentation of Sufism has played a key role in this from time to time, it can be argued that due to the fact that those with an interest in religious learning have not acquired a sufficient understanding of the Qur’ân and Sunna, or more precisely, because their approach to the Qur’ân and Prophetic Traditions has not been for the purpose of benefiting from these as a means of guiding others, but more so for other reasons, or merely for the purpose of just being informed about these, has also been a significant contributing factor. When this is the condition of those who have a certain degree of knowledge of the religion, then what could be said of others? Considering the fact that even the hearts of Prophets turned to their Lord trembling, in supplication and entreaty, I am of the view that continuing to drink from the water of life offered by the wellspring of the Qur’ân and Sunna, in view of realising a spiritual revival starting with our own selves without sliding into a sense of satiation, is the foremost responsibility of each and every one of us. For this reason, seeking the means of realising such a spiritual awakening and helping one another other as believers in making this goal a reality, ought to be the method that we pursue.

The Qur'an declares that, "...it is in the remembrance and of and whole-hearted devotion to Allah that hearts find rest and contentment." This being the case, it goes without saying that individuals and communities who fill their hearts with the fleeting attachments of this transitory realm and who fail to unite their hearts with Allah, will writhe in deprivation of peace and repose, and will not be safe and immune from stress and anarchy. Those who seek the truth in anything other than Allah would have only deceived themselves.

WISDOM: Technological advancements and the currents of change have pulled people away from the concept of the heart. A more materialist, a more worldly philosophy of life has emerged. What is the point to which such a withdrawal from the heart has driven humankind today?

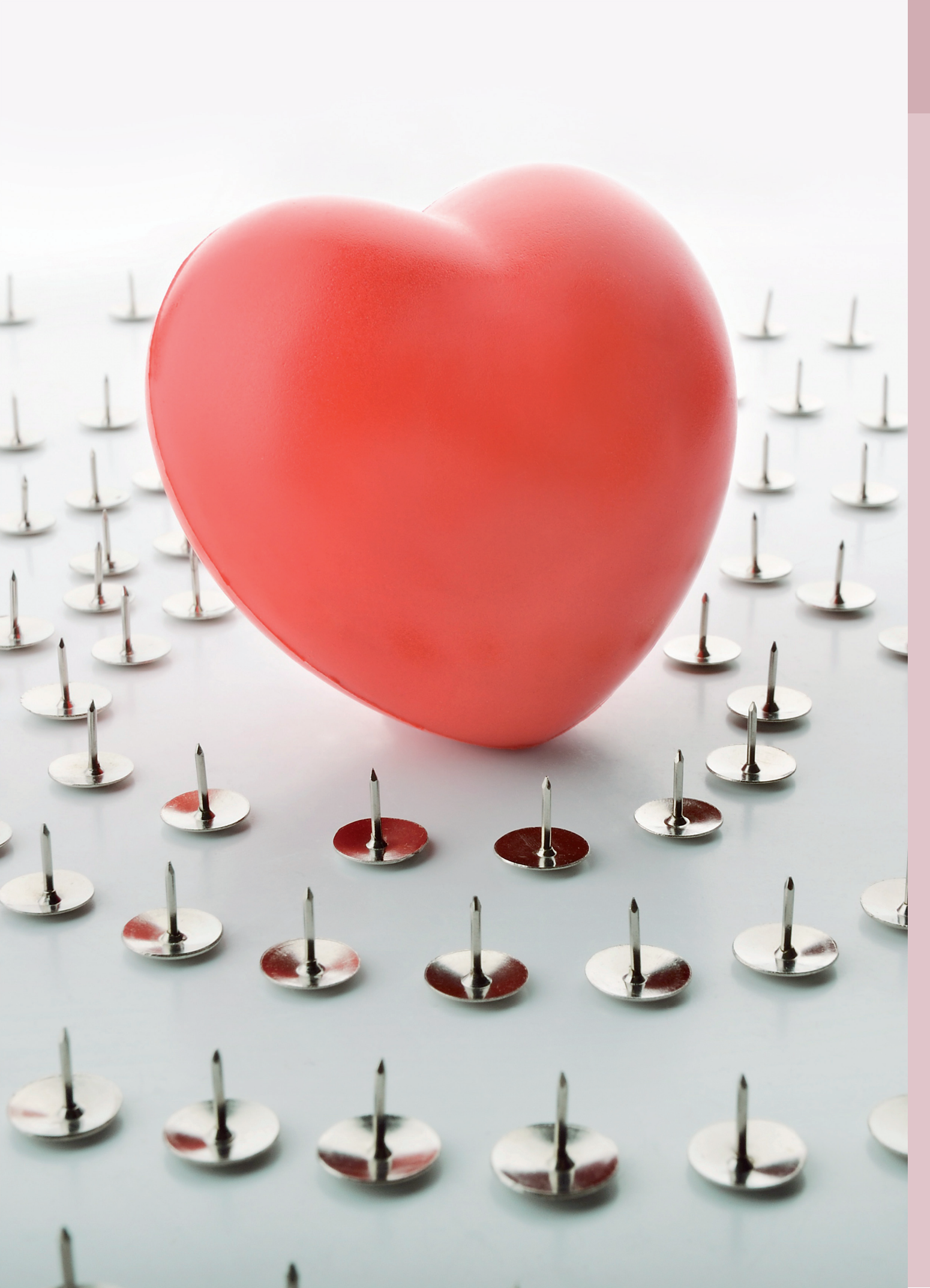
Adem Ergul: It is not for us to make

judgements about Allah's servants. However, when we look at the situation from the outside, I am afraid to say that humanity today appears to have, broadly speaking, lost their heart. They assume the appearance of a poor soul who, in pursuing their carnal whims and desires, supposes the mirage to be water. The heart, for them, is no longer their own essential truth and reality, but the centre of their carnality.

The world has become most alluring for those of our day. However, be that as it may, because the world and all that it contains has been sealed with the stamp of ephemerality, the loss of fleeting pleasures, one by one, has subjected those who are attached to the world to stress and unease. Emerging, as a result, are throngs of those who are not satisfied with anything and who are as though dehumanised, who know no limits and who have no respect for the law.

If we are to presume that the 'outer' is a reflection of the inner, or that one's actions reveal much about the state of their heart, it is safe to say that we, as Muslims, are wanting in terms of paying the necessary attention to the heart.





EASE OF HEART

By virtue of the fact that a person in a state of belief and remembrance experiences complete ease of heart and peace of mind, such people are referred to as having reached the spiritual station of “mutma’inna”, or being at rest.

The word *itmi’nan* denotes attaining peace after hardship and recovery after turmoil or upheaval. Occurring in the Qur’ân as a noun and verb about thirteen times, the concept implies the heart’s attachment to and reliance upon a thing and its attaining repose with this sense of trust and security.

Whilst *itmi’nan* is used in the Prophetic Traditions in the Qur’anic sense, it has also been used to imply physical and outer tranquillity. In fact, *itmi’nan*, or *tuma’inna* is used to signify the constituent part (*arkan*) of the prescribed prayer of remaining quiet and composed in the upright position for several moments after rising from the bowing attitude and before the prostration.

The Qur’anic verses, “Those who have believed (and become established in belief), and whose hearts find rest and contentment in remembrance of and whole-hearted devotion to Allah. Be aware that it is in the remembrance and of and whole-hearted devotion to Allah that hearts find rest and contentment,” (13:28) and, “(But to the righteous Allah will say:) ‘O you soul at

rest (content with the truths of faith and Allah's commands and His treatment of His creatures) Return to your Lord, well-pleased (with Him and His treatment of you), and well-pleasing to Him!" (89:27) refer to the heart and soul's attribute of *itmi'nan*, or repose, and declare that the soul attains rest by way of deliverance from grief and unease, and that it finds relief after distress.

The Prophetic Traditions describing goodness indicate that that with which the carnal self and the heart find rest, or in other words that which they accept without doubt or hesitation is '*birr*' or goodness. (Ibn Hanbal, V:194)

Used in conjunction with such interdependent concepts as remembrance, belief, goodness and uprightness, the sense of *itmi'nan* refers to the deep and intense state of tranquillity wherein all manner of misgiving, doubt and groundless fear are eradicated from the heart. As a matter of fact, in describing truthfulness and untruth, the Messenger of Allah, upon him be peace and blessings, employs the terms *itmi'nan* or *tuma'inna* as a measure.

"Truthfulness is tranquillity and peace of mind while lying is doubt and distress." (Tirmidhi, Qiyama, 60) Polygraphs, the instruments of modern technology that are used in our day to detect the uneasiness, tension and electrical skin response of people who are lying, clearly reveal the dishonesty of such people. The self-possessed and peaceful state

of the truthful person is naturally to differ from the state of the deceiver.


The same thing could be said for belief and unbelief. By virtue of the fact that a person in a state of belief and remembrance experiences complete ease of heart and peace of mind, such people are referred to as having reached the spiritual station of "*mutma'inna*", or being at rest. As the distress of those unfortunate souls who persist in denial and unbelief endures, it is difficult for them to attain a state of repose and tranquillity.

The first Sufi work to expound the concept of tranquillity was Abu Nasr al-Sarraj's *Kitab al-Luma'*. Abu Nasr al-Sarraj defines the *itmi'nan* concept as follows: *Itmi'nan* is to turn to Allah without leaving room for any doubt in the heart. The human selfhood (*nafs*) attains tranquillity upon recognising the existence of the All-Mighty Being Who grants them provisions and sustenance. Tranquillity is the state of those whose heart is triumphant over their intellect, who possess strong faith, who have deepened in knowledge, and who are with a clear mind and sound essence.

Some Sufis indicate that hearts tremble and shake as a result of their acquaintance with the majesty and grandeur of Allah Almighty, are relieved with witness of His mercy and grace, and upon comprehending that He alone is sufficient, they attain repose; this state is referred to as *itmi'nan*.

The Prophetic Traditions describing goodness indicate that that with which the carnal self and the heart find rest, or in other words that which they accept without doubt or hesitation is '*birr*' or goodness.





A sound heart is one in which each and every point of this arena that is the site of the struggle between the satanic and angelic, is covered in sublime attributes. It constitutes the silencing of all carnal and satanic whisperings.

Imam Rabbani states, “One half of the heart is conducive to Satan’s establishing himself therein, [the place] where he is obeyed and where carnal attributes are harboured, while the other half is conducive to being adorned with angelic qualities and enabling angels to dwell therein.” In other words, half of the heart is temporal while the other half is celestial. Two qualities are present in the heart also. In this respect, the answer to be given to the question, “What kind of heart does the Qur’ân demand?” is “The Qur’ân demands a sound heart (*qalb al-salim*).” A sound heart is one in which each and every point of this arena that is the site of the struggle between the satanic and angelic, is covered in sublime attributes. It constitutes the silencing of all carnal and satanic whisperings.

Awareness of the difference between the emotions directing the heart and an understanding of which emotions should be admitted and which should be barred is thus critical.

It is essential that one have control over the heart that is the centre of the knowledge of Allah (*ma’rifa*), compassion and love within the human being. This is because the heart is the command centre of human action and behaviour. If this centre is kept under control, so too is human behaviour.

Sufis generally consider the concept of tranquillity as consisting of three degrees: The tranquillity of the common people

(*‘awam*), that of the select (*kharwas*), and that of the select of the select (*kharwas al-kharwas*).


1. The generality of human beings attain repose by means of remembrance and derive pleasure from this feeling by way of a sense of *itmi’nan*. The acceptance of their supplication before Allah, which is manifested in the form of the averting of tribulation and calamity and the abundance of provisions, provides them with relief.

The soul at rest (*nafs al-mutma’inna*) mentioned in the Qur’ân is the attribute of a carnal soul that believes that there is none other than Allah who can ward off misfortune and who can prevent the acquirement of sustenance.

2. The tranquillity of the select signifies the calming of their hearts through contentment with Allah’s determining, patience in the face of adversity, piety and repose, and souls finding peace with the verse, **“Surely Allah is with the persevering and patient.”** (2:153) Such tranquillity is contingent upon worship. Any deficiency to arise in worship diminishes it.

3. The tranquillity of the select of the select is not to be satiated with tranquillity. Instead of remaining in a state of peace and repose owing to their reverence and veneration of Allah, they prefer to attain union with Him and delve into the ocean of His existence. Due to the fact that everything pertaining to them is with their Lord, no distress or worry remains in them with respect to tranquillity.

THE ANGELS SEEK Forgiveness For Us



There are indications that the angels only seek Allah's forgiveness for those who are repentant, who abandon their whims and fancies and who set forth on the path of Allah in utmost righteousness and with pure intention.

The Qur'ân, the Word of Allah the Exalted, Who knows all that is manifest and all that is hidden, more often than not makes mention of events that are beyond our intellectual and emotional perception. One of these events are the angels in whom we required to believe as a condition of our faith, entreating Allah on behalf of the believers and seeking His forgiveness for them. It is stated in a verse of the Qur'ân: "Those (angels) who bear the Supreme Throne (of Allah), and the others around it glorify their Lord with His praise; and they believe in Him (as the Unique Deity, Lord, and Sovereign of all creation), and ask for His forgiveness for those (among His creation) who believe, saying: 'Our Lord! You embrace all things with mercy and knowledge (having perfect knowledge of every creature's need, and answering that need with mercy), so forgive those who repent (of their sins) and follow Your way, and protect them from the punishment of the Blazing Flame.'"¹

Another verse declaring that the angels ask Allah's forgiveness for the believers reads as follows:

"...and the angels glorify their Lord with

His praise, and pray for (His establishing a way of guidance for) those on the earth, and for forgiveness (of those who follow it). Beware! Surely Allah is He Who is the All-Forgiving, the All-Compassionate.”² Implied in the expression, “those on earth,” as indicated in the previous verse, are the believers.³ In fact, addressing the believers in the Qur’anic chapter Ahzab, Allah Almighty commands them to constant remembrance of Him and to glorify Him in the morning and in the evening and then declares: “He it is Who (in return for your remembrance of Him) bestows His special blessings upon you, with His angels (praying and asking His forgiveness for you), that He may lead you out of (all kinds of intellectual, spiritual, social, economic, and political) darkness into light (and keep them firm therein). He is All-Compassionate toward the believers.”⁴ The verse thus expressly states that the angels seek forgiveness for the believers.


The angels bearing the Divine Throne (*‘arsh*), referred to as the “Bearers of the Supreme Throne” (*Hamala al-‘Arsh*), are mentioned in the narrations as being four in number.⁵ On the Day of Judgement, however, they will number eight.⁶ This term given to describe them is used figuratively, by virtue of the fact that they are charged with the protection and care of the Supreme Throne. The angels surrounding the Supreme Throne, however, are the angels circumambulating it. In reference to them, the Qur’ân declares: “And you (O Messenger) will see the angels

surrounding the Supreme Throne (of Allah), glorifying their Lord with His praise.”⁷

As is clear from the Qur’anic verses provided above, the angels who bear the Supreme Throne and those which surround it, glorifying their Lord with praise, who give thanks to Him and declare that there is no deity other than Him, seek forgiveness for those who believe. They entreat their Lord for the forgiveness of those believers who, like them, declare the oneness and unity of Allah and who reject any other object of worship than Him. They beseech Him for those of His servants, who repent from associating partners with Him and turn to Divine Oneness, who follow the path that He decrees, or who observe His commands and prohibitions, to abandon their sins and to be protected on the Day of Judgement from the torment of the Fire.⁸

Allah’s forgiveness is His protecting the servant from punishment in the Hereafter. And seeking forgiveness is to ask for this both in word and action due to the fact that seeking forgiveness in word only is the act of the untruthful.⁹

Intended in the angels’ seeking forgiveness for the believers is the angels’ intercession on their behalf, encouraging them to repentance and inspiring them with the deeds which attract Divine forgiveness. There is here an indication of the angels’ awareness of the sins of human beings and a reminder of the fact that while their species and natures may differ,



The angels bearing the Divine Throne (*‘arsh*), referred to as the “Bearers of the Supreme Throne” (*Hamala al-‘Arsh*), are mentioned in the narrations as being four in number.

a fellowship in faith necessitates counsel and compassion, for faith constitutes the strongest and most perfect bond.¹⁰

The peak of happiness is contingent upon observance of these two critical factors: Reverence to the Divine command and compassion towards Allah's creatures. By observing this themselves, the angels have first turned to Allah in utmost reverence and have then sought forgiveness for His creation, within the scope of compassion towards them.¹¹

Allah Almighty has decreed that the angels who have drawn near to Him (*muqarrabun*), make supplication for the believers without being in their company. They also join in the prayer of the believer who makes supplication for a fellow believer who is not in their presence. As is stated in a Prophetic Tradition: "There is no believing servant who supplicates for their fellow believer in their absence, where the angels do not say, 'The same be for you.'"¹²

As suggested by leading Tabi'un exegete Mujahid, ever since the angels became aware of the incident involving the two angels Harut and Marut, they have beseeched their Lord to forgive the sins of the believers. Alternatively, they seek forgiveness for the believers on account of the shame they feel¹³ for responding to their Lord's words, "I am setting on the earth a vicegerent," with the question, "Will you set therein one who will cause disorder and corruption on it and shed blood?"¹⁴

In their supplication, they first praise

and glorify Allah and this is followed by an enumeration of all that they ask of from Allah. Prior to asking Allah's forgiveness for the believers and making supplication for them, the angels first begin their words with glorification and praise, saying, "Our Lord! You embrace all things with mercy and knowledge," and then make their entreaty. We see the same method being followed in the supplications of the Prophets. Moreover, this appears to be the most logical order to be followed.¹⁵

There are indications that the angels only seek Allah's forgiveness for those who are repentant, who abandon their whims and fancies and who set forth on the path of Allah in utmost righteousness and with pure intention. This is because the angels know that those who associate partners with Allah, who refuse to repent and who persist in their associationism will not be forgiven.¹⁶

The angels first intend for the Divine pardon (*ghufran*) of penitent believers and then ask Allah for their protection from the punishment of the Fire. The meaning of *ghufran*, or Allah's forgiveness, is deliverance from punishment. In this case, both aspects of supplication come to mean the same thing. The subtlety evident here is the following: The term '*maghfira*' alludes to lifting of the punishment of the Fire. The angels first allude to this supplication and then mention it more clearly for the sake of emphasis and reiteration.¹⁷ Here, there is also an indication that deliverance will not be possible through

**The angels who bear
the Supreme Throne and
those which surround it,
glorifying their Lord with
praise, who give thanks to
Him and declare that there
is no deity other than
Him, seek forgiveness
for those who
believe.**



merely an 'abstract' repentance, that there is a need for perseverance in one's repentance, the purification of one's actions from pretence and ostentation, as well as purging the heart of vain desires and innovations.¹⁸

The angels perpetually make the following supplication: "Our Lord! Admit them into the Gardens of perpetual bliss which You have promised them, and those who are righteous from among their forebears, and their spouses, and their offspring. Surely You are the All-Glorious with irresistible might, the All-Wise."¹⁹

In other words, they say, 'Our Lord, admit these of Your servants who repent and follow Your way along with those of their forebears, spouses and children who were believers in the world and who carried out deeds of righteousness with which You were well pleased, into the Everlasting Gardens (*Adn*) which You have promised for those who obey and worship You.'²⁰

The angels supplicate thus in order for the joy and happiness of the people of Paradise, their elation and pleasure, to be complete and splendid. In this way, by coming together in neighbouring dwellings, they are a means of happiness for one another and thus rejoice in unison. Indeed, Allah, glorified and exalted be He, declares in another Qur'anic verse: "Those who have believed and their offspring have followed them in faith, We will unite them with their offspring (even though the faith of

the latter may not be of the same degree as that of the former), and We will not decrease the reward of their deeds in anything (because of their being united with their offspring)."²¹ That is to say, the degree of all of them will be equalised so that their happiness is shared. The degree of one of a higher degree will not be decreased so that it be equivalent to one with a lower degree. On the contrary, as a favour from their Lord, a great many of their deeds will be equalised and the rank of those with less good deeds will be elevated.²²

The Messenger of Allah said: "The children gather at the place of resurrection when created beings are brought to Judgement, and it will be said to the angels, 'Take these children to Paradise,' but they will stand at the gate of Paradise and say, 'Where are our fathers and mothers?' They will be commanded to enter Paradise in unison and again they will say, 'Will our fathers and mothers enter with us?' The Lord Almighty will say, 'Enter Paradise, you and your parents.' Thereupon, each child will filter through the crowds, take their parents by the hand and lead them into Paradise. On that day, they will recognise their fathers and mothers better than the children in your dwellings recognise you."²³

Mention of Allah Being the All-Glorious with irresistible might (*Al-Aziz*) signifies His possessing the power to fulfil His promise to His believing servants and their righteous kith and kin and that He will bestow honour and esteem to those who repent and follow His



Allah's forgiveness is His protecting the servant from punishment in the Hereafter. And seeking forgiveness is to ask for this both in word and action due to the fact that seeking forgiveness in word only is the act of the untruthful.

way. Mention of His being the All-Wise (*Al-Hakim*) is an expression of the fact that each and every one of His acts is filled with great wisdom.

The angels then complete their supplication in the following words:

“And protect them from (doing) evil deeds (and the consequences thereof on the Day of Judgement). Whoever You protect from evils on that Day, You have surely had mercy on him; and that is the supreme triumph.”²⁴

That is to say, the angels ask for Allah to deliver the believers from the evil outcome of the sins and misdeeds they committed before having repented and turned to His path and not to call them to account for these sins and punish them. For He would have assuredly had mercy and protected from His punishment those who He has delivered on the Day of Judgement from the dire consequences of their wrongdoing, as whosoever is saved from the Fire and is admitted into Paradise certainly been delivered. There is no doubt that this is a great salvation.²⁵

The evil referred to in the expression, “And protect them from (doing) evil deeds,” can also be the erroneous beliefs and corrupted actions in the world. The meaning then becomes: “Whosoever You protect from evil, false belief and misdeed in the world, You would certainly have favoured with Your mercy on the Day of Judgement. And this is a tremendous triumph. This is because they will receive incessant bounties and possessions beyond

human comprehension in return for the scattered, insignificant and trifling deeds they performed in the world and took with them to the Hereafter.”

In conclusion, it can be said that Allah Almighty has created the entire universe for us, so that we may worship and be servants to Him. Our Lord possesses endless compassion towards us. He is our sole Friend, Helper and Guardian. Thus, we as believers must be constantly vigilant and in an incessant state of praise, in the consciousness of the immense bounties of our Lord with which we are surrounded. We must take refuge in Allah from ingratitude, indifference and heedlessness before all these blessings and bounties.

Notes: 1. Qur’ân 40:7. 2. Qur’ân 42:5. 3. Tabari, Abu Ja’far Muhammad ibn Jarir, Jami’ al-bayan fi tafsir al-Qur’ân, XXV:6, Beirut, 1978. 4. Qur’ân 33:43. 5. Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Musnad, I:256. 6. Qur’ân 69:17. 7. Qur’ân 39:75. 8. Tabari, Tafsir, XXIV:29, 30. 9. Raghîb, al-Mufradat, 362, Beirut, n.d. 10. Bursawi, Ismail Haqqi, Ruh al-Bayan, VIII:157, Istanbul, 1389. 11. Razi, Fakhr al-Din, Mafatih al-Ghayb, XXVII:33, Tehran, n.d., 12. Muslim, Dhikr, 86-88. 13. Qur’ân 2:30. 14. Bursawi, Ruh al-Bayan, VIII:157. 15. Razi, Tafsir, XXVII:35; Ibn ‘Ashur, Muhammad Tahir, al-Tahrir wa al-Tanwir, XXIV:91, Tunisia, 1984; Refer to the supplication of Prophet Abraham as a case in point: Qur’ân 26:78-83. 16. Bursawi, Tafsir, VIII:158. 17. Razi, Tafsir, XXVII:37; Ruh al-Bayan, VIII:158; Ibn Ashur, Tahrir, XXIV:92. 18. Ruh al-Bayan, VIII:158. 19. Qur’an 40:8. 20. Tabari, Tafsir, XXIV:30. 21. Qur’ân 52:21. 22. Ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Qur’ân al-‘Azim, VII:121, Istanbul, 1984. 23. Ruh al-Bayan, VIII:158-159. 24. Qur’ân 40:9. 25. Tabari, Tafsir, XXIV:30; Ruh al-Bayan, VIII:159.

Intended in the angels’ seeking forgiveness for the believers is the angels’ intercession on their behalf, encouraging them to repentance and inspiring them with the deeds which attract Divine forgiveness.



Quiz For Children



1. What were those worships and prayers that were ordered by Allah to the community of Bani Israeel and which were continued by the Muslim Ummah also?
a. Zakaat
b. Haj
c. Umrah
d. Salaat and Zakaat
2. What was the age of Prophet Muhammad (upon him peace) when Qur'an was first revealed to him?
a. 40 Years b. 42
c. 44 d. 46
3. How long did Prophet Muhammad (upon him peace) receive the revelation of the Qur'an in Makkah?
a. 12 Years b. 13 Years
c. 14 Years d. 15 Years
4. How long did Prophet Muhammad (upon him peace) receive the revelation of the Qur'an in Madinah?
a. 7 Years
b. 8 Years
c. 9 Years
d. 10 Years
5. Where was the first Surah revealed?
a. Makkah
b. Madinah
c. Taif
d. Jerusalem
6. Where was the last Surah revealed?
a. Makkah
b. Madinah
c. Quba
d. Taif
7. How many Surah in the Qur'an have the titles named after different Prophets?
a. 3
b. 4
c. 5
d. 6
8. Where in the Qur'an has Prophet Muhammad (upon him peace) been named 'Ahmad'?
a. Surah Muhammad
b. Surah Nas
c. Surah Naml
d. Surah Saff
9. How many Makki Surahs are there in the Qur'an?
a. 82
b. 84
c. 86
d. 88
10. How many Madani Surahs are there in the Qur'an?
a. 26
b. 28
c. 30
d. 32

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SAYYIDAH UMMU HABIBAH BINT ABU SUFYAN (I)

On the day that Ummu Habibah and the Muslims reached Medina Prophet Muhammad was returning from the conquest of Haybar. For this reason Prophet Muhammad was doubly pleased on that day: by both the arrival of the Muslim and the conquest of Haybar.

Her Lineage

Ummu Habibah was born 17 years before the start of the Prophethood. She was of the Umayya tribe and her father was the chief of the Quraysh, Abu Sufyan Sahr bin Harb. "After the Battle of Badr the head of the Meccan city state became Abu Sufyan". Her mother was Safiyye bint Abi'l-As bin Umayya.

Ummu Habibah's lineage was joined to that of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) with their mutual ancestor Abdumenaaf.

Ummu Habibah's real name was Ramla. She was called Ummu Habibah after her first daughter, Habibah, was born, in keeping with Arab tradition. Her first marriage was to Prophet Muhammad's cousin, Ubaydullah bin Jahsh.

During the Age of Ignorance

Our mother Ummu Habibah was a member of the *hanif* religion before the advent of Islam. Her husband, Ubaydullah bin Jahsh, was one of the four *hanifs* who lived during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad. These four *hanifs* were called the *Hunafa-i Erbaa*. The other *hanifs* were Waraqa bin Nawfal,

Osman bin Huwayris and Zayd bin Amr. One day, these four people, after watching a grand ceremony held for the idols, said: *"It is clear that our people are (lost) in heresy. They have perverted the true and real religion of their ancestor Abraham. Let us examine our own religion..."* They then left the country and started to look for the laws of the Hanif religion and Abraham. However, before the advent of Islam Ubaydullah converted to Christianity.

Ubaydullah bin Jahsh and his wife Ramla (Ummu Habibah), who were among the first people to believe in Islam when Prophet Muhammad started to call people to the religion, were subjected to torture and oppression in Mecca. It was for this reason that they joined the second group that emigrated from Mecca to Abyssinia so that they could practice their religion freely, and abandoned the land in which they had been born and raised.

The Ever Increasing Torment of Homesickness in Abyssinia

Najashi, the king of Abyssinia, welcomed the members of this new religion from Mecca, so that the convoy decked out with expensive presents from the city, that had been sent out from Mecca to force the return of those Muslim emigrees back to Mecca, returned without them. The Muslims had now found their own peaceful country. They

could carry out their worship in safety and comfortably fulfill the orders of the religion. Only one thing saddened them: that Prophet Muhammad and the other Muslims in Mecca, were still suffering torment.

Abyssinia was a Christian country, and the Muslims that settled there generally lived together, helping and supporting one another. During this time Ummu Habibah's husband, Ubaydullah, who was said to be fond of alcohol, apostatised and became Christian again. Ubaydullah asked his wife Ramla (Ummu Habibah) to become Christian: and in fact he exerted pressure on her to convert. However, Ummu Habibah strongly opposed this and resisted her husband. Before much time had passed he divorced her.

Ubaydullah was not content with only attempting to force his wife to convert: he called for all the Companions in Abyssinia to follow him, and he carried out "apostasy propaganda". He was to die in Abyssinia as a Christian.

Ummu Habibah, ashamed of the actions of Ubaydullah, her husband and the father of her daughter, tried to distance herself from other people; but this merely increased her feelings of homesickness. She could not reside in peace in Abyssinia and she could not return to Mecca, because her father Abu Sufyan had started a merciless war against Prophet Muhammad, the blessed prophet of the religion in which she believed. Here in Abyssinia her husband had betrayed her and



One day while Ummu Habibah was withdrawing more and more into mournful seclusion, she found comfort in a dream. In the dream someone called to her: "O, Mother of Believers!" She interpreted this dream to mean that she would marry the Prophet.

their religion. She no longer knew who she could rely on or who she could trust. Moreover, she was a member of one of the leading families of Mecca and for this reason the men felt uncomfortable in offering her marriage. She was in a hopeless situation.

A Blessed Dream

One day while Ummu Habibah was withdrawing more and more into mournful seclusion, she found comfort in a dream. In the dream someone called to her: “Ya, Ummu’l mu’minin...! (O, Mother of Believers...!)” She interpreted this dream to mean that she would marry Prophet Muhammad. This dream comforted her somewhat, lightening her sorrow.

At this time there was correspondence between the Prophet and Najashi. Prophet Muhammad’s letters were sent with an envoy called Amr bin Umayya ad Damri. In one of those letters Prophet Muhammad called Najashi to Islam, in another he stated that he wanted to marry Ummu Habibah, and

in another he asked for a ship to bring the Abyssinian Muslim refugees back to Mecca. It is understood that Najashi did not refuse any of the suggestions or requests of Prophet Muhammad, including conversion to Islam.

Ummu Habibah then tells us: “*While in Abyssinia nothing thrilled me as much as the news that a concubine called Abraha had been brought by Najashi’s envoy. Abraha took care of Najashi’s clothing and perfumes. She informed me that she wanted to talk to me and I agreed to meet with her.*

She said: “The Prophet of Allah has written a letter to the King of Abyssinia saying he wants to marry you.” I responded: “May Allah give you even more blessed tidings!” But in order to be sure that what I had heard was correct I made Abraha repeat what she had said a few times. Finally Abraha said: “The king has asked you to appoint a representative for the marriage.” Then I called my cousin Halid bin Said bin As’i and made him my representative. I was so happy that I gave all the jewelry I had on my hands and feet to Abraha”.

When the Prophet came to the room he was aware of a lovely scent and after seeing the floor covering said: “Qurayshi women are ones who decorate everything and make a home, they are not like the Bedouins or Arabs.” These words were in appreciation of Ummu Habibah’s cleanliness and skill at setting up the home.

